

Humility and Its Blessed Results

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”
—I Peter 5:6

THIS IS THE SEASON OF

the year when God’s consecrated people throughout the world turn their special attention to the upcoming Memorial celebration. The date of this year’s solemn and blessed occasion, according to

Jewish reckoning, will be Thursday evening, March 29th. At that time we will once again call to remembrance Jesus’ death as the Passover “Lamb of God,” who was “sacrificed for us,” and who “taketh away the sin of the world.”—John 1:29; I Cor. 5:7

It is of vital importance that, as we approach the Memorial, we especially focus our spiritual minds on the great privilege of knowing something of the eternal benefits to all mankind which will accrue as the result of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. (Mark 10:45; I Tim. 2:5,6) As consecrated children of God, we will also do well to renew our efforts to develop a more complete character likeness to Christ. In an earlier article in this issue of *The Dawn*, we considered the work of

daily sanctification and holiness. This is one critical aspect of our Christian walk which we should give special attention to at this season. Another important feature of our character development that deserves particular scrutiny as we prepare our hearts for the upcoming Memorial is the quality of humility. We venture to say that no other trait of Christian character can be successfully developed without first having humility as a foundation principle in our hearts and minds.

Peter, in our opening text, calls to mind a measure of the import of humility. However, he does not stop there. In the ensuing verses, he outlines the blessed results of a character founded on this all-important quality. Quoting the entire context, we read: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."—I Pet. 5:6-10

MEANING OF HUMILITY

Humility has various facets of meaning, but from the standpoint of the Bible, and particularly in our text, its meaning is to make self low. This relates to the expression of our self-will. When we consecrated our lives to the Heavenly Father, the thought of our own wills being dead was a paramount requirement

in order for us to be accepted by him. It follows, then, that our humility is a continual measure of how we are living up to our consecration vows and what the prospect of our reward will be.

The thought of being “under the mighty hand of God” implies a full submission and yielding of mind and body to the providences of his will for us. It is his “mighty hand” which is guiding and directing our lives. Paul says we are God’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” (Eph. 2:10) His design, or will, for us is that by service, sacrifice and suffering, all of which he supervises, we, if rightly exercised by the experiences, are enabled to develop the fruits and graces of the Spirit. This is necessary and must precede our spiritual birth. This thought is expressed beautifully by the apostle: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”—Rom. 12:1

When we made a consecration, we offered our humanity to God, including earthly hopes and aspirations, in exchange for the prospect of life as a spirit being, if “faithful unto death.” (Rev. 2:10) Our bodies of flesh, then, are to be expended—yielded to God in daily sacrifice. We engage in this work of sacrifice by spending our strength, energies, abilities, and influence, in the service of the Truth and the brethren. The result of this activity will be a transformation of character, Paul says, from that which conforms to the world, to that which comes to know, and do, the perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2) Thus we see clearly that humility is a first and continual requisite to success in the fulfillment of our consecration vows.

CASTING OUR CARE UPON GOD

In verse 7 of our lesson from the words of the Apostle Peter, he seems to want us to recognize that a life of humble submission, which leads to a life of sacrifice, may cause us at times to be fearful. This is because our general walk in life, our deportment, words and actions will be different from most in the world around us. We will also have testing experiences, allowed by the Heavenly Father, for the purpose of further developing our characters in the likeness of our dear Master.

When these circumstances come into our lives, the apostle invites us to cast all our care upon the Heavenly Father, in full faith, knowing that “he careth” for us. The word “care” in this verse has the thought of anxiety, to the point of distraction, which seems to describe the condition better. As in other aspects of our Christian walk, however, if we have truly accepted the Heavenly Father’s will for our own, we will realize that his mighty hand is over us in everything that we do or that we experience. Whatever trials are permitted to come to us, we will have confidence in his overruling providences on our behalf. We have not been given the “spirit of fear.”—II Tim. 1:7

OPPOSITION RECOGNIZED

We can never be successful in our Christian walk if we do not know from whom our opposition stems. Peter tells us in verse 8 of our lesson that the source of our trials and difficulties is “your adversary the devil”—Satan. In the Old Testament, we read a very interesting statement concerning Satan: “He shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel

of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee.”—Zech. 3:1,2

The point of this text is to bring to our minds graphically the fact that Satan is a real personality and that he is dedicated to opposing God and his righteous arrangements. If he can cause some aspect of God’s plan to fail, he can perhaps postpone his own demise. He may even have hope of winning the struggle between darkness and light. The Apostle Paul admonishes us to “put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”—Eph. 6:11,12

