

## THE PILGRIM'S GRATEFUL RECOLLECTIONS

### NO. 939

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*“And He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord does man live. Your raiment waxed not old upon you, neither did your foot swell, these forty years. You shall also consider in your heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you. Therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.”  
Deuteronomy 8:3-6.*

OUR aptness to forget God's mercies, is, alas, too conspicuous. It has been said that the annals of a prosperous and peaceful country are singularly uninteresting. Does this arise from the fact that we do not make memoranda of our mercies, or at least if we do, they are far more readily blotted out than the record of our sorrows? We trace our joys in the sand, but we write our afflictions on marble. We forget the streams of mercy, never ceasing, which flow so continually parallel with our pathway.

If we thus, ungratefully forget, it should cause us serious reflections when we see that God does not forget. Here in this Book He brings to His people's memories all the mercies they have received, because they were always present before His own mind. The child may forget the kindness of its mother, but the mother does not forget what she bore, and what she has sacrificed for her child. The friend may forget what he has received, but it is not likely that the benefactor will forget what he has bestowed. If God's memory, therefore, records all that He has given me, let me be ashamed to let my memory suffer these things to slip. What God counts worthy of His Divine recollection let me record on the pages of my memory, and often let me peruse the record.

We are also far too slow to draw the inference of obligation from benefits received. We receive the blessing, but we do not always feel that a proportionate debt is due in return to God, the bounteous Giver of every good gift. Yet Divine Grace has its obligations as well as laws—obligations which honorable minds reckon to be among the first to be discharged. If I do not do what I ought because I fear the Law, at any rate let me prove that I am not so base as to be ungrateful to undeserved mercy and love.

It has been said by some, and there have been others whose lives have almost proved it, that the driving of the Law is more effectual to produce works than the sweet drawings of the Gospel. But it ought not to be so—and if it is so, the fault is in the man acted upon, and not in the principle of gratitude. For with right-minded men, with men educated by the Spirit of God, with men who are lifted up out of the common mass of mankind and endowed with the higher life, the highest motive that can be suggested even by infinite wisdom is the motive which is drawn from the transcendent love and Grace of God.

Now, Brethren, though we forget our obligations, it is clear from the text that God does not—for here, after giving a summary of His benefits—He concludes by drawing an inference with the word, “therefore,” and He tells Israel that having received so much, they were bound to walk in His ways and in His fear—and to keep His Commandments. If He thus considers, whose wisdom none dare dispute, let us voluntarily, cheerfully, and practically concede that such is the very Truth. And let us ask that He will help us to be obedient, and resolve that, receiving His help, we will say in our hearts and lives——

*“Loved of my God, for Him again*

*With love intense I burn;  
Chosen of Him before time began,  
I choose Him in return."*

I shall now ask your attention to the list of favors given in the text, with the view of enforcing the Divine conclusions from them.

**I. LET US PASS IN REVIEW THE FAVORS OF THE LORD,** taking what He did for Israel as being typical of what He has done for us.

**1.** The first blessing mentioned in our text is that of humbling—"And He humbled them, and suffered them to hunger." Not very highly esteemed among men will this favor be. And at first, perhaps, it may be regarded by ourselves as being more of a *judgment*—one of the terrible things in righteousness—than a great favor from the Most High. But rightly judged, this is one of the most admirable proofs of the Lord's loving kindness, that He does not leave His people in their natural pride and obstinacy, but by acts of Grace brings them to their right mind.

Note in the text that the humbling was produced by hunger. What makes a man so humble as to be thoroughly in want? It was not hunger for luxury, merely—bread and water failed them. How could the soil beneath them of hot sand yield them a harvest? Where could they find a stream to slake their dreadful thirst which the broiling sun and the arid sand continually increased? To want bread and water is a short way of making a man feel that he is but a man, and that he is dependent, very dependent, upon the Providence of God.

