

Letters: Written for One in Spiritual Despair (1)

by Andrew Bonar

True faith in Christ is the key to overcoming spiritual despair and receiving God's love and forgiveness.

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Isaiah 61:3, Matthew 11:28, John 1:12, Romans 8:16, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Galatians 3:26, Hebrews 4:16, James 4:10, 1 John 1:7

Topics: "Grace", "Spiritual Despair"

Description

Andrew Bonar addresses a friend in spiritual despair, emphasizing the importance of prayer and the dangers of pride that can hinder one's acceptance of God's grace. He highlights that feelings of despair often stem from a refusal to acknowledge one's absolute need for Christ's forgiveness and the tendency to let Satan exploit our weaknesses. Bonar encourages the friend to submit to God's righteousness and to trust in the truth that we are children of God by faith, regardless of our feelings. He reminds her that true rest and healing come from accepting Christ's love and grace, urging her to open her heart to the 'Sun of Righteousness.'

Transcript

GLASGOW, 9th Oct. 1872. MY DEAR MISS M., --. . . I read with great interest your own letter about your friend who seems so near despair, and this morning your sister has given me more particulars from your friend's letter to you. It is a case that reminds me of the Saviour's words, 'This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.' It is a case that may well draw out all the sympathies and continued prayers of believing friends in her behalf. Evidently there is something to be laid down to the state of her health, and it might be well for her to remember that Satan, the accuser, does take advantage of such circumstances.

Satan has, no doubt, had something to do with her confusion of mind and the bitter things she writes against herself. I wonder if she would admit that in all despair on this side the grave there is rank pride? The sinner is refusing to be treated as an absolute sinner, one full of selfishness, hard-heartedness, meanness, self-deception (a 'living lie,' as she herself writes, in God's view), a sinner who has never repented aright or felt anything aright. This is the sinner who furnishes Christ with His opportunity of manifesting grace.

Pride of conscience is as subtle as pride of reason; it says, 'I cannot, I will not, no, I will not, I never will, admit and believe that Christ's grace will go so far as to welcome me, who am an absolute mass of guilt and rotten corruption.' This thought and feeling of the awakened conscience is pride, rank pride. To say 'I have spent hours struggling with despair,' and 'I am weak and worn with the agony of conflict,' indicates

the very opposite state of mind from what is found in a receiver of grace.

'Come to Me all that labour'--struggle, in agony of conflict. Submit, only submit, to be done struggling. We must receive the kingdom of God as a little child receives what is held out to him, or as a little child allows one to put his arms round him and lift him up. Once more; your friend says 'I feel I have never been a child of God;' but she forgets that we may be God's children when we do not feel that we are. 'We are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus;' 'As many as receive Him to them He gives privilege to become sons of God.'

Luther, with his eye on this truth, repelled Satan's question: 'Martin Luther, do you this day feel that you are a child of God?' 'No, Satan, I do not feel that I am, but yet I know that I am.' O that your friend may, by the Spirit of truth, be enabled to cease from every effort and every struggle, submitting to the Righteousness of God. Will she not let the Sun of Righteousness shine on her? Will she proudly shut her despairing eyes and not look upon the blood that cleanses from all sin, and the forgiving love of Him whose message to her is, 'Come to me; I will give you rest.' Excuse me for writing somewhat hurriedly. May your own soul be blest with 'grace for grace,' day by day, out of His fulness. --Yours truly in the Lord Jesus, ANDREW A. BONAR

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