

ENLARGED

by Jim Hyland

A collection of articles and writings by Jim Hyland from Enlarged, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

35 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Enlarged
1. Prelude
2. Experience
3. The Lord's Presence
4. He Makes Us
5. The Lord's Care
6. The Person of Christ
7. The Work of Christ
8. His Sufferings
9. His Peace
10. The Hope of His Coming
11. Our Changed Bodies
12. His Ways With Us
13. The Furnace
14. Longsuffering and Patience
15. His Grace
16. His Rest
17. His Mercy
18. His Faithfulness
19. His Goodness
20. His Comfort
21. His Kindness
22. The Joy of the Lord
23. Joy in the Lord
24. His Strength
25. His Love
26. The Growth of Faith
27. Waiting
28. The Power of Prayer
29. Christ's Intercession
30. The Power of God's Word
31. Our Fellow-believers
32. To Whom Shall We Go
33. Conclusion
34. Postscript

Enlarged

Prelude

“A Psalm of David. Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress” (Psalm 4:1).

David, who was used to pen these words, was a man of God who did not have an easy life. In fact it was a life of constant ups and downs and twists and turns. It seems that the more he tried to please the Lord the more trouble he had. From the time when he was anointed to be the future king over Israel (1 Samuel 16), until his death (1 Kings 2), there was one thing after another. When sent by his father to take provisions to his brothers who were fighting in Saul’s army against the Philistines, he was misunderstood and ridiculed by his oldest brother Eliab (1 Samuel 17). From that point on he was hunted by his father-in-law, King Saul, lived in uncomfortable conditions such as the Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22), feared for his life, was misunderstood by his wives, lost a young child in death (2 Samuel 12), his son Absalom turned against him and he had to flee for his life (2 Samuel 15). His kingdom was plagued by internal strife, family problems, and wars from his enemies around him, as well as times of discouragement, sin, and failure. Yet through it all David had a strong confidence and trust in the Lord, and as he indicates from our opening verse, he was “enlarged” in his soul as a result of all that the Lord passed him through. When delivered from the hand of Saul on one occasion he said, “Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip” (Psalm 18:36). In this context notice the title of the Psalm as well as 2 Samuel 22:37.

Experience

So often we know the truth of Scripture in an intellectual way, and how good and proper that is. Timothy was reminded by the Apostle Paul, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth...All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16). To read, meditate, and memorize the Word of God is vital to our Christian growth and spiritual well-being.

However, God not only teaches us by precept and principle, but by experience as well. In these short meditations it is my prayerful exercise and desire to share what the Lord has taught me through some difficult experiences, a recent illness, and major surgery. The inspired writer of Psalm 119, said, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes” (verse 71). In other words, what he knew in theory became a living reality in his soul as he passed through the affliction allowed of the Lord.

In these pages we will consider a number of ways in which the Lord has enlarged the writers appreciation of the person of Christ and the invaluable resources that have been provided for our every need and circumstance, whether bright or dark, smooth or rough, pleasant or painful. When our appreciation of these things is expanded and deepened then the heart’s affection for Christ is also enlarged, and we can say, “It is well” (2 Kings 4:26).

To learn the Word God is good;

To read and meditate,

Brings joy and peace, and great reward,

Our lives to permeate.

To walk by faith is good as well,

To learn God’s perfect ways;

Experience our teacher too,

Throughout life’s numbered days.

The Lord's Presence

To have a deepened appreciation and a keener sense of the Lord's presence makes any trial worthwhile. It has been well said, "Sometimes the Master puts us down so that we can look up." And another has stated, "It is worth being sick just to know that the Lord is by your bedside."

Due to recent events in my life I have come to appreciate in a fuller way two statements made by the Lord Jesus concerning His presence with us:

1. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:20).
2. "He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Hebrews 13:5).

Alone at night in a hospital ward, unable to move or to sleep, you learn what it is to have the Lord with you in a very practical and real way. Although different from the situation that the Apostle Paul was in, I felt the truth of his words, "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me" (2 Timothy 4:17).

No doubt David experienced this when alone on the hillside tending sheep, running for his life, forsaken by friends and family, or alone and sleepless within the palace walls. He could say of those times: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches" (Psalm 63:5-6).

With us in sickness, and trial, and pain,

Never to leave us, in sunshine or rain;

Always and ever, with us all the way,

Guiding us safely by night and by day.

His hand in mine, and His presence so near,

Nothing is wanting, and nothing I fear;

Jesus, so gently and lovingly leads,

Knowing my thoughts and supplying my needs.

He Makes Us

David in penning the Shepherd Psalm said, “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures” (Psalm 23:2).

Notice that He leads, “beside the still waters” (verse 2); and also, “in the paths of righteousness” (verse 3). But when it comes to the “green pastures” sometimes He has to put His loving, tender hand upon us and “make” us stop and lie down. This is because we often do not take the time to stop in the hectic fray of life and enjoy personal communion with Himself, of which pastures and fields so often speak in Scripture. We need to be like Isaac who “went out to meditate in the field at the eventide” (Genesis 24:63).

Don’t be upset or annoyed by those times when He makes you stop and lie down in sweet fellowship with Himself. These are times that enlarge the soul, and we can rejoice that we are “His people, and the sheep of His pasture” (Psalm 100:3).

He leads me by the waters, still,

But in His pastures I am still!

While lying down in sweetest rest,

Is where He teaches me the best.

The Lord's Care

"The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness" (Psalm 41:3).

To experience in a real way the Lord's tender care in trial and distress truly enlarges the heart's affections and gives an appreciation of His guardianship that was not there previously. From the time I was a boy I have sung the following hymn written by William Hunter (1811-1877). However, its words have been more special and real to me of late, as I have experienced first hand the care of the Great Physician.

The Great Physician now is near,

The sympathizing Jesus;

He speaks the drooping heart to cheer,

Oh, hear the voice of Jesus!

Sweetest note in seraph song;

Sweetest name on mortal tongue;

Sweetest carol ever sung:

Jesus, blessed Jesus!

