**The Mystery of Suffering**

J.H. Brookes, 1894

Preface to the Fourth Edition *Old age* generally brings with it deepened experience and enlarged observation of human suffering. Besides the increase of personal infirmities, there is continually the knowledge that pain and poverty, sickness and sorrow, toil and trouble everywhere abound. The *friends*of earlier life have disappeared, the expectations of youth have perished, the emptiness of earthly ambition has been fully demonstrated; and unless one has been taught to "seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God," he is ready to exclaim in "the words of the Preacher, the son of David, King in Jerusalem: I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind!" (Ecclesiastes 1:1, 14).

Those who have reached the highest eminence, are the best witnesses to the truth of this testimony. Otto von Bismarck, before he was deposed from the greatness of his position, although he could not be deposed from the greatness of his intellect, wrote to a young man, "I have reaped endless anxiety, worry, and disappointment, and were it not for the hope of a better life beyond the grave through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, I do not see how this life could be endurable." It is a blessed privilege to point some of the suffering ones to the *sufficiency of that grace*for their utmost need.

It has pleased the Lord to own the testimony of this little book to the comfort of many sick and sorrowing saints. Scores of letters have been received, telling of the *light*it has cast upon dark providences, and of the *peace*it has brought to troubled hearts. Some too have confessed that it has delivered them from the monstrous delusions of Christian Science, as it is falsely called, and from the dangerous error of believing that faith is the sure preventive of disease, or the infallible remedy for illness.

Hence this fourth edition is sent forth with gratitude to God for the measure of service it has thus far rendered to His tried children, and with prayer that He may still use it to help others who are struggling in the *deep waters of affliction*. Men by plausible arguments may hold out mocking hopes of escape from bodily ailments and sore bereavements; but until Jesus comes, those who trust in His grace will discover that unto them it is granted in His behalf, not only to *believe*on Him, but also to *suffer*for His sake. *Their consolation will be found, not in exemption from pain and grief—but in the strength and sweetness of His abiding presence.*"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away," they often walk weeping, but never alone.

"Sad, silent, and slow,  
Like a funeral train,  
They are led by the hand  
Over mountain and plain."

***~~Chapter 1. Suffering the Common Lot~~***

In a very ancient and inspired book it is written, "For affliction does not come from the dust, nor does trouble spring from the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (Job 5:6-7). In the same book it is said, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1); while a Psalm of about the same period, containing the sublime and touching prayer of Moses, the servant of God, breathes forth the confession, "The days of our lives are seventy years and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Psalm 90:10).

The truth of this testimony is never called in question. Many deny the fact of a divine revelation, and many at least doubt the existence of a divine Being—but *all recognize the universal reign of sorrow and suffering*. These seem to inhere in our very nature, and sooner or later, in one form or another, they come with the certainty that marks the obedience of material objects to the laws imposed on them for their government.

The *child*is introduced into the world with a most pathetic wail, amid the travailing throes of the mother, more or less severe—and the tear that is so often seen upon the face of a corpse attests that the brief pilgrim journey begins and ends at Bochim.

"There is no God," the foolish says. But none say, "There is no sorrow."

Nor are Christians exempt from this inexorable law. On the other hand they, whatever may be true of others, shall surely be called to listen to the voice of *the rod*. Not alone to the first disciples did Jesus say, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). Not only to the early believers did the apostle testify by the Spirit that "we must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

Suffering is the badge of sonship, and the birthright portion of heirship; for "if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then are you illegitimate and not sons" (Hebrews 12:8); and we are "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together" (Romans 8:17).

The words spoken by our Lord when He was upon the earth should not be forgotten: "'The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.' Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me'" (Luke 9:22-23).

Then connect these words with another statement that is as true today as it was when it fell from His blessed lips: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also'" (John 15:19-20).

It is strange, then, that so many of His followers manifest a sad surprise in the presence of *suffering*. With His example and warning before us, we may not expect a complete escape from its power, nor should we even desire entire exemption in this mortal state from its rule. We are so thoroughly identified with Him that what He is, we are; and what He has, we have. He represented us on the cross, and it is fitting that we should drink of His cup and be baptized with His baptism. All the *waves*and *billows*of God broke over His head, and we are not to complain if some of the *spray*falls upon our feet.

He not only suffered for us and as us, but He gives us the privilege of suffering with Him and for Him. When this thought once gets possession of the believer's mind and heart, he can exclaim with Paul, "I now rejoice in my *sufferings*for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the affliction of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24).

His personal sufferings are over, but His sufferings in His people will continue until He comes. There is the most intimate union and communion between them. He is the Head, and they are the body. He is the Bridegroom, and they are the bride. So real and sweet is the oneness that together they are called "the Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12).

While, therefore, our sufferings cannot in the least degree make atonement for sin nor obtain the slightest merit, which would be a foul dishonor cast upon His finished work—it is blessed to know that the church may enter into "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). She is the partaker of His everlasting joy, and she should not think it hard if for a little while, she is the sharer of His sorrow. She is only asked to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, who was for six hours in the unutterable agonies of crucifixion, made to be sin for her, leaving but one brief hour for the bride to accomplish the perfect number of seven.

Perhaps it is easier now to understand how it can be written to the children of God, "To you it has been *granted*on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (Philippians 1:29). We suffer for Christ's sake not only when we encounter the hatred of the world as He did, but when we endure the *ordinary afflictions*of life in which the Man of Sorrows so largely shared. Thus as members of the human race we have part in all the ills to which the human flesh is heir, and over and above these we are subject to a class of sufferings which can attach to none but those who belong to Christ. Unto them it is *granted*, or as the word literally means, it is *graciously given*, not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake. Suffering is a special mark of God's favor, and faith accepts it as such.

Hence the exhortation of the Holy Spirit is worthy of the most serious attention: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 4:12-13). "Knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brethren in the world" (1 Peter 5:9).

Alas! We are prone not only to think it a strange thing when we are tried, but to fret and worry, forgetful of the fact that the afflictions which are universal, and are fixed in amount and character, have an appointed end. They are being rapidly accomplished in these last days, and every *pang*that rends the heart of the troubled Christian, every *tear*that courses down the cheek of the sorrowing—is so much taken from the fragment that remains.

When suffering, therefore, and ready to conclude that none ever bore a heavier burden, it is well to recall the words, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

After all, the sorest trial is such as is common to man, and it is a comfort to know that others, who have stood the same tremendous strain, have left the strife more than conquerors, as we too shall through the all-sufficient grace of a faithful God.

***~~Chapter 2. The Cause of Suffering~~***

"Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him'" (John 9:1-3).

It is needless to say that our Lord did not mean to affirm the entire sinlessness in every respect of this man and of his parents, for He could not flatly contradict His own testimony everywhere else, nor could He deny the testimony of His Spirit, who says, "There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin" (Ecclesiastes 7:20), "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

But here grace shines in contrast with *Jewish notions of retributive justice*. The eye of the sympathizing Savior looked beyond nature, even beyond the outward relation of cause and effect, to the true and ultimate reason for the blindness in this particular instance, and He saw in it only an opportunity for Christ to work the works of Him that sent Him. It is true that He forbids man in his spiritual blindness and sin to sit in judgment upon his suffering fellow-man, lest he fall into the condemnation of Job's three friends (Job 42:7-8).

It is true that in the case of Job and the man born blind and many others, *suffering becomes a dark platform for the bright exhibition of divine mercy and infinite tenderness*; but we must never forget that sin is the great original cause of all the evils that afflict our race. He, therefore, who would fathom the *mystery of suffering*, about which much is written in these days, must first fathom the *mystery of sin*. Inspired Scripture is explicit in the statement that if there had been no sin, there would have been no suffering. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Romans 5:12).

Death in Bible language standing for the penal consequences of sin. Again it is written, "Sin reigned in death" (Romans 5:21), and hence death is not the tribute we pay to *nature*, as men say, but the tribute we pay to the dread sovereignty of *sin*. "In Adam all die" (1 Corinthians 15:22). *Deep down in the heart lies the root of the evil*, for "When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:15).

It is to be feared that many Christians have been led away by the delusions of Satan, and by the "contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20), to *regard suffering as an unavoidable adjunct of our physical and mental constitution*. They seem to think of God as an ancient Egyptian king, bound hand and foot within his own splendid mausoleum—instead of a divine and personal Architect outside of the structure. He is not tied down by the laws of His creation, and it is obvious that no irreversible decree was laid upon Him to bring into the world a being who must necessarily suffer and die. He called into existence rank upon rank of angelic intelligences, who feel no pain and shed no tear—and He could have caused man to walk on the earth in the bloom of immortal beauty and youth.

But sin entered into Eden; and, "To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children'" (Genesis 3:16); while "To Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat of it"—cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.'" (Genesis 3:17-19).

Such is the narrative which God gives to explain the *mystery of suffering*, and has any more reasonable account ever been devised by the human imagination? All admit that this is a world of suffering. But is suffering here by *chance*or by *fate*or the rigid demand of uncontrolled laws— or by the appointment of a holy God, who assigns to it a suitable and satisfactory cause? "The soul who sins shall surely die!" (Ezekiel 18:20). "The wages of sin is death!" (Romans 6:23).

Without pretending, then, to trace the connection in individual experiences between the sin and the suffering, it may be said in general that *sin is the fruitful and horrible parent of suffering.*Hence, every *groan*that shakes the bosom is a sorrowful protest against the injustice of sin; every *pang*that rends the frame is a swift witness to the frightful evil of sin; every *grave*that has upon it a mound of earth or even a stately monument, is an outstanding demonstration of the monstrous wrong inflicted by sin!

Ah, suffering one, if you saw this in its true light, you could not complain, like so many, that you know not what you have done to deserve such suffering. If the question of suffering is to be settled by the question of deserving, alas! Hell must be the inevitable portion of us all.

But there is another aspect of the subject that should not be wholly overlooked. In the redemption of man the grace of God reigns, but the government of God rules. When David confessed his shocking sin in the seduction of Uriah's wife and in the murder of her faithful husband, the prophet said to the penitent monarch: "The Lord also has put away your sin" (2 Samuel 12:13); but he further said, "Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house" (2 Samuel 12:10).

Grace could forgive, and the sinner was saved, but the wheels of government must roll on, and the sin be visited.

"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. *A man reaps what he sows*. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (Galatians 6:7-8) is an unchangeable law both in the natural and in the spiritual world, touching both the unbeliever and the believer. Whatever a man sows, whether he be a Christian or an infidel—that shall he also reap, although any guilt attached to the former is entirely removed by the precious blood of Christ.

If, for example, the former carelessly or willfully inhales a malarial atmosphere, or takes poison, or violates the laws of health—he need not expect a miracle to deliver him from the consequences of his own misconduct. Or, if in earlier life he was dissipated and licentious and in various ways undermined his health, he must not be surprised to find that he reaps as he sowed, even while trusting with adoring gratitude the word of his Lord who says, "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins" (Isaiah 44:22). Boundless mercy is exhibited in dealing with the *sinner*, but righteousness must be vindicated in dealing with the *sin*.