Their hunger was, no doubt, increased in its power to humble them by their position. They were not hungry, in Goshen, nor in Canaan, but hungry in a waste, howling wilderness, where, let them search as they would, they could find nothing available for sustenance. They were reduced to the most abject condition of spirit, and broken by the most urgent wants. And yet, I say, this was a great *blessing* to them, for, being humbled, they were put in a position where God could bless them.

Speaking after the manner of men, there are some positions where God cannot bless us. If we are proud and lifted up, it is not consistent to the Divine honor and glory that He should smile upon us. But when we are laid low at the foot of the Throne, then there is an opportunity for God to come and deal with us in pity and Grace. It was good, therefore, for Israel to be placed where God's mercy could flow to them. Being there, and being hungry, there were opportunities given for Divine Grace and bounty. A man who is not hungry cannot be fed—why needs he, at any rate, to be fed? And if fed, he will not be grateful as a hungry man.

But now when they are famishing, now will God work His miracles. The open windows of Heaven shall, to their astonishment, rain down their daily food, and up through those open casements shall their praise and thankfulness ascend to the Throne of God. There is room for mercy where there is misery—space for Grace where there is poverty. Happy was Israel, therefore, to be humbled by hunger, and placed where mercy could glorify itself. They were thus, by their being made needy, brought to receive superior supplies. If they had possessed the corn of Egypt, they would have missed the manna of Heaven.

If beneath their feet there had sprung up crops of common wheat from which they could have reaped their daily supplies, they would have missed the angels' food which fell from Heaven around their camp. Absence of meals was more than compensated by the presence of manna. It is a blessed thing to have a famine of the creature, if thereby we are supplied by the Creator!

Now, my dear Friends, just remember for a minute, that this was your case and mine. Years ago, in the case of some of us, the Lord met with us and brought us into a painful state of *spiritual* hunger. All our supplies failed us. We had thought before that time we were at least as good as others, that we might somehow work our way to Heaven, and we were satisfied, after a fashion, with worldly joys. But the Lord suddenly took away our earthly comforts, or took away our rest and enjoyment of them, and at the same time we saw sin and its punishment before us—and we were brought to a condition in which we were like those in the wilderness, who were afflicted with fiery serpents, and bitten with scorpions.

Our thoughts would not suffer us to rest. Our sins plagued and tormented us. We looked round for comfort, and we could find none. We looked and looked again, and we only found fresh cause to despair. We were driven right away from self. What a mercy it was that we were so humbled, for then the Lord could reveal His love to us! What a blessing it was

that we were so wretched, for then there was room for Jesus to come with His pardoning blood, and the Holy Spirit to come with His Divine quickening, and the promise of the Father to come with all its fullness of Grace and Truth. And oh, how blessedly, being deprived of earthly consolations, were we supplied with heavenly ones!

Our self-confidence, what a blessing it was to lose it, for we had confidence in Christ instead of it! Our carnal security, happy were we to see it wither, for we had security in Christ given us in the place of it and our self-righteousness. Thrice happy was it for us that it was totally dried up, for now we come to drink water out of the living Rock of Christ Jesus, and He has become our joy, our song, and our salvation. You remember well that humbling season—you have had such seasons since. You have been brought, since then, into great spiritual straits, when you found that all the supposed Grace which you had in store utterly failed you, even as the manna which the children of Israel unbelievably tried to lay by in store—it bred worms and stank.

You have been brought down to deep spiritual poverty, but that has been a great blessing to you, for each renewed season of soul poverty has been the prelude for a fresh season of Divine manifestation of Grace. When I find myself brought very low in spirit, and made to see the depravity of my heart, and to groan over my own weakness, I have learned to expect better things. I have been thankful for humblings because I have learned by experience that when I am emptied the Lord means to fill me. That when I am brought low it is only a preface to being lifted by the Divine Spirit.

