

Rays of Hope

D. O. Teasley, 1909

Introduction

A drowning man, it is said, will grasp at a straw. This is because he has become awakened to the fact that he is in a critical condition and must have assistance at once or perish. He grasps the straw as his only visible help, and the last ray of hope seems to have fled as he goes down; but even in this desperate condition he feels the encircling arm of a friend and, just in time to save his life, he is rescued.

There are people today sinking in the quagmires of sin, as it were; there are those who have met with misfortune and discouragement and are drifting into a state of desperation; there are some who have been saved, but have given way to doubts and fears, and thus losing hope, are sinking into despair.

In this volume the author has caused rays of hope to shine upon the pathway of erring and unstable souls and such as have become despondent and filled with despair. The way to victory is pointed out, the plans of the enemy are exposed, and many helpful suggestions are given that will aid one in conquering the foe and becoming master of the situation in spiritual matters through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The experience of the author, broadened by years of effectual service in behalf of sin burdened and thirsty souls, has enabled him to present in these pages thoughts and suggestions, instruction and advice, that tend to make the book "Rays of Hope," worthy of its name.

E. E. Byrum

Preface

This book is not intended to present dogmatic theology, but it is written for men and women who feel the need of encouragement and help in fighting the battles of everyday life.

Many people in the world are overconscientious, timid, and easily accused by Satan. To such, I trust, the following pages will prove a help and a blessing.

Two chapters have been taken from a former publication— "The Holy Spirit and Other Spirits." This is done because I have received many letters from those who have been benefited by these chapters.

The writer has a deep sympathy for those unfortunate persons who, through various causes, have fallen into "the slough of despond" and the following pages have been penned to pierce the gloom and let in some rays of light. It is hoped also that the perusal of these pages may help some to shun the road of doubts and fears that leads to the dark city of misery.

Praying that God may by this humble effort encourage some despondent soul, I am,

Hopefully yours in Christ,

D. O. Teasley

New York, N. Y.

Rays of Hope: A Book of Encouragement

FAITH

Faith in the New Testament, has at least three distinct meanings. First, the act of the soul in appropriating the benefits of the promises of God to its individual needs. Of this faith Jesus spoke to the woman mentioned in Luke 7:50, and said, "Thy faith hath saved thee." "Have faith in God." Peter also mentioned this faith to the unbelieving multitude that had gathered in Solomon's porch, greatly wondering at the manifestation of the power of God through faith. "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Acts 3:16. By this faith we are justified (Rom. 5:1), sanctified (Acts 26:18), kept (1 Pet. 1:5), and healed (James 5:14, 15).

Secondly, faith means the doctrine of the gospel. Paul in writing to the Philippians exhorts them to strive together for the faith of the gospel. Jude also speaks of the faith once delivered to the saints and exhorts the children of God to earnestly contend for that faith. The New Testament is the Christian's creed and articles of faith. The New Testament is spoken of as faith because it is a written expression of what the first Christians believed. They did not believe it because it was written, for they believed it before it had been written. It was written because they believed it. "These are written that we in turn might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life through his name." The New Testament is an expression of those principles of the Christian religion first taught by Jesus Christ and believed by His disciples and afterwards taught by the disciples and believed by all who accepted Christ, therefore called "the faith once delivered to the saints." For this simple faith alone did the early Christians contend and in striving for the faith of the gospel they were exhorted to, and did, strive together.

Thirdly, there is a kind of faith sometimes called historical faith. This kind have all who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, whether they have accepted Him as their personal Saviour or not. The vilest of men often possess this faith, and even the devils themselves believe and tremble. James 2:19. This kind of faith is a dead faith, for "faith without works is dead." It is not enough to believe that Jesus tasted death for every man. In order to receive the benefits of His glorious atonement, you must believe that He died for you. Things that are dead do not move themselves or anything else. So a dead faith is inactive and does not move those who possess it to righteous acts, but living faith inspires and animates those who possess it to live in strict harmony with every principle of faith laid down in the New Testament.

As dead faith is of little value and is uninspiring to contemplate, I shall now call your attention to the inspiring subject of living faith in God. This faith every Christian must have, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." Hebrews 11:6.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heb. 11:1. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen. For therein the elders had witness borne to them." Heb. 11:1, 2. Revised Version. "But faith is, of things hoped for, a confidence, of facts a conviction, when they are not seen. For thereby well attested were the elders." – Rotherham. "Now faith is the persuasion of the things that are in hope, as if they were in act; and it is the manifestness of the things not seen. And for it the ancients are well testified of." – Syriac. "But faith is a basis of things hoped for, a conviction of things unseen. For by this the ancients were attested." – Emphatic Diaglott.

From the foregoing texts we learn that faith is the persuasion, a confidence, the assurance, a basis, of things for which we hope; the manifestness, a conviction, or proving, of things unseen. We do not have faith for those things which we see, yet the conviction that the unseen things for which we believe are ours makes them as real as if they were seen. "Now faith is the persuasion of things that are in hope, as if they were in act." A commentator on this subject says: "The word which we translate 'substance' signifies subsistence – that which becomes the foundation for another thing to stand on – and the word which we translate 'evidence' signifies such a conviction as is produced in

the mind by the demonstration of a problem; after which demonstration no doubt can remain, because we see from it that the thing is; that it cannot but be; and that it cannot be otherwise than it is and is proved to be." Without faith we have no ground work, no substructure, no foundation, for things hoped for; without it we have no evidence of things unseen. Seeing, then, that faith is the foundation of our hopes, let us inquire what is

THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH

The foundation of our faith is composed of three stones – the character, the ability, and the will, of the one in whom we believe. There are only three just reasons to doubt any one. First, if a person is or has been unfaithful or untruthful, our knowledge of his perfidy or untruthfulness is a hindrance to our faith in him, for faith is a dependence on the veracity of another, and one is said to keep his promise inviolate when he performs the promise upon which another relied. Secondly, if a person is unable to perform what he promises, we cannot depend upon him for the things we need. Thirdly though a man has always been faithful and is able to perform his every promise, still we cannot believe that he will favor us unless we have his promise – the expression of his will – for a man's power is exercised only in accordance with his will.

Now, first of all, let us ask who should be the object of our faith. "And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God." Mark 11:22. Next, let us ask ourselves three questions: First, is God's character such that we can rely upon it? Second, is his ability such that we have no reason to doubt it? Third, has he promised to supply all our needs? If we can answer these three questions in the affirmative, then no man has any reasons to doubt God.

First, let us examine His character. "God is faithful, by whom ye were called to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." 1 Cor. 1:9. God made a promise to Judah that the scepter should not depart from his tribe nor a law giver from between his feet until Shiloh should come. (Gen. 49:10.) In exact fulfillment of this promise Shiloh, the Rest giver, Jesus of Nazareth, came just about the time when the scepter departed from Judah and the first foreign prince – Herod the Great – ruled over Judea. God promised Abraham that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed. In the fulness of the times God sent forth His Son to bless every one of us in turning us away from our sins, and in him – the seed of Abraham – all nations are blessed. God promised Noah that the world should no more be destroyed by floods and as a token of His promise placed His bow in the clouds. Ages have passed, men have been unfaithful, and many times the wickedness of men has come up as a stench in the nostrils of God, yet God has been faithful to His promise, and the fountains of the great deep have never again been broken up nor the windows of heaven been opened to overwhelm unfaithful man in a deluge. Who could doubt the faithfulness of one who has kept His promise inviolate from generation to generation and has proved Himself faithful even to all His enemies? "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." 2 Tim. 2:13.

"Since the morn when time began,
Hath His Word ceased to prevail?
Is the God of heaven weak as man,
Or can His promise fail?

"Hath a mortal yet been found
Who hath trusted Him in vain?
Search the whole broad space of earth around.
And search it once again."

Secondly, let us inquire of the ability of God. Should He make us a promise, is He able to fulfill it? "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Matt. 28:18. "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." 1 Pet. 3:22. "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." Rev. 1:18. To Jesus Christ is given all power on earth, and power over death, hell, and the grave. Yea, and all power in heaven is given Him, for angels and powers and principalities are made subject unto Him. He "is the

blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." Who, then can doubt the power of Him before whom angels prostrate fall. Unnumbered worlds are at His command. He measures the ocean in His hands and metes out the heavens with a span. Look, doubting one, to the power of His might! Look and live and doubt no more.

If you have considered what I have set before you, you surely cannot doubt His faithfulness and His ability to supply the needs of your soul or to care for your body. So to lay the last stone of this imperishable foundation and complete the triune rock of our faith, let us answer the question, Is it His will to save us and to raise us above every discouragement and oppression of the devil ? A man's will is known only by the expression of his promise; so if God promised victory, we know it is His will to give victory.

1. His promise to save. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matt. 1:21. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:10.

2. His promise to sanctify. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.... And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." John 17:17, 19. "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate." Heb. 13:12. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor." 1 Thess. 4:3, 4. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 5 :23.

3. His promise to keep. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee, Holy Father, keep through shine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." John 17:11, 15. "But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you. and keep you from evil." 2 Thess. 3:3. "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Pet. 1:5. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Rev. 3:10. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Jude 24. "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. 1:12.

4. His promise to heal. "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." James 1:15, 16. "And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him." Matt. 8:7. "Who forgiveth all shine iniquities; who heareth all thy diseases." Psa. 103:3. "And said, If thou wilt diligently harken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that heareth thee." Exodus 15:26.

5. His promise of an eternal abiding place with Him. "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2, 3. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. 4:17. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5:1. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:16, 17.

"How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!
What more can he say than to you he hath said,
Ye who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

"Fear not, I am with thee, oh, be not dismayed;
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid:
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,
My grace all sufficient shall be thy supply;
The flame shall not harm thee; I only design
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.

"The soul that on Jesus cloth lean for repose,
I will not, I will not, desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake."

Now, dear reader, if you are doubting God, you are doing so without a cause and against your reason and better judgment. Nothing can be more unreasonable than to doubt one whose name is faithfulness and truth, whose power is unlimited, and whose promise reaches you. It is much easier to believe God than to doubt Him, for we have all reasons to believe and not one reason to doubt. Can you, will you, do you, firmly believe Him for all that He has promised you? Faith is the road to victory; doubting, the road to despair. Which way will you go?

HINDRANCES TO FAITH

"For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Matt. 21:32.

Some people try to believe who have not repented, so that they might believe. Such is impossible, and those who are thus striving to believe God can never succeed. There are others who have repented many times and are still repenting and yet do not – I shall not say cannot – believe. When you have repented of all wrong, forgiven all who have done aught against you, made restitution to all men to the extent of your ability, confessed that you are a sinner, and asked God's forgiveness, you are then on believing ground. You have a right to believe, you can believe, and nothing can hinder you from believing if you will. Repenting over and over again for the same offense will weaken your faith rather than strengthen it. Repent full and heartily, once for all; then believe God, live for Him, and doubt no more.

"How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that cometh from God only?" John 5 44. Those who seek honor from men, pray, sing or preach to be heard of men cannot exercise faith in God for God is the object of our faith, and faith seeks only that honor which comes from Him.

The habit of doubting is a hindrance to faith. Those who have been in bondage to doubts and accusations often have a hard struggle to exercise faith for permanent victory; but by taking a stand on the Word of God against doubts and accusations such persons may be overcomers. Even the mental habit of doubting can, through faith in God, be completely erased, and the soul once weak and faltering can be made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Trusting in emotions will cause one to lose sight of God's Word and fail to trust in God's promise, the only foundation for living faith. The glad emotions of a Christian's heart are truly sweet; but in order of time, faith comes before joy, for the joy of the Lord is the joy of faith, and God gives us joy and peace in believing. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Romans 15 :13.

Right belief produces right feeling, and wrong belief produces wrong feeling; for we feel according to what we believe, whether what we believe is true or false. A man who believes that he is right has good feelings even though his belief is a deception. This point is beautifully illustrated by an incident that I once read. The only son of a sick mother was lost in a forest. Sympathetic neighbors and friends volunteered to search for the lost child. The night was chilly and cold, and the mother thought only of the welfare of her child. As time after time the news came that the search was fruitless, the mother's pulse grew fainter and all could see that her end was drawing near. Hour after hour the weary night dragged by, and shorter and shorter grew the breath of the dying mother as she worried about her lost son. Finally, just before her end came the report, "The boy is found and is safe and well in the strong arms of a friend." At this joyful news the mother's aching heart was gladdened, and with a smile on her face she exclaimed, "My own dear boy is found," and smiling, breathed her last. She died happy in the belief that her boy had been found; but the report was a false one, for several days afterward the boy was found dead.

To further illustrate this point let me call your attention to the sorrow of Jacob. This hoary headed father, grief stricken, was brought almost to the grave in the firm belief that Joseph was dead, and yet he was alive and the chief steward of Pharaoh's house. Why did Jacob grieve? Because he believed the report of Joseph's envious brethren and saw the coat of many colors, dyed, as he believed, with the life blood of his child. How deceiving, then, are the circumstances of life! and how dangerous to risk the salvation of our souls on anything but the immutable Word of God!

We should not believe that we are right because we feel the weight of trials. Feeling right will make nobody right; but getting right, staying right, and believing that you are right, will make you feel right.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." There can be no victory without battle, so those who wish to have spiritual victory must fight the good fight of faith. Sometimes the sedge may seem hard and long, but the greater the battle, the greater the victory.

Many have made shipwreck by trusting in their emotions to the exclusion of God's Word. The testimony of His Word is the strongest and surest evidence to your soul. Why, then, should you seek to found your experience on the emotions of the human heart? Our feelings are, so to speak, a harp with many strings, on which every circumstance of life may play a tune. Like the tide ever rising and falling, they rise under the influence of joy and prosperity, and fall before the winds of disappointment and adversity.

The Christian's heart is not altogether void of human emotions, yet his sadness is sweetened and his rejoicing tempered by the balm of faith. Your emotions may run as high as they will, only be careful to keep them in the bounds of reason, but when disappointments come and feelings fall, take care lest you fall below the line of faith, for faith it is that helps us to say, "Thy will be done."

The Bible is like a great cable let down from God to man, one end of which is welded to heaven's throne. If by faith you lay hold and keep hold of the cable, one of three things must be done – God's throne must be moved, the cable of His Word must break, or your soul must receive the good that it seeks. If you have not yet learned how to anchor your soul to the Word of God, you should at once tie your spiritual bark to the imperishable rock of truth by the eternal cable of faith. Then, like a ship tied to an immovable rock, your soul may rise on the wave crests of emotions, high in the atmosphere of ecstatic joy, or sink to the deepest depths of human despair, where angry billows threaten sudden destruction or lingering woe; yet through all your anchor is sure, bound by the cable of faith to the solid rock of truth.