"A just God and a Savior" (Isaiah 45:21) is the name of Him who interposes to save us from utter and everlasting ruin. The proclamation which He made of Himself to Moses is very striking: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin; by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation" (Exodus 34:6-7)

Men may quarrel with the doctrine, but they cannot deny the fact. They see it illustrated every day around them, and a wise sufferer in pondering the *mystery of suffering*will also consider the *mystery of sin*. Even if his suffering is the inherited result of ancestral sin, inflicting an incurable disease, he will not become bitter and hard, but rather praise the infinite grace and wisdom that can make what is regarded as a dreadful misfortune, such an occasion for the manifestation of God's tenderest love to his soul.

Especially will he bow to the *mercy*of God in dealing with the sinner, and to His *justice*in dealing with sin—when he remembers that the Sinless One walked the path of suffering in obedience to the claims of both; and that he must walk the same path, if he hopes to shine in His image at last. "Heed the rod and the One who appointed it." (Micah 6:9).

Is there no other way, O God,  
Except through sorrow, pain and loss,  
To stamp Christ's likeness on my soul,  
No other way except the cross?  
Cannot you not bear the furnace heat,  
If 'mid the flames I walk with thee?  
I bore the cross, I know its weight,  
I drank the cup I hold for thee.  
Cannot you not follow where I lead?  
I'll give you strength—O lean on Me.

***~~Chapter 3. Bodily Suffering~~***

All who believe in the providence and word of God recognize His hand in sickness or other physical ailments and discomforts. The Lord Jesus did not exaggerate in the least when He said, "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them fall to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matthew 10:29-30). Yet even these are under divine direction. "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33).

A soldier in the tumult of battle "drew a bow at random" (1 Kings 22:34), but it sped to the accomplishment of Jehovah's predicted purpose. Joseph's brothers threw him into a pit, from which he emerged to enter a dungeon, but God sent him before them "to preserve a posterity" (Genesis 45:7).

The omnipresence, the omniscience, the omnipotence, the very existence of God—makes it certain that He controls everything everywhere, whether with or without secondary causes; and any other view is unscriptural. It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that sickness or any bodily suffering comes upon us by *accident*, or by the *iron rule of a natural law*that knows no master and has no object.

Sometimes suffering is sent as a chastening. "The Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bore to David, and it became ill" (2 Samuel 12:15). "For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:31-32).

The intervention of natural law does not in the least obscure His hand, according to the plain testimony of the Holy Spirit of truth.

"Then it came about, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died" (1 Samuel 25:38).

"David said furthermore, 'As the Lord lives, the Lord shall strike him'" (1 Samuel 26:10).

"The Lord struck the king, so that he was a leper until the day of his death" (2 Kings 15:5).

"So Jeroboam did not recover strength again in the days of Abijah; and the Lord struck him, and he died" (2 Chronicles 13:20).

"You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust" (Psalm 104:29).

"Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:23).

Thus it is all throughout the Bible, and he who reads the book of God with an understanding heart must see His presence and power in every form of disease, whether commissioned to minister to the good of His people, or sent to punish the proud and unbelieving.

Men are ready to accept a *general*providence, while denying a *particular*providence—as if there could be any general providence without particular providences; or as if little things were not essential to the production of great results. They admit that God brings about the revolution of kingdoms; but they do not perceive that no event, connected with the end in view, can fly beyond the bounds of His providence.

God, however, is very explicit in asserting His control of all occurrences:

"Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I *kill*and I *make alive*, I *wound*and I *heal*" (Deuteronomy 32:39).

"The Lord *kills*and *makes alive*; He brings down to the grave and brings up. The Lord makes *poor*and makes *rich*; He brings low and lifts up" (1 Samuel 2:7).

"He does according to His will in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" (Daniel 4:35).

"If there is a *calamity*in a city, will not the Lord have done it?" (Amos 3:6).

Nothing more, perhaps, need be said to those who bow before the authority of the sacred Scriptures to convince them that their bodily afflictions, no matter how sore they may be, are to be traced directly or indirectly to the will of God. Why He permits them is another question, and what Christians are to do, when smarting under His stroke is a question of very great importance, especially in these days.

Let us understand, as a first and fundamental principle of truth, that the Lord's will is always best; and though we may not be able to hear His voice when distracted by pain, nor to see His meaning when blinded by tears, He is still saying, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" (John 13:7).

Yes, *sickness is a rough but thorough teacher of experimental theology*, and it almost compels the soul of the believer to stay itself upon God. During Dr. Payson's last illness a friend said to him, "I am sorry to see you lying upon your back." "Do you know why God puts us on our backs?" asked the smiling sufferer. "No," was the answer. "In order that we may look upward."

While, therefore, it is perfectly proper to pray for the healing of sickness, if it is in accordance with God's will, let us remember that sickness is not the worst thing that can befall a Christian. For eighteen hundred years all Christians have passed through death, and millions of them through violent deaths.

We are doing no wrong when we pray for ourselves or for others, "Lord, if it pleases You, show Your healing power"; but we are certainly doing right when we pray, "Father, glorify Your name" (John 12:28).

God has purposes of love to accomplish through disease and pain, of which we may know nothing at present; and while still praying in the simplicity of an unfaltering confidence, *we are not to suppose that His omnipotence is a mere servant to obey our behests, apart from His holier and wiser counsels*.

If nothing else was gained by our sickness, it teaches us our need, for "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick" (Matthew 9:12). It is when shut up in the sick chamber that the Christian begins to sing with new meaning, "The Great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus."

Whether, then, in active or passive service, let it be our aim to do or suffer the will of God.

We read of some, "Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:33-38).

Do you suppose that these sufferers were less acceptable to God or less dear to His heart? No, if there was any difference, they were nearer to Him, as a loving parent always feels a special tenderness for his afflicted children. They obeyed His will and did their appointed work, as truly and as well as their brethren in the field of battle. The *sorrowing*and *silent*and *submissive*children of our Father shall soon find to their everlasting joy as they enter the portals of Heaven!

***~~Chapter 4. Mental Suffering~~***

Trouble of *heart*is not less common than bodily disease, and often it is harder to endure than physical pain. "The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?" (Proverbs 18:14). Few have reached the middle period allotted to human existence, without the distress that arises from *disappointed hopes*, *misplaced affections*, the *desertion*of old friends now alienated and embittered, the loss of social position, or the humiliations of poverty.

Fewer still have escaped the overwhelming and lasting sorrow that floods the soul, when the ruffian hand of death snatches away someone that is far dearer than life itself. It is then, if never before, the stricken sufferer understands the meaning of the words, "The heart knows its own bitterness" (Proverbs 14:10) and, "By sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken" (Proverb 15:13).

He returns from the graveyard to his desolate home, and the sight of the vacant chair makes him sob and shudder. The sound of voices grates harshly upon his ear, and often he hurries away to be alone with God and with his grief. He is sure that he can never smile again. He wonders that the sun shines. He is amazed that people can talk and laugh on the streets, and that the hum of business does not cease forever.

Time and the soothing touch of an unseen hand, will at length quiet his outward agitation—but he carries with him to the close of life a memory that will not pass away.

Suddenly the absent one will come back to him in reading, in speaking, in writing, and especially at night just as he is falling asleep, startling him from his half slumber, and renewing the anguish of an hour that is past, and yet not past and never can be past, through all the sad years that remain. No *complaint*may fall from his lips, and no *murmur*may rise in his breast, but he cannot forget. He may say with the Psalmist, "I was mute, I did not open my mouth, because it was You who did it" (Psalm 39:9); and with Job, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust Him," (Job 13:15). But he cannot sing until he has recovered from the stunning blow that felled him to the earth.

He resumes the duties that were dropped for a while and takes up the burdens that were heavy enough before, but he knows that he is to be more lonely than he was formerly. He goes into society and sometimes shakes off the weight that is on his spirit into sweet oblivion, but over and over in the rattle of conversation and pleasantry sounding around him, the remembrance of the departed one is in his mind.

There are other forms of mental suffering, not so trying, and yet the sources of serious discomfort, as the pain that is inflicted upon many a Christian by unbelieving members of the same household.

Just before these lines were written, a young lady said with tears in her eyes, "Physical pain is nothing compared to the distress I endure day by day." She is the only Christian in her family, and except when she attends meetings for prayer or preaching, she is constantly surrounded by a circle of ungodly acquaintances and kindred. If she were an infidel, nothing would be said, unless in admiration of her intellect and intelligence; but since she chose Christ as her portion, she is forced to encounter the raillery and feeble wit of those who hate her Savior.

It is a common but very great mistake to suppose that human nature and the world have changed a particle in their essential characteristics. It is as true now as it was eighteen hundred years ago, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7). It is as true now as it was then that "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). The deep-seated enmity of the heart and the malice of Satan may not assume the same mode and manifestation of hostility, but they are always arrayed and united in opposition to Christ.

Jesus meant what He said when He declared to the disciples, "If the world hates you—know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me—they will also persecute you." (John 15:18-20).

The fact that many professing Christians are not hated nor persecuted by the world does not disprove the truth of our Lord's testimony; it only proves that the professing Christians have gone over to the world, and the world sees nothing in them to hate. It was not a falsehood the Holy Spirit uttered when He caused it to be written, "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus *will*suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). If the persecution is not endured, it would be well to ask the question whether we are living godly in Christ Jesus.

There are other persecutions besides the dungeon, the rack, the stake or the den of wild beasts, and there are thousands of Christians in so-called Christian lands who are encountering these subtler and equally torturing persecutions.

Even at this present time children are frequently disinherited and disowned because they have confessed Jesus as their Lord, and many a long-suffering wife could tell of a faith maintained in the face of ridicule and sneers and cruel calumnies.

To these must be added the suffering that comes from *malignant misapprehension of our motives*, from the *censorious judgment*of those we trusted, from the *slander*in which vast numbers who claim to be Christians, indulge as freely as if the cowardly sin were not sternly condemned in the word of God.

There is no exemption from *inward trouble*any more than from *bodily ailments*, and the intelligent believer is bound to recognize the hand of Providence in the former as in the latter. He can enter into the spiritual knowledge that led David to say of the abusive Shimei, "Let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him" (2 Samuel 16:11). He can understand the meaning of Jehovah's exclamation, "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. Shall the axe boast itself against him who chops with it? Or shall the saw exalt itself against him that saws with it?" (Isaiah 10:5, 15). He can feel the force of the Savior's words to Pilate, even when face to face with the worst enemy, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above" (John 19:11).

It is needless to say that grief caused by the *ravages of death*is to be directly traced to the will of our Lord. "Our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong escape from death" (Psalm 68:20), whether we regard the deliverance He gives as *from*death, or *in*death or *by*death. He has fixed the number of our months and determined the bounds we cannot pass, so that each believer can say for himself, and as he thinks of the beloved ones taken away, "All the days of my hard service I will wait, until my change comes" (Job 14:14).

We hear Jesus saying, "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And *I have the keys of Hades and of Death*" (Revelation 1:18). It is certain, therefore, that the dark iron door behind which our darlings have passed, could never have been opened, until Jesus swung it back to welcome them home.

But as He called, so He alone can comfort. Vain is the help of man. All words of human sympathy, however well meant and however grateful to the feelings, seem but a mockery of our agony.

Meanwhile, if we are shut up to the necessity of suffering, let us at least learn to suffer in silence, not forgetful of the *innumerable mercies*received from Him who smites.

