

Quietness and Confidence

“Thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”
—Isaiah 30:15

THE WORLD IN WHICH WE

live today is full of noise. It is not necessarily the audible noise of that which surrounds us. Rather, the noise we are referring to is that of discontent, clamor, political rhetoric, social upheaval, moral degradation, and general divisive-

ness among the people. There is little quietness presently in the affairs of mankind.

Likewise, confidence is also lacking in today's world. People are rapidly losing faith in their political, religious and economic leaders. As a result, many are fearful and perplexed, believing that the world's present condition is beyond hope. They cry peace, and there is no peace. They long for safety and security, but there only seems to be more trouble.
—Ezek. 13:10; I Thess. 5:3

In the pages of this magazine, we often speak of the fact that the troubles of the present world, though many and foreboding, are allowed by God

in preparation for the total dissolution of Satan's rule of sin and death over mankind. The Bible promises that this present order will soon pass away, and the kingdom of God, under the righteous rule of Christ, will bring about the "restitution," or restoration, of mankind back to the condition of perfection our first parents enjoyed in Eden prior to their falling into sin.—Acts 3:20,21; I Cor. 15:21-26; II Pet. 3:12,13; Rev. 21:3-5

However, despite the many promises of God pertaining to the future, just a few of which are cited above, the Christian today may encounter much difficulty in maintaining spiritual "quietness" and "confidence." The negative impacts of all the noise and clamor we are made aware of each day by events in the world, or even in our own experiences, can easily cause us to lose the peace of God, which is designed especially for our benefit.

Indeed, one of the secrets of a happy Christian life is to have confidence and trust in God, a faith in him that is so unfailing and all-comprehensive that no matter what experiences may come, we will be able from the heart to say with the Prophet Job, "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10) It is not a case, however, of blindly trusting the Lord in the sense of not knowing the ultimate purpose of the experiences which he permits to come into our lives. To the Christian he has revealed that purpose through the Scriptures, so that the image of the Master may be developed in us in preparation for the blessed privilege of living and reigning with him during the thousand years of his kingdom, and of being associated with him in divine

glory throughout the endless ages of eternity.—
Rev. 3:21; 20:6

However, even though we rejoice in this knowledge of the divine purpose which is being worked out in our lives and are assured beyond doubt that to this end all things are working together for our good, we still are not walking by sight. Faith and trust are essential, because with our limited comprehension and our short-sighted viewpoints, it is impossible to understand just how every experience, whether of joy or of sorrow, may be best at the time. If we were masters of our own destinies so far as our day by day walk in life is concerned, we would probably change a lot of things, but in so doing we would be quite liable to create circumstances and conditions which would be detrimental to ourselves as devoted followers of Christ Jesus.

How essential it is to develop complete confidence in the Heavenly Father's care and to learn that his will is best. Although our way is often difficult, the end will be glorious, because in every experience his wisdom is choosing that which will be the very best for us. Happy are we, then, if by learning this, we can always leave the choice with him. If we can do this, we will not think "strange" the fiery trials which our loving Heavenly Father permits. (I Pet. 4:12) Rather, we will accept them in quietness and confidence, knowing that he is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind.

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

We can learn many helpful lessons pertaining to God's care over his people by noting the manner in which he dealt with his servants of old. One of these

is brought to our attention in Exodus 14:14, when Moses encouraged the Israelites with the words, “The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.” In this text the fact that God is the strength of his people is emphasized, and that our part is largely that of implicitly trusting in him and letting him fight for us. This does not mean that we should assume a listless, indifferent attitude toward the Lord, his service, and the good fight of faith in which we are engaged. While he fights for us, the Lord has given us a part to perform. In doing our part faithfully, however, it should be with a peace of heart and mind, and a tranquility of soul born of the assurance that victory is not based upon what we can do, but what he has promised to do, and will do, if we but let him fight for us.

When Moses spoke the foregoing words to the Israelites, they were in a very precarious situation from the standpoint of human ability. In their march from Egypt they had reached the Red Sea. The way before them was blocked, or so it seemed. The Egyptian army had closed in on them from the rear. Losing faith in the ability of their God to care for them, they became “sore afraid.” They chided Moses for leading them out of Egypt. Apparently, even before they left the land of bondage, many of them had argued with Moses, claiming that it would be an ill-fated effort. Seeing Pharaoh’s armies, they assumed the well-recognized attitude that so many have done since, “I told you so.”—Exod. 14:10-12

However, Moses was not disturbed. He said to the people, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD.” (vs. 13) The expression “stand still” simply meant that they were to quietly rest in the Lord.

