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Problems for Christians: Discouragement

Joel Portman

Christians were never promised an easy life in this world, a world that has always been opposed to the Lord Jesus and to God's purposes. A survey of Church history would show that the normal experience of believers is to suffer for His name's sake (Acts 9:16). Our Lord Himself foretold such experiences to His disciples before He went to the cross, in the upper room (John 13-16). Though some do not experience the persecutions that others have had and still do in this world, problems continue and should be expected, taking many different forms according to different circumstances. If we are not prepared for them, they can overtake any one of us and cause a fall or failure in our service and faithfulness for our Lord.

One problem that has overcome many believers is discouragement. It seems, possibly, that this affliction can affect any believer of any age in any circumstance of life. Possibly a child of God who is exercised to be faithful to His absent Lord is more affected by this malady than others. This may be especially true in our day when we see limited results from our service, find many hindrances to our exercise, and sense much failure on our part as individuals or on the part of others.

Discouragement is not anything new. It is the subject of Psalm 42, where we find the writer concerned about his soul being cast down. This was possibly written by those, the sons of Korah (or for them), who had the privilege of serving in the Lord's house, assisting the priesthood in their activities. It also seems to be one of the themes

of Hebrews, addressing those who needed to be exhorted to continue on in full faithfulness to the Lord, against the tendency to return to the former religion of their fathers. It appears that they felt that what they had in Christ didn't compensate for what they had lost in Judaism. Peter also writes to those who were in "heaviness" as a result of their various trials.

We recognize that there is a difference between disappointment and discouragement. When our desires and expectations have not been accomplished, we can be disappointed. But discouragement is a loss of courage and of energy in our exercise for the Lord. Those who have higher ideals and greater ambition can be more easily attacked by this malady than those who are simply satisfied with what they are and have in Christ. These latter have little ambition to exercise diligence in their Christian life to gain and grow in that which is spiritual.

A discouraged believer is a weakened believer, and the devil will use this as an opening for other means by which he can defeat us, and keep us down and unavailable for the Lord. However, he cannot defeat us unless we consent with our own wills. This is one reason why the condition of the heart and the purposes of the mind are essential to rise above a condition of this sort (Prov. 4:23, 23:7).

Young Believers and Discouragement

We normally think of youth as a time of hope and expectation, but it can also be a time of depression and discouragement. According to studies in our day, it seems that this condition may be more prevalent than in the past. Young people are sensitive to their prospects and future, and they may realize that some ambitions may never be achieved. They are quick to discern failure in those who are older, who should be their positive examples, and that failure can also cause discouragement. Concerns about employment, family futures, other friends progressing in their fields more rapidly, and a recognition of limited opportunities can have a negative effect. Frustration can aggravate the condition as well, and many other

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causes could be mentioned. Possibly those who are the most exercised to devote their lives to the Lord can succumb to this malady (note Ps. 42:1-2 and his exercise for God). They have a need to be encouraged and be given opportunities, possibly in a limited way according to their capabilities, and most of all, they need older believers who seek to mentor and encourage them to go forward and to develop under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We cannot blame the young, when we, who are older, fail in our responsibility toward them.

Middle Aged Saints and Discouragement

These are those who have entered into the burden of maintaining the testimony of an assembly and who seek to function in their prime in the God's service. In doing so, they can also feel the burden of this work, and the sense of futility as they fail to see the results in themselves and in others. Possibly they can become somewhat skeptical, even cynical, sensing that they may be carrying on a pattern of activity that is not fulfilling. Compromise may be a means by which they seek to escape the difficult situations that they face. There can be degeneration of the conscience as compromise in vital issues takes its toll. The best part of their lives has been lived, and the recollection of those "better days" may make them sense that the anticipated remainder of their lives holds little promise for anything better (Ps. 42:4).

Failure to Overcome Evil May Cause

A Christian life is a constant striving against sin (Heb. 12:4), and failure to finally and fully achieve victory in this battle makes one feel discouraged. The result may be that we fail to "lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed" (Heb. 12:12-13). We all know to some extent this repeated failure to completely enjoy victory and peace from besetting sins, and discouragement results.