***~~Chapter 5. Satan and Suffering~~***

The *mystery of suffering* will never be fully explained in this world, but we cannot even view it aright unless we see the connection with it to that foul and malignant and personal being called "the dragon, that old serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan" (Revelation 20:2). From the time of Adam's entrance into Eden, his hateful presence has been manifested on the earth in unceasing efforts to destroy the souls and bodies of men; and if not permitted to destroy, then to disturb their peace. Not only did he succeed in seducing our first parents from their allegiance to God, but he has ever since continued his relentless war upon the human race, *tempting*and *troubling*in every way that infernal ingenuity can suggest, and terrible power can execute.

Thus we find him in early days bringing upon the patriarch *Job*great and almost intolerable calamities. Some critics now tell us that Job was a fictitious character, but the Holy Spirit by a prophet and an apostle informs us that he really existed, and the Spirit of God knows more than the critics, who probably know less than nearly anybody. "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit" (Colossians 2:8).

Job was a person, and Satan is a person to whom the Lord delivered His servant for awhile, saying to the deceitful and dreadful adversary, "Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person" (Job 1:12); and again, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life" (Job 2:6).

Frightful trials followed, that shook the soul of the afflicted man as storm after storm broke over him, but it is blessed to know that God said to the vindictive foe, as He says to the raging sea, "This far you may come, but no farther—and here your proud waves must stop!" (Job 38:11).

We next see the monster leading the man after God's heart to the commission of an audacious sin. "Satan stood up against Israel, and moved *David*to number Israel" (1 Chronicles 21:1). The king knew tat God had said, "When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number, then every man shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord, when you number them, that there may be no plague among them when you number them" (Exodus 30:12). This sum was called the atonement money of the children of Israel, and it formed the very foundation of their tabernacle worship. David, therefore, in his self-sufficiency, was treating the atonement with contempt, and of course the threatened plague fell. In like manner it was said to the *Corinthian Christians*, when they failed to recognize the atonement in the Lord's supper, "For this reason many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:30), but it was Satan who instigated a denial of the great and essential truth.

Hence he appears as the adversary of God's people, resisting their plea for acceptance before the throne, and demanding the sentence of condemnation because of their unworthiness. Thus the prophet was taught the central doctrine and fact of Christianity when the angel showed him "Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?'" (Zechariah 3:1-2).

The representative of the people was clothed with filthy garments, but he stood before the angel of the Lord, the Christ who afterwards died upon the cross; and one person who is named Lord invoked a rebuke upon the adversary from another person called Lord, causing the iniquity of Joshua to pass from him, and clothing him with change of clothing suitable for the presence of Jehovah. But the scene reveals the deadly hostility of Satan to the atonement, and his baffled attempt to bring suffering upon the objects of redeeming grace.

In the New Testament we find more frequent allusions to this *arch-enemy of God and man, and to the untiring efforts he is ever putting forth to mislead and injure.*He dared to assail the Lord Jesus in the wilderness, and, mark it, if he is not a person, if the temptation was only a conflict raging in Christ's bosom as some of the foolish ones say, then we have a Savior who Himself needs to be saved, for He was a sinner.

But no, Satan came as a person to attack the sinless Savior; and it is of a person He speaks when He says of the bowed woman, "whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years" (Luke 13:16). It is a person who is mentioned when it is written, "Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot" (Luke 22:3), who had already nourished the dark suggestion of betrayal. It is a person to whom our Lord referred when He said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail" (Luke 22:31-32). After the crucifixion we find that Satan filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:3).

The commission of Paul to the Gentiles was "to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). The same apostle warns his brethren, "lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11); and if false teachers transform themselves into apostles of Christ, it is "no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). The devoted servant of the Lord desired again and again to visit the Thessalonians, "but Satan hindered us" (1 Thessalonians 2:18), he writes; and the coming of anti-Christ in the last days "is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders" (2 Thessalonians 2:9); while it was the grief of the apostle's heart, going forth after his erring brethren, that "some have already turned aside after Satan" (1 Timothy 5:15).

Under the title of *devil*or *accuser*, the same terrible and treacherous being is represented as seeking to destroy the souls and bodies of men. *Jesus*said to the Jews, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

*Peter*testifies to Cornelius that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38).

*Paul*writes, "Nor give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4:27) and, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11). He warns us against pride, lest we "fall into the same condemnation as the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6); while *James*tells us to "resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7); and *Peter*reminds us that "the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

No doubt enough has been said to convince anyone who accepts the truth of the Bible that this horrible being is no mere creature of a superstitious imagination, nor a ludicrous bugbear of childhood. That he is a person, and a person always contriving to produce suffering—is as certain as divine revelation. Why God permits him to exist and gives him a certain latitude and liberty, like a *chained dog*, is one of the mysteries of sin and suffering, for the solution of which we must wait until the end of the days. He will surely injure us if he can, and although we may not be able to trace his footsteps through the maze of natural laws and unforeseen circumstances that bring about our sickness or sorrow, it would be well to be always on our guard, and to watch and pray against his assaults.

We know beyond question that "if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4); and, "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning." But it is added, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

While walking in fellowship with the Son of God, we need not in the least fear the *foul fiend*. He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world, and has already gained the victory and pronounced judgment on the prostrate foe. We have only to tread in the footsteps of the Conqueror, and to rejoice in the promise, "The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly" (Romans 16:20).

"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils" (Luke 11:21-22).

In the fiercest conflict and thickest gloom, when faith is shaken by strong gusts of temptation and hope is well near gone, it will strengthen us to remember that the Captain of our salvation has already met and defeated the foul foe!

***~~Chapter 6. The Trial of Faith~~***

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your *faith*, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is *tested*by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:3-7).

Faith is one of the seven precious things Peter is led by the Spirit to mention, but here it is the *trial*or *testing*of faith. Observe, it is not the question of salvation he is raising. Those whose faith is tried are already begotten again by the abundant mercy of God unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance in substance incorruptible, in purity undefiled, in beauty amaranthine or unfading, and they are guarded by all the plentitude of omnipotent power on their way to complete salvation in the heavens.

Yet, for a little time, not long, they are in heaviness or sorrow, when God sees a "need be" for it, that this trial of their faith, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. He is coming again, and the gold separated from the dross by the fire will shine very brightly in the splendor of His throne.

Surely, if Christians knew the meaning of the *trial their faith*is called to endure, there would be less hopeless grief when the flames are kindled around them. We might think of *gold*all but invisible, mingled with hard rock and dirt, thrown into a furnace, and bitterly complaining, if it was conscious, of the fierce fire.

"Oh, why am I tortured thus?" it might say.

"It is only for a season," the refiner would reply, "and you must wait patiently until the end before you can see the purpose of your suffering."

"But when will the end come? I cannot bear this agony."

"Just as soon as I behold the reflection of my face in the molten mass, you will be released from the furnace, and when you are made into a crown meet to be worn by a king at his coronation or formed into a setting for the diamond that shall flash on the brow of his queen, you will understand what you are now compelled to take upon faith alone."

"The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the hearts" (Proverbs 17:3). He is saying to believers in general, as He says to Israel in particular, "I will bring the *third*through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This is My people'; and each one will say, 'The LORD is my God'" (Zechariah 13:9).

Hence the apostle is directed by the Spirit to write, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2-3). It is not, when you *run*into various trials, but when you *fall*into them, and it is not that the trials are in themselves the source of all joy, but because the trial of faith works endurance.

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trials; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him" (James 1:12). Instead of rejoicing as we are told to do, many Christians fret and worry and become sullen under the trial of their faith. When reeling and staggering beneath the burden, they imagine that they cannot be the children of God, if His face is obscured behind the dark cloud.

Sometimes faith stands the test and is strengthened by the strain; but they may still be the children of God, although for a time led under the sore trial to doubt His goodness, His justice, His mercy, nay, it may be, His very existence. Hundreds of the most saintly and sincere men are so agitated by doubts, they are compelled again and again to go over the whole ground of the evidences of God's personal being and the truth of Christianity, for their own satisfaction.

The temptations to DOUBT, causing the trial of faith, spring from four quarters.

First, they arise from **within**. As long as we are in the body, the nature which is called "*the flesh*," to distinguish it from the nature that is imparted by the Spirit, will be in us as the restless source of temptation and trial. It was not an unconverted but a converted man who confessed, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find…. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good" (Romans 7:18, 21).

It was to the saved that it was written, "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16-17). *Faith is forced, therefore, to face an evil beast in our own breasts.*There are those who boast that the fleshly nature no longer exists within them, but the vaunt is an idle dream or satanic delusion, nor can it be supported for a moment except by lowering the claims of divine holiness, or by palliating the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The flesh will be there to the end of the journey!

Second, the **world**is a constant and mighty trial of faith. Thousands are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. Besides its allurements and anxieties and business, let us not forget that Jesus says of His disciples, "I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14).

Every real believer knows that the cross has snapped the link that bound Him to the world, and that the separation is as wide as that made by a two-fold crucifixion, leading Him to say, "God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world!" (Galatians 6:14). If, therefore, the prince of the world cannot entice the Christian by the *attractions*of the world, he will excite against him the *wrath*of the world, evermore seeking to blind his eyes to the solemn truth of God's word. "All that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

Third, thus another source of sore trial is the malice of **Satan**to which, as shown in the last chapter, believers are peculiarly exposed. He is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2). He is the head of a vast host of foul spirits and of a widely extended machinery of evil, so that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

So malignant and so numerous are the demons subject to his control, that a legion of them took possession of one wretched creature, and the professing Christian is a madman who dismisses from his mind the distinct testimony of the Scriptures concerning their existence and numbers with a laugh of unbelief or sneer of contempt. They are getting him just where they want him. Remember that it was the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested" (Revelation 2:10).

Fourth, another way by which faith is tried is **affliction**. Sometimes the blow is so severe and the pain so sharp we cry out with the Psalmist, "Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies?" (Psalm 77:7-9).

Sometimes we are ready to exclaim with poor Israel in her centuries of weary wanderings, "The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me!" (Isaiah 49:14). In the day of grief and of desperate sorrow we do not wonder that Job and Jeremiah cursed the hour that gave them birth (Job 3:1; Jeremiah 20:14). From the lips of millions of true Christians has the exclamation burst forth in anguish, "All Your waves and billows have gone over me," (Psalm 42:7), and none ever had a perfectly smooth voyage to the other side. *God had one Son without sin, but not one son without suffering*.

It may be that when He calls us to endure heavy losses, and the heaviest loss of all in the *death of our children*, He wants us to have fellowship with Himself in the surrender of His Son unto death. Such at least seems to be His meaning in His language to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you" (Genesis 22:2). He is apparently thinking of Himself, and if He had not given grace to His servant, the test would have broken his heart. But "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac" (Hebrews 11:17). His faith reached beyond death, and took hold of resurrection, as ours must do when there is nothing but darkness before us, leading us to sing of God's afflicted children in the mystery of their suffering, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose!" Romans 8:28

We do, however, certainly know that we are in the hands of One of whom it is written, "He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver" (Malachi 3:3), and that when His work is done, His meaning will be made clear.

***~~Chapter 7. Christ and Suffering~~***

"Seeing then that we have a *great*High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" Hebrews 4:14-15

This is the first time in the Bible that a high priest is ever called *great*, and it is remarkable that our Lord should be thus described in connection with the sufferings of His people. The phrase, *sympathize with*, is in the original but one word, occurring but once elsewhere, and there it is rendered *had compassion*. It is the word from which our English word sympathy comes, and the statement is, that we have not a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, for He was tempted in all points as we are—and yet from the beginning to the end He was the sinless One.