When I was in the hospital the nurses and care workers came and went. They took my vitals, drew blood from my veins, brought me my meals (such as they were), asked questions, took notes, made my bed, cleaned and straightened up my room, and a host of other tasks. However, as kind, cheerful, and helpful as they were, I realized that they were doing it because it was their job and there was a paycheck at the end of the week. In contrast it was a comfort to know that the Lord was taking care of me and making my bed, not out of a sense of duty but because He loves me.

It is touching to realize who was still with the Apostle Paul at the end of his life. In writing to Timothy he says, "Only Luke is with me" (2 Timothy 4:11). "Luke, the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14). Who better to be with the Lord's aged servant at the end of his life and in difficult circumstances than the doctor? This was one who could not only minister to Paul spiritually but physically as well. So the Great Physician provided an earthly physician for his faithful apostle, at a time when he needed it most.

While we are thankful for the care and concern of family, friends, and professionals, yet we do not want to forget the constant care of our Lord. Remember, "He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). How intensely individual and personal that care is.

His care is ever constant,

No let that service knows;
His care is kind and gentle,
And healing power bestows.
That care, in love dispensing,
His grace and mercy too,
Flows out without a limit,
And does our strength renew.

The Person of Christ

There is nothing that enlarges the soul like a deeper understanding and appreciation of the person of Christ. We may be in a person's company, we may even experience their care and expertise. But in so doing we may not really get to know them or have any desire to develop a relationship beyond what is essential for a specific time, or place, or purpose. The relationship may end at a certain point when there is nothing further that the individual can help us with, and as a result we may never come in contact with them again.

However, it is different with the Lord Jesus. As we spend time in His presence and experience His marvelous care, we find in Himself a person that answers fully to our every need, "spirit, and soul, and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). We realize the truth of the Psalmist when he wrote, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's...For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 103:2, 5; 107:9).

As the bride in the Song of Solomon is slowly awakened as to the presence of her bridegroom, and begins to enumerate His qualities and beauties, her appreciation of who he is unconsciously deepens and expands until she says with genuine feeling, "He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend" (Song of Solomon 5:16).

In the midst of his trial and affliction, one of Job's friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, exhorted him, "Acquaint now thyself with Him" (Job 22:21). Peter tells us, "Unto you therefore which believe He is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). The better we know Him the more precious He becomes. If affliction brings us into a more intimate acquaintance and a greater appreciation of the person of Christ, then we can truly say, "It is good for me."

It is one thing to know facts about someone, it is quite another thing to know that person in an personal way. We may be able to innumerate statistics concerning many famous people, but we may not know them as a person having never spent time in their company. The desire of Paul's life regarding the person of Christ, was, "that I may know Him" (Philippians 3:10). Not just to know about Him, but to know HIM. Is this our prayer and desire as well?

How much do you value His presence?

How much does He mean to your soul?

How much does His glorious person,

Your thoughts and emotions control?

How well do you know Him, the question—

Acquainted with Him as your friend,

Our Lord, and our Master, our Savior,

Whose beauties His person attend?

The Work of Christ

To have time to read and meditate on the work of Christ, during a season of affliction, enlarges the soul like nothing else. At least that has been my experience. I will simply quote some Scriptures that have become more precious to me of late, and leave them for your meditation and the enlargement of your heart and soul.

- “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4).
- “Christ also suffered for us...Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:21-24).
- “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).
- “Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Ephesians 5:2).
- “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...He was buried...He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:4).

This is the ground of all our blessings! For all eternity we will be occupied with “a Lamb as it had been slain” (Revelation 5:6).

Oh what a work,

A mighty work,

Accomplished there for me,

God’s Son, God’s Lamb,

His well-beloved,

Died there, at Calvary.

Oh what a work,

God satisfied,

Accomplished there we see,

The sacrifice,

Himself He gave,

When there at Calvary.

His Sufferings

“Christ also suffered for us” (1 Peter 2:21).

We will never fully enter into the sufferings of Christ, and especially the atoning suffering in those hours of darkness when He “bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).

Over time two hymn-writers have expressed it in the following way:

The depth of all Thy suffering

No heart could e'er conceive;

The cup of wrath o'erflowing

For us Thou didst receive.

G. W. Frazer

Little Flock Hymnbook #245

'Twas on that night of deepest woe,

When darkness round did thicken,

When through deep waters Thou didst go,

And for our sins wast stricken...

How deep the sorrow, who can tell,

Which was for us endured?

O love divine, which broke the spell

Which had our heart allured.

G. W. Frazer

Little Flock Hymnbook #188

But none of the ransomed ever knew

How deep were the waters crossed;

Nor how dark was the night which the Lord passed through

Ere He found His sheep that was lost.

Elizabeth Cecilia Clephane (1830■1869)

However, when we suffer physically it does give us a greater appreciation of what our Savior suffered as well as a greater empathy for what others are suffering. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is stedfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation" (2 Corinthians 1:5-7).

I recently visited an elderly Christian who has suffered much pain and discomfort during her lifetime. Her patient, quiet attitude touched my heart, as she reminded me that it was nothing compared to what her Lord suffered for her. She also reminded me of what the Apostle Paul said on the matter when writing to the believers at Rome. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

If physical suffering expands our appreciation of what our Lord suffered in the path of faith and service as well as the circumstances surrounding His trial and crucifixion then there is a true and genuine enlargement of soul.

His Peace

Peace with God is a wonderful thing. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). This peace is based on the work of the Lord Jesus at Calvary, where He glorified and satisfied God as to the question of sin, “having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20).

Just as wonderful is “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). This is a peace that comes from submission to His will and fully resting in what He is doing and allowing in our life. It comes from the realization that His timetable is perfect, that He sees the whole picture, knowing “the end from the beginning” (Isaiah 46:10). It is the result of recognizing that He “worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11).

David exhorts us, “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5).

There is also what the Lord referred to as “My peace” (John 14:27). This is the peace of Christ. It is the same peace with which the Lord walked through this troubled world as the “Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). It is an inward peace that comes from communion with God the Father, in spite of outward circumstances, and I must confess that it has taken a season of affliction to give me an enlarged appreciation of this peace.

