

HELP FOR AN ACHING HEART

"Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. The Lord is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed" Psalm 28:6--8.

In the world about us there are many people with aching and breaking hearts. They are called on to bear various kinds of suffering and sorrow. In all of life there is an undertone of suffering. It invades every home sooner or later. We suffer through physical ill health. We suffer loss when temporal reverses come. We suffer disappointment when our plans are broken and our programs are shattered. We suffer regret and remorse over actual wrongdoing. We often suffer from misconstrued motives, unappreciated sacrifices, unrealized aims, thwarted efforts and miscarried hopes.

The pagan philosophy which insists that all suffering is a punishment for specific sins is still prevalent. Sin is the cause of some suffering, but all suffering is not the direct result of sin on the part of the sufferer. If suffering is caused by sin, then one should repent of his sins. In such an event, genuine repentance will ease an aching heart. At times an aching heart is due to some injury which exists only in the mind. Filling such a mind with constructive thoughts and the life with helpful deeds will relieve the aching heart to a great extent.

There are those who say that suffering, or an aching heart, is part of the business of living. A little girl fell on the sidewalk and skinned her knee. She said to her mother, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the world were cushioned?" But the world is not cushioned and every one must expect to suffer at times in life. But simply to tell you to expect suffering and sorrow, and to grit your teeth and bear them is not enough.

Some claim that suffering is good for one, that it is essential to the development of one's character, that, in a "cushioned world" our souls would become flabby and weak. But that is not satisfactory. It is true in some cases that God intends for suffering to be a blessing and a means of grace to the sufferer. It comes into our lives to make us wiser and better and more useful. Suffering often develops the graces of humility, patience and sympathy. It is a polisher of character and a pathway to devotion.

Memorizing and saturating the mind with these words of scripture will certainly help an aching heart in the child of God: "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

This passage has a peculiar charm. It is charged with softness and sweetness, like some gentle strain of tender music. The Psalmist was aware of his weakness, but he caught a glimpse of the divine strength which was guaranteed to him. Perhaps he was trembling from the toils of the fight, and yet he rested as one who was subdued to settled calm and mild composure. He rested in God. So, whatever there may be to disturb, distract or distress us, we should revel in that sweet peace which God alone can give, the peace which passes all understanding, and say with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him."

According to verse two the Psalmist had made his supplications unto God. Then in verse six he expressed his sincere appreciation to Him for the blessings which he had received.

He said, "Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications." There are two ways in which God answers prayer. One way is by granting the things which have been requested. Thus some of the prayers of Moses, Elijah, and the people of God in all ages have been answered. The second way is by endowing the suppliant with the spirit of resignation to the divine will. This is the way in which our Saviour prayed, for He said, "Not my will, but thine be done." Acquiescence in the divine will is the best guarantee of the greatest strength and happiness.

I. A Personal Possession.

1. "The Lord is my strength."

The Lord is the source of physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual strength. It is from an unbounded confidence in God that we receive strength to brave perils with a fearless heart, endure trials without repining and labor with patience.

With the Lord as our strength we obtain a matchless capacity for endurance. It is marvelous how much a Christian can bear when the Lord sustains him. Of course, our power to endure depends upon the strength which is imparted, and not upon the inherent fortitude of the individual. It does not make so much difference what the struggle may be if we have strength sufficient for it. The increase of the burden is not the thing to complain about so long as there is a proportionate increase of strength. It is easier to toil with divine aid than to rest without it.

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25). If the Lord adds a burden to your shoulder, He will impart courage to your mind, vigor to your spirit and strength to your body. When the Lord gives us strength, we can perform any duty, make any sacrifice and win any battle.

2. "The Lord is my shield."

The Lord is a shield against temptation, the fiery darts of Satan and the attacks of personal enemies. As you look back upon your past, I trust that many of you can truly say that God has been your shield. He is the One Who protects from known adversaries, from the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, against whom we should ever be on our guard. He who hath made the Lord his refuge shall be safe. Thank God for protecting you from so many perils to your safety, happiness and reputation.

II. A Personal Experience.

"My heart trusted in him, and I am helped." Thus he spoke without any hesitation as he related his own experience. With his heart he trusted the Lord for the salvation of his soul, for the power to keep him from falling and for the help which he needed from day to day. To trust in the Lord is more than to believe in His existence, His government, His Word and His claims. It is to exercise unbounded confidence in Him, in His character, ability and willingness to help. There is no help for the soul without this trust in God. This trust in Him is the means and guarantee of all that we need.