Their faith was weak. They had become fearful, nervous, and agitated, and in that condition could not properly cooperate with the leading of the Lord. Centuries later, Israel again was failing to place their confidence in God, and as a result they were failing to enjoy the richness of his blessings. The Prophet Isaiah spoke to them the words of our opening text, in which he stated that their “strength” would be found in “quietness and confidence” in God.

It was just as true in Isaiah’s time as it was when Moses spoke to the Israelites that if they were to see the salvation of God it was necessary for them to “stand still,” to be at peace, and to rest quietly in him and in his ability to deliver and bless. The same is true with the Lord’s people today. As individuals and as a people we are constantly being faced with experiences which try our faith, and which may tempt us to respond with loud clamor or complaint. If in these we are to be victorious, however, we must learn to quietly put our full confidence in the Lord. Never should we complain to the Heavenly Father, nor question his wisdom. Likewise, we should not take matters into our own hands; such a course would likely be disastrous. Rather, we should always wait on the Lord for a clear indication of his will. Those who do so will “renew their strength” and be better prepared for whatever future experiences God may choose for them.—Isa. 40:31

“GO FORWARD”

The Lord instructed Moses to tell the Israelites at the Red Sea that they should “go forward.” (Exod. 14:15) From the human standpoint it seemed utterly impossible to obey this command, yet this was God’s

will. When they quietly obeyed, the sea opened up before them and they crossed in safety—and apparently in confidence also. In this instance, as always, the deliverance of the Lord’s people depended upon their trusting God and obeying his instructions. Thus, they were enabled to quietly and confidently “go forward” in order to “see the salvation of the LORD.”

The same is true in the life of the Christian. We must confidently trust God regardless of the apparently insurmountable difficulties with which we may at times be confronted, and no matter how fiercely the storms of life may be raging around us. At the same time, the life of the Christian is not one of listlessness, nor of inactivity. There is work to be done. There are loads to lift, seas to be crossed, and burdens to bear. True faith will find expression in our obedience in going forward in the Christian way as the Lord directs, and in putting our hands energetically to the tasks which he assigns.

We should not expect that the Lord will always clear the way of all difficulties before we enter it, for he does not always overrule in this manner. There are certain things which we know from God’s Word that he wants us to do. We are to be light-bearers, in the world. He wants us to love our enemies and to do good to those who despitefully use us and persecute us. He wants us to study his Word that we may show ourselves approved unto him. He wants us to assemble with his people when it is at all possible. (Matt. 5:14,44; II Tim. 2:15; Heb. 10:25) The Lord may permit many obstacles to stand in the way of our doing these things, removing them only when, by confidently obeying him, we “go forward” to do his will.

GRACE SUFFICIENT

Often, we may wish to change the circumstances of our lives, thinking that by doing so we could serve God so much better. Even the Apostle Paul had thoughts along this line, but he learned that the Lord's way for him was best. At the time of his conversion he was blinded by the light which shone "above the brightness of the sun." (Acts 9:3; 26:13) Later, when visited by Ananias, his sight was partially restored, but he apparently did not regain his normal vision, and was afflicted with this handicap for the remainder of his life. Paul refers to this as a "thorn in the flesh."—II Cor. 12:7

It was natural for Paul to reason that he could serve the Lord more effectively if he had better eyesight, so he made it a matter of special prayer. He prayed to God three times to have this thorn in the flesh removed, but the answer to the apostle was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul's heart responded to this answer, and he wrote, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."—vss. 8,9

In reasoning this matter out, Paul concluded that if he did not have this affliction, he might be "exalted above measure," and therefore be inclined to trust in his own strength and abilities rather than in the Lord's. Herein is the reason for many of the experiences and circumstances which the Heavenly Father permits to come into our lives. He wants us always to realize that our every victory of faith is really his victory, and that our every success and accomplishment should be accredited to him. It is often easy to forget that it is God who is fighting

our battles for us and clearing the paths through the “Red Seas” which block our progress in the narrow way. In his wisdom and mercy, then, he allows conditions to be such that we are continually reminded of our need of him.

The “thorn in the flesh” which buffets us may be one or more of a number of things which our faulty judgment might think should be changed. For example, we may be the only one in our family that is rejoicing in the light of God’s Word and running in the narrow way toward the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Matt. 7:14; Phil. 3:14) We may think, “If I could only enjoy the fellowship of someone right in my own home, how wonderful that would be, and how much better progress I could make in developing the fruits and graces of the Holy Spirit!”

