

Letters: Mr. William Dickson Edinburgh (5)

by Andrew Bonar

The Almighty is sufficient to make up for all our losses, and He is gracious and wise in His consolations to us.

Scripture: Ruth 1:21, Psalm 1:2, Isaiah 41:10, Hosea 3:1, Matthew 11:28-30, John 14:27, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Philippians 4:13, 1 Peter 5:7

Topics: "God's Sufficiency", "Spiritual Refreshment"

Description

Andrew Bonar shares a heartfelt message of comfort and encouragement, reflecting on the afflictions faced by Naomi in Ruth 1:21, emphasizing that God, the 'All-sufficient One,' provides solace even in times of distress. He encourages his friend to find spiritual refreshment amidst the weariness of life and ministry, reminding him that God's grace can sustain and uplift even when one feels overwhelmed. Bonar highlights the importance of maintaining a connection with God's Word and the power of prayer, suggesting that even small reminders of God's love can bring joy and strength during challenging times.

Transcript

COLLACE, Oct. 6th, 1846.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

--I have this moment got a refreshing word which being a piece of the Bread of Life I may share with you. It is Ruth 1:21: 'The Almighty hath afflicted me.' The word 'Almighty' is John Bunyan's word 'Shaddai,' the 'All-sufficient One.' Now, see, Naomi feels smitten down by His right hand and upheld by His left, for she says, 'I am afflicted, left destitute, by One who is Himself sufficient to make up for all.' You hear the sweet sound of the stream of comfort that is flowing through her afflicted soul in that word, 'All-sufficient One!' 'Whom have I in heaven but Thee,' etc.

Do you not observe that the Lord is remarkably gracious and wise in His consolations to you, inasmuch as He is at present so peculiarly impressing your young people? It was thus He comforted me very specially at Mr. M'Cheyne's death. He gave me that year five or six souls, I believe, all about the season when that stroke came. And thus it is He seems to say: 'It is things spiritual that are to supply the place of things seen and temporal.' Even your increased duties in the way of business have this meaning. They lift off your mind from many things in your affliction that otherwise would have been ever recurring to you, and they seem to say, 'You must have more grace now to stand against the wear of business--you must test the fulness of the Lord not only for comfort but for holiness.'

It will hold up my hands a little on the Saturday to know that you and some of your flock have prayed for me. But often do I find God teaching me that it is only when He Himself pleases that any utterance is given. . . . Believe me, yours truly,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

COLLACE, Friday, Jan. 1847.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

--I wrote you a hurried note yesterday from Perth, but on reading yours to me again I cannot resist writing more fully to-day. Our Master may use a word to refresh you. You speak of times when soul and body are so wearied that 'you cannot read the Word or pray with life,' when you come in in the evenings. Well, I can tell you something worse than this in a minister's experience. There was a time when he used to be thus worn out by working in spiritual duties so that all relish for the truth was ready to die. I have gone to classes and come home to family worship in this miserable frame. But now I perceive that there was a great deal of legalism in this state. I used to feel as if I were punished by our Father for not keeping my soul in a better frame, and this idea made me careless of trying to get immediate refreshment in the Word and by prayer, for the secret suspicion of the Lord's fatherly displeasure made this look hopeless. Then the Lord taught me also to remember Psalm 1:2, and, by keeping one word of His own on my spirit all day, I have often since been kept from withering. Just a few days ago I had to ride after breakfast six miles off to visit, and scarcely got home in time to have ten minutes for dinner, when the hour of a teachers meeting struck, and to this I had to go, and then from that to another. But that morning I had got this word, Hosea 3:1: 'The love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods,' etc., and this grain of grace, this particle of the fine wheat, this love to the ungrateful, so continually recurred to my soul that that day was a happy day amid its bustle. I daresay you will say, 'This is just my experience, too, but you do not know how business engrosses mind and memory.' True, brother, and all I meant by telling you I what is familiar to your own experience is just to keep you in mind of the way in which your trials may be borne. Keep a grape of Eshcol beside you, and moisten your parched palate with it when you can ; and, if you cannot get time for this, then surely your Heavenly Father can refresh you without it. You have been working for Him all day. Go home singing of His love to you that needed not your efforts to draw it forth, nor any service directly done to His name. I shall pray for this for you, and expect to hear that often at mid-day you are walking among the trees of life, by the side of the river from the throne of God and the Lamb. Do you try to praise often, when all other things seem dull to you? . . . Do you ever remember my poor flock when you are getting near the High Priest? . . . 'Peace be to you and love with faith.' --Yours affectionately, dear friend,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

COLLACE, Dec.14th, 1847.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

--Thanks for your note announcing your safe arrival . . . You did not say how you found all at home--you took that for granted. But, remember, this is one of the little things that friends like to hear. Was it not one

of the domestic sympathies that Paul cherished?

I was led lately to notice that though writing the all-important Epistle to the Romans, so solemn and so searching, and all under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost who was still filling the room with His presence, yet Paul was led to ask (see chap.16) 'Any message to Rome? I am just closing my letter.' Timothy said, 'Send my kind regards.' Jason and Lucius and Sosipater, all three said, 'And send ours too.' Just at that moment Gaius came in. 'Any word, Gaius, to Rome?' 'O yes, remember me to them all.' A knock came to the door, and the soldier that kept guard introduced 'The chamberlain of the city--Erastus.' Paul says, 'Well, I am just sending off a letter to our friends in Rome, Erastus; shall I send your salutation?' 'By all means, give them my kind love.' . . .

Salute all at your house (I must not forget my own lesson). Write soon.--Yours affectionately, dear William,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

COLLACE, May 16th, 1848.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,--Isabella's note would tell you that it seemed best not to come in this week . . . and when I saw that the forenoon meetings for prayer were to be only for a single hour each day I felt far less regret --although, it is true, one hour might make Jericho fall, were faith in its mountain-removing exercise. . . . I got your Ayrshire paper. Did you notice one thing in it about the 'Singing Valley' ? It is a valley in America covered over with loose fragments of broken stones and shingle, and when a morning breeze passes over it you may hear most melodious sounds issuing from all parts of it. Think of this as an emblem. A broken spirit's debris or loose fragments may send forth sweet melody when the Spirit breathes over the valley. This soul of loose, broken thoughts and feelings, shattered joys, shivered hopes, smooth-worn cares, becomes an AEolian harp in the Spirit's hand. Have you never felt this? Perhaps others have heard the melody from this extraordinary 'Singing Valley' when you did not know. Every traveller wonders at that phenomenon in America, but even angels wonder at a pilgrim's songs--at the sweet sounds that issue from New Jerusalem broken stones. . . .--Your affectionate brother,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

NEWCASTLE, Saturday, 1850.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,--I am not the author of these lines on the Jews. Alas! my harp has never been taken down from the willows, (The only verses of poetry he ever wrote appeared in articles on the Twelve Tribes, which he contributed to The Scattered Nation in 1866.) though I expect it to be when 'the tongue of the dumb shall sing.' I cannot state who is the author. Ask my sister, if you can see her, to look in some of her books . . . May the King give you 'the pen of the ready writer' to write in His praise.

As for dear Hewitson, 'We sorrow not as those who have no hope.' The Lord will bring him to us again when He brings us Christ again. 'Therefore, comfort one another with these words.' But who will fill up the gap ?--Your affectionate brother,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

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