Surely for these reasons we may reckon our humblings among the choicest favors of Heaven. And as here the humbling stands first in the text, so let it not be last in our song. As it is put here as the frontispiece to the volume of grateful remembrances, let it be prominent in our minds. “He humbled you, and caused you to hunger.” Oh, blessed hour in which he prostrated my soul at His feet! Oh, happy season when He stripped me of what I thought my glory, but which were filthy rags! Oh, thrice memorable period when He wounded me with the arrows of conviction, when He slew me by the Law—for this was but a preparation for healing me with His touch of love, and making me alive with the eternal life which is in Christ Jesus. The first mercy, then, is that of humbling the soul.

2. I shall have to notice, in the second place, the Divine feeding. We shall now see ourselves mirrored in the case of Israel as in a glass. “He humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you.” How sweetly that follows, “suffered you to hunger, and fed you.” The light close on the heels of the darkness. Is there a desponding soul here who has been suffered to hunger? “Blessed are you that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for you shall be filled.” That “and” in the text is like a diamond rivet, none can ever take it out or break it. “He suffered you to hunger, and fed you.” He who suffers you to hunger will be sure to feed you yet upon the bountiful provisions of His Grace. Be of good cheer, poor mourning Soul.

Now let us notice what our spiritual food has been, Brethren. I said the first remark shall be, we have been fed spiritually every day. We have had day by day our souls' daily bread. As the manna fell daily, so has the food of our souls been given us from time to time by the power of the Spirit of God. Israel in the wilderness was always on the brink of starvation, yet never knew a want. There was nothing between the people's being starved except (and what a blessed exception!), except the Divine interposition. They could not go to their stores, and say, “Here are tons of food.” They could not, as you may in going down the Thames, look at huge warehouses full of corn laid by in store.

No, no, there was not a halfpenny worth of store in the house of any Israelite as he went to bed, the whole place was bare, all was gone. There was nothing between them and being starved, I say, but the Divine faithfulness. This is precisely how I have lived, by His Grace, before the Lord ever since I have known Him. There has been nothing between my soul and falling from Grace except the Divine faithfulness—no, nothing whatever of past experience, or all the present knowledge that could have stood me in any place in the time of trial. Not a man among you has anything spiritually to depend upon but the daily interpositions of Covenant Grace.

Let the child of God remember this, and when he feels himself very weak in himself, and driven to his Lord in prayer, let him rejoice that he is just where God would have him be. When I am weak, then am I strong. When I have nothing, then have I all things. While I have nothing to depend upon of the old corn of the land, the manna will continually fall, and day by day my strength shall be renewed. Has that been your experience, dear Brothers and Sisters? If it has been, then everyday give a fresh song to God, who interposes between your soul and death.

Yet though the manna came every day, it was always sufficient. I spoke of starvation, but Israel never had any reason even to think of it, for the provender which God sent was not limited so that any man could say, “It is not sufficient for

me." What sufficed one man might not suffice another in ordinary food, but of the manna every man had enough. So to this day it has been in Grace with every Believer. God has given to you and to me, up till this hour, all the Grace we have needed, and though He has given us so much, there is as much more left in the infinite provision as if He had never drawn upon it. Go to the richest man's store, and take something out, and there is so much less remaining. But when the manna came from Heaven, there was just as much manna left after it had come as before.

So the Grace of God is just as all-sufficient after you and I have received as it was at the first. The only stint the Israelite knew in the matter of the manna was the limit of his own capacity to receive. He might have as much as ever he could eat. And if we have not had more Grace, it has been our own fault. If we have not lived nearer to God, if we have not possessed more joy, or been more useful—we have not been straitened in our God—we have been straitened in our heart. We have had the provisions of His Grace day by day. We have had as much as we asked for, and often a great deal more. And we might have had as much more as we would if we had but had larger desires and greater confidence in God. The Lord's name be praised for daily food in this wilderness, and for sufficient food.

The manna was a very mysterious thing. It is said in the text that it was food that they did not know, and which their fathers had not known. And, certainly, the Grace of God which has kept us to this day is a most mysterious power upon us. The worldling does not understand what it is to eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, and though we know what it is by sweet experience, we could not explain it. We have lived to this day upon the promises of God, upon the in-flowing of the Divine Spirit into our souls, but we cannot tell from where it comes nor where it goes.