No man has a right to say that the inspired Scriptures exaggerate the truth in the slightest degree, or to talk, as some of the commentators do, of "sublime hyperbole." It may be said that we do not understand how Christ was tempted in all points as we are, but do we understand any better how the eternal God became a babe on the bosom of the virgin mother, or how His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree? He bore our sins and all the sins of all the countless millions of His people of all centuries and all lands, making them His own when He died upon the cross, and He bore our weaknesses too, making them His own, yet without sin.

As God "laid on Him the iniquities of us all" (Isaiah 53:6), so He made the sorrows of us all to meet on Him. In a manner unknown to us, He gathered up the various temptations that try the faith of His followers and friends, and pressed them to His heart, that He might respond to their griefs and groans along the sensitive link of a personal experience.

When we are bowed to the earth under affliction, there is an immense difference between the condolence of those who only know of our trouble, and the compassion of others who have borne a similar trial. Two mothers, very intimate and fond of each other for years, were called to share a common sorrow in the loss one of them sustained in the death of a child. Not long afterward the second buried her own child and said to her bosom companion, "Once I *knew*that you suffered; now I *feel*it."

Jesus, as the divine and omniscient High Priest, not only knows the temptations that try us, but He has actually passed through them, and *wherever we tread along the pathway of life we find His footprints and catch the aroma of His personal presence*. He is so identified with His people that "in all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isaiah 63:9), and "Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17). This does not and cannot mean, as so often asserted by the faith-healers, that He bore our sicknesses in the same sense and for the same purpose in which He bore our sins.

In the first place, no such thought is expressed elsewhere in Scripture, which from Genesis to Revelation is full of the great truth that He bore our sins, so that His believing people do not bear them.

In the second place, all of His people without a single exception, ever since the words were written, have borne sicknesses and death, often in the most horrible form, and therefore if such an exposition is true, the work of Christ has utterly failed.

In the third place, if it be said that this was owing to a lack of faith, it is enough to reply that the faith-healers themselves sicken and die like all others. Indeed, it is notorious that some of their leaders resort to medical remedies when they are sick, and that many of them suffer from various physical disabilities.

The text obviously means that there was divine sympathy, which entered into the depth of the need Jesus relieved.

It is most important that the suffering children of God should see this and lay hold of it with as firm a grasp as possible. They will be tempted to think that if He were upon the earth, they could go to Him with confidence in His sympathy; but that Heaven has removed Him to such a distance and surrounded Him with such glories, He has forgotten the tribulations of His mortal state. Let them remember for their consolation, that after His ascension into Heaven and after its glories shone around Him above the brightness of the noonday sun, He was still reached by the strokes that fell upon His tried people. He dazzled Saul by the splendor of His appearance, forcing the fierce prosecutor to cry out, "'Who are you, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 9:5). He did not say, "You are persecuting My disciples, but you are persecuting *Me."*He keenly felt every blow they received.

So when He comes again in the glory of His Father and all the holy angels with Him, and sits upon the throne of His glory and all nations shall be gathered before Him, it will be found that whatever has been done to the least of His brethren has been done unto Him. Any kindness shown to them, is a kindness to Him. Any contempt of them, is contempt of Himself (Matthew 25:41-46). "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:30), so united, so completely one in nature, life, standing, service, suffering, resurrection, and glory—there can never be any separation, nor any distinction in God's treatment of them, save that He is the exalted head of those who constitute "the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:23). His own prayer is, "that the world may know that You have sent Me, and *have loved them as You have loved Me*" (John 17:23); and, "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17).

We are not surprised, therefore, to read that "it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering" (Hebrews 2:10). How could the perfect One be made perfect? He was not only absolutely and entirely sinless from His conception and forevermore, but He could not sin. He alone of all the human race could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). Over His head alone was the deep silence of Heaven twice broken, that the Father might speak down audibly from His throne, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; 17:5). He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21); He was "without sin" (Hebrew 4:15); He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26); He "committed no sin" (1 Peter 2:22); "and in Him is no sin" (1 John 3:5).

Still He was made perfect through sufferings. The Christ on the cross was something more perfect than the Christ baptized of John in the Jordan—as a Savior and a sympathizing High Priest. Perfection was perfected; the exceeding fine gold was gilded with a brighter luster, and through sufferings.

Is it strange, then, that His people suffer? Would it not be far stranger if they did *not*suffer? God's love for His only begotten Son is infinite, and yet it was not inconsistent with His boundless love that *His Son should be the greatest of sufferers*. It cannot be inconsistent with His love to permit trials to come upon His younger children, "for whom He did foreknow, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29).

Shall they be conformed to His image in every other respect but in His tribulations? There is no grosser deception practiced upon sick and suffering saints, than to tell them that if they have enough faith they may be exempt from pain and trouble, for the faith of Christ never faltered even once, and still from His borrowed cradle to His borrowed grave He was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3). Blessed be His name. He is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8); and "this same Jesus" shall come again! (Acts 1:11).

Better tell them of *the inexhaustible sufficiency of His grace*, and of *His unchanging and unfailing sympathy*. Better bid them consider His example when in His agony He said, "Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" (John 18:11). It was not a caldron, but a *cup*; it was not a cup sent by chance or ordained by fate, but a cup *given*; it was not given by an enemy, but by a Father's hand; and if nothing more can be done in our pain and weakness but murmur His name, it will be most acceptable prayer to that Father's heart.

A dear old woman in her protracted and wearing sickness forgot all the Scripture she ever knew except the verse, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Philippians 3:10). At last she forgot all of this verse but the word HIM, and day after clay, and night after night, she whispered, "Him, Him!" Never did sweeter worship ascend to Heaven, and we can readily believe that God would rather hear the breathing of that name from the pallid lips of a tired sufferer, than to listen to the hallelujahs of angels, or to look upon the small achievements of robust service. The fellowship of His sufferings brings us very near to the Father's heart.

***~~Chapter 8. The Abiding Comforter~~***

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:16-17).

The *Comforter*or *Paraclete*is literally "one called or sent for to assist another," and the word so rendered is elsewhere translated *advocate*. But the advocate is summoned as a support, the defender of an accused person before a court of justice. The risen and ascended Jesus IS our *Paraclete*or *Comforter*or *Advocate*in the court of Heaven, and the Holy Spirit is another here below to abide with us and to keep us along the journey of life.

Hence we read, "The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). The word *help*means "to lay hold of along with another," and the thought suggested is that of a man bearing a burden too heavy for him. The load is becoming more and more oppressive, and he falters and turns faint and is about to sink under the intolerable weight, when a loving and strong friend steps forward and lifts the burden and relieves the weary one and enables him to carry that which seemed like a mountain. Almost crushed, the heavy-laden soul cannot pray, but only groan; and yet the groan in dumb, inarticulate language is also a prayer, the fruit of the Spirit's intercession for him and within him.

A pastor frequently visited a child of God who was painfully and slowly dying from cancer. She said to him one day, "I am so racked with agony it is impossible to pray. Even when I rally somewhat from the influence of the morphine, my mind is so dazed I cannot put two words together."

He looked at her a moment and said, "You can *groan*, can't you?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, "my days and nights are passed in groaning."

"Well, never mind your prayers, then; your groans going up to God reach His ear and heart far more surely, it may be, than the most eloquent address to the throne of grace, for they are the Spirit's intercession in your behalf."

*One groan borne upward by the Holy Spirit is worth a thousand wordy prayers!* "He who searches the hearts," that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, "knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God" (Romans 8:27). When God, therefore, hears the groan of a suffering Christian, He is but answering the desire of His own heart.

It is most important, however, to grasp the truth that the Comforter is not a vague and undefinable *influence*, but a *divine person*, abiding with us forever. He is as truly a person as the Lord Jesus Christ, who always spoke of Him in the use of the personal pronouns He and Him, and who associated Him with Himself and with the Father in the ordinance of baptism (Matthew 28:19), as He is associated with the Father and the Son in the apostolic blessing (2 Corinthians 13:14). To Him are ascribed both in the Old and New Testaments all divine attributes and perfections, and it is He in the plenitude of His grace and love who is with the sick or sorrowing saint day and night. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6: 19), and "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Romans 8:9. This does not mean the disposition of Christ, but the Holy Spirit of Christ as his indwelling and permanent guest.

Yes, tired and weary and often weeping sufferer, that body of yours, racked with pain and helpless on a sick bed, is the temple of the Holy Spirit; nor will He permit it to decay by disease except to rear out of its ruins a far more beautiful and more glorious temple. Meanwhile He is with you every moment, meting out the kind and the degree of suffering best suited to accomplish His own loving purpose.

We often read of the wrath of God, and even of the wrath of the Lamb, but *we never read of the wrath of the Spirit*. As Christ is the *Head*of the church, so it may be said that the Holy Spirit is the *Heart*of the church. He presents the motherly aspect of the divine nature, if the expression may be allowed, and the intelligent Christian at once thinks of Him when his eye falls upon the words, "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you" (Isaiah 66:13); nor is he surprised to learn that the early churches had rest when "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 9:31). He is so ever present, and so consoling in His gentle ministrations, that the believer can rejoice in tribulations, though they may tear him as a threshing machine, "knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:3-5).

Let the sufferer cherish the sense of the Comforter's abiding presence, and he will better understand the meaning of the precious words, "You did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the *Spirit of adoption*by whom we cry out, *'Abba, Father'*" (Romans 8:15). We may not be able for very anguish of body or mind to utter another word, but it is the Spirit's cry in the heart, and like the first muttered "Papa" of a little child, or the wail of a newborn babe, it goes to the Father's heart!

The Christian superintendent of a deaf and dumb asylum stated at a Sunday School convention a little while ago, that a child had been placed under his care by a father who was exceedingly fond of her, and all the more so because of her sad infirmity. At last he wrote to the official that he could stand the separation no longer; he must see his child. She was informed of his expected arrival, and during the interval was taught, by imitating the movement of her teacher's lips, to pronounce one word.

A carriage drove to the entrance into the grounds; she eagerly watched him as he descended, and throwing open the door, hurried down the walk, her curls flying in the wind, and her eyes sparkling with gladness. He saw her coming, stopped, held out his arms with a bright smile on his face, when she rushed to him, and looking up said, "Father!" The doctor declared that the man rolled on the grass, sobbing and shouting in the rapture of his joy to hear those sweet, dumb lips utter that one word.

Tried and troubled one, the *mystery of suffering* will begin to be clear if under the promptings of the Comforter you will cry, perhaps with tears, *"Abba, Father!"*

The night before Dr. Chalmers was absent from the body and present with the Lord, he was overheard by some of his family, while he was walking in the garden, saying again and again,*"Oh, my Father, my heavenly Father!"* The old man and the great man was becoming a little child once more, as it always is with a true Christian when he approaches the end. He sees clearly that "the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking," or external display, or forms and ceremonies, but "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," (Romans 14:17); and he readily enters into the longing of the apostle's prayer, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

It all comes to *believing*at last, not *seeing*nor *feeling*nor *trying*, but *believing*; and then hope springs up through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is His teaching that leads the children of affliction to say, "We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). It is not that all things *shall*work, as it is often quoted, but *do*work, *are*working; and it is not that we see it, or feel it, but we know it upon the sure testimony of God, confirmed to us by the ever-abiding Comforter.