Here is how the writer, Hamilton Smith expresses it concerning the life of the Lord Jesus:

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

“Walking in communion with the Father, and in subjection to the Father's will, He ever enjoyed peace of heart. This same peace would be the portion of the believer, if enjoying this communion with Divine Persons, and so under the control of the Spirit that the believer's will is refused. Surrounded by a world of unrest the believer's heart would be garrisoned by the peace of Christ. It would be a peace shared with Christ, for in giving His disciples peace, He gives not as the world which parts with what it gives.”

In our previous meditation we quoted from the book of Job. Now let's quote the whole verse: “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21). In other words, true, fixed peace of mind and rest of soul comes from the measure in which we have developed a personal relationship with the Lord. To learn this in a practical way the Lord often has to pass us through trials and afflictions. But when we have learned by experience what this peace really is, then we have once again been enlarged for His glory and our blessing, and can sincerely echo the words of Scripture, “Perfect peace, and at such a time” (Ezra 7:12). And also, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Isaiah 26:3).

There is a peace, sweet peace with God,

Found only in the Lord;
It comes from trusting in His work,
And resting on His Word.
We stand in blessed confidence,
For Jesus, peace has made;
His blood was shed at Calvary,
Our judgment has been stayed.
Peace keeps our hearts and minds through Christ,
Our Savior, Friend, and Guide;
When sorrows come, and troubles mount,
We can in Him confide.
His peace shall be our portion 'til,
We safely reach that shore,
Where with our Lord, the storms of life,
Shall us affect no more.

The Hope of His Coming

Without trials and afflictions we tend to settle down in this world, and lose sight of what is ahead. When everything was going well for Job, he said, "I shall die in my nest" (Job 29:18). Job thought everything would go along smoothly and nothing would disturb the comforts and security he was enjoying. However, just as in the case of Job, sometimes the Lord has to stir up our nest. It is like the mother bird who wants her fledglings to leave the nest and soar upwards to the open sky. She thrusts out the soft feathers and other things she has used to make the nest comfortable for her young. Now with the comforts of the nest gone the young teeter on the edge, and with one final nudge from the parent they take wing and soar upward. Just so the Lord allows things in our lives so that our heart and our direction is pointed upward and onward, and we look forward to being with Him in the Father's house.

So it has been in my experience. I can certainly say, that affliction has weaned me more from this world, and attached me more to the next world. It has enlarged my appreciation for the promise, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

The hope of His coming is more a part of my daily thought and expectation than ever before. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast" (Hebrews 6:19).

Affliction gets us out of our comfort zone and causes us to be "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 21). And yes, His coming will be a mercy!

Lord Jesus Christ, to be with Thee,

From all affliction free,

Within the Father's house of rest,

My heart now longs to be.

To praise Thee then my only task,

For all eternity!

To feel no pain, no sorrow there,

Just glorious ecstasy!

Our Changed Bodies

Along with an increased appreciation of the soon return of the Lord Jesus, is the thought of having a changed body. Here is what Scripture says on the subject:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed...For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself...Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 Corinthians 15:51-51; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2).

As I get a little older and begin to feel a few physical limitations and experience the breakdown of the body, more and more I look forward to the change. In fact that wonderful change is looking better all the time. “For we that are in this tabernacle (body) do groan...For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (2 Corinthians 5:4; Romans 8:22-23).

Someday the aches and pains all gone,
And we with Christ shall be,
With bodies changed, and like Himself,
When we His face shall see.
Then nothing there will e'er disturb,
No thought, no sigh, no tear
Will there distract from Christ, Himself,
No groan, discomfort, fear.
All bliss around, all peace within,
All sickness past, no trace
Of all that now affects us here,
When with Him in that place.
That place of joy, eternal rest,
Our heavenly home on high,

Where Jesus is the central theme,
Where we will never die.
Enlarge my thought, engage my heart,
Attach me to that place;
And more than that, attract me to
The Man of love and grace.

His Ways With Us

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 55:8).

Another way I have been enlarged in affliction is the realization of the perfection of the Lord’s ways and dealings with me. So often we do not understand why the Lord allows certain things in our lives at the time. (If we understood everything and had all the answers we wouldn’t need faith.) While there may be many things we never understand this side of heaven, yet often in retrospect the Lord shows us the reason why. The following personal account will make my point:

From the time I was a child I had the same family doctor until he retired. At that point the only doctor I could get was in a city about thirty-five miles south of where I live. This was somewhat frustrating, but for all I needed a doctor it was no big deal. Then fifteen years later I realized why the Lord allowed it. When I needed serious medical attention and surgery it all happened in the city where my family doctor practiced. Because of this I had the best of doctors and the best of care. Praise the Lord for His perfect ways! I can only echo with the inspired writer, “As for God, His way is perfect” (Psalm 18:30).

King Solomon, looking at things from a natural standpoint said, “That which is crooked cannot be made straight” (Ecclesiastes 1:15). Isn’t that the way we often feel? We look at circumstances and we say that’s never going to be straightened out. However, there is a glorious answer to all this in Isaiah where the inspired writer looks on to a future day of glory and manifestation. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 40:4-5). Yes, those seemingly tangled circumstances are all going to be straightened out and show that He did indeed have our good at heart and our blessing in mind.

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness they often questioned the ways of God. They questioned why He had brought them this way and that, and why they had to encamp in certain places with no water or food for themselves, their families, and their livestock. But when their history is reviewed in Psalms 105, 106 and 107, we have things viewed more from the Lord’s perspective. There we read, “He led them forth by the right way” (Psalm 107:7). That’s not what they said when they were in the situations, but it is the conclusion of the whole matter. I believe this is the way we will view things in a coming day when we see it all from His vantage point, and understand all the reasons. Then we will bow at His feet and praise and thank Him for all His ways with us.

In the meantime, if our hearts can be enlarged to accept and thank Him for His ways with us now we will save ourselves a great deal of frustration and complaining. “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5). It may not be the way we would choose, but remember, His way is the very best.