Fruitlessness in Service

Nothing in Christian service is easy, and even-

tually the reality sets in, that the heart of man is hard and unbelief is normal, and the world's attractions outweigh the blessedness of the gospel. This can result in one being like Demas, who "loved this present world" and turned back from labors with Paul (2 Tim. 4:10). In our day, especially, the difficult thing for a Christian worker is to "go on, go on, go on" despite the lack of results. An older preacher, faithful in the gospel and his service, once told me that he felt that his responsibility was to sow the seed in faithfulness and to leave the results with the Lord. The sower in Matt. 13, sowed the seed faithfully, but only 25% of it produced fruit, and this was not the result of his failure in service. So keep on going, trust the Lord for results, and don't allow that lack to cause discouragement. Results in our service should not be our goal, rather devotion and faithfulness to the Lord.

Multiple Trials as a Cause

The difficulties of life, such as illness (especially chronic), unemployment, world conditions and its evils, opposition of friends, neighbors, and even the governmental decisions are difficult to endure (Ps. 42:3). Those who care for older saints in their homes, those who minister to the chronically sick, and carry these burdens on their hearts, can become discouraged. The psalmist said, "Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" (Ps. 42:9, 43:2), and many expressions of that opposition can cause one to become "cast down." The realization of the trinity of evil that exists in the world, pain, sin and death, can cause one to question the tragedy of a universe and existence from which there seems to be no escape, apart from death or the Lord's coming.

Failures of other Believers

When one sees failure in others who are leaders among assemblies, or in those who are influential in their lives, this can cause believers, especially the young, to stumble. It is good to constantly remind ourselves that one is not responsible for the testimony of others, no matter who they might be, but the ultimate example for our lives is to be "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. . ." (Heb. 12:2). Many examples are presented in Heb. 11, but we turn from them, with their evident failures, and look

away unto the One who never failed or would ever be discouraged (Isa. 42:4). He is the only perfect example for us, but when our eyes become fixed on men instead of Him, discouragement can result. It is obvious that problems exist, to some extent, in every assembly of believers, even division in some areas. However, we should take heart by noticing that the epistles of the New Testament were primarily written to assemblies that had failure. This is nothing new, because as long as there are men, there will be failure.

Prevention of Discouragement

One great preservative for a believer is a heart that is fixed on Christ and fully devoted to Him. Ps. 42 ends with "My God", which seems to be the only direction that the psalmist could turn for encouragement. It is when our attention is directed toward other objects that we find failure and disillusionment. Now, and in eternity, the object and purpose of our lives, indeed the reason for our salvation, is that we might have hearts that fulfill the desires of the Lord for His people, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. . ."

Another preservative is the exercise of discipline of self in the life, control of thoughts and desires, and determination to yield to the control of the Holy Spirit and to let His will control our lives. A life that wanders, not showing purpose and right priorities, will never prosper, nor be joyful and hopeful in spiritual things. A disciplined mind delivers one from being overwhelmed with problems and failures, enabling us to triumph in adversity and to know that even those trials and disappointments are means which our all-wise God uses to train His sons.

That discipline will enable one to Hold on, to Hold fast, and to Hold out the entirety of the life until our days are done. There is joy in continuation, hope in anticipation of the future glories, and encouragement in our faith in God to work in His own time (Ps. 42:5, 11; 43:5). We are reminded that there is a vital link between the three expressions-- faith, hope, and love. The combined enjoyment and exercise of those three will deliver a believer from discouragement and result in a life of fruitful service that honors our absent, coming Lord.

Permit me, sir, to give you one piece of advice. Be not so positive; especially with regard to things which are neither easy nor necessary to be determined. When I was young I was sure of everything. In a few years, having been mistaken a thousand times, I was not half so sure of most things as I was before. At present, I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to man.
John Wesley

The Gospel, pt 3

Larry Steers

Preparing the Message

"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters"
(Isa. 32:20).

Power with God is not related to preparing a speech or a lecture. A burden for souls comes with time spent in the presence of God upon the knees. Urgency in presenting the Gospel of the grace of God rises in a soul from deep personal conviction relative to eternal realities. Hell and the Lake of Fire are real. The value of a soul is inestimable.

A clear solemn gospel message will embrace the four "R's."

1. RUIN

Sin is the issue. Plow deep. Break up the sinful ground. A mighty garrisoned fortress is being assailed, the conscience of the sinner. The great enemy of souls, Satan, will guard his territory with a mighty determined effort. The desperate battle is engaged for the soul of the sinner.