It is that Comforter who is saying now, as of old, and as truly now as then, "Yes, the Lord will give what is good" (Psalm 85:12), and even He can use no stronger beseeching in exhorting "the love of the Spirit" (Romans 15:30).

O Comforter of God's redeemed,  
Whom the world does not see,  
What hand should pluck me from the flood  
That casts my soul on Thee?  
Who would not suffer pain like mine,  
To be consoled like me?  
  
When I am feeble as a child,  
And flesh and heart give way,  
Then on Your everlasting strength  
With passive trust I stay;  
And the rough wind becomes a song;  
The darkness shines like day.

It is not hard to bear by faith  
In Your own bosom laid,  
The trial of a soul redeemed,  
For Your rejoicing made.  
Well may the heart in patience rest,  
That none can make afraid.

Deep unto deep may call, but I  
With peaceful heart will say,  
Your loving kindness has a charge  
No waves can take away.  
Then let the storm that speeds me home  
Deal with me as it may.

***~~Chapter 9. The God of All Comfort~~***

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and *God of all comfort*, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our *consolation*also abounds through Christ" 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

He is the God of all comfort, the source of every kind of consolation we receive now and forever; and the last verse intimates that the suffering we endure is the natural and necessary result of His Son's suffering on the cross. Elsewhere He is described as the "God, who comforts the downcast" (2 Corinthians 7:6).

The word *comfort*in these passages is the one from which *Paraclete*is derived, and hence the glorious God is pleased to reveal Himself as called to the side of His children who are in trouble, that He may render them needed help. *He sends both the trouble and the help*, and therefore the Psalmist says, "You, who have shown me great and severe troubles, shall revive me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth. You shall increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side" (Psalm 71:20-21).

Again he writes by the Spirit, "Cast your *burden*[margin, *gift*, that which He has given you] on the Lord, and He shall sustain you" (Psalm 55:22); the word *sustain*being also rendered in other places bear, feed, guide, nourish, provide, and receive.*Thus, when God gives a burden, it is that we may roll it upon His strong arm*, and we look up with the cry, "Remember the word to Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life" (Psalm 119:49-50).

He not only *comforts*, but He *sympathizes*with those upon whom He lays the rod. Thus we read, "'Comfort yes, comfort My people!' says your God. 'Speak comfort to Jerusalem'" (Isaiah 40:1). Here the first definition of the word comfort is "to sigh, to mourn, to grieve over, to feel compassion for, to pity," while the word speak comfort is literally, "speak to the heart." *He expects the tenderness of His own heart, when He sends the rod of gentle chastening, to reach the heart of His suffering child and drive away all fear.*

The Son of His love has taught us that two sparrows were sold for a farthing, and so cheap and worthless were they that if a man bought four, the seller threw in another for nothing; "and not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered (Luke 12:6-7). To His disciples in the midst of great perils and privations, He said, "But not a hair of your head shall perish. By your patience possess you your souls" (Luke 21:18-19).

A pastor often visited an aged saint eighty-seven years of age, who for fifteen years was bedridden and blind. She was usually very bright and cheerful, but on one occasion she told him that since his last visit she had been in terrible darkness. When he inquired how it came, she replied that she had been informed of the sudden death of a youthful and useful Christian lady, who was a near neighbor. She began to wonder why God spared her so long, when she was of no service to anyone, and then the thought darted into her mind that He had so many people to look after. He had forgotten her, and, "Oh, the horror that rolled over my soul at this," she exclaimed.

"But you are out of the darkness now; how did you get out?" he asked.

"There is but one way," she answered, "and that is by going to the Word. I remembered that the Lord Jesus declares all the hairs of our heads are numbered, and although I once had children of my own, whom I loved, I suppose, as much as most mothers love their children, and although I washed their faces for them and brushed their hair many a time, I never thought enough of one of my children to count every hair on its head. Since my Father thinks enough of me to count every hair on my old gray head, I told the devil to go away and let me alone, and he has left me in peace."

Think of the ways in which the God of all comfort addresses Himself to the necessities of His suffering children.

Are you aged, oppressed with sad memories, and utter loneliness and gloomy forebodings? "Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you" (Isaiah 46:4).

Are you troubled? "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind [margin, thought or imagination] is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:3-4).

Are you hungry? "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young" (Isaiah 40:11).

Are you weary? "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Are you afraid? "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10).

Are you thirsty? "The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst. I, the LORD, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water" (Isaiah 41:17-18).

Are you in the midst of stormy seas and fierce flames? "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you" (Isaiah 43:2).

Are you fighting? "No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn" Isaiah 54:17.

Are you tempted? "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him [margin, put him to flight] (Isaiah 59:19).

These are a few of the promises taken from a single book of the Bible, and there are *thousands of similar promises which the God of all comfort gives in the Scripture*, and which may be appropriated by His suffering children, according to their need, and according to the decision of His infinite wisdom and unchanging love concerning their best interests in this world and the world to come.

Never yet was a check of faith drawn on His boundless resources to be dishonored, although the return from His treasure-house may not have been just the kind we desired or expected.

"When God would teach mankind His name,  
He calls Himself *the Great I AM*,  
And leaves a blank—believers may  
Supply those things for which they pray."

Well then, may burdened Christians send forth the bold challenge, "If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32). That is, all things that He can give consistently with His purpose in the gift of His Son.

A lady whose health was shattered and whose husband had lost his money, complained one day to a servant of Christ that God was harsh in His dealings with her. While they were talking, her sleeping baby awoke, and she took it up to quiet its cries. A bright fire was blazing in the grate, and he suddenly inquired, "What enemy is so dear to you, or what interest is so great in your estimation, that in order to serve the one, or to secure the other, you would put your babe into that fire?"

She looked at him a moment with an expression of surprise and indignation, and replied, "You know perfectly well that I would not cast my child into the fire for any consideration whatever."

"And yet," he said, "God cast His only begotten and well beloved Son into the fire. God spared Him not, though He saw His deep humiliation, though He beheld Him weltering in bloody sweat in Gethsemane, though He witnessed His frightful agonies on Calvary, and still you doubt His goodness."

Surely the greater gift includes the lesser, and he who really believes that God's love for him was so great He gave His Son to the death of the cross, can easily believe that God's love for him is infinite, even when calling him to listen to *the voice of the rod*. God's love for His Son was never greater than when those cries of distress went up at midnight from the garden, and His love for His sons is never greater than when they complain, with sick Hezekiah, "I have considered until morning—like a lion, so will He breaks all my bones; from day until night You make an end of me" (Isaiah 38:13).

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" (Romans 8:35). We may suffer every kind of privation and trouble, and at last be killed, but does this put an end to the love of Christ? "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

When we beat an enemy we are conquerors, but when the enemy becomes a friend we are *more*than conquerors. When we endure tribulation and distress and other forms of trial without a murmur, we are conquerors; but when we know that God compels them to minister to our welfare, to kneel at our feet, and ask how they can serve us, we are more than conquerors, or as the word may be rendered, very far more than conquerors, and all through the unchanging love of Christ.

*The love of Jesus is so deep and tender that it secures His constant presence at every step of our journey through this unfriendly world.* "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). He has not forgotten His promise. "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5); or, "I will not, not leave you, neither will I not, not forsake you, or I can not, I will not forsake you; no, indeed." "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our *home*with him" (John 14:23). The word *home*occurs but once elsewhere, and there it is rendered mansions, as if the indwelling of the Father and the Son by the Holy Spirit were just fitting the man who keeps Christ's words, perhaps by tribulation and distress, for a statelier place in the Father's house with its many mansions.

*We may be sure that the power and the presence and the immutable love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit will secure us against any suffering that is not absolutely necessary.* If nine hundred and ninety-nine aches and pains will answer the purpose, we shall not have a thousand. If a thousand hot tears coursing down our cheeks will accomplish the end the God of all comfort has in view, we shall not have a thousand and one.

*We do not know what is best for us, but He does*, and we can say with the prophet, "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps. O Lord, correct me, but with justice; not in Your anger, lest You bring me to nothing" (Jeremiah 10:23-24). Out of the word that lives and abides forever, comes the sweet response to this prayer: "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen!" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

In view of this, surely some light is shed upon *the mystery of suffering*, when we see that sorrow at least furnishes the *dark background*on which the God of all grace shows His sufficiency for all our need, and the platform for the manifestation of patient submission to His will. It is obvious also that those who suffer according to His will are doing His will, not less truly than those in the field of active service, and shall fully share in the reward to be given at the coming of Christ Jesus. "As his part is who goes down to the battle, so shall his part be who stays by the supplies; they shall share alike" (1 Samuel 30:24).

If the suffering children of God would recognize the dignity and greatness of their calling, and the truth that "the Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet" (Nahum 1:3).

Let them remember that when their Lord was on the earth, He not only rebuked the roaring winds and raging waves, but *muzzled*the sea, as the Greek word means, and that He still lives to *muzzle our afflictions*, lest they go too far. We may be made to weep, but faith will look up with the cry, "Put my tears into Your *bottle*; are they not in Your *book*?" (Psalm 56:8). Yes, they are all in His bottle, preserved before His throne; and then, as if He feared that some of them might be lost, they are recorded in His book. Every one of them will sparkle like a gem in the crown of the sufferer's rejoicing, at "our gathering together to Him," (2 Thessalonians 2:1); and every page upon which they were entered, will be luminous with the splendor of His grace and glory.

When we touch the shining strand  
Where the waiting angels stand,  
In the far-off Fatherland,  
We shall know,  
In the happiness unending  
Of a blissful comprehending,  
What our life-work meant below.  
In the fullness, deep and wide,  
Weary souls, by sorrow tried,  
Knowing, shall be satisfied in His rest;  
Finding, in the perfect sweetness  
Of an infinite completeness,  
That God's ways are always best!

***~~Chapter 10. The Everlasting Arms~~***

"The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms!" Deuteronomy 33:27

This was spoken primarily of Israel, but it is equally true of all God's people in every age and in every land. The *arm*is the symbol of power, and the arms of Jehovah never grow old nor feeble. Israel, unconscious of His presence and unmindful of His promise, has been borne for twenty-five hundred years since the Babylonian captivity, upon these strong and everlasting arms, and this is the only way to account for the preservation of the Jews amid the fiery persecutions of centuries, and the tremendous temptations to merge their identity with other nationalities.

The same everlasting arms are underneath the suffering believer in Jesus, and thus, and thus only, is he kept and upheld.

First, it is a **redeeming**arm. "Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will *redeem*you with an outstretched arm'" (Exodus 6:6).

Afterward it was shown that the redemption was by blood, and the arm was the mere instrument to put into effect the purpose of God's sovereign grace. "The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13). The real redemption, therefore, took place when the blood was sprinkled, and the arm was stretched out to defend those who were delivered from death. God did not say, "When *you*see the blood," but, "When*I*see the blood." Nor did He say, "When I see your good feelings, your repentance, your resolutions, your baptism, your efforts," but, "When I see *the blood*." The *blood*alone made them safe; the *Word*alone made them sure; and the feeblest child, the most timid woman, was as truly sheltered under the blood, and as far beyond the reach of the destroyer, as were Moses and Aaron.