His ways are always perfect,

His dealings with us too;
He knows the path that's suited,
And right for me and you:
All, all is planned and patterned,
After His holy will;
He knows what's best, and leads us,
Where He our hearts call fill.
The way may oft be twisted,
The way may oft seem strange;
But in His love and wisdom,
All has been thus arranged:
And when arrived in heaven,
And earthly paths reviewed,
We'll understand it fully,
Our praises then renewed.

The Furnace

“Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction” (Isaiah 48:10).

The furnace of affliction is never pleasant! Consider for a moment Daniel’s three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. It wasn’t very nice to think that because of faithfulness to their God they were thrown into the “midst of the burning fiery furnace” (Daniel 3:23). However, if we had been able later on to ask them about the experience I am sure they would have told us that it was the best experience of their whole life. Why? Because it was at that time that they enjoyed a special sense of the Lord’s presence with them. When Nebuchadnezzar the king looked into the furnace he was amazed and declared, “Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:25). What an experience! I am sure, looking back, they would not have missed it for anything.

Peter wrote to believers who were going through the furnace of affliction as well. He said, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice” (1 Peter 4:11-12). The believer is the only one who can truly rejoice in the furnace of affliction.

The American preacher and evangelist, Vance Havner (1901-1986), when commenting on a time of difficulty and sickness in his life, said, “God works in mysterious ways...You may gain more ground in adversity than in success.” If the furnace of affliction gives us a deeper sense of His nearness and presence and a special season of personal fellowship, then we have been once again enlarged, and we can echo, “it is good for me...”

Fiery trials, how they bring,
Special seasons with the Lord;
Times of drawing near His side,
Valuing Himself, our Ward.
Though not pleasant at the time,
We can know He’s with us still;
Sweet communion often then,
Does our soul and spirit thrill.
In the furnace, there we’ve learnt,
We can walk and not be burnt:
Though the fire seems fierce and grim,

Precious is that walk with Him.

Longsuffering and Patience

● His:

“The Lord is longsuffering” (Numbers 14:18).

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (2 Peter 3:15).

Another truth that has been impressed upon me of late is the Lord’s patience and longsuffering with His people. In spite of our slowness in learning the lessons He seeks to teach us He does not give up. Often He has to give us the same lesson over and over again. What a patient, longsuffering Master we have. He is indeed “The God of patience” (Romans 15:5).

● Ours:

“For ye have need of patience” (Hebrews 10:36).

We need to learn patience as well, and there is only one way to learn it: “Tribulation worketh patience” (Romans 5:3). “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:3-4).

We live in a world of impatience. Everybody wants everything instantaneously. But to learn patience in the school of God often takes (at least for some of us), many hard lessons. That is one reason why it is helpful to read of those in Bible times who learned patience, often through hard experience. “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience” (James 5:10).

These lessons in His school enlarge our understanding and lead us into “the patience of the Christ” (2 Thessalonians 3:5 JND Translation).

His patience is so infinite,

In dealing with His own,

Forbearance is His character,

Longsuffering we have known.

In spite of our impatient ways,

He patiently imparts,

(Rebuking, guiding, cheering too),

Instruction to our hearts.

To learn His patience gives great calm,

And stays our troubled mind;

For those who learn His patient ways,
In Him sweet blessings find.
To think of Him the patient One,
So kind, and meek, and mild,
Reminds us of those qualities,
That well become His child.

His Grace

“Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16).

Do we need more grace? “He giveth more grace” (James 4:6).

The Apostle Paul had an affliction referred to as “a thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). He asked the Lord three times to remove it, and finally the Lord said “No Paul,” “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9). That same, enabling grace is still sufficient to carry us through every detail and circumstance of life.

Grace meets us in our present need. The last promise of Scripture is, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Revelation 22:21). Going through a trial enlarges our souls as to the reality of that abundant, yes, limitless supply!

I felt so tired and weak today,
And then I heard my Savior say,
“My grace has all sufficient power,
For every step, for every hour;
Lean hard on me, I’m with you here,
Do not give up, I am your cheer.”
I drew upon that grace and strength,
And found sufficiency at length:
And so the hours passed quickly by,
Together with my Lord and I;
I leaned on Him, He was so near,
And through it all became more dear.
So if you feel frail and weak,
Rest in Lord, His comfort seek:
You may be weary of the way,
But don’t forget to watch and pray.
He’ll give more grace for every hour,
And you will know its holy power.

His Rest

“Rest in the Lord” (Psalm 37:7).

Through the turmoil and bustle of life we have a wonderful invitation from the Lord Himself: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). At a difficult time in the lives of the disciples when they had just buried John the Baptist, the Lord said, “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while” (Mark 6:31).

When something in your life or thoughts makes you anxious, go to the Lord about it. “Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6). These are opportunities to experience His healing and rest of soul. They are times when we can learn that the blessings far outweigh the difficulties. And they are times when we can learn what it is to really “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart” (Proverbs 3:5).

The world teaches that peace and rest of mind come from having enough money, possessions, insurance, a better job, and a good security system. But the peace and rest that the Lord gives is all-encompassing and independent of all circumstances. Though you lose everything else, if you gain and enjoy His peace, you are rich indeed. When we learn this in a practical way our hearts are once again enlarged.

His Mercy

“His mercy endureth for ever” (1 Chronicles 16:34).

This expression appears forty-one times in our English Bible. Most of these are in the Psalms and no doubt were a great comfort and sustainment to the writer.

Mercies have to do with our physical and temporal needs. The greatness of His mercies depends on the greatness of our need. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, could say in the midst of severe affliction, “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed...But though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies” (Lamentations 3:23, 32).

David concluded his shepherd’s psalm by saying, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life” (Psalm 23:6). How true this is in each of our lives.

Often it takes seasons of affliction to enlarge our souls as to the realization of how great and limitless His mercy really is.

In times of affliction,

His mercies endure,

In sunshine and shadow,

His mercies are sure.

No limit, no ebbing,

Consistently fixed,

With blessings unnumbered,

His mercies are mixed.

“Great are Thy tender mercies, O Lord” (Psalm 119:156).