Walking by sight, or seeking signs, is a hindrance to faith and endangers the soul to the deceptions of the devil. The Jews sought for a sign, but Jesus told them that no sign should be given them except the sign of Jonah the prophet. It is dishonoring to God and slanderous to His character to seek a sign when we have His promise. Suppose you were to give me a promise and I were to say to you, "I should like to have some sign, some miracle performed, a dream, some extraordinary impression or feeling of some kind, before I believe you." If you are a truthful person, would you not feel that I was doing you an injustice thus to question your truthfulness? How, then, must He who cannot lie regard it when you seek for some impression or ask to see some sign before you will believe His Word?

You possibly do not like to be called doubting Thomas, yet Thomas wished only to see the prints in Jesus' hands and to feel the wound in His side before believing. If you ask for some special emotion or to see some sign before you believe that God's Word is true, are you any better than doubting Thomas? Salvation has its joys, but it takes faith to receive and keep salvation. So if you wish joy, you must have faith.

Completely trusting and obeying God's Word is the only source of true and lasting joy. If then, you refuse to take the first step toward the Christian's joy, how can you expect to reach the goal? Do you expect an effect without a cause? Do you expect wages without labor? Do you expect favor from one whose word you will not credit?

Tradition and superstition are enemies to faith. Many of us who have been taught all our lives to trust in doctors and medicine find such teaching a stubborn barrier to our faith when we first begin to trust the Lord for healing of our bodies. In many other ways the wrong teaching of our youth serves to weaken and hinder our faith unless we take a firm stand on the revealed Word of God. There is just one escape from the strong hand of tradition and that is to believe that the New Testament is in verity the Word of God. "Religion [Christianity] is placed between two great rocks that are equally dangerous to man and injurious to the Deity. I mean impiety and superstition. The one from an affection of free thinking, believes nothing; and the other, from a blind weakness, believes all things." – Plutarch. True Christian faith believes in God and His Word; but, unlike superstition and ignorance, it does not believe all things. It believes in the true and unchanging Word of God, but has no faith in the performance of evil spirits, old wives' fables, conjuring, powwowing, Christian science, and such like.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." James 4:3. People sometimes ask and receive not because they ask for a selfish purpose. Selfishness and lust are inconsistent with the principles of Christian faith and piety, and only the unselfish and pure can exercise faith in God.

PREREQUISITES TO FAITH

We all look upon Daniel as a man of faith, so let us inquire what was the secret of his faith. After Daniel had been cast into the den of lions and the den had been sealed with the king's own seal, and the signet of his lord, the king, we read, "went to his palace, and passed the night in fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him; and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." Dan. 6:19, 22.

Daniel gave two reasons for God's sending His angel and shutting the lions' mouths – first, "before him [God] innocency was found in me"; second, "before thee, O king have I done no hurt." In order to be innocent before God we must have our sins forgiven and be living a holy life. We must be where we know that we are saved and can "assure our hearts before him." "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight." 1 John 3 :20 22. In the second place, we must be living at peace, so far as it lies in us, with all mankind. Then, and not until then, can we

exercise faith in God. It is rather unpleasant and detrimental to faith, when we are praying for some favor from God, to have some neglected duty or committed wrong stand between us and God like a dark cloud, shutting out the sunlight of His presence. Just here, however, the weak and doubting need to be careful in discriminating between sin and the accusations of Satan; for an accusation, if heeded, will stand as much in our way as a real neglect of duty.

The three Hebrew children, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are also good examples of faith, and in their conversation with the king of Babylon before being cast into the fiery furnace is portrayed another prerequisite to faith. Hear, in the following Scripture, the awful threats of a frowning monarch, and see the undaunted boldness and decision of three humble sons of the Highest:

"Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Dan. 3 :15 18.

Not even the stern countenance of an enraged king nor yet the fiery furnace heated seven times hotter than usual could weaken their decision nor dim their faith. In these bold witnesses for the Lord we see portrayed the foundation of faith mentioned in a former chapter. First, they had confidence in the God they served – so much that they were not careful to answer the king. Secondly, they believed in His ability. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." Thirdly, they believed He would do it. "And he will deliver us out of thy hand, O king." Fourthly, we note the leading characteristics of these three men – decision. "But if not [that is, if it is not His will to deliver us], be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

If you would go through every fiery trial and come out without the smell of fire upon your garments, make the decision that God is true to His Word, that He is able to deliver you, and that He will do it. Lastly, decide, firmly decide, that if it is God's will for you to die, you will serve no other god nor worship the golden image set up by men and Satan.

SOURCE OF FAITH

"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. 10:17. In order to have faith we must have a promise. How, then, shall we believe unless we hear? In the days of the apostles there was but little chance to hear the promises of God except from the lips of the ministry, but now, in Christian lands, we have the blessed privilege of reading and studying the written Word of God. Having the exceeding great and precious promises constantly within our reach, we should of all people have the most faith. God's Word is the food of the soul. How careful, then, we should be to daily feast on the bread of eternal life. Nor is it enough to simply read the words; we should read them and meditate upon them until their virtue has strengthened our souls and quickened our faith.

The food that we eat is assimilated and becomes a part of our being. This is true of our spiritual as of our natural food. The soul that is constantly fed on light and chaffy matter can but be lean and powerless. Many people are feeding their souls with the light and chaffy thoughts and with the husks of foolishness and worldliness, and yet wondering why their faith is so weak and their souls so lean. If the food that we eat is so important in the building of our physical strength and the thoughts that we think have so much influence over the condition of our souls, should we not at least be as careful in the selection of mental food as we are in the selection of food for our bodies? If you wish "to grow up as calves of the stall," "to be fat and flourishing to show that the Lord is upright," you must eat "clean provender which hath been winnowed with a shovel and with a fan." You should reject every doctrine, every word, and every thought that is a hindrance to faith in God. Listening to unsound doctrine, to sect preachers, and to

compromising discourses, is a detriment and should be avoided by the faithful. Faith comes by hearing only when hearing is by the Word of God. Hearing the gospel preached in its purity is a powerful stimulant to faith, and hence every child of God should avail himself of every opportunity to hear the Word preached. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10 :25.

HOW FAITH WORKS

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5:6. Faith works by love. When love is out, Faith refuses to work. Faith will not dwell with Malice or Hatred. He will not work in their presence. Only those who are willing to dismiss every element foreign to love can enjoy the workings of faith. Love is the motor power, the mainspring, that operates faith. "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

Unity promotes faith; discord destroys it. The promise reads, "Again I say unto you, That if two of you agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. 18:19. Agreement is not discord, and those who are divided and out of harmony with one another cannot exercise faith nor claim the promises of God. On the day of Pentecost, when the faith of the disciples prevailed and God sent the Holy Spirit as a rushing mighty wind, "they were all of one accord in one place."

Acknowledging the good things that the Lord has done for us is also a means of increasing our faith. Then, be diligent in testifying to the goodness of God, "that the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." Philemon 6.

MUSTARD SEED FAITH

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of God is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." Matt. 13:31, 32. Mustard has two notable features – first, the great size of the plant in comparison with the seed; second, it will not, it is said, mingle or cross with any other plant. Mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds producing a wood like plant.

Referring to the size of the mustard plant, we should not confine it to the mustard of North America, for in a warm climate and rich soil it is said to grow to an almost incredible size. This beautifully illustrates the accomplishments of faith, for nothing that we possess will accomplish so much in comparison with its beginning as faith.

The fact that mustard will not cross with any other plant teaches us that faith will not mix with the things of this world. As the mustard plant, though surrounded by weeds and plants of various kinds, will partake of the nature of none of them; so faith, though beset on every side by the weeds of worldliness, doubts, and sins, will not mingle nor cross with any of them, but remains separate and distinct. Those who attempt to mingle faith and worldliness in the same heart make a sad failure. The two will not mix.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." Matt. 17:20. Pure and undefiled faith as a grain of mustard seed will remove a mountain; but a lifeless inactive faith as large as a mountain cannot remove a mustard seed.

Doubting

Doubting God and His Word is a habit imposed by the devil, and the longer it is indulged in, the stronger becomes its binding power. Doubting causes a path, or furrow, on the brain like a path across an orchard or a field where many feet have trod; and nothing but a stern resistance and the power of God can ever erase these furrows and break the habit of doubting. I repeat that doubting is a habit, imposed by the devil, for no reasonable person can willingly or maliciously doubt God.

Possibly the worst phase of doubting is doubting what God has done for the soul. Those who are habitual doubters often do much praying, but do very little believing. If Satan can succeed in getting you to doubt your experience and cast away your confidence, he has gained an inroad to the soul, which, if not quickly closed, is likely to cause prolonged trouble. I have known persons to doubt their experience, go and ask God's forgiveness, and doubt Him again before rising from prayer. Doubting spirits and accusing spirits are very closely allied and often work together.

To some people doubting becomes almost a second nature, and doubting becomes much easier than believing. If such people would treat the doubting spirits as some people treat peddlers they would not be troubled so much. Some people shut the door in the peddler's face, notwithstanding his pleas to show his goods. If people would always shut their hearts' doors to all doubts regardless of their earnest pleas for entrance they would soon cease to come so often. Doubts, like some book agents, almost force an entrance, and the only way to get rid of them is to tell them to go.

Doubts are like visitors – if they are entertained, they will stay; but if no attention is paid to them, and instead of entertainment they receive a rebuke, they will not stay long and will not return so often. The unrest and the tortures of the habit of doubting are too well known to the doubter to need comment. What is most interesting to the weakened and discouraged doubter is

THE WAY OF DELIVERANCE

There is deliverance for every soul that will accept God's way, even from the severest case of doubts and fears. If you are a doubter, settle it that God is true and that He loves you with an everlasting love. Though you may have failed a thousand times, God loves you still. And though you have been unfaithful many times, yet He abideth true; "he cannot deny himself"; and "his mercy endureth forever. "

Your doubting, unbelief, and failures will not make God unfaithful, or untrue to His Word. God is just as true to you as if you had never doubted. Peter once said to the Lord, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." Matt. 18 :21, 22. Seventy times seven equals four hundred and ninety. Again, Jesus said to His disciples: "Take heed to yourselves; If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." Luke 17:3, 4. If God requires us to forgive each other until seventy times seven, and seven times in a day, is He less merciful than we? Should you forgive your brother seven times in a day until you had forgiven him for seventy times seven transgressions, you would forgive him seven times every day for two months and ten days. If God requires this much of you, how merciful must He be! This should not license you to doubt, but, on the contrary, should inspire you to believe that God will forgive you once more, even though your doubts and failings have been many. Two things you must rely on, trust in, cling to. These are – (1) The written Word of God, (2) Your God given reason, or judgment. Without these two landmarks you could never find the way to deliverance. Feelings will deceive you, doubts assail you, and past experience fail you; but the unchanging Word of God and your better judgment are waymarks on the road to peace.

Meet the conditions of the Word as the best you can, implore the help of God, and resisting Satan, set your face toward the land of victory, determined to conquer or die, and Satan, doubts, and fears will stand back and let you pass. Believe where you cannot see nor feel, and trust where you cannot trace. Your fight may be a feeble one for a

while, but "each victory will help you some other to win," and you will soon be able to vanquish your every foe; and standing on the banks of sweet deliverance you may sing the victor's song and sway a scepter greater than that of which any earthly potentate has ever dreamed. Never be discouraged; all discouragements are of the devil and should be resisted as the devil himself. Use your reason and strengthen your conscience; look at the mercy of God and His loving kindness. Read the Bible, obey it, and believe it despite all your feelings to the contrary. Emotions are the doubter's worst enemies, except the devils themselves; but faith can conquer every foe. Tie the anchor of hope fast to the rock of eternal truth with the unbreakable cable of faith, and then emotions may rise and fall and the storms of doubts may rage, but your anchor is sure. And sooner or later you will learn to pay but little attention to superficial emotions, and to trust in the truth. After you have once gained a victory over Satan, you will be much stronger.

Never give up when tired or feeling bad, for you are not so capable of judging at such times. Wait till you feel well, and then consider. Put off giving up your experience till tomorrow, as some people put off seeking God, and you will get along much better; and when tomorrow comes, put it off again. Or what is better still, abandon the idea and go to helping someone else out of trouble, and God will bless both you and others.

A Desperate Struggle

The following is a supposed argument or dialogue, between Satan, Doubts, Fears, and Feelings on one side, against Reason, Truth, Faith, and Trust on the other. The argument is supposed to be concerning a doubting soul that is trying to get the victory.

Satan (speaking to Doubting Soul) – You are progressing so slowly of late, it must be that you are deceived in your Christian experience.

Feelings – Yes, you have been feeling so downcast for several days, and one who has the victory should feel like shouting and praising God.

Reason – This is the devil; you had better dismiss him at once, or he will deceive you.

Fears (coming up hastily) – Many people have been led astray by Reason, and supposing they were right, have lost their souls. So very many people are deceived, you had better examine yourself.

Doubts – You know you did not get a clear witness of your sanctification, and even if you are justified, you are not sanctified.

Feelings – Yes; we all believe that Doubts is right about this; for at the time of your consecration you did not feel like Brother A, who felt the fire and really knew that he had received the Holy Spirit.

Faith – Pay no attention to Feelings, but believe in God.

Doubts – But those who are saved should feel better than you do.

Truth – "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. 2 :8); so heed the admonition of Faith and dismiss these –

Fears (interrupting) – You had better be careful; you are likely to turn the Lord away.

Trust – "Trust in the Lord and do right," and these enemies shall not harm you.

Satan – Yes, but as Doubts has stated, this soul was not sanctified in the beginning.

Doubts – You had better give up your sanctification and

Fears (interrupting again) – Yes, you had better be sure of it, for it is an awful thing to be lost.

Feelings – These awful feelings are surely the fruits of depravity or inherited sin. You do not feel right toward your brethren, and you feel so tried.

Doubts, Fears, Feelings, and Satan (all in unison) – Give up! give up! give up! you know you are not sanctified now, for you have listened to Doubts.

At this Doubting Soul concludes to give up and seek sanctification to be sure of heaven.

Satan – Although you have given it up now, you know that you were sanctified in the first place; and you could not fall from sanctification without committing sin, and if you have sinned, you are no longer justified.

Doubts – Yes, you have doubted, and doubting is sin.

Feelings – Yes, you feel just like a lost sinner; so you will surely have to repent.

At this Doubting Soul begins to weep and concludes to begin over again and seek pardon. About this time Feelings comes in, and his two friends – Despondency and Discouragement – come along for company. It now being late, Doubting Soul, weary with the struggles of the day, concludes to retire for a little rest. But Feelings and his two friends keep up such a chatter talking over the day's victory that Doubting Soul is unable to sleep, and arising concludes to pass the night in prayer. After Doubting Soul prays for a short time, Reason and Truth come in and persuade him to dismiss Feelings and his two friends and to invite Trust and Faith to come in. After some persuasion Doubting Soul concludes to invite Trust to come in, which he does, and concludes to rest for a while, as the night is now far spent. But soon after he retires, Doubts and his friend Worry rap at the door and ask to be admitted. Despite the earnest pleadings of Trust, Doubting Soul finally opens the door just a little and Doubts and Worry quickly press their way in; and as they come in at the door Trust is compelled to hasten out at the window, and Doubting Soul is again left in the hands of his enemies.