2. REPENTANCE

Our Lord was abundantly clear. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3,5). Repentance is as essential as and must precede the new birth. If there is no genuine repentance there is no salvation. Repentance means "a change of mind, and genuine conviction of sin". The Publican expresses this when he cries "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13).

3. REDEMPTION

John 3:16 and other great gospel verses can only have real significance when a sinner is convicted by the Holy Spirit how lost and helpless they are. There have been far too many instances when a soul with no sin trouble have been asked if they believe John 3:16. When they answer in the affirmative they are told they are saved. How very sad to lead a poor sinner into such a Christ-less profession.

To a deeply concerned sinner the message of the cross embraces reality. The sacrifice of the lamb becomes precious. The shed blood of Christ embraces inexpressible value. What a moment when a desperately lost sinner exclaims "I see it now, Christ died for me".

4. RESPONSIBILITY

The preacher is responsible for the message he proclaims and the sinner is responsible for the acceptance or rejection of the Savior presented in the message. How sad to see lost souls exit after a gospel meeting unconcerned.

"How sad the day when sinners turn away
From light and life and love and
everlasting day."

As you listen during a testimony meeting or in conversation with a believer telling how they were saved, note the precious moment of salvation. They will often refer to a verse of scripture used by the Holy Spirit to reveal Christ to their darkened souls. There is a lesson here that should be taken careful note of. Most often one of the simply expressed well known verses like John 3:16, John 5:24, Rom. 5:6 etc. are referred to. The wise preacher would work around these verses with a simple outline.

Proclamation of the Message

This may sound like a riddle: "prepared unpreparedness". But read on.

There is preparation required for preaching the gospel. Time on the knees with an open Bible will be evident on the platform. Careful meditation on the Word of God is essential. Paul reminded Timothy "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"(2 Tim. 2:15). The speaker must know his subject well and be well grounded with the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel of the

grace of God. The great truths of redemption, substitution, and forgiveness of sins must flood his heart.

The word "unpreparedness" implies that abundant room is left for the Holy Spirit to control in the deliverance of the message. The Holy Spirit knows the specific circumstances of each person who is listening. So, as mentioned above, the preacher is not tied to a prepared script. There must be room for the Holy Spirit to direct the Word in power to the soul of the sinner. Unpreparedness in this contest means there is full allowance for the Holy Spirit to alter the message.

Note carefully that the gospel messages recorded in Acts were delivered mainly by Peter and Paul. Every message was impromptu and met the existing need of the moment. They were spoken in the courts of the day, in the synagogue, the house of Cornelius, on Mars hill and elsewhere. These were words that came from the stirrings and always prepared to give a reason for the hope that was within them. While Peter and Paul were often the main speakers, who could not be impressed with the masterly address of Stephen in Acts 7. Stephen knew his subject and spoke without fear or favour of men.

Passion of the Speaker

With what has been written, it should be obvious without mentioning it again, that there is a danger in writing out a message and reading it from an I-Pod. Using such methods the message becomes dry, uninteresting and hard to listen to.

Have a Bible in your hand so people will understand that you are preaching from the Word of God.

This grand gospel message from the God of eternity has the power to alter eternal destinations and change lives. How is it that we can talk enthusiastically about our cars and events in life but lack compassion when presenting the greatest message mortal ears have ever heard.

Remember your audience is four fold. First, God is listening. Paul wrote "in the sight of God speak we in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:17). At the Judgement Seat of Christ, the herald of the cross will be accountable for every word spoken.

Second, Satan is listening and working. His purpose is to keep sinners bound in their captive chains. He is the enemy, his power is real and his devices manifold.

Third, all heaven is inclined to hear every word spoken. In Luke 15, the Shepherd searching for one lost sheep reminds us of the Lord's yearning over lost souls. The woman searching for the lost piece of silver with the candle reveals the purpose of the Holy Spirit to deliver the sinner. The father embracing the returning son reflects the the God of love receiving a wayward soul.

All heaven is stirred when a sinner repents and trusts Christ. Again in Luke 15:10 the Lord said, "Likewise I say unto you there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth".

Meditate much on the passion of the Lord as revealed in Matt. 9:3 -6. He saw the multitude and was moved because they had no Sheppard. They are around us, we see them, are we moved? Our Lord's was not a cold, uncaring glance of indifference. He wept over the careless city of Jerusalem. He had compassion on the poor, the broken-hearted, the captives and the blind (Luke 4:18).

