

That King Ahaz

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that while affliction and distress can be sanctified for the believer's growth and even bring sinners to repentance, suffering itself does not guarantee a softened heart or true repentance, as exemplified by King Ahaz.

Scripture: 2 Chronicles 28:22, Job 5:7, Psalm 23:4, Isaiah 53:5, Romans 8:28

Topics: "Suffering and Sanctification", "God's Discipline"

Description

In this powerful sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the complex role of suffering in the Christian life, emphasizing that while affliction can be used by God to sanctify believers and bring sinners to repentance, it does not guarantee a softened heart. Using the example of King Ahaz, Spurgeon warns against the danger of hardening one's heart despite trials. He calls listeners to respond humbly to God's discipline and find hope in the sanctifying power of affliction.

Transcript

"And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz." 2 Chronicles 28:22.

IT is absolutely certain, dear Friends, that whatever our personal characters may be, we shall have to know, by practical experience, the meaning of the word, "trouble." Saint or sinner, "man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." The road to Heaven is rough and the path to Hell is not always smooth. There are some tribulations which belong especially to the people of God, yet it is also true that "many sorrows shall be to the wicked." If a man, trying to escape from sorrow, should take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, he would find that sorrow was even there upon the sea! Should he go to the frozen regions of the North, he would find sorrow there, for there have some of the fondest human hopes been wrecked. Let him journey to the sultry South and trouble shall pursue him there, for plagues, fevers and disease haunt that region and the gates of death are near. Until we mount to Heaven, we shall never be able to escape from sorrow and sighing—only there shall we obtain joy and gladness, when our somber companions shall have fled away forever.

Since, dear Friends, the stream of sorrow is here, and we cannot make it flow in any other direction, what shall we do with it? Let us try to put it to profitable uses! Let us lift up our heart in prayer to God that all our sorrows may be sanctified—that, with all other things, they may work together for our lasting good—and that we, who are the children of God, may be perfected in the image of Christ according to the Divine

Purpose. Let us remember, however, that sorrow will not of itself be beneficial to us. It is possible to endure afflictions on earth and afterwards to endure eternal damnation in Hell. Sinners may go from beds of languishing to beds of flame, from toil and poverty here, to torment and all despair hereafter. There is nothing at all in sorrow that can burn out sin—there is no power in human suffering to remove the wrath of God!

I. I shall commence my discourse with this very simple remark—IN THEIR TIMES OF DISTRESS, GOD'S PEOPLE HAVE OFTEN FOUND VERY GREAT PROFIT.

Suffering is one of the things which is written in the Covenant of Grace as a blessing. The rod was promised to us when we became the children of God and we cannot escape it. And I think the poet Cowper was right when he said that "the trueborn child of God" would not escape it if he might. The distress of Believers, when it is sanctified to them, loosens their hold upon this world. Trials cut the ropes which fasten our souls to earthly things and so enable us to mount. They file the chains which, as on the eagle's foot, will not let her spread her wings and soar upward toward the sun. Trouble, like a sharp spade, digs up the earth that is about our roots and then we bring forth more fruit. Were it not for the thorns in our nest, we would be so content with its soft lining that we would sit in it till we died. But the sharp thorns prick our breasts and then we turn our eyes aloft and learn to try our wings, ready for the time when they shall have fully grown and we shall mount to joys above!

Afflictions, also, are often to the benefit of Believers in leading them to search for sin. Our trials should be search warrants, sent to us from God that we may search and find out the secret evil that is within us—the offense that we have hidden, the lie that is in our right hand. You know, Beloved, that it is not an easy thing to bring us to self-examination. We are afraid of it—we are too apt to take things as they seem to be, without testing and trying them to see what they really are. But when the consolations of God grow small with us, then we say, "Is there any secret sin within us?" A rough wind blows through the forest and the rotten branches creak, and are torn from the oak, where otherwise they

would have become a nest for all sorts of destructive insects and a center of decay for the whole tree. So, our afflictions often drive away some besetting sins, some darling propensities which otherwise we might have carried in our bosom till they had done us grievous damage.

