

FACING THE FUTURE

"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."
Proverbs 27:1.

The future is unknown to us. If God revealed to us all that is before us, we could hardly face it. He allows us to pass into the waters of suffering and sorrow in order to prove the reality of the Divine presence and the all-sufficiency of the Divine grace.

The future is all known to God. He knows the end from the beginning. Everything is within His permissive will, but everything is not according to His directive will.

The future will be full of unbounded blessing if we fulfill the conditions laid down in the inspired Word of God. He calls upon us for an unconditional surrender and implicit trust.

How should we face the future?

I. With A True Understanding Of The Past.

Most of us have been very backward students in the school of experience -- the hardest, but the best, of all schools. Most of us have failed to learn the spiritual lessons the Lord intended to teach us by the varied experiences through which we were called upon to pass. We should not ignore the past, neither should we idolize it, but we should interpret it. What do we learn from the past.

1. The utter futility of worry.

If we look over the past we shall find that most of the things we worried about never happened. Facing the future, we should say to ourselves: Don't worry, God knows all about it, and whatever happens He will over-rule to the outworking of His benign purpose. Let us have implicit trust and then there will not be any corroding care.

2. The unchanging faithfulness of God.

Man often fails us when we need him most, but God never fails. He is faithful to His word of promise. The experience of countless multitudes all down the ages confirms the truth that God never lets His people down. We should hold on to the faithfulness of God.

II. With Gratitude For The Blessings Of The Past.

We have been the recipients of innumerable blessings, and the tragedy is we have been guilty of the sin of ingratitude. One of the reasons why we are not having more blessings is because we have not given hearty thanks for the blessings which we have already received. Let there be more praise and less grumbling in the days to come.

Leechman wrote of William Carey, the father of modern missions: "The last word that vibrated in his heart was gratitude to God and His people." Before the sun of his life set in quiet splendour many storms of criticism and misunderstanding broke upon him. He had to pass through deep sorrow and had to suffer sore loss, but the fires of gratitude to God were never put out.

1. Gratitude to God will stimulate faith.

When we thank God for what He has done in the past we are encouraged to trust Him to do even greater things in the future. With every blessing there is the pledge: There is still more to follow.

2. Gratitude to God will attract others.

There is something magnetic about the Christian whose heart is always over-flowing with thankfulness. Others see that it is worth while to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. With Unfaltering Faith In God.

Our Lord is saying to us: "Have faith in God." Have faith in God: --

1. As the King Who never abdicates.

No matter what happens in the world God is still on the throne of eternal sovereignty and power. He reigns in perfect light. The final word is not with man, however powerful, but with God. Sometimes we think He is slow in acting, but He never before His time, and certainly never after it. He rules over all, and overrules all.

2. As the Leader Who never capitulates.

He never surrenders to an enemy. When we look out on the world today we may think that God is defeated, that might triumphs over right, that Satan is stronger than Christ, but we should never forget that in the end God wins. "He always wins who sides with God." The final battle has not yet been fought, and it will decide the issue of the campaign.

3. As the Friend Who never disappoints.

He knows the worst about us, and yet loves us all the same. He says, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." One rendering is: "None that look to Me are ever disappointed." We look to Him for pardon, comfort, guidance, wisdom, victory, and all we need.

4. As the Potter Who never discards.

In our sin and foolishness we have marred the Divine handiwork, but we should never forget that God remakes. If He breaks, it is in order to make again. In one of George Macdonald's books there is a woman who had met with a sudden sorrow. Petulantly and bitterly she said: "I wish I had never been made." Her friend quietly replied: "My dear, you're not made yet. You're only being made, and this is the Maker's process."

IV. In Full Fellowship With The Living Christ.

As we tread the pathway of life, with its disappointments and trials we need a deeper and richer fellowship with Christ, so that our lives may be radiant, and our service more effective. In full fellowship with the living Christ: --

1. We shall be more unselfish.

At best we are very ego-centric, forgetting that selfishness is the very antithesis of New Testament Christianity. We shall be more happy if we are more taken up with Christ and the needs of others.

2. We shall be more holy.

If we are to get the victory over Satan and sin, we must keep in close touch with our enthroned Lord.

3. We shall be more courageous.

It takes courage to be out and out for Christ in a world that is opposed to all that He was and all for which He stood. The secret of courage in the face of intimidating foes is conscious fellowship with the living Christ.

V. With A Fuller Dependence Upon The Holy Spirit.

In the past we have grieved the Holy Spirit by ignoring Him, by disobeying Him, and by seeking the help of those who do not believe in His person and work. We have been defeated in our battle with the world, the flesh and the devil, because we have depended too much on the arm of flesh and too little on the mighty power of the Holy Spirit. Depending fully on Him there will be victory instead of defeat, fruitfulness instead of barrenness, spirituality instead of carnality, and unity instead of division.

The Holy Spirit is the Divine Paraclete, the One called in along side to help us in our work and witness. We have a victorious Ally, who has resources which can never be exhausted, and power which can never be overthrown.

Dr. Chadwick said: "The presence of the Spirit is vital and central to the work of the church. Nothing else avails. Apart from Him wisdom becomes folly, and strength weakness. Scholarship is blind to spiritual truth till He reveals. Worship is idolatry till He inspires. Preaching is powerless if it be not in the demonstration of His power. Prayer is vain unless He energizes. Human resources of learning and organization, wealth and enthusiasm, reform and philanthropy are worse than useless if there be no Holy Ghost in them."

With a true understanding of the past, with gratitude for the blessings of the past, with an unfaltering faith in God, in full fellowship with the living Christ, and with a fuller dependence on the Holy Spirit, we can thank God and take courage as we face the future.