When Paul was in Athens waiting for his fellow laborers to join him "his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16).

Preacher's Manner

I will conclude this article with some council to young preachers.

1. Read from the Bible carefully and distinctly. "So they read in the book of the law of God distinctly and gave the sense and caused them to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:8). The scriptures are of paramount importance, not half the message before you read. How you handle the Bible will indicate to the listeners your respect for the Word of God.

2. Make eye contact with the audience, not the clock or gazing out the window.

3. The speaker is not trying to impress the listeners with his speaking ability or how much he thinks he knows. The writer was impressed when an aged brother reminded him "Remember there may be someone in the audience who knows more than you do".

4. Your confidence is not in what you perceive to be your ability. Your confidence is in the Holy Spirit to direct the message in convicting power to the sinner and the eternal value of the message.

5. Be yourself. Don't attempt to imitate another brother.

6. Never use sarcasm, ridicule, offensive words, scorn, or slang expressions. In other words, use good English.

7. Learn to read faces. Faces reflect emotions, feelings, inner thoughts, boredom. Faces tell you if your message is getting to the soul. This again is where unpreparedness is important. You may need to change direction.

"Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2Tim.4:2)

"Did I firmly believe, as millions say they do, that the knowledge and practice of religion in this life influences destiny in another, religion would mean everything. I would cast aside earthly enjoyments as dross, earthly cares as follies, and earthly thoughts and feelings as vanity. Religion would be my first waking thought, and my last image before sleep sank me into unconsciousness. I should labor in its cause alone. I would take thought for the morrow of Eternity alone. I would esteem one soul gained for heaven worth a life of suffering. Earthly consequences should never stay my hand nor seal my lips. Earth, its joys and griefs, would occupy no moment of my thoughts. I would strive to look upon Eternity alone, and on the Immortal Souls around me, soon to be everlastingly happy or everlastingly miserable. I would go forth to the world and preach to it in season and out of season, and my text would be, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose His soul?"

(Written by an atheist)

Outside the Camp

T. D. W. Muir

One thing that characterizes the present age, and distinguishes it from the others which preceded it, is the place of blessing into

which the Christian is brought, in Christ. The death and resurrection of Christ having settled the question of sin, the way into the holiest is now made manifest, so that the worshiper no longer stands at a distance from God, but approaches in virtue of the blood, into the holiest of all, there to worship God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23,24, and Heb. 10:17-22), his place of acceptance and privilege being now "inside the veil," where Christ is.

When we turn to Heb. 13:10-17, we find that the same link with Christ, which brings the believer "inside the veil," brings him also into a place of responsibility. He is to go forth unto Him "without the camp," there to be a sharer of His reproach. This expression, "without the camp," or "outside the camp," is used in at least a fourfold way in the Scriptures.

1. It was the place given to the leprous and the unclean (Lev. 45,46),—the place also where they carried the body of the sin offering, that it might be wholly consumed. (Read Lev. 4:1-12, especially verses 11,12, and Lev. 16:27, etc.)

2. It was the place to which Moses removed the "tent of meeting," after Israel had defiled themselves, in supplanting the Lord by a golden calf, which they worshipped as their deliverer. (Read Exo. 33:7-11.)

3. It was the place to which they led forth the Lord Jesus, when they crucified Him. The city He had preached to, prayed for, and wept over, had rejected Him, and, in giving Him the place of a malefactor, they led Him "without the gate"—outside that "camp," that thus manifested there was no room in it for the Lord Jesus (John 19:17,18; Heb.13: 12).

4. It is the place of responsibility for all who would take sides with a rejected Christ in this day of His rejection. The "crowning day" of which we often sing, will be coming "by and by", but we cannot suffer with Him then. Hence, the word for the present is, "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13-14).

We judge, then, from these various Scriptures, that the words, "Outside the camp," are used in connection with:

FIRST—God's judgment of sin.

SECOND--Separation from evil.

THIRD—Christ's rejection.

FOURTH—Our identification with Him.

God's Judgment of Sin

In the ritual connected with the day of Atonement, as ordained by God for Israel (Lev. 16), Aaron, the high priest, was commanded, first, to bring a bullock as a sin-offering for himself and his house, which he offered before the Lord (verses 2,6,11, etc.). Then he was to cast lots over two kids of the goats before the door of the Tabernacle. These were for a sin offering for the people. One lot was to be "for the Lord", the other for a "scapegoat." The goat upon which the Lord's lot fell, was slain, and its blood carried by the high priest into the holiest, and sprinkled there upon and before the mercy seat seven times.

