

Letters: Rev. John Milne, Perth (13)

by Andrew Bonar

The sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, fasting, and brotherly love in our spiritual journey, and encourages us to seek the Lord's guidance and direction in times of uncertainty.

Scripture: Philippians 4:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Topics: "Prayer", "Assurance of God's Love"

Description

Andrew Bonar emphasizes the importance of prayer and fasting, urging his brother to remain steadfast in faith despite distractions and temptations. He reflects on the struggles of sin and the assurance of God's love, encouraging a deep reliance on Christ for strength and comfort. Bonar also expresses concern for his brother's well-being and the need for united prayer, reminding him that God cares for them in their trials. He highlights the significance of remaining engaged in ministry and the necessity of seeking God's guidance in all decisions. Ultimately, Bonar reassures his brother of the hope found in Christ and the promise of eternal life.

Transcript

KELSO, April 28th, 1846.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--Do not forget Monday next. (Day of prayer and fasting) In spite of Satan and the flesh keep it from morning to evening. In spite of the temptation, 'O this must be done, or 'that sick person must be seen,' or 'that caller on business must be listened to for a moment, only a moment !' --in spite of all, keep the day.

Ask the Holy Ghost to teach us afresh--to teach us the Bible, and how to preach its contents and not our thoughts. O what need of prayer! The land lies dead. Jesus is little loved even by His own. Who are the mighty men that will break through the host of the Philistines to bring Him one cup of water? O brother, let us lie low. Let us seek the 'mourning as for an only son.'

I have to-day to write sixteen letters, and then to go to Jedburgh, so I must close. Remember me who am on this occasion your remembrancer.--Yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

COLLACE, Friday Evening.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--... I was trying to stand beside Paul last Sabbath and hear him cry, 'O wretched man,' etc. His abhorrence of his remainder of sin arose from his unclouded assurance that his God so loved him --and how intense was his abhorrence! What a cry at the sight of remaining selfishness--at the discovery that he, a pardoned soul, should still be self-willed, slow to believe. God is heaping on me His favour and making me bask in His sweetest beams and yet I am self-pleasing, self-seeking, etc., 'O wretched man!' Never despond, dear brother, and never tell your people that you despond, so long as He who gave your commission the bideth the same. O blessed certainty! my God loves me with all His heart, and has sent me to show others way to the same bliss. And, blessed hope, 'it doth not yet appear what we shall be,' etc.--Yours in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

COLLACE, Augst. 16th, 1852.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--I trust your little boy is to be spared, and that the Lord is only teaching you that he is a gift in the hands of the Preserver of men. 'He careth for you' must be in your thoughts continually under your long-continued anxieties. 'He careth for you!' and these repeated threatenings of separation are proofs of His care. 'He careth for you,' and so He will not let you alone without uncertainty being in your cup of comfort, since that ingredient is needful to its efficacy. But 'He careth for you,' brother, in every way, and so for your little boy as part of you, and as acknowledged such in the hour of his baptism. . . .

How ingenious is Satan in devising schemes for withdrawing us from prayer, and from steadily setting forth Christ the Lord as the life of our every duty, and every sermon. Pray for me, brother, that I may daily, at least, touch the hem of His garment, for, 'as many as touched Him were made whole.' --Yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

When will you keep yourself disengaged to have time to pray with us? . . . Can you afford to want (do without) united prayer?

COLLACE, F. C. Manse [1852].

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--Our post passes only once a day, and I have thoughtlessly let the time slip on, so that I fear this may not reach you before Sabbath. I have been enabled to pray for you more than once with some freedom since I heard of your stroke, which is perhaps the best of all ways of offering you help and bringing you comfort. It may draw forth for you the sympathy of the Lord Jesus. Twice to-day has this verse met me in opening the Word for personal reading, 'He hath done all things well.' Nothing has happened to you accidentally. He

has done it all, as truly as we can say of Him in creation, 'Without Him was not any thing made that was made.' He has done this thing-- He has called home your little boy, 'Come up hither!' Has He not done well in doing this? Your blood-sprinkled heart owns that He has done well, in spite of nature, and you could write, I know, unhesitatingly on his tomb, 'He hath done all things well.' Dear brother, may you get your will sunk in His--may you find your loss supplied by the full Presence of Him who has given you Himself as your portion. May you grow sick of His love, which is better than the life of a thousand beloveds. May you feel powerfully drawn now by three such cords as are fixed round your heart by three departed ones towards the Resurrection-morning, when you shall see them arise in health, power, incorruption, beauty, glorious likeness to the Lord. You are at present walking through one of earth's valleys that are dark with the shadow of death, but you can sing in its gloom, 'Thou art with me, I am not alone.' Lean your weary head as well as your heavy-laden conscience on the Mercy-seat, on the Person of the Giver of rest, as you have taught others to do. The blood, and the Lord who shed that blood, cannot fail to bring intense relief for this is the channel down which love flows without impediment, in full current on its way to you, a sinner and a sorrowful man, holy love, the love of the Holy One for you, brother! The stream seems to murmur as it flows your way, 'I know thy sorrows.' 'In Me ye shall have peace.' Hoping to see you very soon, and still remembering you.--Believe me, yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

COLLACE, Thursday Evening.

