

HEART TO HEART TALKS

character. We are told that “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” 2 Timothy 3:12. This persecution from the enemy of all righteousness may not be always by fire or sword or imprisonment, but perhaps more often by the ordinary trials of life. It is by these trials that we are purified and tested. Of His messenger God declares:

“And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” Malachi 3:3.

When this test comes to us, we are not to consider that we are undergoing something unknown to others. Whatever the trial is, it is our privilege to believe that God will give us strength to bear it.

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.” 1 Corinthians 10:13.

The churches of Macedonia found in their affliction abundance of joy. And why? Because they believed their affliction was permitted for some good. (2 Corinthians 8:2.)

The apostle Peter told the believers that the trial of their faith was much more precious than gold that perishes. (1 Peter 1:7.) They were not to think it strange that they were tried, but were to rejoice in the experience.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy.” 1 Peter 4:12, 13.

Perfect Peace

Let us take to our sympathizing Savior first of all our heart burdens. If doubts assail our minds, let us not express to others our doubts and fears. Of her own personal experience Ellen G. White has this to say:

In times of trial we must cling to God and His promises. Some have said to me, ‘Do you not get discouraged at times when you are under trial?’ And I have answered, ‘Yes, if by discouragement you mean sad or cast down.’ ‘Didn’t you talk to anyone of your feelings?’

“No; there is a time for silence, a time to keep the tongue as with a bridle, and I was determined to utter no word of doubt or darkness, to bring no shade of gloom upon those with whom I was associated. I have said to myself, I will bear the Refiner’s fire. I shall not be consumed. When I speak, it shall be of light; it shall be of faith and hope in God; it shall be of righteousness, of goodness, of the love of Christ my Savior. It shall be to direct the minds of others toward heaven and heavenly things, to Christ’s work in heaven for us, and our work upon earth for Him.” - Review and Herald, February 11, 1890. This is good counsel for us who read these words. It is our blessed privilege to believe that if we trust God He will cause all things to work together for our good. (Romans 8:28.) Thus we shall find peace in trial and tribulation.

We do not mean by what we have said that we should never tell others of our physical suffering or our soul’s perplexities. In our physical infirmities we need the counsel of physicians. And in our doubts and fears we may need to counsel with those who can help us. But we should avoid dwelling on such themes. Conversely, we should find that help in the “God of all comfort,” that we may be able to give to others in trial or sorrow the comfort “wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

So, in conclusion, permit me to say again, let us not peddle our pains, whether they pertain to our physical or spiritual ills. Let us think, speak, and act hope, courage, and confidence in the One who gave His life for our salvation.. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee because he trusted in thee. Trust you in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” Isaiah 26:3,4.

F. The Holy Spirit and Prayer

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND HIS GIFTS

THE beloved Teacher had been with His disciples for more than three years. During that time they had witnessed His holy, blameless life, listened to His uplifting, ennobling instruction, and viewed with wondering amazement His mighty miracles in attestation of His divine origin and character. Their affections had come to be centered upon Him as their dearest friend.

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Now Christ was about to leave them, and sorrow filled their hearts. In seeking to comfort them, the Master promised to send them another Comforter: "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. Whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but you know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." John 14:16-18.

Note the fatherly tenderness expressed in this promise: I will not leave you comfortless ["orphans," margin]. I will come to you."

Christ also tells His disciples that "it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7. The Holy Spirit had been given the church through all the centuries. He had always striven to turn men to God and direct them in the ways of righteousness. Now, after Christ should leave His disciples, the Spirit was to become His official representative, His vicegerent, in a new and larger sense than ever before.

We may remark in passing that Christ has only one Vicegerent. He gives no recognition to any prelate of any church or religious faith who may lay claim to this position.

Sin, Righteousness, Judgment

What was this Comforter, this Spirit of truth, to do? He would "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8. The Master desired to teach His disciples many things, but they were not able to bear them, but the Spirit of truth would guide them in all their study. "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." Verses 13, 14.