Nor do our fathers after the flesh know. And though our sires, who have gone before us to Heaven, fed on the same food, yet it was to them mysterious as it is to us. Talk of wonders! The Christian man is the greatest wonder in the world! Speak of miracles! What is the Christian life but a continued miracle? A series of miracles, like links in a chain, one following the other—kept alive in the midst of death, and supported by a marvelous food—which the world knows nothing of. We are wonders unto many, and more so to ourselves.

Brethren, the manna came from Heaven, and here is the very marrow of the Truth of God as to what we have lived upon spiritually—we have lived upon heavenly food. If our supplies had depended on human ministry, they would have failed. If they had depended upon the mere reading of good books, there might be times when we could read to profit. But the everlasting well-springs of Divine love are not affected by our condition of body or of mind—the Grace and love that are treasured up in Christ Jesus come to us when creature cisterns are broken, and all the help of friends is unavailing.

From You, great God, from You we have derived the nutriment of our spiritual life, and it has always come in due season—up to this hour we have known no lack. You have made us hunger when we have looked to earth for supplies, but when we have turned to You our souls have been satisfied with marrow and fatness! Blessed be Your name forevermore! Dear Brothers and Sisters, do endeavor to live more and more upon unseen things. Let your fellowship be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Look not to the granaries of Egypt. Stay not yourself on an arm of flesh. Israel in the wilderness had no granaries, they looked neither to Moab nor Ammon—they looked to Jehovah, and to Jehovah alone. And let it be so with you, and, assuredly, even in the time of famine, your spirit shall be satisfied.

The children of Israel in the wilderness were fed on the best food that ever fell to the lot of mortals. They did eat angels' food. Egypt and Assyria, with all their wealth, tasted not of bread which dropped from Heaven. But poor Israel in the howling wilderness was fed with royal dainties. Let the sons of earth be nourished as they may, and fattened like kings' sons, yet there are no faces that are so fair to look upon with holy joy and exultation as the faces of the men who feed on Christ Jesus who is the Bread that came down from Heaven.

There are none who are so blessed as those who live upon God Himself—for they have this for their surpassing excellence—that eating as they do this bread, they live forever. He that eats other bread derives temporary nourishment from it, but before long he dies. He who feeds on Christ feeds on immortal food, and more—he becomes immortal himself—the food transforms the man. Matchless is the manna which comes from Heaven, for it makes us heavenly and bears us up to the Heaven from where it came!

They who live on Christ become like Christ. Being fed upon Him, they become conformed unto His image, made meet to be partakers of the glory of God in Heaven. I wish I could speak so as to stir your hearts with gratitude, but the subject ought to do it without words of mine! And, sitting calmly here with Jordan sparkling before us, and Canaan hard

by on the other shore, we are bound to remember all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us—and the food which up to this day has never failed us.

3. The third favor mentioned in the text, upon which we will pause awhile, is the remarkable raiment. “Your raiment waxed not old upon you.” This has been interpreted by some to mean that they were able constantly to procure from the surrounding nations fresh changes of clothing. Others have said, and there is truth in the remark, that they had among them persons of great skill who were able to use the produce of the flocks and herds, so that they were not without clothes to supply their needs. Indeed, if that is all the meaning, it declares a great cause for thankfulness.

The tribes never became a ragged regiment—though always on the march they were always well dressed—their clothes waxed not old. But I am not among those who like to blot out every miracle from the Word of God. As the history of the children in the wilderness is altogether miraculous, and cannot be accounted for without the introduction of Divine interposition, it seems to me that it is as natural to expect their raiment to be miraculously given as to expect their food to be. And the run of the text, if it were read by an intelligent child without any prejudice, one way or the other, would suggest a miracle.