Do you not also know, dear Friends, how trials give new life to prayer? Do we ever pray as well as when we feel the pricks of our Father's sword? He never wounds us so severely as to kill us, but He does, sometimes, just gently probe us to wake us up from our lethargy. Oh, what fervent prayers we offer when in the furnace! And I may add, oh, what grateful songs we sing when we come out! There is more life, I think, in one's piety in times of sorrow than at any other season. I do not wish to be laid aside from pulpit labor, but I must confess that I have often felt unusual spiritual power when coming up to preach to you after a season of sickness. And there have been times when I have heard some of you say, "Our minister speaks more sweetly, now, than he did before he was laid aside." Yes, the olives must go into the press if the oil is to be squeezed out of them—and the grapes must be trod upon with loving feet before the wine flows forth from them. The file must be used upon us to bring out the true quality of the metal. There is no hope that we shall ever be made into much fine gold unless we are often put into the crucible—and unless that crucible is put into the midst of the glowing coals! So I say that we get much good from our trials.

Have you not also found, dear Friends, that trials make your faith grow stronger? We who are but striplings in the Lord's army, enlist very readily. We put the colors in our cap and we think that we are going to do

great things—to stir up the Church and to rout the world, the flesh and the devil! But we soon find that we have to be drilled by the black sergeant, Affliction, and afterwards we have to march out to the battle of the warrior, "with confused noise and garments rolled in blood." And, by-and-by, after many a conflict, we become hardened veterans and we who might have turned our backs before, if it had not been for trial, become bold as lions for the Lord our God! Brothers and Sisters, there is no teaching, no ministry, even of the best-taught servant of God, that can do you such good as sanctified experience! You must learn for yourselves—under that blessed schoolmaster, Mr. Affliction—you must study the sacred science of Divinity! It is good to go to his school, for the lessons to be learned there are so beneficial. One of his scholars wrote, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your Word."

We also get our sweetest comforts in the time of trouble. Do not mothers often give their children, in their seasons of sickness, tokens of love that they never give them when in health? I know that there are kisses of Jesus' lips for His tried children that He gives not to those who are without trial. "He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom." Then I would love to be a lamb, to ride so near to His heart—"and shall gently lead those that are with young," and it is well for us, sometimes, to fake those pains and weaknesses that we may have more of the gentle leadings of the tender Shepherd! I think it was Rutherford who said that when Christ put him down in the cellar of affliction, he knew that He kept His wine there, and he groped about until he found the bottles—and then he drank and was revived! Ah, there is rich wine of comfort in the lowest cellars of affliction when Christ puts us down there! Even the joys of Heaven will be all the sweeter because of our experiences of trial here, where we often sing—

"Sweet affliction Thus to bring my Savior near." Christ is superlatively sweet to us and the next sweetest thing in all the world is Christ's dear Cross. He is, Himself, most precious, but next to the kisses of His lips are the blows—the love pats—of His pierced hands!

II. Now I advance another step and remind you that VERY OFTEN, THROUGH THE GRACE OF GOD, UNGODLY PERSONS HAVE HAD REASON TO BLESS THE LORD FOR THEIR AFFLICTIONS.

Not infrequently have I heard a story of this kind from a man who has passed the prime of life, whose garments bear evidence, though he still looks respectable, that he is one who has seen many sorrows and trials—and who carries on his brow the marks of the plowshare of grief. He has come to unite in fellowship with the Church and he begins telling the story of his conversion, which is something like this—"I was once a flourishing tradesman. I had a large business and was a wealthy man, but, alas, I was foolish. Worse than that, I was wicked. I misspent my time, I delighted in the ways of sin and became a profligate. My companions thought me generous and I did not wish to be less than they thought me to be, so I wasted my substance in riotous living. My business suffered and, at last, there came a crash. All I had went where all must go when a man squanders his time and money as I squandered mine. I became poor. I had not previously known what it was to eat the bread of dependence, but I did eat it for a few months. Friends assisted me for a time, but they grew

tired of doing so and I was cast off by the world. And I felt, when any looked coldly upon me, that I deserved it. I have been a fool, Sir, I know that I have. But it was then, one cold, pitiless night, when there was only one place where I could find shelter for my head—that place was the pauper's last refuge—it was then that I thought upon my ways and lifted my eyes to Heaven and breathed the prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." The man has told me that he blesses God for his poverty, for that was the means of bringing him to Christ! And since he has come to know the Lord, he has thought it a thousand mercies that

he was thus brought very low, for if he had not been, his proud spirit would never have been broken and he would never have been humbled before the Lord.