It is most important for the afflicted Christian who ponders the *mystery of suffering*, to see that the question of his redemption is already settled. If he thinks that God is calling his sins to remembrance, or that he is working in pain for his escape from the curse, there can be no comfort for him. He must accept as true the testimony of the Holy Spirit, "Christ HAS redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Galatians 3:13). "In Him we *have*redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Peter 1:18-19).

So precious is that blood, the very shadow and type of God's lamb redeemed Israel, and "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:8). The everlasting arms are underneath us, only because Christ "with His own blood entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12).

Second, it is a **saving**arm. "They did not gain possession of the land by their own sword, nor did their own arm save them; but it was Your right hand, Your arm, and the light of Your countenance, because You favored them" (Psalm 44:3).

God Himself says, "My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands will wait upon Me, and on My arm they will trust" (Isaiah 51:5). Amid the shameful failures and apostasy of Israel, and the guilt and ignorance and helplessness of the Gentiles, "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore *His own arm brought salvation*for Him, and His own righteousness, it sustained Him" (Isaiah 59:16). Jonah might pray and quote Psalms, but not until he could say, *"Salvation is of the Lord!"*(Jonah 2:9), did the Lord speak to the fish and send forth His poor servant out of the belly of Hell, out of the midst of the seas, from the compassing floods, and from the overwhelming billows and waves and wrapping weeds at the bottoms of the mountains.

So it is still; the suffering Christian must be brought to the end of his own resources and learn the difference between doing and *done*, between trying and *trusting*. As long as we are occupied with ourselves, it is impossible to obtain peace, but when we turn our eyes without to the finished work of Christ, the storm of agitation ceases, and there is a great calm. We must understand once for all the meaning of the angel's announcement to Joseph, "You shall call His name Jesus, for*He will save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). We must see that the One "who being the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3).

We must accept the testimony of the word that, apart from any aid we could render, and independent of any assistance from the church or any other creature, "by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Then, and not until then, do we receive the chastening of a Father's hand, as a correction sent to those who "are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26); already "passed from death into life" (John 5:24); already saved because "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

Third, it is a **strong**arm. "You have a mighty arm; strong is Your hand, and high is Your right hand" (Psalm 89:13). Well might the question be asked of Job in his distress, "Have you an arm like God?" (Job 40:9). It called his attention away from his own weakness, to the omnipotent arm of God on which he ought to have leaned his whole weight in the day of his calamity.

Thus too, our attention is called to the contemplation of "the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:19-20). *God is on His glorious throne, controlling all the affairs of this world, directing all the events of the believer's life, and permitting no trial to befall His blood-bought people, except as it may execute His own loving design.*To know this is to enter into the joyful experience of the apostle, who did not grimly endure sufferings because he could not avoid them, but triumphantly exclaimed, "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Fourth, it is a **scattering**arm. "You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm" (Psalm 89:10). When the Israelites started upon their journey across the pathless desert, the ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them to search out a resting place, while the cloud of the Lord was upon them by day. "So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said, 'Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You" (Numbers 10:35). At least twenty times in the prophecy of Ezekiel alone it is announced that the same Israelites, once so happy and prosperous, shall be scattered among all the nations of the earth for their iniquities; but the scattering arm of the Lord can compel the evils that scatter the true followers of Christ to promote His glory and the good of His people.

Thus in the fierce persecution that scattered the church at Jerusalem, "Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). Our ascended Savior holds the scepter of universal empire in His imperial hand, and "a king who sits on the throne of judgment scatters all evil with his eyes" (Proverbs 20:8).

Fifth, it is a **gathering**arm. "Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scatters Israel will *gather*him, and keep him, as a shepherd keeps his flock" (Jeremiah 31:10). No wonder the prophet adds, "After this I awoke and looked around, and my sleep was sweet to me" (Jeremiah 31:26).

The same truth is taught in the New Testament, where our Lord declares that "He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will *gather*together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:31).

Meanwhile we read of another gathering, as when Caiaphas unconsciously prophesied that "Jesus would die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad" (John 11:51-52), so that "there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16). Our Christian life *begins*with our gathering together unto Him by faith; and it *ends*with our gathering together unto Him by sight, as the apostle exhorts us "concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him" (2 Thessalonians 2:1).

Can anyone imagine that between these two gatherings He will be neglectful of His flock? "He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out" (John 10:3) and knows them often also by the very bruises and wounds they receive on their way to meet Him in glory.

Sixth, it is a **glorious**arm, "Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit within them, who led them by the right hand of Moses with His *glorious*arm, dividing the water before them to make for Himself an everlasting name?" (Isaiah 63:11-12). The cross of Christ has snapped the link that bound us to this world, and now "our citizenship is in Heaven from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself" (Philippians 3:20-21). We cannot suppose that on our way to the glory the *good*Shepherd, the *great*Shepherd, the *chief*Shepherd having such an arm will permit any suffering to come upon us, that will not make the glory the brighter in the day that will fulfill the promise, "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory!" (Colossians 3:4).

Seventh, His arms are embracing and very **tender**. When He saw His disciples rebuking those who brought their little ones to Him, "He was greatly displeased [the only time He ever manifested His displeasure with His poor, ignorant, erring disciples] and said to them, 'Let the little children come unto Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God…. And He took them up in His arms [embraced them, folded them in His arms], put His hands on them and blessed them" (Mark 10:14, 16).

Can any sufferer doubt the love of such a Savior? Can any one imagine that He is indifferent to the pains and sorrows which He Himself felt, and which He feels afresh in the griefs and trials of His friends and followers? In the darkest night and wildest storm He is still saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid!" (Matthew 14:27).

Then cheer you, cheer you, suffering saint!  
Though worn with chastening, be not faint!  
And though your *night of pain*seems long,  
Cling to your Lord—in Him be strong.  
He knows, He numbers every tear;  
Not one faint sigh escapes His ear.  
  
What, though the way be rough and steep?  
What, though we stumble as the blind?  
There's joy reserved for those who weep,  
The Everlasting Arms are kind!  
What matters it if sorrows come?  
What, though the night be dark and long?

The darkest cloud but hides the sun,  
The Everlasting Arms are strong.  
What, though life's ocean surges high?  
The adverse winds now toss each wave?  
Be not afraid! 'tis only I—  
The Everlasting Arms can save.  
  
What, though besieged by sin and strife,  
The heart and flesh but sink and quail?  
I am the Way, the Truth, the Life;  
The Everlasting Arms ne'er fail.  
Remember, flame consumes but dross.  
  
To pure gold adds but brighter charms,  
'Neath the blood-stained banner of the cross,  
Behold the Everlasting Arms.  
In life's fierce conflict, faithful be;  
'Tis only they who win the crown.  
When Death disrobes mortality,  
The Everlasting Arms reach down!"

***~~Chapter 11. Fear Not~~***

These words, or their equivalent, "Do not be afraid," occur at least ninety times in the Old Testament and twenty-four times in the New. They touch every class and condition of God's people under all possible circumstances of suffering and trial. They contain a *command*and an *exhortation*; and if the one was obeyed and the other heeded, the necessity for discipline might not be avoided, but the severity of discipline would be mitigated.

When smarting under the sharpest stroke or groping through the darkest night, the voice of our Almighty Father, of our interceding High Priest, and of our ever abiding Comforter would be distinctly recognized, sounding in our hearing and in our hearts, "Fear not," and all dread of final defeat would be instantly quelled!

The sufferer may complain that he is compelled to receive the knowledge of God's presence and help by faith alone. Very true, but he is also compelled to receive nearly all of his knowledge by faith alone. Apart from the very few incidents that have fallen under his personal observation, his knowledge of the entire history of the world he receives by faith alone. Apart from the very few persons and places he has seen, his knowledge of all the men and of all the countries and cities on the face of the earth he receives by faith alone. Apart from the very few who have investigated for themselves the secrets of God's universe, all the rest of the race must receive their knowledge of scientific discoveries by faith alone. Thousands and millions buy and build and plant and sell and sail seas and work, wholly on the strength of their faith in what others have said; and faith never seems an absurd thing to the unbeliever, until God and the Bible are mentioned.

"Evidences of Christianity!" exclaims Coleridge, "I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the need of it, … and you may safely trust it to its own evidence."

A mother leaves her sick child, saying, "I am going into the next room, but fear not; and if you want anything call me." The child receives the knowledge of the mother's nearness and helpfulness by faith alone, but does the fact that the mother is invisible prevent the child from calling for assistance and sympathy?

Suppose the sufferer knew that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the next room listening to his sighs and interceding in his behalf; he could not fear. But Heaven is only the next room, so near that Stephen saw Him through the opened door standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55), so near that He spoke audibly to Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:4), so near that although He refused to permit Mary to touch Him because He had not ascended to the Father (John 20:17); a few minutes later He was back on the earth, inviting her to hold Him by the feet (Matthew 28:9). "Then the angel said to them: Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord!" (Luke 2:10-11). Here the gospel is proclaimed by an angelic messenger, and all fear of the consequences of sin may be removed at once from the sufferer's mind.

Since the coming and death of Christ on the cross the announcement is evermore sounding from Heaven, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). All the doing was done when He cried with His expiring breath, *"It is finished!"*(John 19:30), and now it is a question, not of struggling but of believing on Him who "died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3); for "he who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

The *invitation*is now: "Come, for all things are NOW ready" (Luke 14:17).

*Righteousness*is now offered as a spotless robe to the believer, "NOW the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe" (Romans 3:21-22).

*Justification*is now waiting on the lips of the great Judge: "Having NOW been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him," (Romans 5:9). "There is therefore NOW no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

*Nearness to the throne*is now the privilege of all who trust in His name: "NOW in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).

*Intercession*is now presented in their behalf: "Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into Heaven itself, NOW to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24). The Son's place is now their place: "Beloved, NOW are we children of God" (1 John 3:2). Hark! You can hear Him saying, "Fear not."

Second, *His watchful providence should banish fear*. "I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4). God directs and upholds a little bird in its flight: "Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:31). Once Paul stood on the deck of a tempest-tossed vessel amid a terrified crew and calmly said, "There stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul'" (Acts 27:23-24); and to the captain and sailors he said, "Not a hair will fall from the head of any of you" (Acts 27:34). It is true that they had to swim for it, "And the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they escaped all safely to land" (Acts 27:44).

Once the Master lay in the hind part of the ship asleep upon a pillow; and when a great storm of wind arose, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves, "His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!' But He said to them, 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm" (Matthew 8:25-26). Only trust Him, suffering and faint-hearted one, for "He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so He guides them to their desired haven" (Psalm 107:29-30).

Third, if in poverty or in loneliness or in the midst of enemies that rob us of all our wells of earthly comfort, He is still saying, as He said to His faithful servant who refused to take even to shoe-latchet from the world, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1).

He is still saying, as He said to a weeping mother in the wilderness, waiting for the death of her child, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is" (Genesis 21:17).

He is still saying, as He said to Isaac, whose herdsmen were driven away by the herdsmen of Gerar, "Fear not, for I am with you. I will bless you" (Genesis 26:24).

He may speak roughly, as Joseph did to his brethren, in order to bring us to a sense of our sin, but He sends a message, as Joseph did by the mouth of his steward, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid!" (Genesis 43:23).