It stands in the midst of miracles, and is one itself. “Your raiment waxed not old upon you.” Certainly this was the old interpretation which the rabbis put upon it—that by a continuous miracle their clothes did not wear out for the whole space of forty years. Though subject to the ordinary wear and tear incidental to traveling, yet their garments still continued to be as good at the end of forty years as they were when first they left the land of Egypt. I believe that to be what the text means. And how, spiritually it is the case with us. “Your garments waxed not old upon you.”

Do you remember, Brethren, when first you put your garments on? I do well remember when first I discovered, as Adam did in the garden, that I was naked, and I hid myself. I tried then, as you did, to make a fig leaf covering for myself—that would have waxed old soon enough—for the fig leaves of our own righteousness soon wither and decay. But I was pointed to the righteousness which God had prepared, even as Adam and Eve were pointed to the coats of skins which the Lord God had made ready for them. And then I put on the robe of Christ's righteousness which He had provided, and glory be to His name—that garment has not waxed old upon me yet!

Is it not so with you? You are not found naked this day. Perhaps you have been a Believer forty or fifty years, but that robe of Grace is ever new and evermore as fresh as at the first, and as suitable as at the beginning. All your nakedness is hidden from the face of God, and hidden from yourself, too. You can now rejoice in the Lord, and approach Him without fear. You do not want to hide yourself, but rather you wish to *show* yourself to God, and you say, “Search me, O God, and know my ways, try me, and know my heart.” Our garment, then, which covers our nakedness, has not waxed old.

But we have a garment for more than this, namely, to make us acceptable. Jacob put on his brother Esau's clothes, and he obtained the blessing of his father. We, too, have put on the garments of Christ, and have won the blessing. He who went into the feast and had not on a wedding garment was cast out. The wedding garment which we wear today is the righteousness which Christ has worked out for us—which He works in us by His Spirit. Now, blessed be His name, that which we put on many years ago, has not waxed old yet—we are still accepted in the Beloved.

That robe has endured much wear and tear. What with our imperfections and sins, shortcomings and transgressions—if it had not been Divinely worked, it would have been worn out long ago. But blessed be His name, I know, and you know, that we are as acceptable to God this day, as we were when first we believed in Jesus. We are still dear children, still Beloved of the Lord, still heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus—our garment of acceptance has not waxed old.

Besides, we have the garment of consolation. Men put on their clothes to warm and comfort them, and how often have we wrapped ourselves about with the promises of God's Word—and with the doctrines of Revelation—and made garments of them to screen us from the cold blast of tribulation? These, also, have not waxed old. Glory be to God for those everlasting promises! When we were young we trusted in them, and when we are old and gray-headed we shall still find them to be fountains of consolation as clear, and true, and sure, and precious as ever they were. You cannot point me to a stale promise in all God's Book. Neither can you find me a worn-out doctrine.

The rabbis say that when the young Israelites grew older their clothes grew as they grew. I do not know how that was, but I do know that let us grow in mental stature as we may, the doctrines of the Gospel still are suitable for us. If

they were like milk to us when we were babes, they are strong meat to us when we become men. They always meet our needs and conditions, and thus we can joyfully say that the garment which covers our nakedness, which adorns us before God, and affords us consolation, has not waxed old these forty years. Blessed be the name of the Most High for all this!

4. But we pass on again. The next blessing for which we ought to be grateful is that sustained personal strength. Our spiritual vigor has not decayed during our sojourn in the wilderness, for it is written, "Neither did your foot swell." A swollen foot is the common ailment of pilgrims in the desert. Much marching over hot sand soon makes the feet become swollen and puffed up, or else it hardens them, and some read this text, "Neither did your foot become callous." In neither way in Israel's case was the foot deformed, nor was walking rendered painful.