This precious promise is for the church today, for us who read these words. How will that guidance be given? By convicting us of sin, and leading us to Christ for forgiveness and cleansing; by writing the law of God upon the tables of our hearts, and enabling us to observe its holy requirements. (See Hebrews 8:10-12.) By instructing us in the reading of God's holy Word. By impressing our minds and thus influencing our decisions. "And your ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk you in it, when you turn to the right hand, and when you turn to the left." Isaiah 30:21. Any impulse or impression that would lead us to act contrary to the teachings of the Bible is not born of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures have come to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1: 21. Therefore the Holy Spirit will never lead the Christian to go contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

The sinner who accepts Christ as his Savior expresses his faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of his Lord in the rite of baptism by immersion. This baptism is "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Matthew 28:19. This text clearly reveals that the Holy Spirit is one of the holy Trinity.

In our study of the work of the Holy Spirit we may profitably consider further what this heavenly agency is. We are not to think of the Spirit as a mere influence emanating from a divine source. Distinctive characteristics are ascribed to the Holy Spirit in the Word of God. We enumerate a few of these.

The Bible represents the Spirit as possessing wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:10), having feelings of love (Romans 15:30), being able to instruct (Nehemiah 9:20), feeling grief over sins of professed Christians (Ephesians 4:30), making intercession for the saints (Romans 8:27), forbidding the apostle Paul to preach at a particular time in Asia (Acts 16:6, 7). These and other Scriptures reveal that the Holy Spirit is a personal being, the third person of the Godhead.

Reception of the Holy Spirit

How may we avail ourselves of the aid of this divine power in our battle against sin? Through repentance and forsaking sin (Acts 2:38, 39); by obedience to God's requirements (Acts 5:32); by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:14); by earnest prayer for the divine blessing (Matthew 7:7). Commenting upon the reception of the Holy Spirit, Ellen G. White gives this illuminating statement:

"Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people 1 to will and to do of His good pleasure.' But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is

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why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Oily to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive." - The Desire of Ages, p. 672.

Spiritual Gifts

God in His infinite love and wisdom has bestowed certain spiritual gifts upon the church. The apostle Paul enumerates these gifts as follows: "God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." 1 Corinthians 12:28. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." Ephesians 4: 11.

We are told why these gifts are given. "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Verses 12, 13.

Through the centuries one or more of these gifts have always been manifested among Christ's true disciples. The gift of prophecy as revealed in the Sacred Record affords striking and convincing proof of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures. In their far-seeing vision the prophets foretold long centuries before they occurred many notable events in human history. The rise and fall of earthly governments, and many things those governments would do, were accurately predicted. Striking examples of this are recorded in the books of Daniel and the Revelation.

In the remnant church, the church looking for and preparing for the return of Christ to take His people to the heavenly mansions, the gift of prophecy will be manifested. "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17. "The testimony of Jesus" is declared by an angel to be the Spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19: 10.)

The one who is guided by the Holy Spirit will reveal this in his Christian experience. He will exemplify in his life definite fruits. These are enumerated as follows: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22, 23.

The Comforter

How earnestly should we seek for the daily guidance and enabling power of this divine agency. We should walk humbly and carefully before the Lord, realizing that He takes account of every act of our lives, the words we speak and the thoughts of our heart. In conclusion I quote the following fine statement as to the companionship of the Comforter, from Dr. R. A. Torrey, the great Methodist revivalist:

'Now that Jesus has gone to be with the Father, while we are awaiting His return, we have another Person just as divine as He, just as wise, just as strong, just as able to help, just as loving, always by our side and ready at any moment that we look to Him, to counsel us, to teach us, to help us, to give us victory, to take the entire control of our lives.

"This is one of the most comforting thoughts in the New Testament for the present dispensation. Many of us, as we have read the story of how Jesus walked and talked with His disciples, have wished that we might have been there; but today we have a Person just as divine as Jesus, just as worthy of our confidence and our trust, right by our side to supply every need of our life. If this wonderful truth of the Bible once gets into our hearts and remains there, it will save us from all anxiety and worry. It is a cure for loneliness. Why need we ever be lonely, even though separated from the best of earthly friends, if we realize that a divine Friend is always by our side? It is a cure for breaking hearts. Many of us have been called upon to part with those earthly ones whom we most loved, and their going has left an aching void that it seemed no one and no thing could ever fill; but there is a divine Friend dwelling in the heart of the believer, who can, and who, if we look to Him to do it, will fill every nook and corner and every aching place in our hearts. It is a cure from the fear of darkness and of danger. No matter how dark the night and how many foes we may fear are lurking on every hand, there is a divine One who walks by our side and who can and will protect us from every danger. He can make the darkest night bright by the glory of His presence."