Has your heart been trusting in God? It is so easy for the heart to trust in itself, but he who trusts in himself is so foolish. It is frightfully easy for the heart to rely upon man, as we know from experience. Confidence in man will betray your hopes, but faith in God will enrich you beyond your expectations.

The Psalmist never could have said, "The Lord is my strength and my shield," if he had not been brought to an end of self-confidence, self-trust and self-reliance. Let us learn this lesson. It seems that we have to learn it over and over. You know that self is at the bottom of most of our disappointments in the Christian life. When you have learned not to have confidence in self, whether it be righteous or unrighteous self, whether it be wise or unwise self, and whether it be strong or weak self, then you cease to expect anything from yourself, and so you are not disappointed. When you know something of what it is to leave self where the Lord left it, on the cross and in the grave, and you look on the flesh as God looks on it, then you will have a wonderful freedom and restfulness.

If you wish to have such an experience as this of the Psalmist, remember the word grace. The Word of God exhorts us to be strong in grace and to grow in grace. But how easily we get off the ground of grace! We understand the word when it means that the Lord is to be our strength, and that we are to be strengthened. But the root-thought of grace is this, that God gives His blessings to those who do not deserve them. It is on the ground of what Christ is and of what Christ has done, it is on the ground of the merits and righteousness of the Lord Jesus alone that God can do anything for us and with us. Bear in mind that it is not only to begin with that we are saved by grace on God's part, but it is by grace all along the line that God deals with us as we live and work for our Master.

It is so easy to get off the ground of grace. Somehow or another as we imagine that because we have been Christians for many years, and have rendered some service for Christ, and because the Lord has manifested Himself to us very graciously, we conclude that God is bound to help us, or that we deserve something from God. One reason why Christians sometimes get so terribly disappointed, and have such sad and painful failures, is this, namely, that they cease to depend upon God as those who deserve nothing to proceed with any more than to start with in the Christian life. You stand today undeserving of anything just as when you began. Day by day you must receive deliverance from pride, temper and love of the world, and whatever else you may need, such as power for service and strength for endurance, as gifts from God. From the beginning to the end we are dependent upon divine mercy.

The Lord is well able to quench every thirst that we have. You well remember when you thirsted for salvation, for the forgiveness of your sins. Where did you get that thirst quenched? It was at the feet of Christ, Who alone has power on earth to forgive sins. You will never forget the peace and joy and satisfaction which came into your heart when you came to Christ and received the forgiveness of your sins. If you have a longing to be delivered from the power of sin, there is only One Who can satisfy that thirst, and that is Christ. He is the only One Who can give you deliverance from your besetting sin. If you have a thirst for happiness or joy, He is the only source from which you can obtain it.

III. A Personal Praise.

"Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him." The Psalmist rejoiced in the Lord because his soul was at peace with Him, because of the consciousness of security in Him, and because of the manifested presence of God in his soul. He praised the Lord for the manifestation of His power to give strength in the hour of weakness, to give encouragement in the hour of despondency, to give light in the hour of darkness, and to give inspiration in the hour of conflict. He also praised the Lord for the manifestation of His love in cleansing his heart from sin, in adopting him into His family, and in giving him the blessed assurance of an eternal home in heaven.

By the word "heart" the Psalmist meant his complete self. When he put his entire faith in God it set his breaking and aching heart to singing again the praises of Him Who had done so much for him. Truly it is wonderful what the Lord can do for an aching heart when one gives Him all the pieces.

Faith in God enables one to keep going. When you have a heartache or sorrow, the worst thing you can do is to stop. To stop is to begin to brood, and brooding induces self-pity, and that always develops and enlarges the pain. I am sure that you have noticed a swamp filled with water over which there was an ugly green film. At one time that water may have been pure. But it ran into a low place and stopped and stagnated. So it is in a life. If you stop when you hit your low places, you begin to stagnate, too. God is eternal power, and as you fill your mind with Him, that power actually flows into you, giving you the necessary strength to carry on for Him.

Faith in God brings love into an aching heart. Love is the greatest medicine for an aching heart. Love is the greatest medicine for an aching heart that has ever been discovered. Suffering and sorrow tend to breed resentment and bitterness. When one is hurt, he is tempted to complain, fuss and get angry. It is a tragedy when a broken heart turns sour.

"God is love," so when one puts faith in Him, love begins to flow into him. When love fills an aching heart, somehow, the pain goes away. Just as oil quiets the raging waters, so the benevolent blanket of love spread over a troubled life causes it to become quiet, to develop ease of mind and to find peace.