After a long struggle with Doubts and his troublesome comrade, Doubting Soul concludes to call for Reason to come in again. On entering, Reason at once sets to work to encourage Doubting Soul and offset the work of Doubts and Worry. After a few encouraging words from Reason, Doubting Soul concludes to have Trust and Truth to come in and help. At the entrance of Trust and Truth, Doubts at once calls for Satan and Fears to come in and to bring Feelings along. On their entering, Doubting Soul feels somewhat alarmed; but as Reason and Trust take their stand one on each side of him and Truth at his back, he feels quite secure. After a short conflict Satan, Doubts, and Fears are compelled to retreat to one corner; but Feelings, seeming to be more fearless, lingers near for a while, but finally recedes to the corner with his friends, where all make considerable noise by way of lamentation, as Reason, Truth, and Trust encourage Doubting Soul.

Finally Doubting Soul is advised to permit Faith to enter. At this the crowd in the corner are greatly angered, and Feelings begins to weep. But Doubting Soul is strengthened by Truth and still exhorted to invite Faith to come in. Acting on the request of Doubting Soul, Reason goes to the door and admits Faith. At the sight of Faith, even before he is fairly in the room, Satan, Doubts, and Fears all make a wild rush for the window and clamber out almost treading upon one another; while Feelings crouches himself in the corner and keeps very still for a while. At the entrance of Faith, Doubting Soul seems much revived, and Truth says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith replies, "The victory is won," and Feelings is compelled to go out, but lingers near the door. Doubting Soul now retires for the remainder of the night while Trust stands guard.

Satan, Doubts, Fears, and Feelings all appear at the door early in the morning and agree that Feelings shall take the lead in gaining an entrance.

Feelings (rapping at the door) – Let me in just for a while.

Truth (speaking to Doubting Soul) – Beware, this is one of those enemies that caused you so much trouble last night.

Fear (trying to assist Feelings) – You were too worried last night to make an intelligent consecration. It is a terrible thing to be lost.

Doubts – You would do much better to give up trying to believe and make another consecration this morning.

Truth – The Bible does not say you are saved by your emotions, but "through grace are ye saved." You had better not listen to these treacherous fellows who are trying to deceive you. You are now safe in our hands if you will but remain in our company; but should you allow these enemies of right to come in, we shall have to go out, for we will not keep such company.

Doubting Soul – I love you, my friend, and want you to stay with me, but I fear that in shutting out Feelings I may be deceived and shut out a dear friend. He is such an innocent fellow and longs so to be in my presence. I can hardly refrain from letting him in just for a little while.

Faith – The joy that you will obtain by remaining in our company will far surpass the friendship of Feelings, and

Satan (interrupting in a boisterous tone from the outside) – Doubting Soul, you know that God is angry with you. The best thing you can do is to turn over a new leaf. Make a new resolution this morning and start at the foundation to build up a Christian character.

Fears (speaking in a trembling voice) – Oh! it would be a terrible thing to be shut out of heaven; to be lost in eternal darkness and sable gloom forever.

Satan – He that fails in one point is guilty of all, and there must be some point in which you have failed.

Fears – Doubting Soul, you have been on your knees so much and your nerves are in such a strain you will ruin your health. You had better resolve to quit praying.

Doubts – The Bible says, "Pray without ceasing." You have ceased to pray, therefore you are a sinner.

A Desperate Struggle

Satan (throwing his voice like a ventriloquist and representing himself as the Lord) – "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." Hebrews 6:7, 8.

Truth – This is the voice of Satan trying to deceive you. He stopped quoting the Scripture just before coming to this encouraging clause – "beloved we are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation."

Feelings (fearing, since Satan is exposed that Doubting Soul may take courage) – You feel so depressed even much worse than last night. You feel that God is angry with you. Even the bright sunshine of the morning does not cheer you, and if you look out at the window, you will see that even the trees and the flowers seem to droop in sadness. Surely, surely these are not the feelings of a redeemed soul.

Feelings pleads so sympathetically that Doubting Soul at once lets him in.

Feelings (after gaining an entrance) – Now you feel just as bad as you did before and you did not receive a definite witness.

Doubts (from the outside) – Yes, let us in, and we will help you to settle this matter.

Satan (from the outside) – "In the multitude of counsel there is safety"; so let us in. Now, you want to be sure this time, so don't go too fast. You had better let us in while we consider. With a few sympathetic words from Feelings, Doubting Soul opens the door against the warnings of Reason and Truth; and Faith, Trust, Reason, and Truth all retire disappointed at Doubting Soul's conduct, though not in any wise discouraged. Doubts and Feelings soon convince Doubting Soul that he is not justified, much to the satisfaction of Satan, while Fears walks the floor and casts an occasional glance at the haggard face of poor Doubting Soul.

After the continuance of this for some time, Doubting Soul becomes very much discouraged, and Satan says to him, "You have committed the unpardonable sin."

Feelings – Yes, you feel just as if there were no mercy for you.

Fears – I, too, think that this case is hopeless. Doubting Soul, you will never get out of this deplorable condition.

Doubts – I have seen several cases like this one, and none of them ever found peace. Doubting Soul, you have now been in my company so long that you can never again look upon the countenance of Faith; for he is my bitter enemy, and I will not permit him to see you.

Satan – You are a burden to your friends, and God no longer cares for you, and you are so miserable that the best thing you can do is to end your life and –

Reason (coming quickly and entering the room without ceremony) – This is Satan, and if you do not resist him he will drive you insane.

Satan and Fears (both speaking at once) – Insane! insane! you are almost insane now.

Doubts – Yes, see how forgetful you are. You will never recover from this. Your mind is affected now.

Truth (stepping in with an air of assurance) – "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you."

Doubts – You are too weak to resist, so Truth must go out.

Faith (speaking from the door) – "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Fears – You have doubted too long now. You are too great a sinner to be forgiven.

Truth – This is false, you have not sinned, and even though your sins were as scarlet, they should be as white as snow, though they were red like crimson they should be as wool.

Satan – But you have no confidence in yourself, even if God is not displeased with you. Through long doubting you have cast away your confidence.

Faith – Your self confidence will be restored to you if you will "have faith in God."

Feelings – You have doubted so long now and you feel so weak that You cannot believe.

Faith – Trust me, and I will drive Satan, Doubts, and Fears to the "four winds," and will conquer Feelings and make him your servant.

Reason – Feelings is always deceptive; trust him not. Many people feel right who are only deceived, and Feelings causes many an honest soul to listen to Satan and Doubts, who are both enemies of God.

At this Doubting Soul is almost ready to dismiss Satan and his troublesome companions and to invite Faith to come in.

Satan – But don't be in a hurry; there is plenty of time.

Truth – "Today is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time." You had better invite Faith in at once.

Doubts – You are too weak to have Faith to come in.

Trust – Let me enter and sustain you, and you will soon be strong enough to entertain Faith.

Reason – I will assist you.

Truth – Whosoever will may be saved.

Doubting Soul is now much encouraged and invites Trust to come in immediately, and Satan, Doubts, and Fears again recede to a corner, while Feelings stands back at quite a distance. Soon Faith is allowed to come in again, and all the enemies of Doubting Soul are again cast out, and Truth says, "Your name shall no longer be called Doubting, but Faithful; and so long as you will trust us we will protect you from Satan, Doubts, and Fears, and will cause Feelings to be your friend." On this Faithful takes courage, dismisses all his troublesome foes, and settles down to enjoy the constant friendship of Faith, Truth, and Trust.

Many times after this did Satan come as an angel of light and try to gain an entrance, but Truth invariably exposed Satan, and Faithful was not deceived by him. Doubts often clothed himself in pitiful robes and sought to excite the sympathy of Faithful and to gain admittance. And many times when Faithful would turn Doubts away, it seemed very hard – almost like turning away his best friend. Fears often tried to intimidate Faithful and make him dismiss Faith; but Faith, Truth, and Trust would sing a trio, which would always stimulate and encourage Faithful.

At first Trust would not allow Faithful to look out at the door when Satan, Doubts, and Fears were trying to get in, lest he should not be able to withstand them; but finally Faithful forgot all his former troubles, and when his old enemies would come around, he would take Faith with him and boldly open the door and rebuke Satan and his fellows and cause them to flee.

Feelings was rather treacherous for awhile and often came near deceiving Faithful; but Trust finally enabled him to ignore the foolish whims and sympathetic stories of Feelings, and to look to Faith and Truth for guidance.

Faithful soon aspired to greater victories and remembered his former troubles "as waters that pass away," and instead of spending his time in struggling with his enemies, he had time to praise God and worship Him with joy. And Faith "appointed unto him beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Isa. 61:3.

"He Careth for You"

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." 1 Pet. 5:7. It is most encouraging to know that God really cares for us. Dear reader, He cares for you. Satan may sometimes try to discourage you with the thought that God does not care for you, but he is a liar and the father of lies. If God cared so much for the ungodly that while we were yet sinners and in rebellion against Him, He gave the only Son of His bosom to die for us, will He not care for the discouraged ones whom Satan is trying to cast down? If God loves His enemies and His opposers, does He not love those whose souls pant for Him as the "hart panteth after the water brooks"? Immediately after exhorting us to cast all our cares upon Jesus, the Apostle says: "Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." 1 Pet. 5:8 10.

It seems that the apostle had in mind the necessity of casting all our cares upon Christ and his care for us when our "adversary the devil walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." After you have cast your care upon the Lord, firmly believing that God cares for you, you can then resist the devil steadfast in the faith, and "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Satan does not care how much you resist him so long as you do not resist him "steadfast in the faith"; but when you begin to resist him thus, he must flee, for Christ will make him flee.

"But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wert precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." Isa. 43:1 7.

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that cloth go with thee; he will not fail thee nor forsake thee. And the Lord, he it is that cloth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed." Deut. 31:7, 8.

"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." Jer. 31:3.

Consider Jesus

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling; consider the Apostle and the High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Heb. 3:1.

Nothing is more inspiring than to consider Jesus. You doubtless have considered Him as the Saviour of mankind, as the only Son of the Father, as the Lord from heaven, as the blessed and only potentate, as King of kings, and Lord of lords. That is inspiring to contemplate and encouraging to meditate upon, but have you ever considered Him as a man? In this there is a tender sweetness and a balm of encouragement found in no other consideration of Jesus. "For we have not an high priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4:15. "Touched with the feeling of our infirmities." "Tempted in all points like as we are." How encouraging to realize when passing through the darkest trials and discouragements that Jesus has been tempted in the same way and then to think that His great loving heart is touched with the feeling of our

infirmities.

"For verily he took not on him the nature of angels but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2:16-18. O merciful and faithful high priest, how great thy love for thy brethren! Note here these three points: First, Jesus is merciful, he is touched with your suffering. Second, He is faithful; He will not forsake you.

Third, He is able to help you; "for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2:18.

Let us now fully consider Jesus in His earthly walk. He might have taken on Him the nature of an angel, but then man might have said, "He being an angel, could overcome the trials and the temptations of this world, but I am only a mortal man." That no man might have an excuse for failures and that all might have an example of success, Jesus took upon Himself the nature of His brethren was tempted in all points just as we are, underwent the severest of earthly trials, fought the hardest battles with sin and Satan, drank the bitter cup of human suffering to its dregs, and tasted death for every man and consigned Himself to the cold and narrow limits of the tomb.

Jesus felt in His natural body the pangs of hunger the same as you do. "And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered." Matt. 4:2. R.V. He also suffered from thirst; for when He was on the cross, He said, "I thirst." John 19:28. Physical exertion and the toils of life made Him weary the same as they do you. John 4:6. When you are hungry, thirsty, or wearied with the toils and the responsibilities of life, consider Jesus, that He also was hungry and thirsty and weary, that He is a faithful high priest, that He is touched with the feeling of your infirmities, that He is able to succor them that are tempted. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4:14-16.

Accusations

What I am about to write has a very dark appearance, and lest the reader might conclude that such an experience is the unavoidable lot of every Christian, I must say that it is not. No one who will begin right, and begin in time, to cast aside the suggestions of Satan need suffer such things. Life is largely made up of habits, and only those who get into the habit of listening to impressions and ignoring reason and their better judgment are likely to fall into the ditch of accusations about to be described.

To those who are in this dark pit there seems no way of escape, and of all persons in this world who need the encouragement and the prayers of God's people, those who are tormented with accusations need them most. I say tormented, because to be accused by Satan is the purest type of torment and is akin to the torment of hell. None but those who have felt the living torture of accusation can realize the depth of suffering inflicted thereby. And what is more cruel, the devil invariably imposes accusations on the most conscientious persons. Those who are hardhearted and stiffnecked he never attempts to accuse, as they already belong to him. He accuses the innocent and excuses the guilty.

The accusing spirit is generally so well disguised that persons unaccustomed to his wily tricks are easily deceived by him. Accusations often seem so real that it is hard for the over conscientious soul to discriminate between accusations and real conviction. Satan will come with a load of accusations and without asking permission will unload them at the door of some conscientious child of God whom he thinks too feeble to remove them; and if he meets with any resistance, he will at once transform himself into an angel of light and strike his victim with the fear

that he may grieve the Lord. Satan will cast an accusation at a soul, and if inquiry is made as to where it comes from, he will reply at once that it comes from God. He often continues this deception for many days and weeks, and some times for years, before he is detected.

Under the awful accusing powers of the devil souls often hope for death to relieve them of their anguish. But even here Satan appears and says, "You cannot die, and you will never be free from these awful feelings, and even if you were to die, you are unprepared." Under such torment the nerves are often wrecked and the reason almost dethroned, and still Satan is not satisfied. Accusing spirits can never be satisfied. If you are accused of committing sin and you undertake to repent, the devil will then say you are not repenting right, that your heart is not in it, or you are just going through a form. If Satan can get you to give up and try to repent, he will then say, "You had a much better experience before than you now have, and it would have been much better if you had not given it up."

Accusations very often get people into the most rigorous bondage. For instance, Satan will impress you to do some certain thing – possibly speak to some one concerning salvation – and say, "If you do not obey, you will lose your soul." Such suggestions are usually made when it would be unreasonable or impossible to obey them, then Satan will say, "You have grieved the Lord."

It is almost enough to drive insane anyone who will listen to the repeated accusations of the devil. The past experience abandoned, the present one unsatisfactory, and but little hope for the future, the soul sighs and reels beneath the load, supposing that God is grieved away, when it is only Satan's lie.