The expression “principalities and powers” seems to denote different orders of spiritual beings, perhaps both good and evil. In these verses the Apostle Paul is referring to those powerful spirit beings who are under Satan’s control. We are obviously no match for them when they oppose us, and the only effective defense that we have is the armor of God. The apostle proceeds to enumerate the various parts of this armor, which are the Truth, righteousness, the Gospel of peace, faith, the promise of salvation, and the word of God. (vss. 14-17) All of these are provided to us by the Heavenly Father. Our skill in using them is dependent upon the depth of our consecration and the extent to which we have learned to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

These words of Paul also indicate that Satan and his subordinates have enlisted earthly governments, institutions, and even religious systems as part of the forces of darkness. We believe, however, that most of these are aligned with the powers of darkness through ignorance. Nevertheless, they constitute a powerful force in opposition to the children of light.

In view of all these powers which are against us, the Apostle Peter, in verse 8 of our lesson, warns that we should be sober and vigilant because Satan, represented in all these forces of darkness, is stalking the children of light. Like a roaring lion, he is seeking whom he may devour. The term lion is used by Peter because of its fierceness, cruelty, and cunning. It is said that its roar can be so terrifying to its intended victim that it freezes with terror, becoming easy prey to the attacker. So it can be with us if we leave ourselves exposed, trusting in our own strength for a defense. We become an easy prey to a much more powerful and cunning foe. On the other hand, if we are vigilant and alert, we will be watchful for his snares and will rely on the Lord's superior power for guidance and deliverance.

The Apostle Paul, in telling of his experience with Alexander the coppersmith, who was a violent opposer to the Truth, said that when he first countered the opposition all his friends left him. Continuing, though, he stated, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." (II Tim. 4:14-17) The Lord will deliver us also.

RESIST—IN FAITH

In verse 9 of our lesson, the apostle states that we are to resist Satan and his emissaries of darkness, standing firm in the faith. It is only because God has, through his Holy Spirit, enlightened our minds and revealed the Truth to us that we are able to discern fully between good and evil. This has not been true of any others of the human race since Adam, except Jesus at his First Advent. Because we have this ability, we can be victorious in this present trial time of the Gospel Age, knowing that “the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.”—I Pet. 4:17

To the true child of God, who has been given the privilege of discerning the beauty of his character revealed through the Scriptures, these divine principles satisfy the innermost desires of the heart. The words of the psalmist express the thought nicely: “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. ... How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.”—Ps. 119:97,103,104

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the brethren at Ephesus, says, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.” (Eph. 5:11-13) It is the light generated through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit that makes the works of darkness manifest to the child of God. Thus, being fully aware, he is able to cast them off with soberness and vigilance.

AFFLICTION AND SUFFERING

Continuing in I Peter 5:9, the apostle speaks of “afflictions,” or suffering, which will come upon us and all our “brethren that are in the world.” This brings to our attention that suffering on the part of the church is universal. Sometimes, when we as individuals are undergoing severe experiences, it may seem that we are the only ones who are suffering. We may even feel that we have been singled out for especially severe trials. This, of course, is not true. The Apostle Paul states, “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him,” and “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Tim. 2:11,12; 3:12) Then we have his wonderful statement: “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:17

To suffer, according to Bible usage, means to endure or experience something, usually of a difficult nature. The thought of suffering with Christ is that the child of God is to be submissive to all the experiences that the Heavenly Father permits him to have, just as Jesus endured all the difficult trials permitted to come upon him. These can be experiences of being misunderstood, of derision, mocking, and even of physical pain and death, if the Lord requires it.

However, all these experiences must be the result of Christian activity. The Apostle Peter expresses the matter thus: “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: ... But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as

a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—I Pet. 4:14-16

In another place, Peter similarly writes, "For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. ... For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." (I Pet. 2:19-23) This is suffering and being submissive in the experiences brought about through our efforts to serve the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren.

PAUL'S EXAMPLE

The Apostle Paul, speaking of himself, provides an example for all the footstep followers of Jesus down through the Gospel Age, saying, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (Col. 1:24) The apostle does not mean that Christ's sacrifice was not efficacious and that it required additional sacrifices and suffering. What he is saying, rather, is that the Christ, head and body, must suffer. (I Cor. 12:12) Since the head, Christ Jesus, has already suffered, the suffering that is left "behind" is that of the church. Suffering must be experienced by each member for his testing and development.

