

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Our God And Our Weaknesses

W. H. Griffith Thomas; James Denney;
Samuel Ridout

We are born into this world with corrupt bodies, full of physical weaknesses of all kinds. We are born into this world with sinful natures, full of spiritual weaknesses of all kinds. The question then arises, Is God able to deal with our weaknesses? The answer is decidedly - *Yes!* Let us look at three verses which demonstrate this very emphatically.

1. Romans 8:26: "Likewise the Spirit also helps in our *weaknesses*. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Now amidst present sufferings the indwelling Spirit does far more than inspire us with hope. He actually helps us in our present distress. Just as hope assists us (verse 25), so "in like manner the Spirit helps our weaknesses," for we have no power unaided to realize our hopes. The word employed for the help of the Spirit is very striking. It implies "assistance against all opposition." The Holy Spirit makes common cause with us against every foe, by taking hold of us, and providing adequate aid. In particular He helps us in our weakness about prayer, all the helplessness and weariness which tend to come to the believer amidst suffering and perplexity. We feel as if we could not pray, but the Holy Spirit prays for us; and we know that this intercession will be effectual because God, the searcher of hearts, knows the meaning of the Spirit's intercession and interprets the inarticulate utterances as they are offered on our behalf. How great a help all this assurance is to the believer amidst his weariness, perplexity, weakness, and pain is only too well known to personal experience. God Who is greater than our hearts understands us perfectly, and while our lips may be unable to utter anything, the Holy Spirit is all the while making intercession within. (W. H. Griffith Thomas)

2. Second Corinthians 12:9: "And He has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in *weakness*. Therefore most gladly I will rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The first point to notice in this answer is the tense of the verb:

"He has said." The sentence is present as well as past; it is Christ's continuous, as well as final, answer to Paul's prayer. He has been made to understand that the thorn must remain in his flesh, but along with this he has received the assurance of an abiding love and help from the Lord. Paul could no more ask for the removal of the thorn; it was the Lord's will that he should submit to it for high spiritual ends, and to pray against it would now have been a kind of impiety. But it is no longer an unrelieved pain and humiliation; he is supported under it by that grace of Christ which finds in the need and abjectness of men the opportunity of showing in all perfection His own condescending strength. The collocation (order) of "grace" and "strength" is characteristic of the New Testament, and very significant. But grace, in the New Testament, is force; it is a heavenly strength bestowed on men for timely succor; it finds its opportunity in our extremity; when our weakness makes us incapable of doing anything, it gets full scope to work. Paul is content. This compensation far outweighed the trial. He is conscious only of the weakness and suffering from which he is never to escape, and of the grace of Christ which hovers over him, and out of weakness and suffering makes him strong. (James Denney)

3. HEBREWS 4:15: "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our WEAKNESSES, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." We are a feeble people, a tempted people, a people who are passing through the wilderness, beset with snares, temptations, difficulties, on every side. We make a great mistake - as I am sure your experience will bear me out - if we belittle the attractiveness and the allurements of the world. And when we come to its trials, to the difficulties of the way, to the manifold assaults of the enemy, who has felt the need of a power greater far than even the power of his own love to the Lord Jesus? And so He is presented to us not merely as the High Priest gone above, but as One whose infinite, tender sympathy is ever engaged on our behalf. What a comfort it is in the midst of the trials of the way to know that we have a sympathetic High Priest! Oftentimes we may go to one another with our trials and we meet each other with a certain measure of sympathy. But how incomplete is the sympathy of the dearest friend that you may have! There are experiences, there is a sense of weakness, there are needs which you are either ashamed to speak of or realize the uselessness of telling

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The Man Of The World

C. H. Mackintosh

“Now Abigail went to Nabal, and there he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal’s heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; therefore she told him nothing, little or much, until morning light. So it was, in the morning, when the wine had gone from Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became like a stone. Then it happened, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died (1 Sam. 25:36-38).” What a sad picture of a man of the world! Sunk in intoxication during the night, and when the morning dawned, struck with terror, pierced by the arrow of death. How solemnly like the multitudes whom the enemy has succeeded, in every age, in alluring and intoxicating with the perishing joys of a world which lies under the curse of God, and awaits the fire of His judgment. “They that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night;” but, ah! the morning is at hand, when the wine (apt symbol of this world’s joy) shall have altogether evaporated - the feverish excitement in which Satan now involves the spirits of the men of this world shall have calmed down, and then comes the stern reality of an eternity of misery - unspeakable misery, in company with Satan and his angels.

