

The Houseless Wanderer

by J.C. Philpot

The spiritual wanderer is a person who has been driven out of the world by the Spirit of God and is now walking in a solitary way, searching for rest and satisfaction in God.

Scripture: Proverbs 13:4

Topics: "Spiritual Wilderness", "Godly Intervention"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches about the spiritual wanderer's journey through the wilderness of life, where they experience houselessness and losing their way as the Spirit of God drives them out of worldly comforts and self-reliance. The wanderer's hunger and thirst for heavenly realities lead to their soul fainting, creating a deep need for God's intervention. Through cries of distress, the Lord delivers them, leading them in the right way of tribulation towards a heavenly city of habitation, where true rest and satisfaction are found in Christ alone.

Transcript

"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way--they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out their distresses. And he led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation." Psalm 107:4-7

These words, at first sight, appear to refer to the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness--but a closer inspection will show that this view cannot be borne out by the context. If we look at the preceding verse, we read, "And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south." This is not applicable to the children of Israel; they were gathered only out of Egypt, not from the four quarters of the world. The text has no reference then to the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness; but describes, spiritually and experimentally, the dealings of God with the souls of his people.

This Psalm appears to me to be an epitome of the Lord's dealings with the souls of his children. In order therefore to set forth those dealings more clearly, and to trace out their diversified nature, the Holy Spirit, by the pen of the Psalmist, has given us in it a description of four distinct characters. When I say distinct, I mean, distinct so far as refers to the teachings of the Spirit in the soul. In all the Lord's spiritual dealings with his chosen, there is unity, though not uniformity; similarity, though not sameness. And thus with respect to the dealings of God with his people, as traced out in this Psalm, there is a variety; and yet such a variety as is not inconsistent with the unity of the Spirit's teachings.

I shall, this evening, if God enable me, endeavor to trace out the character of the spiritual wanderer, as drawn by the pen of inspiration in the text. And in so doing, I shall not make any formal divisions of the subject; but take it up sentence by sentence, and clause by clause, as it lies before me--more in a way of exposition, than in a set, arranged sermon.

The first thing said of the spiritual wanderer, and that from which I give him the name, is, "They WANDERED in the wilderness in a solitary way." A wanderer is the mark stamped upon this spiritual pilgrim. But how did he become so? And what is the character of a wanderer, such as is described in the text? He may be known by two marks-

1. that he is houseless.

2. that he has lost his way.

1. But what made him houseless? Had he not a comfortable home in which he lived? Had he not once a place where he could find food and shelter? He had--and this was the world. That was his home; and the things of time and sense were his food. But when the Spirit of God entered with divine power into his conscience, he drove him out of his house, he banished him from this shelter; and, like Noah's dove, he cannot find rest for the sole of his foot upon the carcasses that are floating amid the waters of the deluge. He is no longer able to shelter in his own wisdom, righteousness, and strength.

The pleasures of the world and the pursuits of business, that alternately amuse and engross the great bulk of mankind, have lost for him their interest. He can no longer find his element in these things. The inward teachings of God the Spirit have driven him out from them all by laying the things of eternity with weight upon his soul; and thus he has become a wanderer.

2. But there is another idea connected with a wanderer--that he has lost his way. When he was in the world, he had no difficulties--the path was so broad that he could not mistake it. But when the work of divine grace begins in a sinner's heart, he loses his way. He cannot find his way into the world--God has driven him out of it, as he drove Lot out of Sodom. He cannot find his way to heaven--because he at present lacks those clear testimonies, those bright manifestations whereby alone he can see his path.

This is his experience, then, that he has lost his way--having turned his back upon the world--and yet unable to realize those enjoyments in his soul that would make heaven his home. He has so lost his way, as to be often unable to go backward or forward; so lost his way, that whether he turns to the right hand or the left, he has no plain landmarks to show him the path in which his soul longs to go.

But we need not stray from the text to find where the wanderer is. "They wandered IN THE WILDERNESS." The wilderness is a type and figure of what this life is to the Lord's people. There is nothing that grows in it fit for their food or nourishment. In it the fiery flying serpents--sin and Satan--are perpetually biting and stinging them; and there is nothing in it that can give them any sweet and solid rest. The barren sands of carnality below, and the burning sun of temptation above, alike deny them food and shelter.