The scapegoat, having had the sins, iniquities, and transgressions of the people confessed upon its head, bore those sins (typically, of course) into the wilderness.

But, while the blood of the sin offering was brought within the veil—there to form a righteous cause, on the ground of which God could forgive His people, and the scape goat could carry those sins away as the blessed effect of that atoning sacrifice,—yet there was one thing more needed to mark God's judgment of sin. The body of the sin offering was carried outside the camp, and there wholly consumed by fire. (Lev. 15:27).

To this the Spirit of God refers in Heb. 13:11, and then adds: "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (verse 12). He was the true Sin offering, by Whom the sins of His people are actually put away—the consuming fire of God's judgment having burned against them on that place of judgment, "without the camp."

Turning now to our next Scripture, and reading carefully (Exo. 33) we find that "the camp" there, and the city without whose gate they led our Lord Jesus, are morally alike in one thing; namely, there was no room for God in either of them.

A Defiled Camp

Moses, the servant of Jehovah, was on the Mount with God too long for the patience of the people below, and, in their apostasy from God, they turned to a calf of gold, which they had "made themselves naked" to provide (Exo. 32:1-4, 25).

It is a striking fact that, even now, men, professing to be the children of God, will readily give their money lavishly towards unscriptural projects and practices, when they would hesitate to devote the least of it to forwarding that which is according to the Book, and really of God. Israel made themselves "naked" for an idol. How few of God's people are willing to deny themselves for God—till it hurts!

But God is a "God of judgment"; and judgment ever begins at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17), as Israel found to their cost. Moses, as the mediator, had turned away the severity of God's wrath from the people, yet he realized that a holy God must separate Himself from such wickedness. Hence, he removes the Tent which was the meeting place with God (for the Tabernacle was not yet made) to a place "outside the camp." The consequence was, that all who would have a meeting place with the Lord, had to go outside the defiled camp to get it.

A Rejected King

Looking on to 1 Samuel 22:1,2, we find the Lord's anointed Ruler in a cave, while Saul, who represents "the will of man," is on the throne, ruling God's people, Israel. That chapter tells us of some who were attracted—not to the cave, but to the Lord's anointed, who was in the cave and they gathered themselves unto him. "Every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented ("bitter of soul," margin) gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them."

The iron rule of Saul, which caused distress, debt, and bitterness of soul among many of the Israel of God, was the means of turning their eyes and hearts towards David, the anointed of Jehovah, and they went forth unto him. His palace was a cave, and his throne a boulder, nevertheless they went forth, but it was "unto" David. The person of the Lord's anointed filled their vision, and satisfied their

hearts, so they "gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them." They acknowledged David as their leader and ruler.

For, be it noted, that while they cut themselves loose from the rule of Saul, it was not that they might be lawless, and do "as they pleased," but that they might be under the rule of God's chosen king, under David. He was their captain, and it was their joy to obey him! They were outside the camp with David to do his bidding, and in acknowledging the true king, who was still in rejection, they were. . .

"Bearing His Reproach"

Note how strikingly the Spirit of God has blended these two narratives of Exodus 33 and 1 Sam. 22 together in the exhortation to us in Heb. 13. In Exodus 33 we find the principle of separation from evil emphasized. In 1 Samuel 22, separation unto a person is set forth, and that person the Lord's anointed!

In Hebrews 13, the One who is rejected by the religious world—for such it had morally become—was placed "outside the camp." As far as the religious world is concerned, He is still there. Hence the word to all who would be true to Him is: "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach."

Many who are truly the children of God, and it may be faithful to all the light they have, yet remain in the defiled camp of Christendom. There they may occasionally raise a feeble protest against the dishonor done to the Name and Word of the Lord. And for this they may suffer a measure of reproach. Nevertheless, the world will still respect them because they remain in fellowship with them, to support their "cause." But let any give the Word of the Lord its true place, own no name but His, turning their back on the "camp" of man's religion, going forth unto the rejected Lord, then the world, as ever, will have nothing but reproach—"the reproach of Christ"—for them. It is not merely the reproach of being a Christian, or even of bearing testimony to the Gospel for Him: it is the reproach and stigma of being an outcast in the world that had no place for Christ! Shall we not seek, then, grace to take that place now with Him, that He once took for us? As we sing:

"When we see Thy love unshaken,
Outside the camp;
Scorned by man, by God forsaken,
Outside the camp;
Thy loved cross alone can charm us,
Shame need now no more alarm us,
Glad we follow, nought can harm us,
Outside the camp."