Fourth, His people are sometimes led, as Israel was led; and that, too, remember, under the guidance of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. *Before*them was a sea on which was no boat nor bridge. *Behind*them was the army of the mightiest empire on earth, and there was no way of escape on either *side*. "And Moses said to the people: Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord!" (Exodus 14:13).

Very often we fail to see the salvation of the Lord because we do not learn to stand still, to cease from our own efforts, to cast ourselves in simple faith upon His almighty and protecting arm. Jehoshaphat, surrounded by foes, could only cry, "We have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us, nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You" (2 Chronicles 20:12).

The result was a message from the prophet, "Thus says the Lord to you, 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's…. You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem! Do not fear or be dismayed'" (2 Chronicles 10:15, 17).

Fifth, there are times when we are overwhelmed by the *discovery of our own vileness*in the presence of His glorious holiness, and we feel like falling with our faces toward the ground as Daniel did, while our loveliness is turned in us into corruption and we retain no strength. But there most surely comes a voice from one "having the likeness of a man…. 'O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!' So when he spoke unto me, I was strengthened, and said, 'Let my Lord speak, for you have strengthened me'" (Daniel 10:18, 19).

Nay, such an experience is frequently needed to fit us for service, and if this is kept in mind, the *mystery of suffering*will be better understood. Most of us are like Peter, who fell down at Jesus' knees under the display of His power, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8). But immediately came the response, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men!" (Luke 5:10). It is well if in suffering and by suffering, we learn the sublime paradox of the apostle, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Sixth, the same word of cheer attends us when shuddering beneath the blow that deprives us of our children. Jairus fell at the feet of Jesus beseeching Him greatly in behalf of a little daughter lying at the point of death. But the Savior was stopped on the road to heal a suffering woman, and during the trying delay, "Some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Master any further?' As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, 'Do not be afraid, only believe'" (Mark 5:35-36). Yes, as soon as He heard the word, for He did not wish unbelief to enter that sorrowing heart and make the grief all the greater. Calmly He went on His way, and entering the house of mourning, He took the dead child's cold hand in His own, saying, "Rise, My child!" the pledge and the forerunner of the word He will speak to all of His redeemed children when He comes again.

Seventh, beyond death the voice of courage and hope attends us even to the judgment seat of Christ. At His open grave the angel said unto the women, "Fear not," and the risen Jesus Himself said to them, "Be not afraid." The beloved disciple who leaned upon His bosom at the last supper, fell at His feet like a dead man, stricken down by the brightness of His glory on the isle of Patmos; but the Lord laid His right hand upon him, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last" (Revelation 1:17).

John never feared again. Awful judgments passed before his vision, like successive flashes of lightning, like hurrying cyclones with terrifying roll of thunder and roar of winds, but he trembled no more. The assuring touch of Jesus was upon him, and he knew that he was above the storm forever. "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:7).

Why then should we *fear*, though the rough waves are tossed by the tempest, when faith can behold Him walking on the sea and hear His voice, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

Why should we *shrink*, when He says to us amid the tumult of the world and the perils that beset our souls, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). He does not say "Go," but "Come!" for He Himself will be with us in our loneliness, and the place of our separation and suffering will become radiant with the beauty of His manifested presence.

Shut in, shut in from the ceaseless din  
Of the restless world, and its want and sin;  
Shut in from its turmoil, care and strife,  
And all the wearisome round of life.

Shut in with tears that are spent in vain,  
With the dull companionship of pain;  
Shut in with the changeless days and hours,  
And the bitter knowledge of failing powers.

Shut in with dreams of days gone by,  
With buried hopes that were born to die;  
Shut in with hopes that have lost their zest,  
And leave but a longing after rest.

Shut in with a trio of angels sweet, *Patience*and *Grace*all pain to meet,  
With *Faith*that can suffer and stand and wait,  
And lean on the promises strong and great!

Shut in with Christ! Oh, wonderful thought!  
Shut in with the peace His sufferings brought.  
Shut in with the love that wields the rod;  
Oh, company blessed! Shut in with God!

***~~Chapter 12. Songs in the Night~~***

"But no one says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night?" (Job 35:10). Elihu is here reproving Job for his self-righteousness, and he tells him that as the wickedness of man cannot dim the majesty of God, but brings ruin to the sinner—so the obedience of man cannot profit God, but it carries blessing and joy in its train, even songs in the dark night of affliction. "Therefore trust in Him" is the lesson he seeks to teach the sorely tried man, and it is the lesson he learned in the school of suffering, when the Lord spoke to him out of the whirlwind. "Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'Behold, I am vile! What shall I answer You? I will lay my hand over my mouth" (Job 40:3-4).

There are many things about which sufferers may sing, if they will only turn their thoughts away from themselves and their distressing circumstances—and train their minds to bring before them the tender assurances of infinite love scattered through the Word. Try it some sleepless night, when racked with pain, or tossing and turning in your bed, disturbed by doubts, haunted by fears, harassed by painful recollections, tortured by gloomy forebodings or shrinking from death. Recall all you can of the life and sayings and sympathy of Jesus, remembering that "all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20), and see if it will not quiet your agitation, like His own "Peace, be still," spoken to the storm. "For so He gives His beloved sleep," (Psalm 127:2).

"Of all the thoughts of God that are  
Borne inward unto souls afar  
Along the Psalmist's music deep,  
Now tell me if that any is,  
For gift or grace surpassing this,  
*He gives His beloved sleep.*"

First, we may sing of His **creative**power in the night of sorrow, and thus catch the strains of that first music, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy" (Job 38:7). It is a manifestation of power designed to give comfort to the afflicted, for the Holy Spirit expressly writes, "Let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a *faithful Creator*" (1 Peter 4:19).

It is a still greater comfort to know that *creation was an act of power put forth by the hand that was nailed to the cross*, "For by Him all things were created that are in Heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:16-18).

Surely it is enough to call forth a song in the darkest night to understand that over the night and in the face of the night, the Son of God reigns, "whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He *made*the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:2-3).

Since He who loved us unto death not only *made*the worlds, but *upholds*all things by the word of His power, it is certain that no suffering can be the portion of His people, except that which is necessary to carry out the purpose of God, "who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 3:9-10). The church is the lesson book which the angels are studying, and the manifold wisdom of God, including all that He does, will be made known more through suffering than through all the other manifestations of His glory.

Second, we can sing of **redemption**in the night, when we can sing of nothing else. "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to Me, for I have *redeemed*you. Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the Lord has *redeemed*Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel" (Isaiah 44:22-23).

So of Israel it is said, "The ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).

The time is coming when the covenanted promise of God shall be fulfilled: "Behold, I will allure her, will bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfort to her. I will give her her vineyards from there, and the Valley of Achor as a door of hope; she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt" (Hosea 2:14-15).

John saw the twenty-four elders in Heaven, representatives of all the saved, fall down before the Lamb who still bore the marks of the sacrificial knife, "And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have *redeemed*us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth'" (Revelation 5:9-10). Seven times in the Old Testament do we read of the new song, and although redemption's song has been sung since Abel's day, it will be new world without end.

Third, we can sing of **righteousness**in the dark. "Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of Your *righteousness*" (Psalm 51:14). So the Psalmist once more says, "My mouth shall tell of Your *righteousness*and Your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits" (Psalm 71:15). There are not figures enough, nor musical notes enough, to celebrate the righteousness that has been fully vindicated in the salvation of God's redeemed people.

No real Christian even desires to be saved at the expense of divine righteousness, and it makes him sing for very gladness of heart to see that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4) and that God is never more just than when He is "Just, and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).*A great sinner saved makes a great singer*, and even when the night closes around him and his song is broken and hoarse with sobs, he is certain that God is righteous in all of His ways.

Fourth, we can find something to sing about in the **Word of God**, if we will recall it when there is no light. "Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage" (Psalm 119:54). "Sing to Him a new song. Play skillfully with a shout of joy. For the word of the Lord is right, and all His work is done in truth" (Psalm 33:3-4). The acceptance of His Word as true must be followed by songs, as it is said of Israel, "Then they believed His Words; they sang His praise" (Psalm 106:12). Hence the Psalmist, by the spirit of prophecy, exclaims, as he looks to a day that is yet future, "All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the words of Your mouth. Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord" (Psalm 138:4-5).

But even in this day to those who believe, it is written, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

None can so well afford to sing as those who know that "all Scripture [every word of the sacred writings] is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness ; that the man of God may be compete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (1 Timothy 3:16-17).

Fifth, we may sing in **anticipation of the morning**that shall follow the night. "His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a *night*, but joy [margin, singing] comes in the *morning*" (Psalm 30:5). It was this that led the Psalmist to say, "The Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me—a prayer to the God of my life" (Psalm 42:8). At another time his spirit was overwhelmed, and he bitterly complained, "My hand was stretched out in the night without ceasing; my soul refused to be comforted" (Psalm 77:2). But even then he adds, "I call to remembrance my song in the night" (Psalm 77:6).

We can scarcely imagine a more trying position than that of two servants of Christ in a strange and heathen land, with bleeding backs gashed by the Roman lash, thrust into the inner prison and their feet made fast in the stocks; "But at *midnight*Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God" (Acts 16:25). The *nightingale*sings at night, and most sweetly, it is said, when the thorn pierces its breast.

Sixth, there is to be a wonderful song in **the morning of the Resurrection**. "Your dead shall live; together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead" (Isaiah 26:19). The lark sings most loudly and sweetly the higher it ascends, and when no longer visible from the earth it floods the skies with its joyful melody, as we, too, shall do when caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Then shall roll around redeemed creation the shout and song of triumph, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Seventh, this, of course, leads to **the song of the bride**: "My beloved spoke, and said to me: 'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land" (Song of Solomon 2:10-12). She shall have a great leader of her song, for her glorious Bridegroom says to the Father, "In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You" (Hebrews 2:12). Her warfare accomplished and her victory achieved, her song shall blend harmoniously with the song of the elect of Israel standing on "a sea of glass mingled with fire" (Revelation 15:2). It is glass because the *mystery of suffering* will then be clear; it is of fire because they have come up through the great tribulation under Antichrist. And, "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and marvelous are Your works. Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!'" (Revelation 15:3). The sea is so bright that it reflects His glory, in which we shall shine forever and ever, while we shall sing forever and ever of Him who brought us out of night into everlasting light.

During a recent conversation with a Christian lady in her own home, concerning the King, there suddenly floated through the room a strain of exquisite music. It was a succession of notes from a master's composition, and the tones were exceedingly rich and delicious. Turning the head to discover the source of the charming melody, it was found to proceed from a beautiful little bird in a cage. "How," it was asked, "was he taught to sing so sweetly?" "He was placed in the night," the lady replied, "beside a fine music-box, and learned to imitate the sounds he heard in the dark." Thus Jesus teaches His own to sing.

There's One who once walked in the darkness,  
Forsaken and all alone,  
And He left there a voice of singing,  
Which He gives to His own.

He gives! Ah, yes, He gives—  
You can read the mystery now;  
For He strikes the joyous key-note,  
Where circling seraphs bow.

Is the midnight closing round you?  
Are the shadows dark and long?  
Ask Him to come close beside you,  
And He'll give you a new, sweet song.