For forty years the pilgrims footed it without pain, and though it was a weary land, yet their strength held out till they crossed the Jordan, and came into the promised rest. So it has been with us. Our foot has not swelled these forty years. In the way of perseverance we have been maintained and preserved. Personally I admire the Grace which has kept me in my course, though assailed by many, many fierce temptations, and exposed to great perils in my position. If I wonder, I dare say each one of you have to wonder, too. There have been scores of times since you made a profession, when your feet were almost gone, your steps had well near slipped, and yet your foot has not swollen. You are still on the way, in the way, and nearing the end of the way, kept consistent, kept in godliness, even until now.

What a blessing! Suppose you had been permitted to faint? Suppose you had been suffered to fall on the road, and had no longer held on your way? You know what the result must have been, for only to perseverance is the promise made. But God has helped you to hold on to this hour, and He will aid you even to the end. Up till now you have held on—have confidence—He will keep you still. Your foot has not swelled in the way of perseverance.

Neither have you been lamed in the way of service. Perhaps you have been called to do much work for Christ, yet you have not grown tired of it, though sometimes tired *in* it. Still you have kept to your labor, and found help in it. If you were ever called to preach the Gospel, you would be compelled to see, even if you closed your eyes, how dependent you were upon God. Sunday after Sunday, and weekday after weekday, preaching still, having need to say something fresh continually, and often wondering where it will come from. The preacher is grateful that as yet his foot has not swollen.

You, too, have gone to your Sunday school, or you have held your position as a solitary testifier in the family, or you have served God as a missionary from door to door, and you have thought, "Surely, I shall come to the end of all I know, and all I can do," but you have not. Your foot has not swollen all these years, you have kept on in the way of service. So, too, your foot has not swollen in the way of faith. Such little faith you had at first, that you might well have thought it would all die out by now.

See a spark that floats in the sea, see a stone that hangs in the air, surely these must come to an end. The one must be extinguished, and the other must fall! But it has not been so. God has not quenched the smoking flax, nor broken the bruised reed. Still your foot has not swollen. You believe in Jesus yet, and notwithstanding your unbelief, your faith still can give forth the cry of a loving child, and say, "Lord, I believe, help You my unbelief."

In addition to all this, your foot has not swollen in the way of fellowship. You have walked with God, and you have not grown weary of the holy communion. Sometimes that walking with God has cost you much effort, much struggling with inward corruptions, much determination to be clear from the customs and the ways of ungodly men. And you had long ago been tired had not you leaned on your Beloved. But you have leaned so much on Him that your foot has not swollen. You can still walk with Him, and hope to do so until you come to your journey's end—and sit down with Him forever and ever.

Moreover, dear Brothers and Sisters, your foot has not swollen in the way of joy. You were happy young men in Christ Jesus, and you are happy fathers now. You were happy young women when first you gave your heart to Christ, and you have grown to be matronly now, but you are as happy as in younger days. The novelty has not worn off, or rather one novelty has been succeeded by another—fresh discoveries have broken out upon you—and Jesus has still to you the dew of His youth. If the old light has passed away, yet the new light of a still brighter sun has come, and you are nearing the "sacred, high, eternal noon," where the Glory of God and of the Lamb shed splendor all around. He who walks with God shall never weary, though through all eternity he continues the hallowed march. For all this we give to God our thanks yet again.

5. Bear with me when I notice in the fifth place the memorable blessing of chastisement. I must call special attention to it because God does so in these words, "You shall also consider in your heart." That unswollen foot, and that unworn garment you need not so much value as this—for this you are specialty bid to consider—to meditate upon in your very heart. Your deepest thoughts are to be given to it, and, consequently, your highest praises. "Consider in your heart, that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you." My dear Friends, I speak as one of the most humble of God's servants, but I dare not withhold my testimony.

I can truly say of everything I have ever tasted in this world of God's mercy—and my path has been remarkably strewn with Divine loving kindness. I feel more grateful to God for the bodily pain I have suffered, and for all the trials I have endured of many sorts, than I do for anything else except the gift of His dear Son. I am sure I have derived more real benefit and permanent strength and growth in Grace, and every precious thing, from the furnace of affliction, than I have ever derived from prosperity. In fact, I have for years looked upon my great prosperity as being sent as a test and trial of my Graces.