But there is a word added which throws a further light upon the character of the wilderness. "They wandered in the wilderness IN A SOLITARY WAY;"--a way not tracked; a path in which each has to walk alone; a road where no company cheers him, and without landmarks to direct his course. This is a mark peculiar to the child of God--that the path by which he travels is, in his own feelings, a solitary way. This

much increases his trials, that they appear peculiar to himself. His perplexities are such as he cannot believe any living soul is exercised with; the fiery darts which are cast into his mind by the wicked One are such as he thinks no child of God has ever experienced--the darkness of his soul, the unbelief and infidelity of his heart, and the workings of his powerful corruptions, are such as he supposes none ever knew but himself.

It is this walking "in a solitary way" that makes the path of trial and temptation so painful to God's family. To be without any comfort except what God gives, without any guidance but what the Lord affords, without any support but what springs from the everlasting arms laid underneath--in a word, to be in that state where the Lord alone must appear, and where he alone can deliver, is very painful. But it is the very painful nature of the path that makes it so profitable. We need to be cut off from resting upon an arm of flesh--to be completely divorced from all props to support our souls--except that Almighty Prop which cannot fail.

The Lord's people are very apt to lean upon one another--they will rest upon anything (so prone is our nature to look to and rest upon something visible) before they will lean upon the invisible God. But the mark of the believer is, that he has to do with invisible realities--that he is supplied with invisible strength, and upheld by an invisible hand. Were it not, then, that the people of God had to walk in this solitary path where none but the Lord can support or comfort their souls, they would cease to deal with these invisible realities, and lean more upon those things which sense and reason could comprehend.

But the Lord will take care that his people shall deal only with himself; that they shall have no real comfort but that which springs from his presence, and no solid testimonies but those which are breathed into their conscience from his own lips. And thus he puts his people into, and keeps them "in a solitary way," that they may receive communications out of Christ's fullness into their souls, just as much as though there were no other believers on the face of the earth.

How many a gracious person is utterly unable to communicate the feelings of his heart to any one! And sometimes this burdens us. We desire sympathy, pity, and compassion from men. But the Lord will not often allow us to find this pity or compassion; or if we find it, he will not allow us to rest upon it. His object is to draw us away from the creature; to take us off from leaning on human pity and compassion; and to bring us to trust implicitly to himself, "whose compassions fail not"--to lean wholly and solely upon him, who is "full of pity, and of tender mercy." Thus the very circumstance of having to walk in a path of peculiar temptation and sorrow, which makes it to be "a solitary way," is the very reason why that solitary way is so profitable.

But there is another expression added, which helps to fill up the description of the solitary wanderer--"They found no city to dwell in." Man is, by nature, a restless creature, and he desires some place of rest. The world rests in the shop, the farm, the pleasures and vanities of the passing day--men in a profession of religion without the power, rest in a name to live. But the Lord has determined that his people shall find no rest but in himself. He is a jealous God. He will not allow us to find any solid resting-place for our souls but in the Son of his love.

This, then, is the mark that belongs to the solitary wanderer--that "he finds no city to dwell in." A city implies something which is stable, with dwellings, streets, shops, houses--something that has fixtures. But the Lord's people, as they journey through the wilderness, find no such fixtures--there is nothing in this world that is sufficiently strong for them to lean upon; there is no city that spreads its charms before their

eyes sufficient to satisfy them. This world can afford no resting-place for their weary spirit; they are not at home in it. Their minds may be occupied with business--their affections may be drawn aside after the things of time and sense; they may set up idols in the chambers of imagery; they may even endeavor for a time wholly to occupy themselves, as other men do, with the things of this world; but yet with all, "they find no city to dwell in."

There is nothing stable, nothing satisfactory; no rest, no peace. "All that comes is vanity and vexation of spirit." Should they sometimes attempt to rear up a city, sorrow, trouble, temptation, and grief sweep it away as soon as it rises up before their eyes--like a house of cards, one touch dashes it all to pieces. For the pilgrims of Zion there is in this world no city to dwell in; no suitable foundation to rest upon, except the Lord, who will not own nor bless the earthly city with which the citizens of this world are so much occupied and so madly in love.

Do you not find this in your experience, that there is an aching void in your souls, which nothing but the presence and love of God can fill? Are you not often restless at home, restless abroad--restless alone, restless in company? Is there not a desolate vacancy in your soul that the world cannot satisfy? Is not all confusion without the Lord's presence--all darkness without the Lord's light; and a feeling of dissatisfaction generally prevalent, except the Lord lift upon you the light of his countenance? This is a sure and infallible mark of the life of God in the soul.