The world, social and political, is so manifestly a scene gross defilement and Christ-rejection, that, with many, the instincts of the divine life teach them to turn away from it, and they thus bear their testimony against it. But the Word of God would have His people to be as separate from man's religion as from the other things in which he finds his pleasure and boast. The call to separation is full and clear: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17,18).

Jonathan and David

Jonathan was a lover of David. From the day he stood by the side of Saul his father, and saw David get that mighty victory over the giant of Gath, Jonathan loved David "as he loved his own soul" (1 Sam. 17: 18). Many a time he visited David in his exile, and communed with him there. Many a time did he comfort him by his affectionate words. And in the court of Saul his father, many a time did he speak in David's favor, and bring upon himself the wrath of the king. Thus he suffered reproach for David, whom he loved.

Yet Jonathan, with all his personal devotion, did not sever his link with the court of Saul to go out unto David and stay out with him, sharing thus in his rejection. We do not find Jonathan in the cave of Adullam with David, as one of those who gathered unto him there. Dear Jonathan was not prepared to go so far in his association with God's rejected king. So he remained in the court of Saul. And while he loved David until the end, he fell side by side with his father, in the disastrous battle on Mount Gilboa (1 Sam. 31). How many of God's dear people in our day are somewhat similarly placed. They love the Lord Jesus, and enjoy

communion with Him in many things. They talk with Him of the time of His coming glory, which they shall share, nay more, they testify for Him where they are, and are reproached for His sake. But they cannot bring themselves to make a complete break with the popular systems of man's religion which have so little place for them and their Lord. So they remain, like Jonathan, in the court of Saul, in association with that which is opposed to God. The judgment seat of Christ will alone tell out how they have missed it, and from what causes they failed to be sharers; of that place which, while it has its own peculiar reproach has ever its counterbalancing joy, and will have its glory by and by. As we sing

“Unto Thee the homeless stranger,
Outside the camp;
Forth we hasten, fear no danger,—
Outside the camp;
Thy reproach far richer treasure
Than all Egypt's boasted pleasure,
Drawn by love that knows no measure,
Outside the camp.”

May the Lord Himself grant us to have a heart for Him, and grace to take our place with Him now. We may join “assemblies” or “meetings,” large or small, and it may cost us little, but, if we truly “go forth unto Him,” we shall find we must share with Him the scorn and reproach of that world that still has no room for Him! And, if truly with Him, in this way, we will find that our very association with Him will affect our manner of life, and the things that are inconsistent with His presence, can no longer be allowed to find a place with us or in our ways.

If we but go out unto “a place,” whether that place be Scriptural or otherwise, we may glory in our position, and be as worldly as the next one. But if the heart has truly found its object in Christ, and we are, in truth, sharers with Him of the rejection of this world, then the world will not court us—nor will we desire the world! The Lord grant that thus it may be with us till Jesus comes, and the glory dawns.

“Soon Thy saints shall all be gathered,—
Inside the veil;

All at home, no more be scattered,—
Inside the veil;
Nought from Thee our hearts shall sever,
We shall see Thee, grieve Thee never,
Praise the Lamb!' shall sound for ever,
Inside the veil.”
(Assembly Annals, April 1938)