I regard it as the severest of ordeals which I must lay before God humbly, and ask for Grace to bear. But I have learned to regard affliction as being a sheltered nook in which I am more than usually screened from temptation, and in which I might expect to have the peculiar Presence of the Lord my God. I am not fearful of my ballast, but I am very anxious about my sail. Moreover, I have discovered that there is a sweetness in bitterness not to be found in honey—a safety with Christ in a storm which may be lost in a calm. I know not how to quite express my meaning, but even lowness of spirits and deep sadness have a peculiar charm within them which laughter may emulate in vain.

It is good for me that I have been afflicted. Now I think if I were to take the testimony of many Christian friends here, they would have to say much the same. So then, as you know all this, let me say nothing about it but just this—ponder and consider much the gratitude you owe to God for His chastening rod. Dwell much in your heart upon what God evidently regards as one of His distinguishing blessings. Do not pass over slightly what God would have you consider. Count the Cross and the rod to be doubly worthy of your deepest thought. "Hear the rod and Him that has appointed it." Remember that whenever you are chastened you are *not* chastened as a slave-master smites his victim, nor as a judge orders the criminal to be lashed, but as a man chastens his *son*, so are you chastened.

Your chastisement is a sign of sonship, it is a token of *love*. It is intended for your good. Accept it, therefore, in the spirit of sonship, and "despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither faint when you are corrected of Him." Remember that chastisement is an assured token of the Covenant relationship. It is the Lord your God that chastens you. If He were not your God He might let you alone. If He had not chosen you to be His own, He would not take such care of you. If He had not given Himself to be your Treasure, He might not be so diligent in weaning you from all other treasures. But because you are His He will withdraw your love away from this poor world.

Perhaps He will take one child after another from you, that all the love that was lavished on the child might flow towards Himself. Perhaps He will leave you a widow, that the love that ran in the channel of a husband may run altogether to Himself. Perhaps He will take away your riches, that the consolation you did derive from them may be all derived from Him. Perhaps He will smite you, and then lay you on His own bosom, faint and helpless, that you may derive a strength and a joy from fellowship, close, and near with Himself. A closeness which you would never have had if it had not been that these other joys were removed.

I have seen a little plant beneath an oak tree sheltered from the storm, and wind, and rain, and it felt pleased and happy to be so screened. But I have seen the woodman come with his axe and fell the oak, and the little plant has trembled with fear because its protection was removed. "Alas, for me," it said, "the hot sun will scorch me, the driving rain will drown me, and the fierce wind will tear me up by the roots." But instead of these dreadful results, the shelter being removed, the plant has breathed freer air, drank more of the dews of Heaven, received more of the light of the sun, and it has sprung up and borne flowers which else had never bloomed, and seeds that never else had sown themselves in the soil.

Be glad when God thus visits you, when He takes away these overshadowing but dwarfing comforts to make you have a clear way between you and Heaven. So that heavenly gifts might come more plentifully to you. Bless God for chastenings! Let the sweetest note of your music be to Him that lays not the rod aside, but like a father chastens His children for their good.

**II.** Now our time is gone, but you must even be detained, for it is necessary to dwell upon the last thought, which is THE INFERENCE FROM ALL THIS. All this humbling, feeding, clothing, strengthening, chastening—what of it all? Why this—“therefore you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to fear Him.” If you have not shared in these blessings, I shall not speak with you, for the inference would not tell upon you.

But if in very deed and truth every line here describes to the letter your Christian career, then let these arguments have power with you. He has done thus much for you, will you not serve Him? Are you not His by a thousand bonds? Delivered out of deep distresses, supported under enormous burdens, forgiven heinous sins, saved with a great salvation—are you not now bound by every tie that can bind an honorable man to be obedient to the Lord your God? Take the model of the text. Let your obedience be universal. Keep the commandments of the Lord. Walk in His ways.