But there are other marks given in the text of the spiritual wanderer, which further serve to fill up his character. "HUNGRY AND THIRSTY, their soul fainted in them." Hungry after what? The things of time and sense? The delicacies and luxuries that the world sets before them? No--they are spoiled for such things. Their hunger is after heavenly food, after eternal and spiritual realities, after the presence of Jesus, the love of God shed abroad in their heart, the blood of atonement sprinkled on the conscience, and the consolations of the Spirit experimentally enjoyed.

But hunger is a painful sensation. It is not merely an appetite for food; but hunger is an appetite for food attended with pain. So spiritually. It is not merely a desire after Christ that constitutes spiritual hunger. "The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing." (Prov. 13:4) But it is a desire attended with pain; nor merely a wish for spiritual food, but also with such painful sensations, that unless this appetite is satisfied, the soul must perish and die. Nothing short of this constitutes spiritual hunger. There are many who say, 'I have a desire.' If it is a spiritual desire, it will be granted. But spiritual desire is always attended with painful sensations, which many are completely ignorant of who profess to have desire. "The desire of the slothful kills him." (Prov. 21:25) Why? Because he rests satisfied with a desire, and never takes the kingdom of heaven by violence.

The expression "thirsty," in the text, conveys a still larger meaning. Hunger is more supportable than thirst. Persons die sooner when left without water than without food. Intense thirst is perhaps the most painful of all bodily sensations that a human being can know. The Spirit has therefore made use of this figure in order to convey the intense desire of a living soul--that he must have Christ, or perish--must feel his blood sprinkled upon the conscience, or die in his sins--must "know him, and the power of his resurrection," or pass into the gloomy chambers of eternal woe--must have the presence of Jesus sensibly realized, and the love of God shed abroad, or else of all men be the most miserable.

But there is a word added, which throws a still greater light upon the subject--the sure effect and consequence of hunger and thirst--"THEIR SOULS FAINTED IN THEM." Observe, it is not said their

'bodies,' but "their souls," which shows that the whole description is to be understood spiritually--and that the Holy Spirit is not here describing natural hunger and thirst, but that which is wholly and solely supernatural. It was their hunger, and not having that hunger gratified--it was their thirst, and not having that thirst appeased, which made their souls faint within them.

Some of God's people think that they have only to desire, and as soon as they desire, that the blessing must come; that they have only to thirst, and no sooner do they thirst, than God is sure to send them a supply. But it is not so. Hunger and thirst are first to do a certain work. What is this work? To make their souls faint within them; to starve them out of all spiritual strength, and reduce them to the famishing point. And be sure that you have never hungered and thirsted aright, if your soul has never fainted--fainted through the weakness produced by the denial of spiritual food--fainted by reason of the difficulties which you have had to pass through--fainted through the burdens laid on your shoulders--fainted through the rough and narrow path which you have had to traverse.

How many of the Lord's people have been brought to this spot, that they must give up all for lost! How many have sunk into despondency, because the Lord will not attend to them when they call upon his name--that he will not speak to their souls, though they have so often begged him to hear and answer--that he will not take the burdens off their shoulders under which they are sinking--that he will not give them those evidences, testimonies, and smiles which their hearts are panting after!

But the Lord has a special purpose in all this. It is his object that their souls should faint within them. It was so with Jonah. "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came in unto you, into your holy temple. (Jonah 2:7) We must be brought to the fainting point. It is almost, to use a natural figure, as with persons ill of a fever or inflammation; they must be bled until the body swoons away. And so with spiritual hungerings and thirstings; they must go on until the soul faints; this is the intention of them. Until the soul faints, it does not desire support--the everlasting arms are slighted--the bosom of Jesus is not leaned upon. "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples," cries the Bride. Why? Because she was swooning away--not indeed, in her case, of hunger, but of love. When we faint, we desire cordials--but cordials are mere intoxicating drinks, unless to fainting persons. "He gives power to the faint--and to those who have no might he increases strength." (Isa. 40:29)

But we pass on to consider that which is the FRUIT of their wanderings, hungerings, and faintings--"Then." Observe how this is the point to which all tends. All their previous exercises are to bring them to this solemn then. "THEN THEY CRIED UNTO THE LORD IN THEIR TROUBLE, and he delivered them out of their distresses." It was these things made them cry. Until they wandered in the wilderness -until they felt it to be a solitary way, until they found no city to dwell in until hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them--there was no cry. There might have been prayer, a desire a feeble wish, and now and then a sigh or a groan. But this was not enough. Something more was needed to move the affections of divine clemency. The case was not sufficiently urgent; the disease had not struck deep enough into the vitals to demand the hand of the heavenly Physician. The feeble prayer; the mere expression of desire, the falling down upon the knees, and uttering a few words, which so many are satisfied with--this was not sufficient.