Satan is very cautious in his approaches. He will not present too much at once, lest he should be detected; and yet when the proper time comes, he will present the most unreasonable things possible. He generally begins by suggesting that you are not sanctified. If he can get you to believe this, he will begin to argue about as follows: "Now you know that you could not lose sanctification without losing all, so you are unsaved and will have to repent." On **this you give up and begin to try to repent; but as you cannot think of anything of which to repent, you will [38]** possibly conclude that you are all right after all. At this juncture Satan again appears on the scene and suggests that even if you were all right in the first place, you are now backslidden, as you have doubted the Lord. After you have struggled on under these false impressions for a while, Satan will then advance far enough to tell you that you have committed the unpardonable sin and grieved the Holy Spirit entirely away. This lie is self evident to all who are acquainted with the wiles of the devil, from the fact that the one who has committed the unpardonable sin does not feel convicted. But many poor souls have believed this falsehood and on account of it have been driven to the utmost bounds of human anguish. Mortal tongue can not frame words to describe the suffering of a soul thus accused of the devil. The imagination of Dante could not dream of a darker scene than this nor could the brush of the most skilled artist paint a picture so dismal.

Probably the next bold step Satan will take is to suggest self destruction, or suicide. And souls in this awful state of mental anguish have been known to take their own lives, and so perish soul and body, when mercy was freely offered.

The same vile spirit of the devil that will accuse you about your own experience will, in order to cut off any possible help he may see coming your way, accuse others to you and cause you to lose confidence in them, thus causing still greater discouragement.

CONFESSION

Along with the spirit of accusation there often goes a disposition to confess all the deeds of one's life. Satan will bring to your mind some past mistake or sin or failure and tell you that if you do not confess it, you will lose your soul. Then when you go and confess to some one. Satan will turn and accuse you for doing what he impressed you to do and will say that you have made a fool of yourself and that the brother to whom you have confessed will never have confidence in you again. I have known persons under the spirit of accusation to confess publicly to the secret

sins of their life, which the Lord had long forgiven and forgotten. Such confession brings shame and disgrace to the cause of Christ and nothing but discouragement to the confessor. The spirit of accusation is a greedy tyrant that cannot be satisfied. The person who tries to confess until the spirit of accusation has been satisfied will find a life long task.

The Bible teaches that we shall confess our sins, but does not teach that we shall confess them to everybody. Sometimes confession to certain individuals is necessary, and sometimes when a community has been wronged, sinned against, or disgraced, public confession is required. "Confession to whom confession is due" is a good motto. If you have sinned against God and against Him only, then confess your sins to Him alone, and He will be faithful and just to forgive you and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness. If you have wronged your neighborhood, your brother, your wife, your husband, your children, or your parents, confess your wrong to those whom you have wronged and to them alone. If you have committed sin before the public, have sinned openly, then confess your sin publicly. Remember this and do not let Satan push you over the mark and cause you to bring disgrace upon the cause of Christ and discouragement to your own soul.

Sometimes people get into such a habit of confessing past deeds that they are seized by an irresistible desire to confess their past life, and their only relief, it seems, is to pour out their confession to somebody who will listen to their tale of woe. I have known dear souls who were as honest as truth to confess under the influence of accusation that they had been hypocrites all their lives. Such confession never benefits anyone.

I repeat, you cannot satisfy the spirit of accusation, for it will accuse you till you confess and then accuse you for confessing. So there is no end to it, only by saying, "The Lord rebuke thee." To open your heart to a spiritual adviser able to instruct you is often beneficial, but continually confessing, confessing, confessing, is a work of the devil and will only tend to discourage and dishearten you.

With joy we point to a proffered way of escape for every soul bowed down by the accusing and discouraging powers of the devil. Everyone who will take God's way may be set free, and instead of being depressed by Satan may tread him under foot, for God has promised "power over all the power of the enemy."

The case of one oppressed with accusation very much reminds us of a certain ship and its crew that were once lost at sea. Having exhausted their fresh water supply, they were famishing with thirst; and on sighting another vessel passing near them, they cried out, "Water! fresh water!" In reply the crew on the passing vessel informed them that they were in the mouth of the Amazon River, and shouted, "Let down your buckets." Had not this lost crew been informed that they were in fresh waters, many might have perished, when help was near.

The accused and despondent soul is almost famished, and cries out for help, when the waters of life eternal flow so very near. Dear soul, there is help for you; the water of life is offered free, and if you will only drink, you may live.

There is one rule by which you may always detect the spirit of the devil and distinguish it from the Spirit of God. When the Spirit of God is convicting you of sin, it will point out the wrong so clearly that you will not be left in doubt; but when the devil is accusing, he can never tell what is wrong. You feel very bad, and in every way you may feel like a sinner; but if you do not know that you have transgressed God's written law, stand your grounds and defy the devil. Satan may say that your trials are not like other people's trials, or that they last too long to be trials only; but if you continue to resist him, he must flee. You must be willing to bear trials, for "blessed is the man that endureth temptation." James 1:12. You must learn to "count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations." James 1:2. And "let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." James 1:4.

Yonder is a city of refuge, dear accused and despondent soul, to which you may flee and be safe. It is called Stability, and its streets are paved with victory. In it floats the air of freedom, and all its inhabitants though not without trials, are triumphant. The road which leads to it is perseverance and faith. Flee to it before the slayer strikes the final blow and your soul is lost; for little does Satan care whether you lose your soul through accusation or

through crime. Start today for the city of refuge, for its gates are open wide to admit the weary soul. Linger not to spend your time in listening to Satan, for he seeks your destruction. Sternly resist him and turn your back upon him forever.

"Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." James 4:7, 8. Some people spend all their time resisting the devil, consequently have no time to draw nigh to God. Resist the devil, leave him with his accusations, ignore him, draw nigh to God; God will draw nigh to you, and victory shall be yours.

Three Attitudes

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:13, 14, Authorized Version. "My brethren, I do not consider myself, as having taken (it). But one thing I know, that I forget the things behind me, and reach for the things before me; and I run straight for the goal, that I may obtain the (prize) of victory of the call of God from on high, by Jesus the Messiah." – Syriac. "Brethren, I do not reckon myself to have attained it: but one thing I do – even forgetting the things behind, and stretching forth towards the things before, I press along by the line, towards the prize of the high calling of God by Christ Jesus." – Emphatic Diaglott.

The scene from which Paul draws the foregoing picture is the foot race, so celebrated among the ancients. He here represents three attitudes. The attitude of the runner to the starting point is that he forgets it, leaves it behind. His attitude (present) as he runs from the starting point to the goal is pressing forward along the line. His attitude toward the goal is stretching forth toward it, running straight for it. In the stadium a white line marked the ground from the starting place to the goal. On this line the runners were obliged to step, and he who stepped off this line did not run lawfully and was not crowned even if he did reach the goal first. This scene represents the whole of our present life – the past, the present, and the future. After the runner in a race has left the starting place, he entirely forgets it as he presses onward in the race and thinks of the prize and the honor awaiting at the goal. Neither do his past circumstances, financial surroundings, failures, disappointments, business or friends occupy his mind. He does one thing ("this one thing I do"), and that is to put forth his utmost effort to win the race and gain the prize.

Let us now see what practical benefit we can derive from this strong and beautiful illustration.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PAST – "I FORGET"

Dear reader, have you forgotten the past things – every trial, disappointment, and discouragement? If you have not, let me exhort you today, even now, to do this one thing – to forget everything of the past that will not help you gain the prize of eternal life.

How much have you ever gained from meditating on past failures, disappointments, and discouragements? If you have sinned and God, by forgiving your sins, has put it behind you, what good can you gain by grieving over it? Failures and accusations are unpleasant to meditate upon. Grieving over the sins and the failures of misspent days is a poor way to occupy your present precious moments. "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which cloth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us! looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:1, 2.

The starting place of the Christian race is where we lay aside every weight, where God forgives our sins, relieves us of the burdens that Satan has laid upon us, looses our bands and sets us free. Like a man who runs in a race, from the moment we leave the starting point we should trouble ourselves no longer about the things that lie back of us; for the greatest accomplishments and the highest achievements of a life in sin are of little value compared with the grace of God. Of how little value, then, yea, how worthless and what a hindrance, to meditate upon are the failures and the

sins of the past! Think of your past failures only as things left behind, as weights laid aside at the starting point.

"And Joseph called the name of the first born Manasseh (forgetting or making to forget, see margin): for God said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." Gen. 41:51. Joseph is a fair type. He had so completely forgotten the trials and the disappointments of his former life through the joy of his present surroundings that he called his first born son "Forgetting." He had forgotten not only his toil, but also all his father's house. His father's house is a type of the worldly friends and the kindred ties that hinder us in the Christian race. Jesus says, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple." Luke 14:26. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matt. 10:37. This does not mean that a man who runs in the Christian race should not love his kindred nor provide for those of his own household, but that he should forget them and forsake them in every connection that would hinder him in the race of life or tie him to the present evil world.

While Job kept his eyes upon his troubles, he feared to forget his complaint or to leave off his heaviness and comfort himself; but when he got his eyes upon God, "Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholders from thee." As long as your attention is given to your trials or to your discouragements and despondent feelings, you are not likely to see above them; but if you will forget those things that are past, and will set your eyes upon God, victory is certain. "For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shall not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away and shine as the sun; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea thou shalt dig about thee, and shalt take thy rest in safety. Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee." Job 11:15-19.

Satan has hindered many dear souls from enjoying the blessings of God and from pressing on in the Christian race by pointing them to sins of the past – sins which God had forgiven. What if the mistakes of your life have been many; what if you have been in the depths of sin; did not Jesus forgive the vilest of sinners? Did He not say to the adulteress who was caught in the very act, the vilest of sins, "Neither do I condemn thee; go and sin no more"? Hath not the Lord said, "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold"? Psa. 68:13.

"Fear not: for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is shine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name: and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and as a wife of youth, when thou west refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should go no more over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children.

"In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the L o r d." Isaiah 54 :4-17.

A discouraged person will often help the devil by bringing up things of the past that have been forgiven and trying to repent of them. The accused and despondent soul will often wander down by the dark shores of the sea of forgetfulness, and finding there a bark of discouragement, will launch it and sail out through the fog and mist of past life hunting for something over which to mourn. Often some mistake or sin of the past, which, like an ocean derelict, has long since been forsaken and forgotten is found; and pulling it ashore, the discouraged soul who is anxious to do something, invites friends and brethren to help in asking God to take notice and forgive. But God will not visit such a scene. What He has forgiven He has forgiven forever, and He cannot forgive it a second time, "for," says He, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." Heb. 8:12.

If a man should come to God and obtain forgiveness of his sins, live a faithful life for a while, and finally backslide and be lost, none of his former sins would be mentioned to him, nor would he be punished for any of the deeds of his former life, but only for those committed at the time of, and after, his fall. Neither will the Lord forgive only a part of our wrong doings. When He forgives, He forgives all, and forgives forever.

So the only possible way out is to resist the devil and all accusations; cut the shore lines and consign the past to the waves of forgetfulness; make an eternal abandonment of all past sins and mistakes that God has forgiven; and set your face Zionward.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PRESENT – "I PRESS TOWARD THE MARK."

The present is the most important of all times. Today is the day of salvation; now is the accepted time. What we did yesterday is done forever and tomorrow may never come. The man who grasps present opportunities and does his best today has no time to get discouraged about yesterday nor to worry about what shall be on the morrow. Yesterday belongs to eternity; today belongs to us; Satan's time to do good is tomorrow.

"Wait not till tomorrow's sun
Beams upon your way
To do a good and cheerful deed
That you can do today."

To press forward does not mean to press backward. Forward to the Christian is upward. When the apostle penned the immortal words, "I press forward toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," he considered that behind him was the world with its follies, disappointments and misery. He had no time to consider that which was behind. The present was too valuable to waste one moment on the things which he had already counted as refuse that he might win Christ; so, forgetting the past, he was wholly occupied with the thought of reaching the goal, where to him and all the faithful will be granted a faceless crown, a diadem of glory, an eternal home at God's right hand forevermore.

Dear reader, do these things have any attraction for you? Would you gain them? Then spend your present moments in blissful meditation on these eternal things. It will help you at this present moment to press forward. Allow nothing to occupy your mind that will draw you backward. Think only on those things that will help you onward. Lay aside every weight and run with patience the race set before you, looking, not backward to the discouragements, failures, or sins of the past, but to Jesus, who is the author and finisher of the Christian's faith.

ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FUTURE – "REACHING FORTH."

Our attitude toward the future is the well spring of our hope. We should not allow the past nor the present to dim our eyes to the bright star of inspiration that shines invitingly before us. Take from the Christian the hope of heaven and immortal glory, and you take from him his all. We have often heard it said that if there were no future reward the joys of salvation in this life would be worth living for. It is true that the joys of salvation here are worth all that it costs to obtain them, but we should remember that joy here is founded to a great extent on what we hope for in the

future. If there were no future world and we knew that there was none, there could be no salvation and no present joy; so present joy is founded on future realities. Therefore to reach forth to the future is to add to our present strength and joy. It is true that many have overlooked the privileges and the joys of the Christian in this life. It is true that, though surrounded by sin and sorrow, we may, by abiding in the Saviour's love, enjoy perfect victory and complete happiness right here in this world; but, after all, the brightest and best of our hope and joy is the unfading crown which we shall receive after we have reached the goal in the land where trials and temptations shall never come and where we shall be surrounded no longer by temptation and sin, but by righteousness supreme and eternal.

The Greek word which in Phil. 3:13 is translated "reaching forth" points out the strong exertion made in the race wherein every muscle and nerve is strained and every particle of strength is exerted in running.

The apostle Paul considered that to him the winning of the prize was all important. He had left the world with all it was worth behind him. He was pressing too swiftly along to enjoy the pleasures of life, therefore he must win Christ or lose all. He was running for life, running for his life.

Dear reader, if you are in the Christian race, your all is at stake. You have no time to doubt or falter. The cause that you have espoused is of too great importance for you to stop and consider the suggestions of Satan. Take your New Testament, read it through, and mark the one bright hope that inspired the early Christians to forsake their all and follow Christ; the hope that strengthened them in the hour of affliction and temptation and helped them to say in persecutions and afflictions, in imprisonments and bonds, "None of these things move me;" the hope that helped them to fearlessly face the wild beasts in the arena, to stand firm in the flames, and in the presence of frowning judges who demanded their allegiance to heathen gods, to frame the fatal sentence, "I am a Christian." When you have finished marking, you will have found that the one thing which inspired them all under every circumstance of life to stand loyal to their Lord was the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, the crown that lies at the goal – heaven.

How to Resist the Devil

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." James 4:7, 8. This text gives perfect instructions, and one who will follow them will always succeed in getting rid of Satan.