Set your heart to the Scriptures to find out what the Commandments are, and then, once knowing them, perform them at once. Settle it in your soul that you only want to know it is His will, and you will, by His Grace, neither question nor delay—but whatever He says unto you, you will do. Shut not your eyes to any part of His teaching. Be not willfully blind where Christ would guide you with His Word. Let your obedience be entire. In nothing be rebellious. Let that obedience be careful. Does not the text say, “Keep the commandments,” and does not the first verse say, “You shall observe to do”?

Keep it as though you kept a treasure, carefully putting your heart as a garrison round it. Observe it as they do who have some difficult art, and who watch each order of the teacher, and trace each different part of the process with observant eye, lest they fail in their art by missing any one little thing. Keep and observe. Be careful in your life. Be scrupulous. You serve a jealous God, be jealous of yourself. Let your obedience be practical. The text says, “Walk in His ways.” Carry your service of God into your daily life, into all the minutiae and details of it.

Do not have an unholy room in your house. Let the bedchamber, let the banqueting hall, let the place of conversation, the place of business—let every place be holiness unto your Gold. Walk in His ways. Whereas others walk up and down in the name of their god, and boast themselves in the idols wherein they trust, you walk in the name of Jehovah your God, and glory always to avow that you are a disciple of Jesus, God's dear Son—and let your obedience spring from principle, for the text says, “Walk in His ways, and fear Him.”

Seek to have a sense of His Presence, such as holy spirits have in Heaven who view Him face to face. Remember He is everywhere. You are never absent from that Eye. Tremble, therefore, before Him with that sacred trembling which is consistent with holy faith. Serve Him with faith and trembling, knowing that be you who you may, He is infinite and you are finite. He is perfect and you are sinful, He is All in All and you are nothing at all. With this sacred, reverential, child-like fear pregnant within your spirit, you will be sure to walk practically in obedience to Him.

I close by saying, we who have followed God's Word so far, and experienced the faithfulness of God so long, ought never to give way to unbelief. Your foot has not swollen, your garment has not waxed old these forty years—why will you then mistrust or be suspicious? If He meant to deceive you He would have left you long ago—

*“He cannot have taught you  
To trust in His name,  
And thus far have brought you  
To put you to shame.”*

Go on! The present difficulty will melt like the past. Go on! The future mercy will be as sure as the mercies that have up to now come to you. Though winds and waves go over your head, and friends vanish from you, “trust in the Lord, and do good, so shall you dwell in the land, and, verily, you shall be fed.” The heavens and the earth may pass away, and rocks turn to rivers, and the sun turn to a coal, but the eternal promise never shall fail, and the heart of infinite love shall never change. “Be of good comfort, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.”

What encouragement all this gives to young Brethren who are setting out in the Christian life, or about to engage in the Christian ministry! With that reflection I close. If your fathers, and your fellow Christians of elder years can say that their bread has been given them, and their supplies have been all-sufficient, then rest assured, my Brethren, you are entering upon a happy life, even if it is a tried and difficult one. For the Lord who has dealt so well with some of His people, gives in that fact a pledge that He will deal so with all. Commit yourselves wholly to God. Give up all your powers to His service. Work for Him with all your hearts, and He will supply your needs.

Think not of this world's gain, but "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." Lay self in the dust, and let Christ be All in All. Live by the rule of Truth. Walk by the way of faith. Have confidence in God, and your path shall be as brightness, and your glory as a lamp that burns. Joined on earth to the hand of Christian soldiers, you shall, before long, be added to the countless host of the Church triumphant, who at this hour bear witness that God is faithful, and that His promise is sure.

O you who are not Believers, methinks your mouths must water this morning to come and join with God's Israel! And remember that simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ will bring you to be numbered with Israel. If you will but with your hearts accept Christ to be your Savior, then His people shall be your people, His God shall be your God. Where He dwells and His people dwell, you shall dwell. And if for awhile you are buried with Him, you shall arise again to live forever with Him in Heaven. May the Holy Spirit seal this on your hearts. Amen.

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