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness dwells. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that you look for such things, be diligent, that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:11-14). Such are the soul-stirring, momentous facts presented to us throughout the Book of God, in order to detach our hearts from present things, and bind them in genuine affection to those objects and prospects which stand connected with the person of the Son of God. Nor will aught else, save the deep and positive conviction of the reality of these things, produce such effects.

We know the intoxicating power of this world’s schemes and operations; we know how the human heart is borne away, as upon the surface of a rapid current, when such things are presented: schemes of improvement, commercial operations, political movements - aye, and popular religious movements too - all these things produce upon the human mind an effect similar to that produced by Nabal’s wine, so that

it is almost useless to announce the stern facts presented in the above solemn quotation. Still, they must be announced, must be reiterated, “and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.” “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” “All these things shall be dissolved.” “The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt, with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up.” Such is the prospect presented to us all who, like Nabal, surcharged with “surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life,” have rejected the claims and appeals of Jesus. *

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the dearest earthly friend about. How blessed it is to know that there is not an atom of experience we may have that is beneath the notice of our blessed High Priest! There is not a trial, so small that you might be ashamed to speak of it to man, that you cannot tell out in His sympathetic ear. He has passed through our experiences. Christ has gone through all the circumstances of the wilderness. He knows what it all means in a way infinitely beyond the experience of the ripest saints, for He has passed through it, apart from the deadening, dulling, wasteful experiences of sin. Oh, it was because of His spotless purity, because He was in circumstances where we fail, but where He did not fail, that He is a perfect sympathizing Priest. As we pass through the wilderness, we know that the loving heart of our blessed Savior throbs in unison with every God-given experience that His people have; therefore we can come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, no matter what the need may be, to find grace for seasonable help - the grace that will help us in the very difficulty in which we are. *

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prayed for that boy twice a day since he was born, and I know that it isn’t a case of if he’ll be saved, only a matter of when.’

Mr. Richardson died and went to glory, and never saw his prayers answered. Thirty years after that celebration in his honour, I returned to Scotland for my mother’s funeral, and when I arrived at my sister’s home, she informed me that they were all rejoicing, because that very week, Mr. Richardson’s son had finally trusted Christ at the age of 75, and he was on fire for the Lord, and expressing his deep regrets that he hadn’t been saved sooner. It is evident that the Lord saw his father’s faith, and in turn, his son’s response, and responded in a remarkable way. The wonderful sequel is, that his son will join him in glory at the end of life’s day.

Dear brother or sister, perhaps you are grieving over a son or daughter, or some loved one who is not saved. Do take heart. Like the friends of the paralytic, keep bringing them to Jesus’ feet - that’s as much as you can do - and if you leave them with Him, the Spirit will undoubtedly work with them with a view to giving them opportunity to accept the way of salvation. *

I Verily Thought With Myself

August VanRyn

“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9).

I would like to devote a little space to this unique confession of the erstwhile persecutor of the saints as he rehearses before King Agrippa his sensational experience.. There are at least seven interesting points in this remarkable verse:

1. **“I” - The Wrong Person Filled His Vision.** What an enemy this “I” is to the natural man! It is a great relief when it is crucified with Christ; when true deliverance and peace are known; when it is no longer I, but Christ who dwells in me, that sits on the throne of my heart.

2. **“I Verily Thought” - And He Thought Wrong.** How man prides himself on his intellectual capacity, not knowing, it seems, what the Scriptures teach so clearly: that God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth. God has given a revelation - the Scriptures of truth - to guide our thinking, to set and keep our thoughts in the right channels. Every thought must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5).

3. **“I Thought With Myself”- What A Tragedy Looms In This Unique Expression Of Opinionated Self-Sufficiency.** It reminds one of the story our Lord told about the farmer in Luke 12 whose barns were bursting with crops and who thought “within himself” saying, “What shall I do?” It is like the Pharisee of Luke 18 who prayed “with himself.” None of these sought counsel elsewhere; they knew it all; they left God out of their reckoning. In prayer we seek counsel from God, but Saul never really asked advice from the God he professed to serve. His very thoughts did not leave home. The most narrow-minded person is the one who leaves God out; whose thoughts never leave the narrow confines of his own limited brain. Depend upon it, the soul that does not seek help from the God of omniscience and omnipotence will inevitably go wrong somewhere. Saul found it so. Thinking, in his fanatical zeal, that he did God’s will, he was actually doing the exact reverse.