If you recount God’s blessings,

And His mercies everyday,

You won’t have time to murmur,

Or complain along life’s way.

You’ll be thinking of His goodness,

And His love divine and sweet,

And you’ll talk of it to others,

Yes, to everyone you meet.

On your face there'll be a smile,
In your heart there'll be a song,
Whether life is bright and cheerful,
Or everything goes wrong.
You will rise above your problems,
Whether great or whether small,
And you'll not be always grumbling,
As God's mercies you recall.

His Faithfulness

Along with the “Lord’s mercies,” Jeremiah added, “Great is Thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:23).

I personally enjoy the assurance of the statement, “If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). In other words, even if we are not faithful, He remains faithful, it is His very nature and character. “He is faithful” (1 John 1:9). In fact it is one of His titles. “And He...was called Faithful” (Revelation 19:11).

Sometimes in faithfulness He has to allow things that are not pleasant, and to speak loudly as to a course we are on or something that we are allowing in our life. King Solomon records, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend” (Proverbs 27:6). It is better to have a friend that will warn us and speak directly and frankly, than someone who lets us run a course that leads to folly and sorrowful reaping. The Lord loves us too much to let us have our own way without being faithful in His warnings and admonitions.

Jesus, Friend and Faithful Shepherd,

Great, and good, and kind to me;

Sweetest Savior, guiding, caring,

All in faithfulness I see.

Yes, in spite of all my failures,

Jesus, still the same today,

Why should I be so unfaithful?

Why from Him so often stray?

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8).

When the Apostle Paul prayed for the preservation of the believers in Thessalonica he counted on the Lord’s faithfulness. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24).

A meditation on HIS faithfulness certainly enlarges the heart!

His Goodness

Seven times in our English Bibles we are told, “THE LORD IS GOOD.”

- “O taste and see that THE LORD IS GOOD: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him” (Psalm 34:8).
- “THE LORD IS GOOD; His mercy is everlasting; and His truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).
- “Praise the Lord; for THE LORD IS GOOD: sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant” (Psalm 135:3).
- “THE LORD IS GOOD to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:9).
- “Praise the Lord of Hosts: for THE LORD IS GOOD; for His mercy endureth for ever” (Jeremiah 33:11).
- “THE LORD IS GOOD unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him” (Lamentations 3:25).
- “THE LORD IS GOOD, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nahum 1:7).

A prayerful consideration of these statements will enlarge our heart’s appreciation of His goodness.

Sometime in the mid 1700’s Joseph Hart penned the words of this hymn that I have sung and enjoyed for as long as I can remember.

How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend,
Whose love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.
’Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,
Whose Spirit shall guide us safe home;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.

A brother in Egypt often sends me a simple text that reads: “We have a good Lord!”

I find it a great encouragement.

It is unbelief of the goodness that is in the heart of God that is the root of all coldness, carelessness and lack of earnestness in the things of God. –H. E. Hayhoe

His Comfort

“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

The Apostle Paul went through deep suffering and trial in His life of service for Christ and His people. Through it all He experienced the comfort of the God and Christ. In writing to the Thessalonian believers, he said, “Now our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17).

Having been comforted in his own soul, he had a deeper appreciation for what others were passing through, and wished for them that they would experience and enjoy that same comfort that he had been comforted with. Not only does comfort through trials enlarge our souls, but it also enlarges our sphere of service in being able to comfort others, with genuine feeling and empathy, who are going through similar circumstances. Isaiah having experienced sorrow in his life was told, “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God” (Isaiah 40:1).

We also have the Holy Spirit for our comfort as well. Before going back to heaven, the Lord, for the comfort and consolation of the disciples, promised, “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 seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless” (John 14:16-18).

Joseph Addison (May 1, 1672 - June 17, 1719), suffered in many ways both physically and circumstantially during his lifetime. In 1712 he wrote the following lines expressing how the Lord had comforted him through it all.

Unnumbered comforts to my soul

Thy tender care bestowed,

Before my infant heart conceived

From whom those comforts flowed.

(Little Flock Hymnbook # 297).

The inspired writer of Psalm 94 said, “In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul” (Verse 19). These are truly the words of one who has been enlarged through trial.

His Kindness

“Blessed be the Lord: for He hath shewed me His marvellous kindness” (Psalm 31:21).

What a kind Lord we have! Today I have a better appreciation and a larger understanding of that kindness than ever before. I can say from experience and with no hesitation, “His merciful kindness is great toward us” (Psalm 117:2).

Here is what David says on the matter:

“For Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes” (Psalm 26:3).

“How excellent is Thy lovingkindness” (Psalm 36:7).

His kindness, oh how precious,
It fills my soul with praise;
I’ve known His loving kindness,
Throughout my pilgrim days;
His kindness ever thrills me,
That kindness round me poured;
My soul enlarged and grateful,
I cannot doubt my Lord.
His kindness, oh so tender,
I know it very well,
It saved my soul for heaven,
Delivered me from hell:
And now that kindness carries
Me safe along life’s way,
Compassionate and gentle,
Preserving every day.

“Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in Thy truth...How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings...The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life” (Psalm 26:3; 36:7; 42:8).

“That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7).

The Joy of the Lord

“The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

During my time of affliction I have thought a great deal about His joy. Not so much my joy, but the Lord’s joy. That which the Lord referred to as “My joy” (John 15:11).

I have enjoyed it in four different aspects:

First of all His joy in accomplishing the work that God His Father gave Him to do here in this world when He “offered Himself without spot to God” (Hebrews 9:14). He could say, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God” (Psalm 40:8).

Secondly, His joy in returning to the Father having accomplished that work to His full satisfaction and glory. “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Thirdly, His joy in His people. “Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men” (Proverbs 8:31).

Fourthly, His joy in having us with Him for all eternity. “He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17).

The truth of this surely engages and enlarges the mind, the heart, and the soul, and gives us the strength and courage to press on in spite of the sorrows and afflictions of this life.

The joy of the Lord is your fortress,
Your strength and your power divine;
To know He delights in His people,
And tenderly says, “You are Mine.”