Notice the order of action. First, resist the devil, and he will flee; secondly, draw nigh to God. Some people spend all their time resisting the devil, consequently have no time to draw nigh to God. Satan does not care how much you resist in your own strength; but when you begin to draw nigh to God, then Satan trembles and flees away. He is willing to fight with you for a life time, if he can thereby hinder you from drawing nigh to God. When Satan is resisted steadfastly in the faith and the soul draws nigh to God, there is no longer hope for Satan and the only alternative left him is to flee. As long as you show a weak faith and listen to the suggestions of the enemy, he is well pleased. Sometimes Satan must be ignored. It is not always necessary to get on your knees in order to resist the devil. I have known persons to spend hours, and even days, almost constantly on their knees, and yet come out in the end defeated, not because they did not pray, but because they did not ignore the devil and resist him once for all, then draw nigh to God.

Some people pray because Satan tells them to do so. He will accuse them of having done wrong and suggest that they had better go and pray a while. They will then go and spend an hour or two, perhaps half a day, on their knees, not praying, but listening to the suggestions of the devil and trying to get rid of him in their own strength. Never go and pray because you are accused. When you go to pray, always pray to the Lord, who is ever willing to hear you and to grant you all your needs. Ask Him in faith and confidence for the needed strength and grace never forgetting to thank Him for what He has done. I have often found that the best way to get rid of Satan is to quit thinking of his suggestions – to utterly ignore him and to interest myself in something beneficial. If you have work to do, set about it, singing some encouraging song as you work, or take a Bible and read a few chapters. Begin to praise the Lord for

past benefits and rejoice in expectations of future blessings. The more you thank and praise the Lord, the less you will feel disposed to doubt or give up.

The only reliable standard of right and wrong is the Bible. Acquaint yourself thoroughly with the practical precepts of the New Testament. You will then be well armed and able to decide whether an impression is from the Lord or of the devil, and when you know it is the devil, you will surely not spend time parleying with him. Some people however, get in such a habit of listening to Satan that you will hear them say, "The devil has been after me for two or three days." The devil has been after you? Then, you really knew that it was the devil, yet you have allowed him to trouble you for two or three days? Do you not know that the New Testament says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"?

Again, someone will say, "the devil is trying to make me believe I have sinned," or "the devil has been trying to make me believe this or that." Who was talking to you? If you knew it was the devil, why did you not resist him? If you resisted him, why did you not then draw nigh to God? and as God would have drawn near to you, Satan would have fled. But you really spent two or three days listening to what you knew was the suggestion of the devil and spent hours on your knees wrestling in your own strength against what you knew was the suggestion of the evil one. Be ashamed and never do the like again. If Satan tells you a lie, and you know it to be Satan and know it to be a lie, you are to blame if you believe it; and if you disbelieve it, act accordingly. Do not be afraid to let Satan know that you believe him to be a liar. You may tell him in a trembling way, as many times as you please, that he is a liar, that you do not believe him, and that you believe the Lord, but little does he care what you tell him, so long as you continue to worry about what he has told you.

Now, in conclusion, let me give you a perfect plan to get rid of the devil at any time and under any circumstance. First, as I have said, you must be acquainted with the practical precepts of the New Testament, so that you may detect the difference between the voice of Satan and the voice of God. Then in your action against the devil follow carefully this order of attack: First, resist the devil steadfastly in the faith; secondly, do not linger to see whether he will go or not, but draw nigh to God with all your heart. When Satan sees you start toward the Lord, he will become frightened and flee away. By following this order of attack you will see that you have only a small part to perform in getting rid of the devil and you will find it an easy task; for as Satan departs, God draws nigh. You have but one third of the distance to go; for as you draw nigh to God, He draws nigh to you, and Satan flees at the same rate of speed. So then, when you have drawn nigh to the Lord, you will be twice as far from Satan as the distance you have come; for as you draw nigh to God, He draws nigh to you and Satan flees away. Amen.

Impressions

Our impressions are from three sources – the divine, the diabolical, and the human; from God, from Satan, and from natural sources. There are two rules given us by which to test our impressions – first and best, the Word of God; second, our own better judgment.

Some people are more given to impressions than others. Persons of the former class need to be careful lest they should follow some "ignis fatuus" to the quagmires of fanaticism.

Impressions from the Lord are never attended with discouragements from Him. Though sometimes the way may seem difficult and we may see ahead of us lions that seem to be on the way, yet the assurance that God's grace is sufficient, the promise that no lions shall go up on the holy way, and the confidence that He will make a way for us in trouble – these keep discouragements away. If impressions from the Lord are attended with discouragements, these are not from the Lord. Even with conviction for sin the Lord does not send discouragement, but rather sends with the sorrow for sin hope of deliverance. This, then, is one way to recognize the impressions that come from God.

The surest and best test, of course, is to consider whether or not the impression is in harmony with the Bible. If it is not, it is unsafe to follow. But we sometimes have impressions in regard to things of which the Scriptures do not

speak. In such cases the Lord allows us to use our better judgment. We often receive impressions from the Spirit of God concerning matters on which the Bible is silent, but the difficult point with those who are accused and doubting is to know when the Lord is talking and when Satan is talking.

It is well for those who are habitual doubters or for those who have long been accused, to pay but little attention to impressions of any kind. For such persons the safest way out is to take the written Word of God and their better judgment, and build upon it until they have become well established. Then they can more easily and more surely obtain the leadings of the Lord through His Spirit.

Impressions brought about by circumstances or natural causes may sometimes be harmless and sometimes may lead to disaster. Your better judgment and the advice of discreet brethren constitute the surest way to discriminate between right and wrong impressions of this nature. Impressions that come from Satan, we all know, are invariably wrong. The most important question is to be able to detect the impressions of the devil to know when the Lord is speaking and when Satan is tempting. I repeat that the only safe way out from the slough of false impressions for those who have become habitual doubters or have been long accused by Satan is the written Word of God, the advice of spiritual and well informed brethren, and the use of one's own better judgment.

Establishment

To establish means to make stable or firm, to fix immovable, or firmly; to set a thing in a place and make it stable there; to settle; to confirm.

Dear reader, if you have been unsettled and unstable in the grace of God, let me persuade you to believe that there is power in the blood of Jesus Christ to make you stable and firm, to settle and fix you immovable in the kingdom of our God. Do not say that you cannot get established; for the everlasting arm that upholds the universe is able to establish, strengthen, and settle you. If you doubt that you may be established, let me call your attention to

SOME THINGS THAT GOD HAS ESTABLISHED

First, His throne, "Thy throne is established of old: thou art everlasting." Psalm 93:2.

Second, the world, "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty: the Lord is clothed with strength, where with he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved." Psalm 93:1.

Third, His commands. "The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." Psa. 111:7, 8.

Fourth, the heavens. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth: by understanding hath he established the heavens." Prov. 3:19.

Do you believe that God's throne is immovable, that it is established in the heavens? Do you fear that the earth upon which you tread will sink beneath your feet? Do you tremble lest the heavens above you should fall? The same God that has established his throne, the earth, and the heavens has established Mount Zion (Isa. 2:2), on whose sunlit and immovable heights you may stand.

Fifth, good men. "A good man showeth favor, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved forever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid until he see his desire upon his enemies." Psa. 112 :5 8.

Sixth, His Word. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." "The Scriptures can not be broken." John 10:35. If the Word of God is established, all that we have to do in order to be immovably fixed and

established forever is to get on His Word and remain there. Some day the earth, now upheld by the Word of God, will pass away, and the heavens, which are now established, shall depart as a scroll; but "the word of God abideth forever." The Word of God is stronger than the earth upon which we walk, for by it the world is upheld and should the earth at any moment pass from beneath us, those who are standing on the Word of God would still have a firm foundation. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Heb. 12:28.

GOD'S PROMISE TO ESTABLISH US

First, in the grace of God. "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace: not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein." Heb. 13 :9.

Secondly, in righteousness. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror, for it shall not come near thee." Isa. 43 :11 14.

Thirdly, God has promised to establish our thoughts. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established." Prov. 16:3. Very often those who are not established in the grace of God and those who have fallen into the habit of doubting have trouble in controlling their thoughts. It is very necessary that the thoughts be directed aright; but unless you understand how to make the effort, you are likely to fail in controlling your thoughts. Continual conscious effort to control the thoughts is a strain on the mind. The best way is to commit your works unto the Lord, interest yourself in some profitable pastime, take a walk in a pleasant grove, read a few chapters in the Bible, attend well to your devotion, and then, instead of continuing to make an effort, commit your way unto the Lord and go about your work. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Phil. 4 :8.

Fourthly, God will establish our hearts. "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." 1 Thess. 3 :12, 13.

Fifthly, God will establish us in the present truth. "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them and be established in the present truth." 2 Pet. 1:12. The present truth is revealed truth, the whole truth, and it is our privilege to be so established in the present truth that we shall not be wondering whether this way is right or not. It is our privilege to know the truth and by the truth to be made free and in the truth to be established. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." John 7:17.

Sixthly, God will establish us "in every good word and work." "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." 2 Thess. 2:16, 17.

MEANS BY WHICH WE ARE ESTABLISHED

A great many people would like to be established who will not pay the price in order to obtain the experience. God uses the means that will accomplish His desire, and He knows best the means that will effect His purpose; therefore you will do well to submit to His way and follow His directions. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle

you." 1 Pet. 5:10. When will God stablish, strengthen, settle you? "After that ye have suffered a while" – suffered the trials, endured the temptations, and conquered every emotion.

Enduring hardships and vigorous exercise is the surest way to increase physical strength. In order to make good soldiers, the ancients used to expose themselves to all kinds of hardships till they were inured to heat and cold, hunger and thirst. Then they could scorn the difficulties of warfare and endure the greatest fatigue. The law of our spiritual being is not altogether unlike that of our physical beings. If we wish to be strong and able to conquer in the battles of life, we must be inured to hardships, "endure temptation," and learn to "suffer a while."

HINDRANCES TO ESTABLISHMENT

Possibly the most prevalent hindrance to the establishment of the souls of men is lack of proper foundation. "But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6 :49. Those who hear the Word of God and do not do it, those who say yes to God and then go their own way, cannot hope to be established here or hereafter. "Whosoever cometh to me and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like; He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock." Luke 6:47, 48.

For those who are willing to build on the unchanging Word of God alone; to take away all the rubbish and sand lying between them and the eternal rock; to build, not on emotions or traditions of man, but on the word of truth – for such there is an established experience that the storms of trials and persecutions and the floods of accusations and temptations cannot overthrow. Reader, where are you building? Is your house founded on the sinking sand of human emotion? or have you founded your experience on the Word of God.

"The tide of emotion may run as it will, The Son and the Father abide with me still. His Word is sufficient, I seek not a sign; I grasp but the promise, salvation is mine."

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." James 1:8. A doubleminded man is a man who has a mind to serve the Lord and a mind to serve the world. Such a man is unstable in all his ways. He is not a good worldling nor a good Christian. He is continually in indecision. A lack of decision hinders many dear souls who would serve the Lord. Decision, it is said, is half the battle. Decide to do a thing, and you have it half done. Doubters often make a firm decision for the time being, but the decision, itself, is not fixed, for no sooner does Satan attack their decision, than they let down the shield of faith and become undecided. If this is your experience, what you need is not a rash vow to go through, made today and broken tomorrow, but a settled, calm, and unchanging decision to be right, to do right, and to believe right.

Unbelief hinders establishment. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James 1:6, 7. Faith, then, is all important. If you would be established, you must have faith. Do not say, "I can't," for God has made it possible. "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Isa. 7:8. "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." 2 Chron. 20:20.

Temptations

I know of no better definition of temptation than that given by the apostle James – "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." James 1:14. "But each one is tempted by his own inordinate desire, being drawn out and allured." Emphatic Diaglott. Not every suggestion to do wrong is a temptation. Suggestions to evil are temptations only when there is a drawing or inclination to follow them. A suggestion that is a strong temptation to one person may be no temptation whatever to another. For instance, the suggestion to take a drink of intoxicating liquor would be a temptation to some man, while to another it would be no temptation whatever. One man may be easily tempted to covetousness, because his natural make up inclines him that way; while another man, who is free hearted and naturally liberal, has no temptation whatever to hoard up money. Both, of course, must be equally free from covetousness; but to one man it is an easy task, because he has no temptations to be avaricious. However, the man who is not tempted to covetousness will not be unvisited by temptation in some other direction, for all are tempted.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. 10:13.

When lust, or strong desire, has conceived through the consent of the will and one has yielded to temptation, then, and not until then, is sin brought forth. Many people do not understand the difference between temptation and sin, do not understand where temptation ends and sin begins. Sometimes Satan will tempt people, and then when they feel the weight and the drawing of the temptation, will accuse them, telling them they have sinned. Remember that your will is yourself and that, though temptations may rage, yet so long as your will says, "No" and you refrain from sin, God will stand by you and help you to conquer temptation. Remember, He is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." You should not think it strange concerning the fiery trials and the burning temptations with which the Lord intends to try you. Consider them as ordinary occurrences; gird up the loins of your mind; call upon the name of the Lord; and resist the devil steadfast in the faith.

ENDURING TEMPTATION

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." James 1:12. Here we see that God pronounces a blessing on the man that endures temptation. God never tempts anyone, but often tries people. Would you receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him? Then, you must endure the temptation; you must be tried, for until then you cannot receive it. So when temptation overtakes you, do not forget to endure, for thereby you shall gain the crown of life. "And after that ye have suffered a while, the God of all grace, who has called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."

ENJOYING TEMPTATION

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." James 1:2. You may wonder where there is room for joy in temptation; but after you have learned to endure it for a while, you will learn the secret of making your temptations transparent by the compound application of faith and trust. No temptation seems joyous for the present; but by faith we can see through the temptation and behold the strength and the victory that we are winning through its endurance, and thus the severest temptation may be mixed with joy. As Jesus, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the suffering of the cross; so we, for the joy of the victory set before us, may gladly endure the temptation, and by anticipating the blessings pronounced on the man that endures temptation, we may have joy at present, though overtaken by divers temptations. By considering the worth of temptations and the benefit to our experience to be derived from them, we can count them joy.

"Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." James 1:3. Patience is a priceless gem. So when we are blessed with the very cause that effects patience – temptation – we should not yield to sin nor murmur at our lot. "But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Jas. 1:4. Perfect and entire, wanting nothing – thank God! What a happy state! Yet the road by which this state is reached is one of temptation; for temptation tries our faith, faith works patience, and patience perfects us in every good thing.

Spiritual Prosperity; or, How to Grow in Grace

A great many people would like to grow in grace and are trying to be spiritual, but do not know how. Let me invite your attention to the words of Jesus in the twelfth chapter of Luke and the twenty seventh verse – "Consider the lilies how they grow." The lily does not grow by toiling or spinning nor does she take anxious thought. She does not worry about in whose meadow she is growing. She does not fear that it will not rain nor that the sun will not shine on the morrow. In fact, she does not put forth any special effort to grow, yet she grows and is arrayed more gorgeously than was Solomon in all his glory.