'Sub-pastor Pastoris boni'

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--Your kind note grieved me. I did not think you were sunk at present into any depression. Come, fellow-pilgrim, remember how it is written, 'Strengthen ye the weak hands and confirm the feeble knees.' How will you hold up others? After all, you are the strongest, if you really are feeling quite weak and self-emptied. Are you not, on Scripture principles? And your brother at Collace is certainly anything but strong when he is in too equable a mood. . . .

Your sermon to us was felt much by all the people-- or, rather, your three sermons. We were all refreshed. The Lord seemed to speak by you.--In haste, dear brother, yours in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--I heard you setting off this morning at an untimely hour, and I trust the Lord made you a 'Barnabas.' But, brother, do remember the following passage: preach on it next Sabbath, and practise it, Exodus 18:18. . . . Now, may the God of hospitable Abraham be the God that remembers to you all your kindness to travellers and strangers who come under the shadow of your roof. Remember me to Mr. and Mrs. Moody-Stuart whom I love in the truth.--Yours affectionately in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

Moses was very 'meek' ; hence Exodus 18:24.

N.B.--This also would make a good sermon!

THREE LETTERS TO REV. JOHN MILNE, PERTH, ON HIS RECEIVING A CALL TO GO ABROAD

I

COLLACE, Jan.10th, 1853. Monday Evening.

MY DEAR BROTHER,--It may be that my affection for you, and the sort of melancholy that is suggested to my mind by the idea of Perth without you,--it may be that these considerations are influencing my judgment as unconsciously as your loneliness may have influenced yours. Be this as it may, you want me to state to you how the matter now looks to me.

Well, then, my impressions continue to be these:

(1) All plans originating in a time of despondency are to be suspected, *prima facie*. There is so little of faith in low spirits. I find that at the time when the Spirit separated Paul and Barnabas for a mission, they were vigorous and full of work-- 'ministering and fasting'--publicly and privately, full of energetic service. And, on the other hand, when Elijah in low spirits goes to the Desert and then to Horeb, he is sent back again, so that we soon find him sitting on Carmel once more.

(2) Your thoughts about Calcutta did not seem to me to amount to a call made upon you by the Spirit. Of course I may be quite mistaken, I merely say what I feel, so far as knowledge guides me. You were not bent towards Calcutta, were you, by any great and preponderating sense of the claims of that field over all others? Was not your feeling rather one of merely decided admission that the scheme was important beyond doubt? In other words, you thought you felt uprooted, and you saw you might as well be planted down in Calcutta as anywhere else, perhaps giving its claims a preference in the circumstances?

Still, was there a drawing--is there at this moment a drawing such as you might from its peculiar strength and tenacity interpret to be the result of the Spirit calling you with a Macedonian cry?

The brethren with whom I met to-day prayed for you, asking 'counsel' that you might not mistake, and 'might,' that you may execute what you see to be the Lord's will. Perhaps, on the whole, they were more ready than I to admit the probability that our Master may have made use of your very loneliness for shutting your eye on the home field, and opening it on the vast fields of India, for no one felt otherwise than that Calcutta, and all connected with it, is of very peculiar and very vast importance, and that were you there, you might be a most suitable instrument for the work there. Dear brother, you are prayed for. May the Lord get all the glory in the end.--Yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

Whatever be the result I can say of you as Paul could, Phil.1:7: *echo en te kardia umas*. 'I have you in my heart,' and will feel if you go that I am more a pilgrim than before, waiting for our 'gathering together in Him.'

II

COLLACE, Wednesday.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

-- 'Be strong, yea, be strong.' Touch the hem of His garment now again, and draw out virtue for this present trial of thy spirit, O man of God. Will you let me know how things look to you now? You are often remembered, and the God who so graciously sat in the Cloudy Pillar, unasked and uninvited, to guide His Israel then, will, beyond doubt, guide His own (and guide His Moses and Aaron) when daily besought to do so.