We may make this a matter of prayer, perhaps even more than the three times that Paul prayed for better eyesight, only to get the same answer, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” The Lord may be saying to us: “I want you to appreciate my fellowship more, and to lean more confidently upon me. If you can learn to do this, I will be to you as the choicest of friends, and as one that keepeth closer than a brother or a mother; or any other human association you could possibly possess. I will be a friend who will overlook your shortcomings and give you strength in your weakness. I will be an ever-present help in your every trial and will share your every joy. So rest quietly in me, and I will give you peace and will be your shield and exceeding great reward.”—Gen. 15:1

We may not only be without the fellowship of others, but some may even oppose us in our service

to the Lord. From the natural standpoint, this could lead to turmoil of heart, and to anxiety and sorrow. How our flesh would like to change a situation of this kind. Let us remember, though, that this is but another circumstance in which the Lord will fight for us, and that we can hold our peace. We will realize that in this, as in every other circumstance of life, strength will be found in quietness and in confidence—not confidence in our own ability to respond to the opposing gales, but confidence that God is able to make his grace abound toward us at all times and in all things.—II Cor. 9:8

Seldom does a footstep follower of Christ enjoy the peace which results from tranquility of circumstances and surroundings. Usually, various storms of life are raging, and the tempests which come sweeping down over the soul may stem from one or more of many causes. The tempest of ill health may disturb our peace of heart. In such an event the fleshly mind may be quick to think that the Lord has forgotten us. The human mind is ever ready to fill the role as “Job’s comforter,” trying to persuade us that God has turned his back upon us. However, faithful Job said to his accusers concerning God, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.”—Job 13:15

Our trust in God under such circumstances is not a blind one. We know that we have entered into a covenant with the Lord by sacrifice. (Ps. 50:5) Therefore, our outward man must perish before we can enter into and enjoy our house from heaven. Faith in God and in this part of his will and plan, therefore, should give us peace. Indeed, whether it be the trial of sickness, or one which is bearing down upon us in some other way, we should accept it as evidence

of God's love. Such an attitude will result from depending on his promise to supply all our needs, and rejoicing in his blessed assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

SECURE IN CHRIST

As followers of the Master, New Creatures in Christ Jesus, we should never lose sight of the fact that the Heavenly Father's care, his protection, his strength that is made perfect in our weakness, and the final victory which he has promised to give us through Christ, are all of a spiritual character. It is as New Creatures that he keeps us from falling. It is the renewed mind that dwells in the secret place of his love. He is a rock and fortress to the inner man which, because of the bounties of his grace, is being renewed day by day.—II Cor. 5:17; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 3:16; II Cor. 4:16

This being true, we should not become anxious as to how our flesh may fare, or toward the natural circumstances of our lives. All that should really concern us is that the Heavenly Father is able to hold us in the hollow of his hand as his spiritual children regardless of the opposing forces with which we may be surrounded—and in this we can always rejoice. God can open the "Red Sea" before us that we may "go forward" safely in the doing of his will. With his love and the love of his Son, Christ Jesus, overshadowing us, nothing can pluck us out of his hand. Paul was persuaded of this "in quietness and in confidence." We can be also, and in this assurance we can have the "peace of God" ruling in our hearts.—Col. 3:15

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” asks Paul in Romans 8:35. “Shall tribulation?” No, divine wisdom has decreed that we need tribulation to prove and develop us. “Or distress?” No also. We do not expect to be at ease while walking in the narrow way. “Or persecution?” Again the answer is no, for we will remember the Master’s words telling of the blessedness of those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, and the promise that theirs is the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. 5:10

“Or famine?” Paul learned to suffer need, and therein to be content, and so should we. “Or nakedness?” There may be times when we could wish for better clothes to wear but will remember that to be adorned with a meek and quiet spirit is far better. We might possess the richest of material things and yet not enjoy peace and quietness of heart and soul.—I Pet. 3:3,4

“Or peril?” No, for regardless of how perilous the storms of life may be, we will rest quietly in the Lord. As the little bird that builds its nest on the slender branch overhanging a chasm does not fear, so we will remember that underneath us as followers of Christ Jesus are the everlasting arms of divine care which will ever hold us in the love of God.

“Or sword?” We know that the enemies of the New Creature are fighting desperately to overthrow us, to break down our courage and confidence, to take us away from our Heavenly Father’s love, but we will not fear. Instead, with the protection of the “armor of light” on the right hand and on the left, we will “go forward” in the strife, following the commands of the Captain of our salvation. Doing this, no matter how fiercely the battle may rage

about us, we will remain at peace, knowing that victory is assured.—Rom. 8:37; 13:12

“KILLED ALL THE DAY LONG”

Quoting from Psalm 44:22, Paul continues, “For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” (Rom. 8:36) How much in keeping this is with our covenant of sacrifice. Our Master, in whose footsteps we are walking, was also “led as a lamb to the slaughter,” and how honored we are to share this experience with him. (Isa. 53:7) This being true, the sufferings which result from following in the Master’s footsteps should but increase our faith and confidence, and our peace should abound as our sufferings increase. As Paul expresses it, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”—Rom. 8:37