Joy in the Lord

Of course there is our joy as well. Of this joy the Lord said, “Your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16:22). This is an inward joy that does not depend on outward circumstances, but really proves itself, and even enlarges and deepens in times of distress and affliction. The Lord wants our joy to be full and overflowing. In ministering to the disciples before going to the cross He said, “These things have I spoken unto you...that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

From a Roman prison Paul wrote to the believers in Philippi, “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord....Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 3:1; 4:4). It wasn’t that Paul was indifferent or callous to his situation. On another occasion he said, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Corinthians 6:10). He had a joy that lifted him above the present circumstances because His joy was in the Lord Himself. As he wrote to the brethren at Rome, “We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:11).

So it is in affliction, while we cannot depend on our outward circumstances to supply our joy, yet there is a joy that comes from our enjoyment of Christ. Here is how the Apostle Peter expressed it to encourage those who were going through real trials in his day: “Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:7-8).

Are you going through a difficult time? May your joy in the Lord be enlarged and multiplied.

His Strength

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Do you feel weak?

Do you feel cast down?

It is not wrong to feel weak and cast down as long as it casts you on the Lord. It is then that we learn in a practical way the truth of the verse, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). Paul learned this by the things that he faced and suffered in the path of faith and service for the Lord.

Remember too, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27). No matter how down or low we may feel we can never get below those arms of love and strength.

The prophet Isaiah gives us another key to gaining and maintaining strength in our day to day life. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

The eagle rises up and soars above the difficulty. The running person can’t get above the difficulty, but he runs and finds strength for each lap of the race. He can say, like David, “For by Thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall” (Psalm 18:29). But perhaps we are neither soaring nor running. Today’s promise, even to the person who is just down to walking, is, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25).

Weak, and often powerless,
Languishing in deep distress;
I can turn and seek His might,
For the battles I must fight.
For the battles are not mine,
Jesus, Captain, they are Thine;
Every enemy is weak,
When Thy strength I daily seek.
Soaring, running, walking too,
Everyday my strength renew;

As I go along life's course,
Be my strength and full resource.

His Love

“I have loved you, saith the Lord” (Malachi 1:2).

“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1).

“Greater love hath no man than this” (John 15:13).

We may ask ourselves the question, “How much do I love the Lord?” But perhaps it would be better to ask ourselves, “How much does the Lord love me?”

Have you ever just sat quietly alone and let the Lord love you? Have you ever, alone in His company, felt those everlasting arms of love about you, and heard Him say, “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jeremiah 31:3)? His is a perfect love, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18).

Sometimes the Lord has to pull us aside from the busyness of life and society so that we will take time to enjoy His love. To have a fresh and deeper appreciation of His love is to have our hearts and our love for Him enlarged and magnified. “We love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). The more we enjoy His love, the more we love Him.

We are loved by the Lord with the same love that God the Father has for His beloved Son. He has declared, “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you” He then adds a word of exhortation, “Continue ye in My love” (John 15:9).

Even in correction and chastening He does it for our good and blessing, and in infinite love. “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Hebrews 12:6). “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Revelation 3:19).

We may not always be able to see or understand His ways of love in our circumstances, but we can always see His love at the cross. If you ever doubt His love in His dealings with you, repeat with the Apostle Paul, “The Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). Or, think of the words of the hymn most of us have sung from the days of our childhood:

Jesus loves me, He who died,

Heaven’s gate to open wide;

He will wash away my sin,

Let a little child come in.

Yes, Jesus love me!

Yes, Jesus loves me!

Yes, Jesus love me!

The Bible tells me so.

Soon we will enjoy His love unhindered in the Father's house. In the meantime we are encouraged and exhorted, "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

When our souls are enlarged in this way our response will be: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5-6).

"And now abide faith, hope, love; these three things; and the greater of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13 JND Translation).

The Growth of Faith

On one occasion the disciples asked the Lord, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5). However, the Lord answered to show them that while faith does grow, it grows by putting it in operation. If you have a friend or business acquaintance that you have known a short time you may feel that you can trust them. But if you have known them for many years and they have always been worthy of your confidence your faith in them has grown.

It is the same with the Lord. The better we know Him and the more we trust Him, the more our faith in Him grows. Trials and afflictions tend to do this in a very real way. In fact this is often the reason for the trials and tests. As Peter denotes it, "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). It is not so much the trial that is precious but the faith that shines out as a result of the trial. When faith is tried and proven it is of great value to the Lord, and there is fruit for His glory in our life while here in this world which is the sphere of faith. We will not need faith when we are safe home in the Father's house. But until then, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

There is another wonderful fact to consider and that is that we are never tried or tested above the measure of faith that has been developed in our Christian experience, and the faith that has been given to us by Himself. "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" (Romans 12:3).

The Lord values our complete faith and trust and will reward for it in a coming day of manifestation. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward" (Hebrews 10:35).

Faith is a perfect confidence,
God's Word it rightly claims;
Believing, trusting, wavers not,
But ev'ry promise names.
Though through this world by faith we walk,
Our Lord goes on before;
We follow closely by His side,
And trust Him more and more.
We do not walk by sight, to faith
The path is clearly seen;
Scripture, our guide, our only light—

A full resource has been.

We do not know the future here,

But this at least we see,

That when the path of faith is o'er,

We shall in glory be.

It is faith that gives purpose and substance to our life as we pass through this world. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). When our confidence in the Lord is enlarged, in the ups and downs of our walk of faith, we can surely acknowledge that it has been all worthwhile. And remember, He never disappoints our faith! In fact we are told that so much does He value any little faith in our life that He promises to reward us for it. We are encouraged, "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward" (Hebrews 10:35).

Here is how the hymn-writer, John Charles Ryle (May 10, 1816 June 10, 1900) expressed it:

Faith is not what we see or feel;

It is a simple trust

In what the God of love has said

Of Jesus as the Just.

It looks not on the things around,

Nor on the things within,

It takes its flight to scenes above,

Beyond the sphere of sin.

Waiting

This section is really a parentheses in our meditation, but I feel I must add it at this point.