Have you tokens of the Master's presence? What has He given you of sympathy and of His peace? Dear brother, dearer always the oftener the idea of separation comes in, may you find that Christ 'has need of you,' whatever be the place and scene of labour. Is the whole matter to come on next Wednesday at the Presbytery?--Believe me, ever yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

III

COLLACE, April 6th, 1853.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--Is this the last note I am to address to you at Perth? You do not know how lonely I sometimes imagine myself likely to feel when you are gone. Perth will seem like what Dundee has long been to me--somehow an empty hall. Once this region was a very pleasant one, in the days of Hamilton, Manson, Miller, Cormick, Cumming, William Burns, and, above all, Robert M'Cheyne. You and Macdonald are the only palm-trees still remaining. And as for Robert Macdonald, he is in a manner out from among us this good while past. And you, brother, are now on the eve of departure, leaving one solitary member of that once happy brotherhood behind. I think I shall be more of a pilgrim than I ever was--a Gershom. If the Master enables me to sing 'All my springs are in Thee,' the pilgrimage will be a peaceful one nevertheless, and will end in the Kingdom, and 'our gathering together in Him.' Here is a journeying text for you, 1 Thess.3:11: 'Now God Himself, even our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, direct your way!' What a Pillar-Cloud to lead you to the City of Palaces, and then onward to the 'City of the Great King.' --Believe me, dear brother, your affectionate brother in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

GLASGOW, 8th Oct. 1858.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--Are we never to hear anything of you? You wrote oftener in India than you do now. Were your letters then the luxuriant growth of Eastern soil? And has the north nipped the vegetation of your pen? Brother, this will not do,-- iron sharpens iron, --you must let us hear how it fares with you.

I was greatly struck with the news of the death of David Sandeman. How soon at rest! We would have thought that that strong-built frame would have stood many shocks of disease, and that his Master would

have kept His servant for many years of labour. His single-mindedness, and zeal, and love to the Lord Jesus often struck me with a sort of impression approaching to undesigned upbraiding, that is, I felt rebuked by his warmer devotedness. And so happy always in his Lord. 'Rejoice evermore' was on his face wherever you met him. Do you know that he was much blessed at Hillhead, near this place? The people talk of him and Mr. Allan as men of God who carried on a great work here. And is it not remarkable that these two died within six weeks of each other? ... Why are we spared?

Are not the showers of the Spirit in America indications of the Lord hastening the gathering in of sheaves before the winter? We may expect the like in Scotland 'ere the great and notable day of the Lord come.' . . Yours in the Lord Jesus,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

GLASGOW, 27th Feby. 1864.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--Your little epistle a few days since was very pleasant,--like a gentle shower in the heat of summer,--telling the thoughts of your brotherly heart as well as the wanderings of your feet. . . . We get occasionally at present some tokens of the Master's favour, though we often pray, 'When the poor and needy. . . . their tongue faileth for thirst.' In so dry a land nothing but heavy, heavy showers will take thirst away.

We lost the other day Mr. William Munsie, a true Caleb, one that always brought up a good report of the Land. How many of late are gone to the 'mountain of myrrh.' James Crawford was no ordinary loss. John Bonar, too, is a great blank in our circle. Everything bids us 'hasten unto the coming of the Day of God.'

'The foundation of God standeth sure.' The Word is as sweet as ever, is it not, and Christ still the chief among ten thousand? Have you still a place for me in your Saturday evening prayer for brethren? Remember this is our rule. 'So much the more as ye see the day approaching.'

Give my kindest brotherly love to Mrs. Milne.--Yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

GLASGOW, 7th Feby. 1865.

MY DEAR BROTHER,--Thanks for to-day's token of remembrance. . . . Your brief stay with us was very cheering and useful. Many of your words are lingering in many memories and hearts.

Our house is not what it was--at least to me--but the Lord is the same. O that I may be able to use Him as the true and only Lethe, in drinking of which I shall forget what I have lost. Brother, pray still for me, and sister Barbara, pray too. Not a day has closed since 14th October during which my heart has not felt its sore want. But I hear Him reminding me, 'Behold, I come quickly!'

Now I must run away to my class. 'Weeping must not hinder sowing,' said Matthew Henry.--Yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

GLASGOW, 20th Oct. 1866.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

--I read your letter last night with a kind of awe, as being the writing of one who had been almost within the veil. You have seen and felt what others of us are strangers to. But do you know one thing, I have of late noticed that there may be a good reason alleged for even desiring to die! What is it? It is this. If (as you once thought you might) a brother outstrip us ('pre-vent') in getting to the sepulchre, he shall also outstrip us ('pre-vent,' 1 Thess. 4:15, phtano) in rising again from the dead. For 'the dead in Christ shall rise first' ; they first shall hear His voice, or at any rate they shall be the first to put on the resurrection-body. Is it not so? Yet, after all, 'the twinkling of an eye' may make all the difference, and 'then we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall be caught up along with them.' You see they do get a sort of pre-eminence, as if to make up for their having been called away ere the Lord arrived.

I do give thanks with you and with Mrs. Milne, and with many everywhere for the Lord's mercy to you. This is our Communion week. Is it yours also? I think it is. Then let us get all the more the help of your sympathies and prayers. 'Joshua redivivus' must not fight Amalek at present, but lie still and pray for the fighters. . .--Yours truly in the Lord,

ANDREW A. BONAR.

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