Paul's suffering on behalf of the brethren is well documented. We think especially of the account in II Corinthians 11:24-30. Here he tells of being beaten

with rods, of being stoned, of suffering shipwreck, “In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, ... In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. ... If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.”

All these experiences were brought about only because of Paul’s activity in preaching the good news of the kingdom and endeavoring to serve the brethren. They came as the result of his doing “good unto all men” as opportunity presented itself. (Gal. 6:10) Those who opposed Paul often boasted of difficulties they had overcome based on their own strength. Paul said, however, that if boasting is necessary, he would glory in those things that demonstrated his complete submission to the Lord. His lack of reliance on his own strength or judgment, and the knowledge that it was the Lord who always won the victory, were things Paul could joyously acclaim. While we will likely never be required to endure and suffer as he did, the same principles that he exemplified in this regard apply to us.

OTHER EXAMPLES

In Hebrews 12:1, the Apostle Paul says that we are “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses.” In this statement he is referring to all the wonderful examples of faith he had just enumerated in the previous chapter. These wonderful heroes of faith were witnesses for God in the sense that they spoke of

the things that God requested they speak of, even though the message was most often unpopular.

The witness that they gave in some instances meant torture and even death. In these trials, however, they demonstrated their faith in God, not relying on their own strength, but “out of weakness were made strong.” (Heb. 11:34) Their attitude was best expressed by the three young Hebrews, who said, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.”—Dan. 3:17,18

Because of their faithfulness under testing and trials brought about as a result of their witnessing for God, and telling forth the message that was for that time or season, they looked forward to a “better resurrection.” They were called friends of God, and their faith was accounted to them for righteousness.—Heb. 11:35; James 2:23; Rom. 4:3

The apostle tells us that these faithful men of God are examples to us, for we too are witnesses for God. It is our mission to tell forth the message for this time and season, which is the good news of the kingdom. To the established forces of darkness, this is an unpopular message and will bring upon us testings, trials and persecution. However, in these trials we are to look to Jesus, our forerunner and example, who was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” (Heb. 4:15) “Consider him that endured such contradiction [opposition] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Heb. 12:3

UNTO DEATH

The apostle indicates that our afflictions and suffering are not temporary things, but will continue until our course is ended in death. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” (Heb. 12:4) Paul then adds that this should be no surprise to us, because the prophet foretold of these things, saying, “My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” (vss. 5,6) The thought of “chastening” in these verses is more correctly understood as that of tutoring or training. God permits certain trials to come upon us as he sees we have need. These experiences are for the purpose of training and assisting us in the development of the fruits and graces of the spirit. In fact, the apostle continues, if we are not having these experiences, we are not legitimate sons.—vs. 8

In verse 11 of the same chapter, the apostle states, “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” These training experiences are the trials and sufferings that come to each member of the body of Christ, designed to yield in our characters the peaceable fruits of righteousness. This fruitage results from our being properly “exercised” by these difficult experiences. By them we are made more mature, complete, and spiritually healthy—that is, more Christ-like.

AFTER YE HAVE SUFFERED

Returning to the opening verses of our lesson, the Apostle Peter summarizes his thoughts: “The God

of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” (I Pet. 5:10) The apostle’s conclusion is that such experiences, if we are exercised by them, will have a beneficial effect on our Christian character. By proving faithful under trials and testings, we will be more firmly established, and at the same time our faith will be strengthened and settled.

This process, the apostle says, starts with a foundation of humility and submission to God’s mighty hand. It requires that we cast all our anxious cares upon him, as our great burden-bearer. It further means that we will be ever watchful and vigilant in our fight against Satan and his forces of evil, knowing that if we resist these, no harm can come to us as New Creatures. We likewise understand that, like Jesus and all other consecrated believers, we must be tested and proven through the training experiences of trials, difficulties, and suffering. By all these things, the “God of all grace” will complete his work in us, and “exalt” us “in due time.” Let us, therefore, as this year’s Memorial celebration nears, rekindle our efforts to be faithful to our consecration vows, that we might reap the eternal blessings resulting from daily, humble submission to the will of God. ■

*I have seen You in Your sanctuary and gazed
upon Your power and glory.*

*Your unfailing love is better than life itself;
how I praise You!*

—Psalm 63:2,3

New Living Translation