And some of you, my Sisters, know that you have told me and the Church your story. You were happy mothers in your households, but you feared not the Lord. You had your children around you and you and your husband took what you called, "your pleasure," on the Sabbath, for you had no fear of God before your eyes. But, by-and-by, one of your little ones was taken ill. You watched, with anxious care, the pale cheek as it grew still paler—and grim Death took your darling from you. Again his shaft flew and a second one was taken—and your soul was melted because of heaviness. There is one here who had four children taken away in succession, till, at last, the mother's agonized soul, bereaved of all earthly comfort, could go to no one else but Christ—and when she went to Him, she found in Him what was better than 10 sons—His love, His pardon, His acceptance, His free gift of eternal life!

Ah, Brothers and Sisters, there have been many who have thus, by a series of bereavements, through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, been brought to know the Lord! I need not stay to mention instances of which I am constantly hearing. I believe that the black angel of distress has brought as many to Christ as the bright angel of tender mercy. In fact, if you look well at the black angel, as I have called him, you will see that he is not black, but exceedingly bright, for there is a gracious ministry in those loving sorrows! There is an angelic kindness in those loving cruelties (as some term them) by which God sometimes bring hardened sinners to Himself!

III. But now I come to the main point of my discourse which is that although distress is often blessed to God's people, and is frequently sanctified to the conversion of sinners, our text is a notable proof that THERE IS NOTHING

IN TRIAL, ITSELF, WHICH WILL NECESSARILY SOFTEN THE HEART AND MAKE A MAN REPENT.
"In the

time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz."

If further proof were needed that trouble, affliction, sickness and familiarity with death necessarily softened the heart, then those people who have most to do with these things would have the most tender hearts—but it is not so. Think of the man who has to deal with the dead. Where will you find anywhere, as a class, a more hardened set of men than undertakers often are? I know that anyone who is well acquainted with them, must have observed how they joke over a corpse and make mirth over the death of their fellow creatures, regarding a fever rather as a blessing which brings them employment than as a calamity which takes away the husband from the wife, or the parent from the children. I do not speak without my book in this case, and it is very much the same with other people. I think I said, one day, that if a man or a woman were not converted before they became pew-openers at a church or a chapel, it was probable that they never would be converted—and I am still of the same opinion. I once said that I thought even reporters of sermons, if they did not know the Lord before they undertook that work, would very likely fail to get any good out of the sermon and, therefore, it is always a great joy to me when I know that those who have any share in the preparation of my sermons with a view to their publication have realized the power of the Truth of God in their own hearts so that, even while engaged in the mechanical operations connected with reporting and printing the sermons, their souls drink in something of the sweetness of the Truth which is afterwards to be read by others.

Probably, however, the truth of the text will be best illustrated by a Scriptural instance. Look at Pharaoh. Was any man ever more troubled than he was? All the power of land, and water, and sky united to plague him! It seemed as if all the frogs in the world had made Egypt their rendezvous—and the locusts, and the lice, and the flies, and cattle diseases, and boils, and the hail, and the thick darkness—and though all these plagues came upon Pharaoh, he still hardened his heart and would not let the people go! Affliction did not soften him. On the contrary, it hardened him. And the case of Ahaz is another instance of the same evil spirit, for the more trials came to him, the more did he trespass against the Lord. The children of Israel, too, though they were smitten many times, yet revolted again and again. They were hunted about by marauders and delivered up to their enemies. Their crops were devoured of locusts. Famine and pestilence came

upon them, but, for all that, they turned not unto the Lord, but hardened their hearts against Him and were a stiff-necked generation, even as they are unto this day!