Today I am waiting to see my doctor and get the report on my six month CAT scan. I was to have my appointment yesterday but it was postponed until this afternoon. Waiting is one of the hardest things, at least for me.

In the midst of all this an elderly sister, who has really been a second mom to me, called to encourage me. She said, "Remember, you have spent most of your life waiting. Waiting in airports, waiting in third-world countries, waiting for shipments of Bibles and literature to arrive, waiting for delayed planes, trains, and buses...and so on. Now the Lord is asking you to wait for this report and evidently has some lesson for you to learn, and if you learn it He has something wonderful in store."

This was just the exhortation and encouragement I needed for the moment. It brought to mind the words of David, when he wrote: "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14). He also said "Wait patiently for Him: fret not thyself" (Psalm 37:7). The New Testament writer reminds us, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (James 5:11).

Waiting is one thing, but to wait patiently and without fretting, well, that takes real faith, grace, and dependence on the Lord.

* A few hours later I saw the doctor and we sent out the following post:

"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Psalm 126:3.

The results of my CAT Scan were clear, and I will not have another one for a year.

Having said that, we realize that it is nothing less than the prayers and faith of our brethren.

The other day in the midst of turmoil of mind and lack of faith, I was reading in Mark's Gospel chapter 2, concerning the man that was let down in front of the Lord Jesus by his friends through the roof. Verse 5 was a great encouragement, "When Jesus saw their faith." Not the faith of the man who was sick, but the faith of the ones who brought him to the Lord. I was thankful to realize that though my faith was small, to say the least, I had others bringing me to the Lord with more faith than I had.

Now as we feel relief and rejoicing we want to thank our brethren for their prayers and out pouring of love and care. It has been a real blessing and nothing less than amazing. The family of God is so wonderful and we value it more than ever before.

The Power of Prayer

“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men” (1 Timothy 2:1).

There are many things from the Bible that I have known in theory but it has taken a lifetime of experience and living to learn the practical truth of. One of those things is the power of prayer, and particularly the power of intercessory prayer. In my recent affliction I have learned the power of interceding for one another at the “Throne of Grace” (Hebrews 4:16).

When we are in physical pain, under great duress, confusion of mind due to medication, or mental turmoil, we cannot always pray intelligently. Nor can we always form proper thoughts, even concerning our own needs and situation. However, in my recent experience my comfort has been that I knew there were many family members, friends, and fellow-believers interceding on my behalf. I felt the power of those prayers in a way I had never known before.

I have come to the realization that praying for one another is important, yea, a vital element of Christian activity and experience. No wonder Paul said on more than one occasion “Pray for us” (1 Thessalonians 5:25). He knew the power of intercessory prayer, and desired and felt the need of the prayers of his brethren.

There was a man in the early church at Colosse who understood the power of intercessory prayer and put it to good use. Of him we read, “Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis.” (Colossians 4:12). I suggest that he not only had a prayerful interest in fellow-believers in his home city of Colosse, but also those he knew of in nearby cities as well, i.e. Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Don’t ever think that praying for one another is a waste of time or ineffective. As different ones are brought to mind during the day, bring their names before the Lord in prayer. It may be ever so brief a mention, but it will have weighty and eternal consequences. The wonderful thing is that we don’t need to be in any special place or in any special position to pray for one another.

I also valued those who took time to stop at my bedside and in my home to have a short word of prayer. It was a great comfort, and something I will cherish for a long time to come.

Thus I have been enlarged as to my understanding of the privilege and power of intercessory prayer.

Prayer is a powerful tool indeed,

Expressing to the Lord each need;

It brings us to the Throne above,

Where each is known in grace and love:

There we can freely intercede,

And for our brethren safely plead.

May the Lord enlarge our hearts more and more to the privilege of praying for one another name
by name and need by need.

Christ's Intercession

In keeping with the previous meditation we want to remember that the Lord Himself is interceding for us, praying for us every hour of every day.

“It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34).

“Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

It is through the intercession of our Lord at the right hand of power that we are preserved in the path of faith. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Here is how the hymn-writer, A. P. Cecil expressed it:

Our great High Priest is sitting
At God's right hand above,
For us His hands uplifting,
In sympathy and love:
Whilst here below, in weakness,
We onward speed our way;
In sorrow oft and sickness,
We sigh and groan and pray.
Through manifold temptation,
My soul holds on her course,
Christ's mighty intercession
Alone is her resource;
My gracious High Priest's pleadings,
Who on the cross did bleed,
Bring down God's grace and blessings,

Help in each hour of need.
Oh, Jesus, blessed Savior,
We hope to see Thee soon,
Who once on earth didst suffer,
Who soon for us wilt come;
'Twas God's most gracious favour,
That gave His Son to die,
To live our Intercessor,
To plead for us on high.

The Power of God's Word

The Bible is the only book in the world that is living. It is “the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). It is, “quick (living), and powerful (operative)” (Hebrews 4:12). It has converted the sinner, changed lives, cheered and edified the believer, instructed the mind, comforted the heart, fed the soul, and restored the wayward.

However, it took a season of affliction to make me realize just how living and powerful the Scriptures really are. The day I was diagnosed with cancer I was reading in 2 Kings chapter 4. There we have the story of the Shunammite woman whose son had died. It was a severe trial, but when she was asked if all was well with her and her family, without hesitation she answered, “It is well” (2 Kings 4:26). The living power of those three one-syllable words carried me through the weeks that followed. I never before realize how powerful the Word of God really is.

My wife tells me that when I awoke after an eight hour surgery and several hours of recovery, my first words were, “Read me the Bible.” From there on I valued every verse that was read to me, not only by my wife, but by the many who visited. It wasn't necessarily long readings, just a verse or two, or a quote in passing. For several days I could not focus enough to read myself, and long readings were pointless. However, every text, every card with a verse, every email or phone call with a Scripture shared, has been invaluable, and a source of divine strength and uplifting energy.