A God of Deliverance

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By men of the world, natural and visible agents are accredited as giving prosperity in days of peace, and deliverance in times of danger. But the Christian should see the hand of God in everything. The fact that he has been severed from the world by the Cross of Christ, and has now become a sojourner in it, does not make him indifferent to its dangers, or oblivious to the operations of God's hand in the deliverance He works for it. Although he takes no part in its politics, he prays incessantly for its rulers, and in times of crisis he “carries to the Lord in prayer” what he knows to be with God alone in His providence to control, and in His power to bestow. To “regard not the operation of His hands” (Psa. 28:5), is to disown God as the Supreme Governor of His own universe, and to dishonor Him as the One who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). Nothing comes by chance, but is either sent or allowed by God, all for some wise purpose and all in mercy. The wars of earth are no exception. Awful alike in their fury, and in the loss of precious life, they are under the control of the God of heaven. Just as His own people, who are sojourners in the nations whose armies are in deadly conflict with each other, are exercised before Him, and dealing with Him with regard to this great work of Satan, so will its issue be. It is not to be expected that men, who are blinded to the devil's wiles, or others who have imbibed the spirit of the age, will do other than sneer at such a statement, or pity the ignorance of those who make it, yet our firm conviction and fearless confession is, that it is neither with great generals and their armies on the fields of war, nor with skilled admirals and their great navies on the high seas, but with the saints of God on their knees, that the issue of each tremendous conflict lies. If we do not realize this,

Satan does and will seek by every device at his disposal to hinder prayer. There have been times of crisis to the British Empire and to the people and work of God therein, in years long gone by, in which great deliverances were wrought by God in answer to His people's cries, which may well encourage us at such times to "continue instant in prayer."

In 1588, the Spanish Armada under the Duke of Medina sailed from the coast of Spain for the shores of England. It consisted of 130 warships, manned by 8,000 sailors, carrying 18,000 soldiers. Its object was to join with an army raised in Flanders to subjugate Britain to the Pope and make Rome the sole teacher of culture and religion to the British nation, and ultimately to the whole of Europe. The secret agents of the Papacy had been preparing for the events while nominal Protestants were irresolute and unexercised. True saints of God who were in the secret of His counsel, continued in earnest prayer, that the God in whom they trusted might make bare His arm, and overturn the devices of the enemy and theirs. And thus the answer and the deliverance came. Álvaro de Bazán, the skilled admiral of the great Armada died before it had sailed. It encountered two great storms before it reached the English coast, where the fleet appeared on July 30, 1588, extending seven miles at sea. Disaster followed disaster: artifice and tempest scattered the great fleet, causing what of it remained, to flee to the northern seas, where furious winds dashed the vessels against rocks and cliffs to utter destruction. In the end, only 67 ships and fewer than 10,000 men survived, many of them to die in Spain due to diseases. It was reported that, when Philip II learned of the result of the expedition, he declared, "I sent the Armada against men, not God's winds and waves". Throughout the British Isles this was recognized as the act of God, and national thanks was given to Him. Even the people of Spain acknowledged that the Divine hand was against them. All Europe was solemnized, and a medal struck to commemorate the event bore the text, "The Lord sent His wind and scattered them". Would to God the same spirit of submission under God's mighty hand, with confession of our failures and sins, and dependence on God as expressed in prayer, were more found among

God's people in any crisis. Then we would soon have to acknowledge that "His right hand and His holy arm" had brought deliverance.

To Every Man His Work

The Lord has given to every man his work. It is his business to do it, and the devil's business to hinder him—if he can. So, sure as God gives a man a work to do, Satan will try to hinder him. He may present other things more promising; he may allure you by worldly prospect; he may assault you with slander, torment you with false accusations, set you to work defending your character, employ pious persons to lie about you, editors to assail you, and excellent men to slander you. You may have Pilate and Herod, Ananias and Caiaphas all combined against you, and Judas standing by to sell you for 30 pieces of silver. And you may wonder why all these things have come to pass. Can you not see that the whole thing is brought about through the craft of the devil, to draw you off from your work and hinder your obedience to Christ? Keep about your work. Do not flinch because the lion roars. Do not stop to stone the devil's dogs. Do not fool around your time chasing the devil's rabbits. Do your work; let liars lie; let sectarians quarrel; let editors publish; let the devil do his worst. But see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work God has given you. He had not sent you to make money; He has not commanded you to get rich. He has never bidden you to defend your character nor has He bidden you to contradict falsehoods about yourself which Satan and his servants may start to peddle. If you do these things you will do nothing else; you will be at work for yourself and not for the Lord. Keep about your work. Let your aim be as steady as a star. Let the world brawl and bubble. You may be assaulted, wrangled, insulted, slandered, wounded, and rejected. You may be chased by foes, abused by them, forsaken by friend, despised and rejected of men, but see to it that with steadfast determination and with unflinching zeal you pursue that great purpose of your life and the object of your being until at last you can say, "I have finished the work which you, dear God, have given me to do"?

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