Growth and perpetuation of life are brought about by two things – food and exercise. The lily sends her tender roots into the earth, opens her petals to the dew, and receives her God given nourishment; and from the gentle breezes that sweep the meadow she receives exercise. By these means she grows. There is only one way to grow – to correspond with the environments, to eat the food that God has provided, and to exercise. People who are always making a conscious effort to grow in their own strength, often, like the wasp, which is larger when hatched than at any other time in its life, grow smaller instead of larger. Our spiritual food is the Word of God. "But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matt. 4:4. "Eat ye that which is good and let thy soul delight itself in fatness." Our spiritual exercise is: "Watch and pray;" "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luke 18:1); endure temptation; do good unto all men, rejoice evermore. If we do these things, our growth like that of the lily, will be unconscious and spontaneous. Conscious effort to grow and a neglect of the laws of growth are fruitless and vain, for "which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" Matt. 6:27.

David thus describes the blessedness of the man who delights himself in the law of the Lord: "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psa. 1:3. From the rich soil of the river bank and the moisture of its waters, the tree draws its food – corresponds with its environment and so prospers. The winds give it exercise, and it grows.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright." Psa. 92 :12 15. "Shall flourish like the palmtree." When does the palm tree flourish the most? When the winds bend it and sway it to and fro; for then the roots run farther and deeper, the sap flows faster and more abundantly, the trunk grows larger and stronger and the branches become more luxuriant and beautiful. Just so with the righteous. When the storms of trials and temptations rage against them, then life and vitality within flows quicker and the strength of the inner man is renewed day by day.

"Shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." How does the cedar in Lebanon grow? By sinking its roots deep in the ground; and when the storms sway it to and fro, its roots get exercise and take deeper hold in the soil. So with the person who is planted in the house of the Lord, rooted and grounded in love. The more trials and storms, the more he loves his Lord, "and taking root downward, he bears fruit upward." So dear one, if you would be established in the grace of God, if you would flourish in the courts of our God, you must stand the storms of trials and temptations.

Our growth must be brought about and our life must be perpetuated by the simple acts of eating and exercising. The infant draws its food from its mother and by crying, kicking, and playing, it gets exercise. The colt draws its sustenance from its mother and by playing about the barnyard gets exercise. So it is with every form of life – growth is brought about by corresponding with environments and by taking proper exercise. Sometimes we hear Christians

say, "There is no use for me to pray in public or to testify to what the Lord has done for me, for I can not speak well, and it will do nobody any good." Do you suppose it does the farmer any good to see his colt run and play about the barnyard? Do you suppose that it does the mother any good for the infant to play and cry? No; but it does the infant good to cry and play, for that is its exercise; and it does the colt good to run and play. By continuing to do itself good, the child may become a strong man or woman, and then it can be a help to others. The colt, while it is kicking and playing about the barnyard, does the farmer no good; but it does itself good, and after a while it may be a strong draft horse and able to draw heavy loads. So with you, dear weak one. If your prayers or your testimonies or your efforts to glorify the Lord do not accomplish as much as those of some stronger Christian, you need the exercise. It will do you good, and after a while you will be strong and able to do good to others. Even the humblest efforts of God's little ones sometimes accomplish a great deal, and God is not unrighteous to forget your labor of love. So if you would prosper in the divine life and grow in grace, remember these two things; feed your soul on the Word of God and exercise yourself unto godliness. "If you do these things, you shall never fall."

Blessings

Blessing in the sense in which I wish to use it signifies the favor, kindness, and goodness of God to His people all good things, gifts, graces, and privileges, that God bestows. These blessings may be either spiritual (Eph. 1:3) or temporal. Deut. 28:2.

Blessings may refer to this life, to the judgment, or to eternity; but the blessings of which I now wish to speak are those received in this life. We hear a great deal said about blessings, but there are many people who do not know what a blessing is, or what is a blessing to them or what is a curse to them. Many people spend much time in praying for a blessing, and then when the blessing comes, they absolutely refuse to have it, not because they do not want a blessing, but because they do not know that it is a blessing. A blessing is anything that will do us good, whether it produces good feelings or not. To a great many people the word "blessing" means nothing more than a superficial emotion. It certainly is a blessing to feel happy, but the sorrows and the trials of life are needed to teach us the value of bliss. We can understand the greatness of our bliss only by contrasting it with our sorrow. If we had never seen a cloudy day, we could not so well appreciate the sunshine. Those who have never been ill do not know so well how to appreciate health. Were it not for the shades of night, we could not rightly appreciate the day dawn and the sunrise. When weeping has endured for a night, it maketh the joy that cometh in the morning seem seven fold.

If we would know who is truly blessed, let us inquire who is the man that God counts blessed. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways." Psa. 128:1. "And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matt. 5 :2 12. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." James 1:25. "And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord." Luke 1:45. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Jas. 1:12.

Who knows better than the Lord what is a blessing to the soul of man ? Do you not see that in the enumeration of things which He has said make people blessed He has not once mentioned what you have often thought were the greatest blessings? Has He not enumerated those things which you have considered calamities rather than blessings? Who knows better – you or the Lord? Would you have a blessing? Then, trust with all your heart in the providence and the power of God. Believe that whatever He sends, and even those things that Satan may bring, yea, even the

sores temptations, will prove a blessing; for "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." Rom. 8:28. Some people pray for a blessing, then when the Lord sends a trial to see whether they will endure it, they shrink from the first step toward the land of blessings and refuse to put their feet on the very stepping stone that would bring a blessing. "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation" – not always the man who has temptations, but the man who endures temptations. God has promised to bless you if you will serve Him, if you will walk uprightly, if you will trust Him; but you must allow Him to choose the road to the blessing. You must learn to let Him who knows better than you do what a blessing is, choose your blessings for you, and then accept them thankfully whether you can see that they are blessings or not. It is said of Jacob that God made him to suck honey out of the rock; so if the Lord leads you to a rock, you must not doubt Him and say there is no honey in it.

There is a class of people who spend most of their time preaching about and praying for what they call blessings. Such people are usually totally ignorant of what a real blessing is. They are often void of the real Christian grace and feeding on and living for superficial emotions and the feelings that they are able to "work up." In most cases they are worked up, for they do not come down. People who live on such food are void of establishment and Christian endurance. They are unable to bear the trials and temptations of one day. While they pray for what they call a blessing and jump about and shout and try by human effort to manufacture a blessing, they trample beneath their feet the blessed truth of the gospel, that which alone can bless them, and neglect to get the strength to endure temptation and walk uprightly. Let the shout of joy and the glad emotions come if they will, but do not try to manufacture them by human effort.

Finally, let me say that the Christian life begins and ends with a blessing. The Christian life begins where God forgives our sins. "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:26. The Christian life ends when we depart to be with the Lord, and in this we receive the crowning blessing, the climax of all our joys. "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." Rev. 14:13.

Trials

The word "trial" is from the word "try," and means a proving or testing in any manner. "Specifically, any effort or exertion of strength for the purpose of ascertaining what can be done or effected. The act of testing by experience, proving, testing. Examination by test, experience, etc. The state of being tried or tempted; exposure to suffering, to test strength, patience, faith, and the like. Affliction that proves the graces and virtues of men. To beautify or refine as metals. To melt and retain in a pure state as tallow, lard, or oil. To purify or refine, as metals; to melt out and produce in a pure state, as oil, tallow, lard, etc. To prove by experiment; to apply a test to, for the purpose of determining the quality; to examine; to prove; to test; as, to try weights or measures by a standard to try a man's opinions."

SOURCE OF TRIALS

Trials and temptations are often confounded. Trials may come either from the Lord or from Satan. Satan tries us to see whether he can find in us any weakness, to reduce our strength, to overcome and destroy us. The Lord tries us in order to inure us to hardship and thereby strengthen us, so that when Satan tries us, we shall be able to overcome. In the same way soldiers are tried, tested, and inured to hardship, in the routine of military discipline, so that when the battle comes and exposure becomes necessary, they may be able to endure. God tries us to see how strong we are, to test our decision and trueness, to increase our strength, and our decision and increase our loyalty. Satan tempts us to see how weak we are, to see whether there is any indecision or untrueness in us; to decrease our strength, weaken our decision, and spoil our loyalty. Temptations never come from the Lord. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." James 1:13. The Lord tries us, but He never tempts us. "The Lord is in his holy temple, and the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his

eyelids try, the children of men." Psa. 11:4. "I the Lord search the heart I try the reins even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Jer. 17:10. The Lord sometimes tries us in order to see what we will do; in order to prove the submission of our wills and the decision of our hearts to serve and obey Him. We have an example of this in John 6 :5, 6. "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do." Authorized Version. "And this he said, to try him; for he knew what he was about to do." – Syriac.

It was foretold by prophets of old that the people of God should be tried. "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Dan. 12:10. "Many must be tested, and thoroughly whitened, and tried with fire, and sanctified; but the transgressors shall transgress: and none of the transgressors shall understand; but the wise shall understand." – Septuagint.

Seeing, then, that the Bible says that we are to be tried and that God tries us, you should, "beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." 1 Peter 4:12.

Job's trial was permitted by the Lord, yet Satan was allowed to apply the test. Both the Lord and Satan were interested in Job's trial. The Lord sought to prove that "Job was a perfect and an upright man, one that feared God and eschewed evil; that there was none like him in the earth." Satan sought to prove that Job's loyalty to God was founded on selfish principles; that he served the Lord only because the Lord had blessed him with temporal prosperity. Said Satan, "Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land; but put forth thy hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Satan was anxious to test Job, and to cause him to be disloyal to Jehovah. God was willing to have Job tested in order that the loyalty of his heart and the uprightness of his character might be proved and that he might set an example of suffering for all those who after him should be tried.

WAYS AND MEANS BY WHICH WE ARE TRIED

As we have just been considering Job's trial, let us consider the ways and means by which he was tried. First, all that he had was taken from him. But upon Job himself God allowed not Satan to put his hand. This test being insufficient to prove any disloyalty in Job, Satan was desirous that he should be tried further. So Satan said unto the Lord, "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth shine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand; but save his life. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes." Job 2:4 8.

Job still received some comfort in his wife, who seemingly was spared that his trial might be perfected, but Satan turned her against her husband. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain shine integrity? curse God, and die." Job 2:9. This was doubtless the severest point in Job's test. Trials press harder when they come from those whom we love. It seems that Satan spared Job's wife on purpose to have her speak these discouraging words to him in the hour of his sorest trial, Satan thinking by this extreme means to overcome him; but Job "said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." Job 2:10.

The next attack of Satan was to send Job's three friends, who were philosophers, to reason him out of his integrity. At first, by their weeping and mourning, they succeeded in discouraging Job a little; but when they attempted to go further and take from him his integrity, Job turned against them and Satan's plans were defeated.

After Satan had utterly failed to overthrow Job, Jehovah sent Elihu, a man anointed and inspired with wisdom, and through him was able to show Job how to make some improvements, and to bring him to a place where the Lord

could speak to him. When Job recognized the voice of God, he humbled himself in sackcloth and ashes, and he came out of the trial stronger than he entered it.

If you wish to rightly understand the book of Job and to study in detail the different stages of Job's trial, make the following divisions of the book: First, Job untried. Chap. 1:1-12. Second, beginning of Job's trial. Chap. 1:13-22 and Chap. 2. Third, Job's lamentation. Chap. 3. Fourth, Job's comforters (?). Chaps. 3-32. Fifth, God's message through Elihu. Chaps. 32-37. Sixth, God speaks to Job. Chaps. 38-41. Seventh, Job's confession and God's blessing. Chap. 42.

Note these four ways in which Satan tried Job: First, through his temporal possessions; second, through the affliction of his body; third, through his affections; fourth, through the intellect, by false reasoning and philosophy. Satan today is not altogether unlike he was in the days of Job; the human heart also is, to a great extent, the same as it was then; and God often permits us to be tried in the same manner that Job was tried. You have probably thought your trials very hard; but if you will compare them with the trials of Job, you will doubtless conclude that your trials are only "light afflictions" "that will work out a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Imagine yourself in Job's place. Should all your earthly possessions be taken from you; should your body be afflicted with painful boils from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet; should all your loved ones, except the nearest one to your heart, be summoned to the land of death, and should that dearest one, tempt you in the hour of your sorest trial and discouragement to curse God and die; should Satan, sectarian sophists, and philosophers point to your utter downfall and reason with you of your wrong in taking your stand as you have for the Lord alone – considering the standard of light that you have, would you come out as well as Job did?

"And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." Dan. 11:35. Though this text may have some specific application to a certain historical event, yet history often repeats itself, and we are sometimes compelled to face the trying scene of the fall of some of understanding. It is one of the severest of trials to see those who have been far ahead of us in strength and usefulness, stumble and fall; yet if we understand the truth of the matter, the occurrence need not be in any wise discouraging. There cannot be an effect without a cause. We should remember that the Bible says, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Prov. 16:18. The strong, through pride of heart, may fall before the tempter's power; while the weak, in the simplicity of his mind and the humility of his heart, may stand the fiercest storms. The battle is not always to the strong, but the humble shall always prosper. Should the trial be yours to witness the fall of some of understanding, do not unwisely say, "If such a one has fallen, one who had knowledge and strength, how can I, in my weakness, stand the trials of life?" Remember that there was a cause for his fall. Keep clear of that cause – pride – and you need have no fear of falling. Let the sad fate of those who have made shipwreck be to you, not a discouragement, but a warning – a warning to steer far from the treacherous rocks of pride against which their bark has crashed.

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." Zech. 13:9. "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

1 Pet. 1:7. God tries us as men try gold and silver and other precious metals – tries us with fire. Our faith and loyalty to God are to be tested as silver and gold are tested. Why, then, should we think it strange and begin to murmur when the fires of adversity, disappointment, discouragement, temptation, and affliction are kindled? Let us not, my brother or sister, murmur at the trials; for they will only make us stronger and prove to God, to the world, and to Satan that our experience is genuine; that our loyalty to God is not a vain one; that our hearts are fixed, that our trueness is immovable. There is a day coming in which every man's work shall receive the final test and that by fire. "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1 Cor. 3:13.