4. **“I Ought To” - Duty Was Saul Of Tarsus’ Motive Prior To His Conversion.** Duty is but a cold, often heartless motive. Duty fails to render the heart to God, who says, “Son, give Me thine heart!” The commandments did not say first “thou shalt serve the Lord thy God,” but “thou shalt LOVE the Lord thy God with all thine heart.”

The elder son said to his father, “Lo, these many years do I serve thee,” but it had made him only hard and bitter and censorious when his sinful but repentant prodigal brother was welcomed home. A life ordered by duty can be very hard, cold, and Pharasaic. The worst madman is a religious one; in others the conscience is a restraining force; in him it becomes a relentlessly compelling one. Conscience made Saul a murderer of Christians; love, the mighty love of Christ, made him a humble follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and a suffering servant of his Lord. It is the love of Christ - not hard duty - that is to constrain the believer henceforth not to live unto himself but unto Him who died for him and rose again.

5. **“I Ought To Do” - Man Loves To Do.** With God, to “BE” comes first. Service from a sinner is not acceptable to Him. Worship precedes service. The heart must be right with God before the hands are fit to do His will. We do not become His by good works, but, once saved, we are created in Christ unto good works; works that flow from a heart filled with the wonder of the love of Christ.

6. **“Many Things.”** But, as the Lord said of Mary in Luke 10, “ONE thing is needful.” As Paul writes in Philippians 3:13: “This one thing I do”; I press toward the mark, forgetting the things behind. The young ruler of Mark 10 did many things too, but the Savior told him that he lacked ONE thing - the one thing necessary. Without saving faith in Christ, which produces the love of God in the soul, no works, no matter how many or how great, are worth anything in His sight; in fact, they are sins that need to be repented of.

7. **“Contrary To The Name Of Jesus Of Nazareth.”** Saul of Tarsus did not know Jesus; that was the evil root from which sprang all his evil course. He learned to know and love Him later, and his whole life became revolutionized. From a persecutor he became the persecuted; hard duty became transmuted into living, lowly service. Jesus’ Name, which once he despised, now became his boast and glory. He learned that the despised Jesus of Nazareth was actually the Lord of glory, for at his conversion he saw Him in the opened heaven seated at the right hand of God. Henceforth he gloried in the cross of Christ, by which the world was crucified unto him and he to the world. *

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*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that
Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.
1 Timothy 1:15*

October, 2012

The Reward Of Faith

Willie Burnett

When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee. Mark 2. 5

All of the synoptic gospels record the miracle of the healing of the paralytic man. We recall that caring friends brought him to Jesus, and when they could not gain access because of the crowd, they made heroic attempts to get him to the feet of Jesus by uncovering the roof, and letting him down before Him. That was as much as they could do, and they left their burden with the Lord Jesus. We then read the remarkable statement ‘When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.’ Mark 2. 5. Note, it does not say that Jesus saw the man’s faith, but the faith of his friends who brought him, and the Lord readily responded to that faith and healed the man.

Forty years ago, just before immigrating to Canada, our assembly in Scotland held a celebration to honour brother Tom Richardson on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, which coincided with his fiftieth year of full-time service in the Lord’s work as an evangelist. The elders of the assembly sent letters around the country inviting any who had been saved through Mr. Richardson’s preaching to come and attend the celebration. The response was much greater than we ever expected. The hall was filled to capacity with his converts, to the extent that the locals had to move into the foyer. Before the meeting started, I noticed a man sitting in the front row that I didn’t recognize, and on making enquiries, I discovered that this was one of Mr. Richardson’s sons – aged 45 and not saved. I felt so sorry for Mr. Richardson. To think that this hall was filled with his converts, and here was his son – not yet saved. After the meeting I spoke with Mr. Richardson, and I said how sorry I was about his son, and that this must be a real heartbreak to him, considering all the others he had led to Christ. Surprisingly, he said ‘No, not really.

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December 8	Eternal Life & Eternal Punishment	Randy Amos
January 12	Romans 12-16	Tom Irwin
February 9	Lessons from Saul & David	Bob Spender
March 9	Feasts of Jehovah	Mike Attwood
April 13	Conference - John Gordon, TBA Held at North York Bible Chapel (PA)	

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