

The Word Brought Nigh to the Sorrowful

by Andrew Bonar

God's interest in our cares and troubles is evident in His promise to guide and protect us through the wilderness of life, and faith is the remedy for fear and care.

Scripture: Genesis 21:17, Psalm 112:4, Luke 12:29, 2 Timothy 1:7

Topics: "Trust in God's Provision", "God's Comfort"

Description

Andrew Bonar emphasizes God's compassionate presence in times of sorrow, illustrating how He cares for even the most distressed individuals, like Hagar, and reassures them through His promises. He encourages believers to trust in God's guidance and provision, reminding them that their lives are orchestrated by Him, and that all things work together for their good. Bonar highlights the importance of prayer and casting our cares upon God, assuring that He is attentive to our needs and will provide peace amidst turmoil. He draws on various scriptures to reinforce the message that faith in God alleviates fear and anxiety, ultimately leading to spiritual growth and comfort.

Transcript

(From The Visitor's Book of Texts. Chapter 4 from Part 3 "The Word brought nigh to the sorrowful")

(In a few cases the wording of the Bible text will be found to differ from the Authorised Version.

This is how it was printed originally, and is presumably intentional.)

Introduction

Our errand being one of grace, the Lord will hear us when we ask his presence in it. Now, his Spirit is not "the spirit of fear :" it is the "spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). To be clothed with his Spirit ourselves, and to ask Him to impart to others what we ourselves have been furnished with, is our best preparation for dealing with the case before us.

We may take up some such passage as Gen. 21:17. "What aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is." Here is , 1. God's interest in the cares and troubles of a servant-woman, or rather slave. 2. God takes such interest in such a case as even hers, that He sends an angel - aye, and no common angel; He sends "the Angel of the covenant," as appears by the context. 3. The Holy Ghost has recorded all this minutely, to teach us what to expect when we too are in a wilderness, losing our way, and trying to manage our own cares.

Or we dwell upon Ps. 112:4. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." A memorable text. 1. as surely as there is blue sky behind these dark clouds, so surely there is a gracious God and Father, though unseen, behind these distressing cares. 2. The past has given examples of light arising on darkness. 3. Your one duty is, to continue conscientiously and filially to fulfil His will, doing or suffering.

Perhaps we may occasionally, with advantage, refer to history or biography. What a simple yet powerfully instructive incident was that of the little child, who, seeing her mother's tears while gazing shoreward from the ship that bore her amid strangers to a land of strangers, repeated (as she touched her mother's hand), "Though I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, thy right hand shall hold me;" and then asked, "Is it true?"

Sorrowful - because of anxious forebodings and cares

Ps 37:23. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his way."

1. The plan of that man's life has been drawn up by the Lord, and He delights to see the plan carried out, step by step. 2. Each man's history is a world's history in miniature.

Num. 14:11. "How long will this people provoke Me? How long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs that I have shewed among them?"

What! not trust Him with the future? He that has destroyed Pharaoh, is He not able to bring Anakims down? He that gave you His Spirit to bring you to know His Son (having given you His Son as your Saviour), what else will He hesitate to do for you?

Luke 12:29-32. "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after. And your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

He that loveth you as to have ready for you the glorious kingdom, cannot but intend to keep you safe by the way. But strength is not promised to-day for the trials of to-morrow.

Rom 8:28. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

1. "All things?" yes, cares, perplexities, as well as other things. 2. They will help you on your progress. 3. They are in God's plan of your life - "according to His purpose." 4. Do not say, "If I were an eminent saint, I might fancy this to be so;" it belongs to all who "love God," i.e., who acquiesce in His will, who love the work and person of His Son, in whom the Father is revealed. 5. "We know" all this; we "know" it - it is most sure.

Prov. 12:21. "There shall no evil happen to the just."

("If we are not secure from trials, we are secure from harm" - Cecil)

1. The just man in God's sight is the sinner made just, or justified, who now doeth justly - the sinner "in Christ, who walketh not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1). 2. To this man, nothing but good ever comes. No condemnation, no wrath, no evil. 3. Trials, uncertainties, drive him nearer to God, and so become blessings.

Ps.112:7. "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings : his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

The Good News takes the sting out of all that men call evil tidings. God's covenant-love sweetens the bitterest gall.

Ps.61:2. "From the end of the earth will I cry unto Thee, when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I."

That Rock can cast its shadow over the careful, fearful, foreboding man, as it did over that same man, when sin-oppressed, ready to sink under God's crushing wrath.

Phil.4:6,7. "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Luther called prayer "The leeches of his care.")

1 Pet. 5:7. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you."

1. It is not, cast away care, but "cast it on Christ." 2. It is, cast it all on Him. 3. Not one concern of yours is too small for Him. In creation, the smallest insect is cared for, and gets mysterious life, as certainly as the loftiest angel; and, in providence, His saints' minutest interest is attended to. "If it were not so, I would have told you" (John 14:2). 4. Let this sink into your heart, "He careth for you."