BENEFITS OF TRIALS

To some it may seem impossible that any good should come from trials, but to those of more mature experience it is a well known fact that trials are the gateway to higher and brighter grounds in the Christian experience. Every person who has come to a strong and settled experience of salvation will acknowledge that trials have been one of the most effective means of exercising their strength and of settling their spiritual experience. As we have before observed, trials are the stepping stones by which we ascend to higher usefulness. Untried soldiers are never put in responsible positions. In fact, in any vocation or business whatever, only those who have stood the trials and the tests that come to the ordinary man are placed in the more responsible positions. Trials are the hardships which, if patiently endured will make you a good soldier of Jesus Christ. If time, space, and knowledge would permit me to mention every man in every stage of life that has become useful, I could point out each one's trials as the most powerful agents in raising him to his place of usefulness. Those who refuse to be tried can never expect to be great either in the eyes of man or in the eyes of God. Never murmur at your trials, never shrink from a test; for they are angels in disguise. To enumerate every benefit that one can obtain, and every degree of usefulness that one is able to reach alone through tests and trials would occupy much time and space. Every Christian grace, every faculty of body, mind, or soul, is strengthened, fortified and increased by the patient endurance of hardship.

In the twenty third Psalm David draws a striking and beautiful illustration of the benefits of trials. He says, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Psa. 23:4. This interesting Psalm is taken from David's experience as a shepherd. By not considering the natural circumstances from which he drew the thoughts contained in the verse just quoted, many have overlooked one phase of the lesson that it teaches. In the mountainous country where David kept his father's sheep there were probably open valleys of tender grass affording good pasture for the sheep. It is well known that a flock of sheep feeding long in the same pasture, unless the pasture be very large, will soon kill out the grass. It is necessary, therefore, after the sheep have remained a few days in one place that they be led to a green pasture, or as the margin of Psa. 23:2 reads, to "pastures of tender grass." In order to get to new pastures he was doubtless often obliged to lead his sheep through narrow valleys and over dangerous places. Probably it was in some of these dark and narrow valleys where David slew the lion and the bear. How natural in the figure to call such places the "valley of the shadow of death" – a valley where death overshadowed a valley where both his own life and the life of his sheep were in danger.

In general, the application of these texts is confined to physical death alone. However, it is not the valley of death, but the valley of the shadow of death – the valley where death casts his darkest shadow across our pathway; a valley where our life, either spiritual or physical, is endangered. But even in the severest trials, in the darkest valleys, even when gloomy death himself casts his shadow on our pathway, we can say with David, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

But let us return again to the natural circumstances from which this striking lesson is drawn. Just beyond these dangerous valleys lay the open pastures of tender grass, and every sheep that would lie down in the green pastures or walk beside the still waters had to follow the shepherd from the old pastures through the valley of the shadow of death. The sheep that remained behind, refusing to pass through the valley, would soon famish on the stale food of the old pasture, or when from under the protecting care of the shepherd, be devoured by wild animals. Just so it is in our Christian experience. Jesus, like Oriental shepherds, goes before His flock (John 10:4), and all who would enjoy the rich pastures to which He leads His flock must follow through the valleys – trials. Those who linger behind and fear to follow the Shepherd in the valley of the shadow of death must soon starve or be devoured by evil spirits. But just beyond the severest trial, when the shadow of death has been dispelled by the sunlight of faith, we enter the fields of living green, the pastures of tender grass, and follow the shepherd beside the still waters.

EXAMPLES OF TRIALS

"By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only

begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called." Heb. 11:17, 18. In the case of Abraham's offering up Isaac there was everything possible to make the trial severe. You will remember that it was God who tried Abraham. Abraham had been true and faithful through everything that had come upon him, but it was God's will to make of him, by testing him to the uttermost, an immortal example to all who should afterwards believe.

It was hard enough to be required to offer his loving and only child, to slay him with his own hand, and there alone on the mountain behold the death of his loved one and afterwards burn his remains with fire, but this was not all nor the severest aspect of the trial. God had made a solemn covenant with Abraham, in which He had promised that Abraham's seed should be "as the stars of the heavens for multitude, and as the sand which is by the seashore innumerable," and Isaac was his only son and the only hope for the fulfillment of that promise, for God had said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." Now see the bewilderment into which Abraham was cast. Looking at it from the viewpoint of natural circumstances, Abraham, it would seem, could have perceived no way for God to be true to His promise; therefore the temptation would naturally have risen to spare his son, because if God were untrue, He was unworthy of so dear a sacrifice. To refuse to obey the Lord meant to lose all that God had promised him, for the promise was on conditions, and to slay his son, viewing it naturally, meant no less, for both he and his wife were past the age of child bearing and Isaac was the only son and the only source through which God could fulfill His promise. Under such circumstances, what do you think you should have done? Compare this with some of the trials you have and see how great your trials are. Abraham believed God, "accounting that God was able to raise him [Isaac] up even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure," and Abraham was called "the friend of God."

By careful study of the experience of David we can learn more about the enduring of trials. Take first his experience in the slaying of Goliath. When Saul called David's attention to his tender years and to the greatness of the Philistine giant, David told him of some experiences that he had had while herding his father's sheep – experiences that gave him boldness to undertake to deliver the armies of Israel from the boasting and threatening alien giant. "Let no man's heart fail because of him," said David; "thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the Lord be with thee." 1 Sam. 17:32-37.

This was only the beginning, as it were, of David's trials. Even after he had been anointed king over Israel, he was compelled to flee before the face of angry Saul, and to lodge many days in dens and caves and in the mountains, far remote from the comforts of life; but in these trials he learned to endure and also how to pity those in difficult circumstances. He also learned how to show kindness even to his enemies. This was especially necessary, for his enemies were many. The trials which he endured also helped to humble him in the sight of God and to teach him when human strength could not prevail to trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength.

To every one acquainted with the New Testament the example of the apostle Paul in suffering trials cannot fail to be a source of continual encouragement. Hear his description of the trials he suffered and see with what contempt and utter disregard he looked upon them – "But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings: by pureness, by knowledge, by long suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, 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, and yet possessing all things." 2 Cor. 6:4-10. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than

conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:35-39. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. 4 :17.

After passing through distresses and trials, the apostle Paul, through the abundant grace given unto him, was able to regard them all as "light afflictions." If after considering all that Paul suffered – the instances here mentioned being only a few of those recorded in the New Testament – you consider his trials light afflictions, are your trials enough greater than his to justify you in calling them hard, severe, unbearable? Most people think their trials harder than other people's, and this in itself blinds their eyes to the very weapon by which Satan is quickly put to flight – endurance, and faith in the justice of God.

Often people are heard to say, "I have the hardest time of anyone on earth. If you had the trials that I have, you could not live right, either. Trouble and disappointment have always been my portion." Reader, if these or like thoughts have been yours, let me call your attention to the testimony of David. You will probably acknowledge that his trials as a shepherd, as a soldier, and as a king are quite as great as yours; then hear his testimony – "Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psa. 23:6.

Even Jesus, the perfect Author of salvation's plan was not without trials and temptations. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." Heb. 2:16-18. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. 4 :15. "Tempted in all points like as we are." Yes, reader, exactly as you are. Then, into whatsoever temptation or trial you may fall, stop for a moment and think; "Jesus was tempted just as I am. He was tried in the manner in which I am now tried. He knows how to succor me. He is touched with the feeling of my infirmities, and he is able to help me, for all power in heaven and in earth is given unto him." Jesus has gone the way before you, has taken every step from the cradle to the grave. Every thorn in the pathway of human life has pierced His tender feet; every heartache that you have endured touched His heart before it did yours. When you have any pain, suffering, trial, or distress, or any hardship whatever, remember that Jesus had it first, and that He is touched with the feeling of your infirmity. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. 4 :16.

HOW TO OVERCOME TRIALS

Probably the first and most necessary thing in overcoming a trial is to be sure that it is a trial; to be sure that we are abiding in God's will and that we have done nothing to separate us from the love of God or to displease our heavenly Father; to recognize that the present trouble of whatever nature, it may be, is just a trial and nothing but a trial. The trials that hurt, those which are most likely to deceive and overcome us, are those which come disguised in the beautiful robe of reality and accompanied by a spirit of accusation. Trials of this kind invariably come from the devil – I mean the kind accompanied by accusation and temptation. A well armed Christian, like a well armed soldier, knows more than one means of defense. Some trials must be sternly resisted in the name of Jesus, must receive immediate attention. Some must be patiently endured in order that we may receive the benefit that is to be derived from them. Others, such as suggestions of the devil, should be ignored.

Often the quickest way to get rid of an accusation of the devil is utterly to discountenance it, to pay no attention to it whatever. Under all circumstances and in every trial there is no weapon more powerful than "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." Eph. 6:17.

Another thing that will often help us to endure or overcome our trials is to recognize that trials are for our good, that sometimes they "need be." When we can realize that a trial is for our good, that there is in it some lesson we need to

learn, the trial is much more easily borne and the victory more easily gained. A man does not mind his toil nearly so much if he knows that he is to receive good wages.

It is said of Jacob that the Lord made him to suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the flinty rock. Deut. 32:13. The primary application of this text, of course refers to the temporal prosperity of the Israelites, but the thought of sucking honey out of the rock beautifully illustrates the benefits of trials. Honey from the rock is as sweet as honey from the hive; so if in your Christian experience the Lord should lead you to some rock like trial remember that in the rock there is sweet honey for you if you will only patiently endure. Knowing that there is good in a hardship is certainly a wonderful stimulus! a powerful impetus to its endurance.

Another help in overcoming a trial is to consider that it is nothing uncommon. Remember that all the holy prophets, the priests, the apostles, and even Christ Himself, were tried. Are you better than they? Do you deserve more favors? When a trial overtakes you and Satan tries to make you think it something strange and peculiar and uncommon, sing a verse of the old familiar hymn:

"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease
While others fought to win the prize
And sailed through bloody seas.

"No, I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the cross, endure the pain,
Supported by thy Word."

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." 1 Peter 4:12.

The experience of Samson with the young lion affords a beautiful illustration of how to overcome trials "Then went Samson down, and his father and his mother, to Timnath, and came to the vineyard of Timnath: and, behold, a young lion roared against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand: but he told not his father or his mother what he had done. And he went down, and talked with the woman; and she pleased Samson well. And after a time he returned to take her, and he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion. And he took thereof in his hands, and went on eating, and came to his father and mother, and he gave them, and they did eat: but he told not them that he had taken the honey out of the carcass of the lion." Judges 14:5-9.

Should a lion like trial roar against you, remember the experience of Samson, lay hold upon it in the name of the Lord and rend it as you would a kid; then in after years when you pass the place of that particular trial, you may find in its carcass an abundance of honey, of which you may freely eat and also give to others. Had Samson allowed the roaring of the lion to intimidate him, he doubtless would have lost his life. At the time when the lion roared against him and he slew it in the name of the Lord, he probably had no thought that this experience would be of any benefit to him in the future. So it is with trials. We may be able to see no good in them at present, but in after years from the carcass of the severest trial we shall eat honey and give to others. The writer is eating honey today from one of the severest trials of his life; and if the reader finds in these lines any sweetness to his spirit, let him remember that it is honey from the carcass of the lion that someone has slain.

To patiently endure trials is to prove to God that we thankfully receive what He has given us. Trials are part of the Christian's heritage. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps." 1 Pet. 2 :21. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,

and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Eph. 6:13 16.

"Faith is mighty and will conquer,
Bind it firmly on thy heart;
On the hottest field of battle,
Thou shalt quench the vilest dart.

"In the mighty name of Jesus
Ever lift up the shield of faith;
Wield the sword of truth, my brother,
Heaven will crown thy fight of faith.

"And when trouble specters round thee
Come, thy spirit to depress,
Lift the shield of faith abounding,
And thy soul shall calmly rest.

"Then put on the holy armor,
And defy the tempting throng;
Over all the foes that gather,
Shout and sing the victor's song."

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Heb. 12:11, 12. "Above all, taking the shield of faith," for by faith we are begotten unto a lively hope and preserved "to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein we greatly rejoice, though now for a season if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." 1 Peter 1:4-9.

Learning to Fly

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Deut. 32:11, 12. The beautiful illustration here cited is taken from the habits of the eagle and the manner in which she teaches her young to fly. The eagle often builds her nest on the rocky edge of some precipice or canyon. When her eaglets are of sufficient age to exercise their wings, she does not leave them to the ignoble ease that they would perhaps prefer. No; she would teach them self reliance, so she "stirreth up her nest." She stirs it until an eaglet falls out and goes tumbling, dashing, flopping down toward the depths below. She does not leave him, however, to the fate that he might think would shortly be his, to dash his life out against the rocks below; for, though the young one does not perceive it, the old bird "fluttereth over her young," and before the little one has done himself any harm, she glides beneath him, and she "taketh him and beareth him on her wings." She bears him to a greater height than the nest from which he was stirred. When he feels himself quite at ease and at rest on his mother's wings, by a sudden turn he is again thrown on his own resources. This exercise is repeated until his muscles have been strengthened and he has learned to bear himself on his own wings. How beautifully this illustrates the experience of a Christian! How very many would sit in the easy nest of superficial joy and emotion, fearing to launch out on the wings of faith over the great chasm of trials and responsibilities, if the Lord did not occasionally stir his nest! When you feel yourself sinking, sinking, down through the chasm of trials, responsibilities, and new experiences, remember that God hovers over His young and that before your tender life has been dashed out against the rocks below, which now engage your fearful sight. He will bear you on His wings. Do your best to fly, exercise the wings (faith) you have, and thereby you will become strong. How encouraging it would be could you always realize that just above you were the strong paternal wings of your Father's protecting care! How much better would it be in the midst of your feeble efforts, to look above you than to look at the dizzy depths below. Remember "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. 10 :13. When your trial has accomplished God's design and your good, He will bear you on His wings. Thus, by proper exercise under the direction and the care of your loving heavenly Father, your faith will grow exceedingly.

It is said of the eagle that she is able to rise entirely above a storm and that while the storm is raging below, she soars in the sunlight above. So you, dear reader, if you will patiently endure the trials of learning to fly, may renew your strength and mount up with wings as eagles. Isa. 40:31. While the storm beneath you is raging, you may, on wings of faith and in the strength of Jehovah soar in the sunlight of grace far above the storm and enjoy the atmosphere of heaven.

PROMISES TO THOSE WHO OVERCOME TRIALS

"Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty: for he maketh sore, and bindeth up: he woundeth, and his hands make whole. He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh. At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh: neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field: and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin. Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and shine offspring as the grass of the earth. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season. Lo this, we have searched it so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good." Job 5 :17 27.

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10.

"My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: for whom the Lord loveth he

correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." Prov. 3:11, 12.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name." Rev. 3:12.

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptations: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Jas. 1:12.