However, I need not go on beating round the bush, for, if further proofs that sorrow does not necessarily soften are needed, there are plenty of such proofs here at this moment. There is that sailor over yonder. He knows that he is a great deal worse than he was three or four years ago. He had more pricks of conscience then, than he has now, yet it is not many months since he escaped from shipwreck. He thought the angry deep must surely swallow him up, so he cried unto God in his time of trouble, and said, "Save me, O God, for the waters have come in unto my soul!" God spared his life, but the trial he then endured had no beneficial effect upon him and, as I have said, he is a worse man, now, than he was years ago! Then there is that man yonder—whose business has been going down. What effect has that had upon him? He is growing harder and harder and is even cursing God for what he calls his bad luck! In trying to improve his position, he is only plunging deeper into the mire and he will be head over heels in the morass, presently, unless the almighty Grace of God shall deliver him! But the man is not softened in spirit by all that he has had to endure. That which would have softened him had he been as wax, has hardened him because his nature is like clay. May God yet have mercy on him, for I plainly perceive that his briars, by themselves, will be of no use to him!

And you, too, who have come creeping out to this service—you have been so ill that hospital after hospital has turned you away as incurable. The doctors say that nothing more can be done for you, so you have come limping in here, though you can scarcely keep your seat for weariness—you are very ill and weak—yet your unhumiliated spirit is as proud as though your ribs were made of iron and your heart were strong as steel! If you should be chastened any more, you would only revolt more and more. You have already been smitten until your whole head is sick and your whole heart is faint—from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet there is no soundness in you, for you have become, as the result of God's chastisements, a mass of wounds, bruises and putrefying sores! Yet still is sin as strongly entrenched within your soul as ever it was! What more shall the Lord do to you? Shall He give you up as hopeless? Shall He make you as Admah? Shall He set you as Zeboim? Shall He say concerning you, "He is joined unto his idols; let him alone"? What else remains to be done for you where all this affliction and trial will not break your heart?

I might go on pointing out you who are like king Ahaz, for my Master knows all about you and He knows how to direct my tongue so that I shall describe you. I feel a great yearning of heart, the throes of strong convulsions in my soul over some of you who are here! I know that I have a special message from God for some whom I am now addressing. Who and where they are, the Lord knows. I do not, but I pray that my message may now be accepted by them. As the Lord my God lives, before whom I stand, if you turn not at

His rebuke, O Soul—if this last affliction shall not humble you, He will dash you in pieces like a potter's vessel and break you with a rod of iron! "Turn you, turn you, for why will you die?" Why will you draw destruction down upon your own head? Why will you stain your garments with your own blood? Why will you dash yourself to pieces upon the bosses of Jehovah's buckler? Why will you run upon the edge of His sword? Why will you leap into the fires of Hell? Why will you ruin your soul forever? Pause, I entreat you! A brother's love bids you pause! You who are like "that king Ahaz" who, in the time of his distress, trespassed yet more against the Lord, I pray you to stop and consider, lest, at your next step, your feet should hang over the awful darkness of the Pit and your soul be hurled into the eternal depths!

I have thus, I hope, come somewhat near the mark at which I am aiming. And I am getting to speak right home to those who have had afflictions and trials, but are growing worse, rather than better, notwithstanding all that has happened to them. I will turn from them to speak to some of you who have the notion that you will repent and believe in Christ some day, but you will not repent and believe in Christ just yet. You have not made up your minds that you will go to Hell—oh, no, you mean to be saved, one of these days! You have not decided when it shall be, but still, you do mean it to happen one of these days! Your secret thought is that one of these days you will be obedient to the heavenly vision. You talk to yourselves in some such fashion as this, "I shall be laid aside one day. Perhaps it may not be until I grow old and when I am ill—then I shall have time to turn the matter over calmly and quietly. I have heard my friends say concerning some who had lived very bad lives, that they hoped it was all right with them at the last and, therefore, may I not hope that it will be all right with me?"