“For I am persuaded,” the apostle continues in verse 38. He was not persuaded that the Lord would protect him from trial, nor prevent his enemies from attacking him. On the contrary, he expected tribulation. He knew that he must endure difficult trials as a follower of Christ. He knew that Satan would buffet him, and that he would be at enmity with the world. He knew that he would need to struggle constantly to keep his own fallen flesh in “subjection.” (I Cor. 9:27) However, he was persuaded that in all these things the Lord would be to him an ever-present source of strength, and in this assurance he enjoyed the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”—Phil. 4:7

In Romans 8:38 Paul identifies many of the things which from the human standpoint might

seem to pluck us out of the loving hand of God, such, for example, as "death." Death is the world's greatest enemy, one which disturbs the peace of every family. We are assured of victory over death, however, and certainly it cannot separate us from the love of God. It is not that we are spared from death, for in fact our covenant with the Lord calls for our death. We are dying with Christ sacrificially. Indeed, "dying, and, behold, we live." (II Cor. 6:9) We have been raised up to walk in newness of life in Christ, and from this vantage point of divine love we see that no evil can befall us as New Creatures.

"Nor life," Paul says. One of the greatest dangers to the New Creature is an abundance of material good things, such as health, prosperity and friends. To the natural man these constitute the joys of "life," as the apostle puts it. Let us remember, however, that as children of God our life does not consist of the abundance of the things which we possess. Remembering this, we must keep close to the Lord, looking to him for strength lest the allurements of ease and plenty pluck us out of his hand, and we fall from our steadfastness.

"Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers." These are the powers and "rulers of the darkness of this world," under the leadership of Satan, the god of this world. The evil influences and selfish spirit of this world are among our most formidable enemies. It is against these that we "wrestle." Yet we need not fear, for the Lord fights for us in that he has provided an armor which, if we put it on and keep it on, the "wiles of the devil" will not be able to harm us.—Eph. 6:11,12

“Nor things present, nor things to come.” The Lord, through Moses, promised his people of old that as their days, so should their strength be. (Deut. 33:25) We know that God is fighting for us today, and that he is not permitting any of our enemies to overwhelm us. We should also trust him for the future, for the apostle assures us that just as things “present” cannot separate us from the love of God, neither will “things to come” be permitted to do so. What a promise this is, and how sweet is the peace which results when in confidence we lay hold upon it!

“Nor height, nor depth,” the apostle adds—that is, neither exaltation nor humiliation. Either of these extremes might easily separate us from divine love. Exaltation, either in the Lord’s service, in business, or among our friends could be dangerous to the New Creature, but not if we humbly remember who we are, and that our standing before God is only by his grace. His protection against this danger might well be in permitting us, for a time, to experience the “depth,” and to be humbled through reverses of one sort or another. In this, too, however, we must remember that regardless of our experiences in life, they are by his permission, and nothing which is good for us as New Creatures will he withhold.

“Nor any other creature.” Paul gives us a very complete cross section of Christian experience. However, in case he overlooked one or more of the influences, or “creatures,” which war against our new minds in an effort to separate us from the Lord and to destroy our peace in him, he makes this blanket statement to assure us that nothing whatever is too

small or too great for God to notice as he spreads over us the protection of his mighty power. Certainly, then, we can be assured, as the apostle states, that nothing will be able to "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Being assured of this, we can have peace "in quietness and in confidence."

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31) Is God for his devoted spiritual children? He most certainly is! As Paul says in another place, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 15:57) He is fighting for us, and with us, that we can have the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding, and that keeps our hearts and minds centered upon him and his will.—Phil. 4:7

The peace of God that we desire to have is the same peace which he possesses. It is the peace that results from his knowledge that nothing can happen in his whole vast universe except as he wills or permits it. He is neither anxious about the present nor fearful of the future. He knows that no portion of his plans and purposes will ever fail. Thus, our God is continually at peace. It is this same peace that we can have, for as members of his family he has assured us that all the glorious attributes of his character are enlisted for our eternal protection and care.

With this blessed assurance we can "go forward" in our march toward the heavenly Canaan with absolute confidence that if in each step of the way we seek fully to obey him, no seas of trouble can drown us, nor will God permit any of the storms of

life to overwhelm us. He has promised to guide us, to hold us in the palm of his hand, to keep us from falling, to fight for us in life's battles, and to give us strength for every experience.

What more can we ask? It remains only for us to wait on him "in quietness and in confidence," knowing that whatever our need may be he will bring it to pass in accordance with his will. All we must do is to "stand still," in the sense of not being fearful and agitated no matter what the circumstances may be, and when he gives the command to "go forward," obey knowing that he will lead the way and give victory to all who put their trust in him. ■