I certainly have learned the value of sharing the Word of God with others who are going through difficult times and afflictions ways. It has been an enlargement that has taught me the value and power of the Living Word. I realize more of what it means when it says, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

The Living Word, how powerful,
Its comforts fill my heart,
Its light is to my feet a guide,
Its pages, peace impart:
It cheers my soul, it gives me joy,
When all around is dim;
It speaks of truth, and life, and health,
And occupies with HIM.
With HIM, my Savior, and my Friend,
Telling of all His ways,

Of love, and grace, and tenderness,
Filling my heart with praise.
Oh let me value all my life,
This precious book, divine;
Reading its message through and through,
Prizing each sacred line.

Our Fellow-believers

As the children of God we have been brought into a marvelous fellowship, not only with God the Father and the Lord Jesus, but also with one another. “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ....But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:3, 7).

It is when we are going through times of real trial that we learn to have a deeper appreciation of this circle of fellowship and of our fellow-believers. When the Apostle Paul, as a prisoner was approaching the imperial city of Rome, we read, “And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage” (Acts 28:15). Little did these brethren realize what their effort would mean to God’s prisoner and servant! I suppose Paul appreciated them like never before. It was just the encouragement he needed as the daunting city came into view.

In these difficult days, just before the Lord comes, we need our brethren like never before. And we need to seek grace to help and encourage one another as the inspired writer exhorts us: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works....Wherefore 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” (Hebrews 10:24; 12:12-13).

For myself, until recently I never realized the true worth and need of those who are, “fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). During my illness every visit, even just five or ten minutes, was valued. To experience at such times the “unfeigned love of the brethren” (1 Peter 1:22), enlarges the soul and strengths the bonds that united us in Christ our living head.

To know the love of fellow-saints,
Our souls with joy and sunshine paints,
And cheers us on our weary way,
And gives us purpose for the day;
It lifts our drooping spirits up,
And helps to fill our trembling cup.
What fellowship is ours indeed,
To help and share in every need;
Encouraging each fellow-saint,
With cheerfulness, without complaint:

Without a murmur or a fuss,

Sharing what Christ has given us.

Along with this I have learned to value more the privilege of meeting with other believers for meetings for worship, exposition of the Word of God, breaking of bread, and prayer. Not being able to attend these meetings for some time during my illness made me realize how precious and needful they are. I can truthfully say that my soul is enlarged as to the value of, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). We need to have that same desire and fervency, like those in the early days of Christianity. “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

To Whom Shall We Go

“Lord, to whom shall we go” (John 6:68).

At times life is a real struggle, an uphill climb, a constant battle, an obstacle race. But in every situation we have one that we can always turn to anytime and anywhere. In my travels I often see those who do not know the Lord become frustrated and angry because things are not going their way or working out as quickly as they had planned. A delayed or canceled flight and they lash out at the person behind the service desk, complain to the person in line next to them, or make unreasonable demands. But when you know the Lord you can commit the matter to Him and seek His grace to accept the situation. This is a great blessing, and often those times enlarge our appreciation of His purposes, His timetable, and the verse that reminds us, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

As we get older, life doesn’t get any easier, and I am more and more thankful that I know the Lord, not only as my Savior, but as my “Everything” (Colossians 3:11 JND Translation). What incredible, unfathomable, infinite, precious resources we have in Himself!

The inspired writer of Psalm 46 tells us, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (verse 1). In other words, He is always available...always present...always at hand. As the Christians at Philippi were reminded, “The Lord is at hand” (Philippians 4:5). Yes He is always handy, day or night, or as we often say, 24/7. The Lord is right there ready and willing to take up our case and carry us through. There is always an open line to the Throne of Grace. He doesn’t keep office hours like some people, and there is never call waiting or call forwarding when we come with needs or requests. He always has time for us and we never have to feel rushed or pressured as He has plenty of time to listen and take up our cause. We only need to learn to go to Him, and we will find availability as well as ability.

Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go,

In all of the struggles of life,

With all of our questions and woe,

With all of our fears and our strife?

Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go,

None other can counsel like Thee?

No greater a refuge we know,

All wisdom and safety's in Thee.

Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go?

No, never another we see,
So glorious and sweet, while below,
Our source and supply Thou shalt be.
Lord Jesus, to whom shall we go,
Till gathered in heaven with Thee,
Thy fulness and rest we shall know?
...No, none but Lord Jesus, to Thee!

Conclusion

“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 ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

This verse reminds us that just because we are saved, and just because we seek to please the Lord and live for His glory does not mean that we are immune to all the things that affect this world of sin and sorrow. We pass through and face all that the ungodly face, but with a completely different perspective, Christ as our object and heaven at the end. We have the same temptations, trials, and tests. However, we have a God who is faithful, and who provides all that is needed for whatever we face. “For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14). We can turn to Him, anytime, anywhere, and in any situation, knowing that He loves and cares, and is more than able to bring us through for His glory and our blessing. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

When we come face-to-face with impossibilities and situations totally beyond our control and ability to handle, that is when we learn to lean on Him. When you see armies of problems marching toward you turn it all over to the one who says, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness....Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God” (Isaiah 41:10; 43:1-3).

When our appreciation of these things is expanded and deepened, and we have learned that “Christ is everything, and in all” (Colossians 3:11 JND Translation). Then too is the heart’s affection for Christ deepened and enlarged as well. Then we can say with genuine conviction, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted” (Psalm 119:71).

Postscript

“I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart” (Psalm 119:32).

In medical terms an enlarged heart, also known as cardiomegaly, is not a good thing. It is usually the result of high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, or some other disorder in the body, which if not treated can bring about congestive heart failure. But spiritually speaking an enlarged heart is a wonderful work of the Lord as He passes us through the tests, trials, afflictions, joys, and a multiplicity of experiences during our Christian life.

In light of what has been before us, here is a good, daily prayer, whether things are going well or not:

Ah, Lord! enlarge our scanty thought,

To know the wonders Thou hast wrought;

Unloose our stammering tongues to tell

Thy love, immense, unsearchable.

W. C. Dessler (February 11, 1660 - March 11, 1722)

Little Flock Hymn Book #294, verse 4.

Dear reader, my prayer for you is like that of the Apostle Paul for the believers at Corinth, “Be ye also enlarged” (2 Corinthians 6:13).

Chateau de Rianduale

April, 2019

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