Friend, I want to give you a warning word! Perhaps my meeting you here and talking especially to you for a little while may be the means of your eternal salvation! What makes you imagine that a time of sickness is a suitable time for

repentance? Do you not think that you will have quite enough to do to bear your bodily pains without having to think of the state of your soul? When your head is aching, you cannot properly attend even to your earthly business—so how can you hope to attend to your soul's business when your head and your heart will both be aching? You find that your worldly concerns need a healthy mind and body to conduct them properly—so do you think that when the mind is becoming weak through senile decay and physical infirmity—that then will be a fitting time to think of these momentous and eternal realities?

In many diseases I believe that repentance and faith are scarcely possible, for some of them bring such a lethargy of spirit that the mind is hardly able to act at all. There are, doubtless, many persons who are alive but who, for all practical purposes, are dead long before they actually die. You know, too, how often the very thought of death is so harassing to an unbeliever that he can hardly think of sin. A murderer may repent that he has been brought to the gallows, yet not repent of the murder that brought him there—just as, on their deathbed, many repent of Hell, but not of sin! I fear that often the sense of the wrath to come gets to be so vivid and so real that sin hardly comes into the reckoning—and remember, Friend, that it is not repentance of Hell that will save you, but repentance of SIN—not repentance of the punishment, but repentance of the evil deed itself—a sincere hatred of the very pleasure which sin would bring! O Sirs, take my word for it—and I think that if there were physicians here, they would certify that I am speaking the truth when I say that there are other things to do on your deathbed than to talk of "making your peace with God." I am uttering a solemn Truth of God, but it is one that must be spoken! There may have been some few persons who have been saved on a deathbed, but my own conviction is that they have been very, very, very, very few! We only read in Scripture of one who was saved at the last—the dying thief on the Cross—and it has been well said that there was one so that none might despair—but only one that

none might presume! I do not know that there ever was another besides the dying thief who was called by Grace at the eleventh hour! I repeat that I do not know. I do not say that there have not been any—I hope there have been many—but I do not know it. I have no revelation concerning it. There is nothing in this blessed Book about it. Only this I know—there was one—and therefore I hope there have been more. But since I only know of that one, I would warn you not to put any confidence in a repentance that may possibly come at the last. You may be saved on your deathbed, but I think there is every probability that you who have loved sin so long, will hug it to the last! I do not see any reason why you would suddenly turn your backs on your former course. If there is any such reason, let it operate upon you now. Surely it would have as much force upon your conscience at this moment—while you are capable of weighing the whole matter calmly and deliberately—as it will have when you are tossing on your bed and your judgment has lost a great part, if not all of its former vigor! May God bring you to Christ now! But do not, I pray you, be dreaming about a deathbed on which you may never lie, or of a repentance which you may never experience!

There was a man who was an awful swearer and whenever anybody spoke to him about his not being saved, he used to say, "Oh, well, when my turn comes to die, I shall just say, 'Lord, have mercy upon me,' and that will be enough." It happened that one dark night, when going home on horseback, drunk, his horse leaped the railing of a high bridge and horse and rider fell right into the water. And the last word that the man was heard to utter was an oath—so beyond all doubt he plunged into a hopeless eternity! It is quite possible that you will never have the opportunity to breathe a dying prayer, or if you could have such an opportunity, it is quite possible that you would have no inclination to utter it. Remember that "now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." May God, in His Sovereign Mercy, turn you to Himself now!

Now I come back to you who have had many trials, but who have not been bettered by them. My Friend over yonder, you do not often hear a minister preach the Word of God and, therefore, now that I have you here, let me deal very plainly and faithfully with you. Why do you think that your trials were sent to you? I have shown you that distress often has been blessed to others. Now, supposing you have had an experience which has been blessed to others, but it has been no blessing to you—what is the inference? If a man takes a piece of quartz in which he thinks there is some gold, and puts it through the usual processes for extracting gold—and when he has done that, sees that there is no likelihood of finding gold in it, what is he likely to do with it? Why, I think, before long, when he has tried all the plans he can think of, he will throw it away and have nothing more to do with it! And is it not likely that God will soon throw you away as utterly worthless? Did you not say, the other night, that you wished God would leave you alone? You would not have come in to this service if you had thought that I should speak so pointedly and personally to you, would you? You would like to see every church, and chapel, and mission-hall destroyed—you would like to have no Sundays, and no religious people, because they plague you—they get in your way, they stick pins in your pillow, they will not leave you alone to sleep the sleep of death!