Jer. 17:7,8. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, . . . he shall not be careful in the year of drought."

Faith is the remedy for fear and care.

Mark. 4:39,40. "The wind ceased, and there was a great calm. And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

1. You will see, when the storm is over, how unreasonable was your fear. 2. He that permits the storm to arise, can control it. 3. Fix your eye on Him; forget the winds and waves.

Jer. 10:23. "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. It is not in him that walketh to direct his steps."

"If so, you need not wish to alter anything. God has chosen for you out of his endless stores the very best portion," - says one who knew care.

Ps. 32:1,8. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. . . . I will instruct thee and teach thee the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye."

1. A pardoned man is one to whom guidance is promised. Why, then, should he be so careful and fearful?
2. He that sees how to get over the difficulties in the way of thy pardon, can He not get over the difficulties that lie in thy way through life?

Num. 9:2, 18-22. "Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season. . . .At the commandment of the Lord, the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched. Whether it were two days, or a week, or a year, that the cloud tarried upon the tabernacle, remaining thereon, the children of Israel abode in their tents and journeyed not; but when it was taken up, they journeyed."

1. Passover-men are the men whom the Lord will guide by His cloudy pillar. This is the connecting link between the first part of this chapter and the second. 2. They are not left to shift for themselves. 3. He often takes unexpected paths, and puts them to much inconvenience. 4. He thus trains their will.

Is. 42 :16. "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

Gen. 46:2,3. "God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob? And he said, Here am I. And He said, I am God! the God of thy father! Fear not to go down into Egypt." Verse 4. "I will go down with thee into Egypt."

Ps. 94:18,19. "Thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul."

1. "Mercy held him up" when his foot was slipping. Mercy ! mercy ! the very thing for my case. 2. God's comforts were dropt into the stream of his anxious thoughts. Yes, the comforts of God !

Is. 50:10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

1. Spoken to a real believer; i.e., to a sinner who feels the Lord's majesty, and listens to the grace revealed by Messiah, "His Servant." 2. Spoken to such a one especially in times of affliction; for the darkness here is that arising from outward things, as if calamities were equivalent to God's frowns. 3. Let such a one fix his thoughts on "the name of the Lord;" i.e., the Lord's manifested character, and the Lord's gracious heart, and stay himself there, till "these calamities be overpast."

Gen. 32:7, 9,11,30. "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed. And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham. . . .deliver me! And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

1. It was always in anxious seasons that Jacob got his singular discoveries of God. This is one instance; but see also, Bethel, ch. 28:11,12; and Bethel again, ch. 35: 5,9, and 46:3,4. How seasonable is our God's support! 2. If so, perplexities and forebodings may be but the folding-doors by which we are to see God come forth (as Jonathan came out to David from the thick wood) to comfort us.

Song 4:8. "Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards."

1 Pet. 5:10,11. "But the God of all grace, who hath called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

1. It is the God of grace that wishes us to suffer a while - the God who spared us every drop of penal suffering. 2. If so, these trials must be love-portions. 3. They will soon end. 4. They will contribute to our after completeness. The potter is handling and moulding the clay at present, and sometimes his hand seems rude as it shapes the vessel. 5. We shall yet sing "Glory" to him over these very sorrows; and "Dominion," too, rejoicing that he had the power to overrule.

2 Chron. 20:12. "Neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

It is He that drives the chariot - He alone. Do not try to help Him, but sit quiet in faith upon Him, and look what He will do. "The Lord, alone, did lead him" (Deut. 32:12).

Ps. 25:15. "Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord; for He shall pluck my feet out of the net."

Job 9:34. "Let Him take His rod away from me."

"It is all one to have a burden taken off, and to have strength given to bear and patience to endure it." - Caryl.

Ps. 56:3. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee."

Daniel 3:17. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace."

Is. 27:8. "He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind."

He might have added bodily sickness to this trial, or the sickness of friends; He might have added excruciating pain; He might have added a hundred aggravations; but lo! He gives you just so much at a time as you can well bear, through His Spirit in you.

1 John 4:4. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world."

Is. 27:7. "Hath He smitten him as He smote those that smote him?"

There is a wide difference between your afflictions and those of other men, if you are one of His people - even as there was between Israel's chastisements and Pharaoh's doom.

Ps. 140:7. "O Lord God, the strength of my salvation! Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle."

Ps. 42:7. "All thy waves and billows are gone over me."

It is God's waves. "Tides of love springing out of the ocean of God's love! so that they cannot overwhelm, but only plunge us in its unfathomable depths." - (A. Newton's Memoirs)

Luke 10:19. "Nothing shall by any means hurt you."

Spoken to the seventy - to all whose names are written in heaven. Jesus promises, 1. Nothing shall hurt a disciple ! 2. Nothing shall hurt a disciple, come in what shape it may, and though Satan try to wield it - "Nothing by any means"

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