He'll give it, and sing it with you;  
And when weakness lets it down,  
He'll take up the broken cadence,  
And blend it with his own.

And many a rapturous minstrel  
Among those sons of light,  
Will say of His sweetest music,  
"I learned it in the *night*."

And many a rolling anthem  
That fills the Father's home,  
Sobbed out its first rehearsal  
In the shade of a darkened room.

***~~Chapter 13. Afterward~~***

"Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, *afterward*it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11). It would not be a chastening at all, unless it was grievous. Christians make a great mistake if they imagine that the Lord expects them to meet the sufferings of life with stoic indifference, or to remain unmoved under the strokes of His rod. He knows that *the rod will sting and wound*, and in order to alleviate the pain, He bids us look beyond the present affliction to the long afterward that follows.

A humble and godly man once came with his wife to a servant of the Lord and informed him that he was about to undergo a severe and dangerous surgical operation as the only means of saving his life. He stated that he was not afraid of death, for God had given him the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; but his wife and ten children, all of whom were girls, the youngest not six-months-old and the eldest not sixteen years, were dependent upon him for support, and it seemed to be necessary for him to live for their sakes. So it seemed to the minister, and he never prayed with more fervor or faith that his brother might be spared. At the close of a season of very earnest supplication all three arose from their knees, confident that their request would be granted.

A few days later the operation was performed, and at once it became apparent that he could not survive. The pastor called to see him and noticed that his face had a sad and disappointed look. "What do you think," he asked him, "of the promise of God, that though no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless, afterward, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who have been trained by it?"

He replied that the verse had greatly troubled him, for he could not see how his sore chastening could yield him any peaceable fruit during the little time remaining to him on earth, "But why," inquired his friend, "do you limit the 'afterward' to the little time remaining on earth? It stretches through everlasting years, and you will be gathering precious fruit from the tree watered with your tears while eternity endures." He soon fell asleep calmly and even joyfully, and by a strange and unexpected providence of God, his family were immediately placed in far more comfortable circumstances than they could have been had he continued among them.

It *often*occurs, and it has been gratefully acknowledged ten thousand times, that the chastening yields peaceable fruit in the afterward of this present life; and it is *sure*to do it in the life to come. The fruit of the battle won is speedy peace; and if the victory is decisive, it is endless. This peace is for those "who have been trained by it," the original word containing an allusion to Grecian athletes, who stripped themselves naked that they might put forth all their strength in their public games, and so win the wreath of immortality. With the utmost confidence it may be said, that *if God did not see an absolute necessity for such a desperate struggle on the part of His beloved children, the chastening would never smite them*.

"This weed? This stone? It is your heart;  
It must be crushed by pain and smart,  
It must be cleansed by sorrow's art,  
Before it will yield a fragrance sweet,  
Before it will shine a jewel meet  
To lay before your dear Lord's feet."

The deluge that swept around *Noah*brought out the rainbow of promise (Genesis 9). *Abraham's*offering up of Isaac made his seed as the stars of Heaven, and as the sands upon the sea shore (Genesis 22). *Jacob's*halting thigh caused him to see God's face as the sun rose upon him (Genesis 32). *Joseph's*prison was the doorway to Pharaoh's palace (Genesis 41). *Moses'*grief over Israel's sin led God to speak to him face to face, as a man speaks unto his friend (Exodus 33). *Job*was stripped of all that he had, that in the end the Lord might give him twice as much as he had before (Job 42). *David*was like a hunted partridge in the mountains, that he might become the sweet Psalmist of Israel to the saints of all succeeding generations (2 Samuel 23). *Manasseh's*chain was worth more to him than Manasseh's crown (2 Chronicles 33). *Daniel's*captivity made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon (Daniel 2). *Esther's*exposure to death saved a nation (Esther 4). *Peter*was girded and carried where he wished not, that he should glorify God (John 21). *Paul's*head fell beneath Nero's axe, that there might be placed upon it an unfading wreath (2 Timothy 4); and as an old Puritan writer has said, "The stones that came about Stephen's ears, did but knock him closer to Christ!" (Acts 7).

Thus it always has been, thus it always is, with those of whom God thinks enough to use them in His service; and the *mystery of suffering* begins to clear up when we see that there is a certain and most intimate relation between it and the glory that shall follow. So common is the affliction of Christians, that Heaven has been described as a hospital at one end and a palace at the other; and our place in the palace will depend upon the ward, and the character of the trials and the spirit in which they were borne, while we are at this end. This is no conjecture nor theory, but the plain testimony of the inspired Scriptures to which every sufferer should give heed.

It is the law of the kingdom from which there is no exemption, that we must follow the pathway leading to the cross, if we would reach the crown shining in the great afterward of God. It is His law in nature, in providence, and in grace; and His wise children would not escape it if they could. It is the way the Master took, and surely, "It is enough for the disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master" (Matthew 10:25). Hence we must know "the fellowship of His sufferings."

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). Language has no meaning unless this teaches that the believer's affliction works out the everlasting and exceeding glory. As Dr. Charles Hodge has truly said, "Afflictions are the cause of eternal glory. Not the *meritorious*cause, but still the *procuring*cause. God has seen fit to reveal His purpose not only to reward with exceeding joy the afflictions of His people, but to make those afflictions the means of working out that joy.

This doctrine is taught in many passages of Scripture: Matthew 19:29; Romans 8:17; 2 Timothy 2:12-13; I Peter 1:6, 4:13; Rev. 7:14. Paul says, "I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked." (2 Corinthians 11:23-27).

Do you call these things *light*, Paul? Yes, in contrast with the weight of the *afterward*. Were they but for a moment? Yes, in contrast with the eternity of the afterward. They only led him to cry out, "From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 6:17). They were the brands of Christ's ownership, and he well knew that in the great *afterward*that rolls across a sea of boundless glory, every scar would add a star to the crown of his rejoicing.

Hence in each affliction he could say, as he wrote to the Philippians from his prison in Rome, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:19).

"Weeping may endure for a night, but *joy*[margin, *singing*] comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5)—the afterward morning, that has no cloud and no evening. In the light of that glorious morning the *mystery of suffering* will be fully explained, and we shall be as the people were when Jesus was upon the earth, "astonished beyond measure, saying:*He has done all things well!"*(Mark 7:37). In the brightness of His presence it will be seen that *infinite wisdom directed every step of the suffering Christian, and unchanging love attended upon every sorrow*.

There is a difference between *life*and a *crown*of life, between righteousness and a crown of righteousness, between glory and a crown of glory; and *no brow shall bear a crown of glory that has not first worn a crown of thorns*. Indeed, our Lord's estimate of the greatness of a disciple, in the hereafter, we must so soon enter, will be based, not so much upon what he has done, as upon what he has meekly and patiently suffered. He is still saying of every chosen vessel, as He said of Paul, "I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Let us wait.

***~~Chapter 14. "Until He Comes"~~***

One beautifully says of the second and personal coming of our Lord, "It is in the New Testament the great event that towers above every other. The Heaven that gives back Christ, gives back all that we have loved and lost, solves all doubts, and ends all sorrows. His coming looks in upon the whole life of His church, as a lofty mountain peak looks in upon every little valley and sequestered home around its base, and belongs to them all alike. Every generation lies under the shadow of it, for whatever is transcendently great is constantly near, and in moments of high conviction it absorbs petty interests and annihilates intervals."

The one definite and blessed hope of our Lord's literal and personal return is a hope which shines out in one verse of every twenty-five in the New Testament, and in scores of passages in the Old Testament.

Death in any form is dreadful and loathsome; and when we think of the havoc it has wrought, of the homes it has desolated, of the hearts it has broken—we can rejoice that the time is surely coming when it shall be cast with the antichrist and with Satan into the lake of fire. Not with the prospect of death did our Lord seek to comfort His troubled disciples when he said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (John 14:2). Not of death did He speak when, after foretelling the death of Peter, He said concerning John, "If I will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me." Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that He would not die, but, 'If I will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'" (John 21:22-23).

It was not of death that the two men in white testified after the bodily, literal, personal, and visible ascension of our Lord into Heaven, when they said to the disciples, "This same Jesus who was taken up from you into Heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into Heaven" (Acts 1:11). It was not of death the apostle wrote when he told His brethren, sorrowing over the loss of their dear ones, that the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, that those who sleep in Him shall come forth from the grave, and, "Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18).

The Holy Spirit never calls our attention to death as the certain end before us, and therefore as the only relief from suffering, but to that which delivers the dead from death, which guards the living against the approach of death, which swallows up death in victory. "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep" (1 Corinthians 15:51). "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). "Therefore be patient, brethren, [margin, suffer with long patience] until the coming of the Lord" (James 5:7).

Whatever imaginary meaning men may choose to give to such statements, the language of Scripture is plain and explicit in bidding us to watch for the personal return of our Lord; and as Trench well says, "It is a necessary element of the doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ, that it is possible at any time, that no generation should consider it improbable in theirs."

Thus the suffering ones are lifted up above the thought of the gloomy grave as they sweetly sing:

Clouds and darkness round us press;  
Would we have one sorrow less?  
All the sharpness of the cross,  
All that tells the world is loss,  
Death and darkness, and the tomb  
Pain us only, until He come!

Take courage, then, tried children of God, oppressed by sadness, enfeebled by sickness, burdened with sorrow, worn with suffering; "for yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry" (Hebrews 10:37). What a little while is in His estimation, we cannot know, but we know that He regards "a thousand years as one day" (2 Peter 3:8); and hence it has not been two days, as time is reckoned in Heaven, since He ascended from the Mount of Olives.

It may not be another day before you hear His glad shout, summoning you from your bed of pain, summoning your beloved ones from the tomb, summoning His tired saints from the wearisome journey of life. Then you will have a body "conformed to His glorious body" (Philippians 3:21)! Then you will be so beautiful the Holy Spirit exclaims in admiration, "Who is this coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" (Song of Solomon 8:5). Until you can lean upon Him in the day of your espousals, let your desire be expressed in the prayer of the bride, "Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm!" (Song of Solomon 8:6), the place of security, the place of His infinite love and omnipotent power, and rest thus in calm confidence.

"Content to walk in paths of His own choosing,  
Since He will hold your hand along the way;  
Content to know that you are journeying homeward,  
And brighter grows the pilgrim's path each day."

It may be night about you now, but, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Romans 13:12). Three times in the last chapter of the Bible does the Savior repeat the sweet promise, "Behold, I am coming quickly!" "Behold, I am coming quickly!" "Surely I am coming quickly!" (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20). All we have to do, all we can do, is to look up and wait and watch with the cry upon our lips and in our hearts, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

The dark *mystery of suffering* will then be so clear, we will wonder at ourselves that we ever complained or doubted for an instant. What is a *bitter drop of sorrow*, compared to a *boundless sea of bliss?*What is a second of pain, compared to an eternity of glory? We may inquire with Daniel and, like him, inquire in vain for an explanation of perplexing providences and for fuller knowledge, but at the time of the end when Jesus comes, every sorrow here shall shine with a strange luster; every suffering endured on earth shall be an advanced step up the everlasting hills; and "there shall be no night there!" (Revelation 22:5).

If we had no other reason for watching, it ought to be enough for His followers and friends to know that He bids them to watch with girded loins and burning lights and hand upon the hall door waiting for His return. "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when He comes, will find watching!" (Luke 12:37).