But do you not see that the fact that you want to be left alone is, itself, a proof of your reprobate mind? God is beginning to leave you alone, I am afraid, inasmuch as you are wishing to be left alone. I am afraid that awful curse will come upon you and, possibly, it will come upon you soon. Should your present condition continue much longer, I can tell you what will happen to you—you will become an avowed atheist. You will even deny the existence of God! You may even become an open blasphemer, or you may become unconscious of any spiritual emotion. Your conscience will never prick you and you will go on sinning with a high hand until you come to die. Perhaps, even then, no alarm or terror will disturb your

false peace of mind. Even when you dip your feet in the chilly stream of the River of Death, you will be self-deceived to the last. But oh, Sir, what a change will come over you when you once get into the world of eternal realities! When, at last, you realize that you are a lost soul and that you have forever to anticipate the wrath to come, what will you do then? O Man, how will the blood boil in your veins and your nerves become burning tracks for the wheels of pain to travel on! God help you! God save you! Only He can do this, for I see the dread forecast of the flames of Hell in you when you begin to ask God to leave you alone in your sin!

"Well," says one, "like that king Ahaz, I have transgressed yet more and more against the Lord notwithstanding all my distress. But God, who knows all things, knows that I would be saved if I could. While you were singing that hymn just now, I thought I would act upon it. I said in my heart—

"I can but perish if I go.

I am resolved to try

For if I stay away I know,

I must forever die.

Dear Friend, give me your hand! I feel that I may rejoice over you, for if God the Holy Spirit has put it into your heart to say, "I am resolved to try," or, better still, "I am resolved to trust Jesus Christ as my Savior—though He slays me, I will trust in Him"—depend upon it, He will not slay you! He would not do so even if you were the blackest of sinners—one who had sinned till you had become the vilest of all offenders! Jesus casts out none who come to Him by faith. Do, I pray you, now say in your soul, "God helping me, I will now come to Him—and who can tell whether there may not be a harp in Heaven even for me, and a crown of glory for me? I trust that I may yet stand with all the blood-washed host before the Throne of God above and join in singing the everlasting song of praise to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And even here on earth, I may be among the children of God, I may be forgiven, I may be saved, I may be accepted in the Beloved." If you talk thus, and mean all that you say, I say unto you, not only that this may be the case with you, but that it may be the case with you this very hour—

"Oh, believe the promise true, God to you His Son has given!"

A loving Father waits with outstretched arms to welcome the returning prodigal to His heart. Jesus waits by the fountain filled with His precious blood to wash you from all your sinful stains. The Holy Spirit is working in you even now—'tis He who bids you come! Let not Satan persuade you that it is too late for you to come to Jesus—it is never too late while the Messenger of Mercy continues to speak to you! Let not the devil convince you that you are too sinful to be saved—often the greatest sinners are the first to be saved! If the devil tells you that you are an extraordinary sinner, tell him that Christ is such an extraordinary Savior that He can save all sorts of sinners, ordinary and extraordinary, too! Say not in your heart that you cannot be saved, for, high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are God's thoughts above your thoughts and His ways above your ways! My poor Friend, if you feel your need of a Savior, join with me and with all the people of God here in singing this verse! Sing it from your heart and the great transaction's done—

"Nothing in my hands I bring:

Simply to Your Cross I cling!

Naked, come to You for dress—

Helpless, look to You for Grace!

Foul, I to the Fountain fly—

Wash me, Savior, or I die!"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—509, 473, 514.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 2 THESSALONIANS 1; 2:1-4.