HOPE

"Christian hope is the firm expectation of all promised good things, so far as they may be for God's glory and our good, but especially of eternal salvation and happiness in heaven, where we shall be conformed to the Son of God; which hope is founded on the grace, blood righteousness, and intercession of Christ, and the earnest of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and the unchangeable truth and almighty power of God, which always second His Word. This hope is distinguished from worldly hopes, first, by the excellency of the object, which is an eternal state of glory and joy; whereas worldly hopes are terminated on empty, vanishing things gilded over with the thin appearance of good. Secondly, by the stability of its foundation, namely, God's unchangeable truth and almighty power. God cannot lie, and consequently neither deceive our faith, nor disappoint our hopes; and He can do all things, which the apostle makes the ground of his confidence. 2 Tim. 1:12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' But worldly hopes are always uncertain. There is so much of impotence or deceit in all the means used to obtain human desires that the success is doubtful. Thirdly, divine hope is distinguished from carnal presumption by its inseparable effect; it has a cleansing efficacy. 1 John 3:2, 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.' He endeavors to shun all sin, and to be perfecting holiness. He purifies himself by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, from whom the spiritual life, and all the operations of it, do proceed. But vain and groundless hopes are inspirations of wind, loose and ineffective.

"The hope of Israel is the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Acts 28:20 – 'For the Hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.' Christ is also called in respect of the fathers, who looked for his promised coming. Some by this understand the belief of the resurrection. Christ is called our hope, that is, the only foundation we have to build our hope of heaven or any good thing, upon. 1 Tim. 1:1. Hope is taken for that eternal salvation, which is the object or end of our hope. Tit. 2:13 – 'Looking for that blessed hope.' The Lord is called the hope of his people. Jer. 14:8. He is that God in whom alone they hope for help, and their hope shall not be confounded. On the contrary, the hope of the ungodly shall perish. Prov. 10:28; 11:7. Then hope shall be without effect: or they shall live and die without hope. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, delays in obtaining that good which a man passionately desires and hopes for makes the heart sad and sorrowful; but when anyone possesses what he desires, his soul is comforted and revived. Prov. 13:12. My flesh shall rest in hope. Psa. 16:9. My body shall quietly and sweetly rest in the grave in confident assurance of its resurrection to a blessed and immortal life. Abraham against hope believed in hope, when being advanced in years, God promised him a son. Rom. 4:18. He confidently believed God's promise that he should have a son, against all grounds of hope when, it was most unlikely in a way of nature and reason. The prisoners of hope (Zech. 9:12) are the Israelites who were captives in Babylon, but were in hopes of deliverance. Oh, ye prisoners of hope, ye who, though captives to sin and Satan, yet have good grounds to hope for deliverance, turn ye to the stronghold, repent, believe, and apply to the Lord Jesus Christ, your only help and refuge." – Cruden.

CULTIVATION OF HOPE

Some people are naturally hopeful, others naturally despondent. One man sees hope where there is no hope, and hopes on when he has no foundation whatever for his hope. Another man cannot see hope where there is hope. While it is true that an abnormal development of hope that is, unreasonable and unfounded hope, is undesirable and is likely to cause us a great many disappointments, it is no less true that a lack of hope robs many a dear soul of the joyful expectation of future good and of the happiness peculiar to the hopeful heart. Those who can see only the dark side

of life are certainly to be pitied. In the most auspicious of all ages, the glorious day of grace when the bright hope gleams from Calvary's cross, the soul that is not hopeful certainly needs a word of encouragement to point it upward. No picture is so dark, no experience so gloomy, that it has no bright side to the hopeful Christian. It is Satan's business to show you the dark side of everything; it is your business, if you will attend to it, to find the bright side.

The reason why most people are not hopeful is because they look too low. If within the compass of your present vision you can see no light, hope, nor cheer, lift up your head and look higher; continue to go forward and upward till the angel of hope shall greet your vision. If you cannot see her near, look above and beyond the stage of natural action and you will see her at the threshold of that eternal world, holding out a crown of rejoicing to all the faithful. Look forward and above the trials now surrounding you until you see the hope gleam from above; fix your eyes upon it and rejoice, even though now, if need be, you are in manifold temptations. Leap and shout for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. But, we need not look so far ahead; for the trials of life seldom gather so dark about the Christian pilgrim that he can see no sign of hope in this life. There are too many rich promises, too many bright victories just ahead, to allow the light of hope to be entirely obscured.

If you would cultivate hope and thereby cultivate happiness, give vent to the faculty of anticipation; pluck from the tree of life by faith some joy, some victory, some freedom, that you have unwisely supposed was not for you. Do not feel that you would rob heaven by enjoying all that you can today.

There is no better way to cultivate hope than to meditate on the goodness of God and the pleasures held out to us in His promises. "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defense; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us." Psa. 62:5 8. Let your expectation be from the Lord, and found that expectation on the revealed promises of His Word. By so doing you will drive trouble from your door and though you have long been despondent, God will come to your deliverance and though it seems to you as if you had been forgotten, as if the Lord had forsaken you, if you will obey the Word of God – hope in the strength of Jehovah – you will be comforted. "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever." Psa. 9:18.

Hear the testimony of the blessed apostle Paul. Learn from him how in the midst of the sorest trials to cultivate hope. The testimony that I am about to quote was given by him when he lay bound in chains at Rome, surrounded by enemies of the cross and pressed by Satan on every hand, yet his hope was bright. "For I know," said he, "that this [trouble] shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Phil. 1:20, 21.

BORROWING TROUBLE

Never worry over what might have been yesterday. What might have been can be of no benefit to you today. What might have been has filled many an eye with tears and robbed many a soul of its joy, but has never added one cubit to the spiritual stature of any man. Neither should you spoil your hope of today by taking anxious thought of what may be tomorrow. Yesterday and tomorrow are alike in eternity. Live for today and get from it all the good you can, for when today is gone, you can never live it again.

"Therefore I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment? Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit unto his stature? And why are ye anxious concerning raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God cloth so

clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Matt. 6:25-34, Revised Version.

The "maybes" and the "might have beens" – those things which will never come to pass and those things that never were – cause more trouble than realities. Retain no thought of trouble from yesterday that will dim your hope today. Borrow no gloomy vision for tomorrow, for the morrow will have trouble enough of its own. It is time enough to be troubled when trouble comes. If your power of anticipation is so great that you can taste the bitterness of trouble yet to come, make that power of anticipation, instead of a curse, a blessing, by tasting of the sweets that are before.

"Hark! I hear Hope sweetly singing
Softly in an undertone,
Singing as if God had taught her,
'It is better farther on.
'Night and day I hear her singing,
Singing while I sit alone,
Singing so my heart may hear it,
'It is better farther on.

"When my faith took hold on Jesus,
Light divine within me shone,
And I know since that glad moment,
'It is better farther on.
'I have plunged into the fountain,
Flowing free for every one; I am saved, and
Hope is singing, 'It is better farther on.
'Farther on, but how much farther?"

Count the mile stones one by one;
No, no counting, only trusting –
'It is better farther on.
'Rest, my soul, in hope forever
,All my doubts and fears are gone;
Jesus is my Saviour, Keeper –
'It is better farther on.' "

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Prov. 4:18.
Therefore by looking ahead you can see brighter things.

"I no trouble and no sorrow
Know today, nor will I borrow
Gloomy visions for tomorrow;
In my Jesus all is bright."

HOPE AN ANCHOR TO THE SOUL

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. 6:19, 20. "The hope of eternal life is here represented as the soul's anchor; the world is the boisterous, dangerous sea; the Christian course, the voyage, the port, everlasting felicity; and the veil, or inner road, the royal dock in which that anchor was cast."

The natural scene from which this illustration is taken is that of a storm tossed ship endeavoring to make its port. The dangerous rocks that lie between the ship and its docks, together with the violence of the storm, prevent it from entering at once into the haven. So the forerunner, the anchor man, taking in a small boat the anchor with its cable attached, rows into the docks and makes the anchor fast. "Then, swinging at the length of her cable, the ship rides out the storm in confidence, knowing that her anchor is sound, the ground good in which it is fastened and the cable strong. Though agitated, she is safe; though buffeted by wind and tide, she does not drive. By and by the storm ceases, the tide flows in, her sailors take to the capstan, wear the ship against the anchor, which still keeps its bite, or hold, till she gets safely into port."

In the spiritual application, the soul has been sailing on the wide sea of life and at last is making an attempt to enter the eternal haven. Without the hope of salvation your bark would soon be driven far out on the sea of sin again; but Jesus, our forerunner, the anchor man, has for us entered within the veil, fastened our anchor, to which we are bound by the strong cable of faith firmly and surely to those immortal docks. How necessary, then, that "we should hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm unto the end"! Though we be storm tossed on the billows of trials and temptations, our anchor is sure. A few more days of trial and temptation, and the storms of life will be over; the tide of eternity will flow in, and by the cable of faith we shall run in our tempest tossed vessel and fasten her forever to those everlasting docks in the haven of eternal bliss.

Prayer

"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Luke 18:1. "Pray without ceasing." 1 Thess. 5:17. To pray always does not mean that we should be constantly on our knees, but that we should not neglect to pray, should not forsake the habit of prayer, but should at all times have our hearts in a prayerful attitude. Every Christian can and must pray in secret, in family devotion, and in public. Closet communion fits us for public prayer. Probably you have said, "I can't pray in public." Such, however, is not the case. It is only the suggestion of Satan, only a barrier that he has raised to keep you from the blessings of activity. Many people give Satan an opportunity to accuse and discourage them, by their own timidity and by not moving out in prayer regardless of what men may think. If you would prosper, you must pray.

BEWILDERED PRAYER

Some prayers are bewildered and consequently bewildering. The mind is worried and wondering about something else than what is spoken by the lips in prayer. An abundance of business is often bewildering to prayer. A good plan to clear away the bewilderment is to stop and carefully take your bearings, consider what you need, what God wishes you to have, and that for which you can believe; then concentrate the heart and mind upon that one thing, send up a prayer of faith in Jesus' name, letting work and business wait till the hour of prayer is past. Someone has called this kind of prayer "smoky prayer." Not only does it hinder the spiritual vision and active faith of the one who is praying, but if the prayer is public it makes a cloud of smoke for others to pray through.

DOUBTFUL PRAYER

Some people are continually praying, are almost slaves to prayer, yet their doubts are as many as their prayers.

They doubt even before they go to pray that the thing for which they are about to ask will be granted. It is true that God has said, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea

driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." James 1:5 7. Many prayers are lavishly punctuated with "if" – the devil's interrogation point. If you wish your prayer to be beneficial to you and pleasing to God, pray not alone for those things which you would like to have, but also for those things which you believe God will give you. Rebuke the doubts of the devil, break the destructive habit of doubting, discard the devil's punctuation marks, and "have faith in God."

PREVAILING PRAYER

In order to derive the benefit from prayer that you should, you must know how to pray an effectual prevailing prayer. It matters little just how you express yourself, whether in a few words or many, whether in a whisper or a shout, whether in the closet or in public, so long as you pray according to the will of God, express the desires of your heart, and prevail in prayer. How much you pray or how often you pray is not so important as how prevailingly you pray. A thousand long prayers unanswered are not as beneficial to the soul as one short, earnest, prevailing prayer. A prevailing prayer is a fervent prayer, a prayer that comes from the burning desire of the confiding and trustful heart. A prevailing prayer is a prayer of faith. It is not what you pray for that does you good, but what you believe for. Prayer without faith is like a man without a soul, or like faith without works: it is dead. If you cannot believe for the thing you most desire in prayer, pray for an increase of faith, use what faith you have, step out on the Word and accompany your prayer with all the faith God has given and you can exercise, then you can prevail in prayer. Nobody can pray too much if all his prayers are prayers of faith, but often those who pray the most believe the least. Remember that the important point in prevailing with God is not prayer alone, but believing prayer.

Don'ts for Doubters

Don't waste precious time arguing with Satan.

Don't make your emotions the standard by which to measure your experience.

Don't say, "I can't"; that belongs to those who have no Christ.

Don't measure your salvation by some wonderful experience someone else has had; measure by the New Testament.

Don't depend on your conscience; live by the Bible.

Don't get discouraged; it will be of no help to you.

Don't be a baby all your life; learn to be strong.

Don't make rash vows. "Trust in the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass."

Don't shed tears to please the devil.

Don't believe that God does not hear you; if you are seeking Him earnestly, His ears are open to your cry.

Don't let Satan make a speaking trumpet to your ears.

Don't testify for the devil; tell what God has done.

Don't try to feel as you think somebody else feels.

Don't follow every impression; use your common sense and follow the Bible.

Don't let Satan make you believe that you have harder trials than anyone else on earth.

Don't look for trials and discouragements; let your expectation be from the Lord.

Don't help the devil to make you miserable by bringing up the past.

Don't pray for blessings and then refuse to endure temptations. James 1:12.

Don't accuse yourself; be as good to yourself as you are to others.

Light Ahead

I once heard a story of how Satan hunts for the souls of man. With the story was a picture of a man going down a long dismal street. On his right shoulder sat an imp, apparently speaking into his ear. The street represented life. Just where the man was, seemed the darkest spot in all the street, but far ahead of him light seemed springing up, which, however, was not seen by him at the time, for he was looking down. Often if we would look up, we should discover that just where we are is the darkest spot and that ahead the light of hope beams brightly, inviting us on to triumph and victory. The story ran about as follows:

Satan has many imps with which he hunts the souls of man. The most successful one of them he calls Discouragement. Once upon a time Satan saw a man passing down the way of life, and he said to his little imp, Discouragement, "Catch him." Starting off with a bound, the imp soon overtook the man, and springing upon his shoulder whispered in his ear, "You are discouraged." "No," replied the man; "I do not think so." "Yes," said the imp; "I tell you, you are discouraged." "Well," replied the man, "I am not very much discouraged." Again the imp repeated, "I tell you, you are discouraged." Finally the man said, "Yes, I am discouraged." The imp then went flying back to his master and said triumphantly, "I caught him." Another man came along and Satan again said to the imp, "Catch him." Leaping upon the second man's shoulder, he began as before by saying, "You are discouraged." This man answered firmly, "No; I am not discouraged." But the imp repeated, "Sir, you are discouraged." This time the man answered, "I tell you positively I am not discouraged." But again the imp said, "Surely you are discouraged." On this the man became vehement and said, "You are a liar; I am not discouraged." At this the imp left him and slowly returned to his master, and reluctantly said, "I couldn't get him. I told him twice that he was discouraged, and he answered me promptly, 'No!' I told him the third time he was surely discouraged. At this he called me a liar and that discouraged me."

Firm resistance to the accusations, discouragements, and attacks of Satan will put him to flight, and instead of being discouraged, downcast, and despondent, we can be victors in the name of Christ, and the instruments of Satan sent to cast down our souls will themselves give away under the pressure of firm resistance and faith in God. Finally, dear reader, let me say, or rather let me remind you, that Jesus said of Satan, "He is a liar and the father of it." Though many traps be set along the way to ensnare the feet of men; and many imps be sent out to hunt the souls of those who would do right, no power or imp of Satan can stand before the soul of the least of God's redeemed who resists Satan steadfastly in the faith and trusts firmly in the written Word of the Almighty power of the true and living God. "Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

— D. O. Teasley

— END —