[This Exposition belongs to Sermon No. 2991, Volume 52—WHAT WE HAVE, AND ARE TO HAVE—but there was not space available for it there.]

2 Thessalonians 1:1, 2. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. All nations have their special forms of salutation and this is the Christian's greeting to his fellow Christians—"Grace unto you, and peace." How much there is in this prayer! "Grace"—the free favor of God, the active energy of the Divine Power. And, "peace"—reconciliation to God, peace of conscience, peace with all men! My Brothers and Sisters, what better things could I desire for you, and what better things could you wish for your best beloved friends than these, "Grace unto you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ"?

3. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren. We do not feel this bond as much as we ought. We often feel ourselves bound to grumble and complain, but I question whether we think enough about being bound to praise God. And if we do not thank God as we ought for ourselves, it is little marvel if we are very slack in the duty of thanking Him for others. Herein, then, let us imitate this devout Apostle and let us consider ourselves bound to always thank God for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

3-7. As it is meet, because that your faith grows exceedingly, and the charity of everyone of you all toward each other abounds; so that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us. You will perhaps say that this command is more easily given than carried out. And yet, my Brothers and Sisters, the Grace of God always enables us to perform what the precept of God commands! You who are troubled rest with us. If you can get even a partial glimpse of the Glory that is to follow your trouble. If you can see Christ suffering with you and realize your union with Him. If the blessed Spirit who pledges Himself to be with all the Lord's people, shall be with you, you will find it not hard thing thus to rest. "You who are troubled rest with us."

7. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels. This rest, then, it seems, is to be given to us mainly when Christ shall come with His mighty angels.

8, 9. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. I wonder what those persons who say that it is not the duty of men to believe the Gospel, make of this passage? Paul writes that those who "obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

shall be punished with everlasting destruction." Then, clearly, the Gospel demands and commands man's obedience, and those who will not believe it shall be punished, not only for their other sins, but for this as their chief and damning fault—that they will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as set before them in the Gospel of His Grace.

10. When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. Which passage means, I suppose, that as Christ will be admired in His own Person, so His Glory, reflected in all His children, will be a subject of admiration to the whole intelligent universe. The saints of God shall be so pure, so bright—such trophies of the Redeemer's power to save—that He shall be admired in them! We know that in God's great temple of the universe, everything does speak of His Glory and so, in the great spiritual temple of His Church, every separate saint shall show forth the Glory of Christ!

10, 11. (Because our testimony among you was believed) in that day. Therefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the goodpleasure of His goodness, and the word of faith with power. Ministers should be much in prayer for their people. When John Welsh's wife found him on the ground with his eyes red with weeping—and she found that he had been there supplicating by the hour together—she asked him what ailed him and he replied, "Woman, I have three thousand souls to care for, and I know not how they all prosper; therefore must I wrestle with God for them all." Oh, that we felt more the weight of our ministry! It is, perhaps, the great fault of this age that so many who preach, yet preach with so little earnestness and are not sufficiently alive to the value of immortal souls! Oh, that the Holy Spirit would make our ministry to be "the burden of the Lord" upon us!

12. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the Grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. In his former Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul had written as if he expected Christ to come immediately. And the people seem to have taken his words so literally as to have lived in expectation of Christ's advent and, perhaps, to have exhibited some degree of fear concerning it. He now calms their minds by telling them that Christ would not come until certain events had happened. The history of the world was not complete. The harvest of the Church was not ripe—neither had the sin of man and especially the "man of sin" become fully developed.

3, 4. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sits in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. If this "man of sin" is not the Pope of Rome, we cannot tell who is the antichrist! Certainly, if this description were put in the Hue-and-Cry, and we were police officers, we should at once arrest the Pope as the man whose character agreed with the warrant in our hands! What does he call himself? "Vicar of Christ on earth." What does he do but set himself up to be adored and worshipped as though he were Divine, making himself out to be the fountain and channel of all Grace? Beloved, this "man of sin" has been revealed! Now we may look for the coming of the Son of Man—but the day and the hour when He shall come, no man knows. No, and not even the angels of God!

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