Something more was needed to draw forth loving-kindness out of the bosom of the compassionate Head of the church. A cry was needed--a cry of distress, a cry of soul trouble, a cry forced out of their hearts by heavy burdens. A reality, an urgency, a taking no denial, a fervent importunity, a holy wrestling was needed. There is no real cry in the soul until it is brought into these circumstances. Perhaps some of you are wondering why the Lord has not had compassion upon you. You read this and that person's

experience; and you wonder why the Lord has not appeared for you as he has appeared for others.

Have you ever looked deeply into the chambers of your heart to trace out the cause? Is not God faithful and willing to fulfill his promises to the very letter? Perhaps you have not been brought to that spot where real blessings and testimonies are needed. You have been hovering around the blessing, instead of earnestly crying after it. You have been sometimes going to it, sometimes going from it--sometimes casting half-hearted looks, sometimes venting half-hearted desires--and then wondering and wondering why the blessing has not come. But you must go into a deeper spot, into heavy trials, into more painful and distressing feelings, into more stripping and cutting sensations before the cry that brings deliverance can come forth.

A cry implies necessity, urgent need, a perishing without an answer to the cry. It is the breath of a soul bent upon having eternal realities brought into the conscience, or perishing without them. "Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble." It is trouble that makes a man cry. I am a living witness to that. No, nothing but trouble will make a man cry. And therefore the Lord is obliged to send trouble into our hearts to produce it. Past troubles will not make us cry, and past blessings will not make us cry; past experiences, however deep, however high, will not make us cry. They affect us no more than the showers that fell last year.

We must have present things to call forth present cries--we must feel present trials to bring forth present prayers. That is the reason why the Lord is perpetually sending troubles upon his people; perpetually wounding and distressing them. Not that he loves to see them distressed; not that he delights to see them in misery and sorrowing; but he knows that it is for our good; as we read, "But he disciplines us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." (Heb. 12:10) And thus it is he sends troubles into our souls, and afflicts us in body and mind, for the purpose of producing an effect upon us, which cannot be produced in any other way.

Now, do look at your experience in this matter, you that fear God. What are your prayers, when you have no trouble, no burdens, no exercises, no perplexities? Are not your prayers half-hearted? Is there then any wrestling with the Lord? Is there any breathing of your soul into his bosom? I know from experience that we need troubles and trials, exercises and temptations, stripe upon stripe, and blow upon blow, to bring a cry out of our soul. What a mercy it is when there is a cry!

Some of our troubles and trials stun us; and then we cannot cry. Some shut us up well-near in despondency and despair; and then we cannot cry. We cannot cry. Some drive us to rebellion, and to think that the Lord is dealing harshly with us; and then we cannot cry. Some make us sullen and reckless--and then we cannot cry. We cannot raise up a cry ourselves. We may be in the deepest trouble--and yet be shut up in sullen obstinacy. But when the Lord sends a cry in the trouble, he is sure, in his own time and way, to send deliverance out of it.

Observe the words, "Then they cried unto the Lord IN THEIR TROUBLE." Not before, not after, but in it. When they were in the midst of it--when trouble was wrapped round their head, as the weeds were wrapped round the head of Jonah--when they were surrounded by it, and could see no way out of it; when, like a person in a mist, they saw no way of escape before or behind--when nothing but a dark cloud of trouble surrounded their souls, and they did not know that ever that cloud would be dispersed--then it was that they cried.

But what makes them cry? It is this solemn feeling in their hearts, that they have no other refuge but God. The Lord brings all his people here--to have no other refuge but himself. Friends, counselors, acquaintances--these may sympathize, but they cannot afford relief. There is no refuge, nor shelter, nor harbor, nor home into which they can fly, except the Lord. Thus troubles bring us to deal with God in a personal manner. They chase away that half-hearted religion of which we have so much; and they drive out that notional experience and dry profession that we are so often satisfied with. They chase them away as a strong north wind chases away the mists; and they bring a man to this solemn spot, that he must have communications from God to support him under, and bring him out of his trouble.

If a man is not brought to this point by his troubles, they have done him no good. They have been like the clouds that have passed over the desert, and transmitted to it neither fertility nor fruitfulness; they have been like the rain that drops upon the pavement, and is evaporated by the sun, producing neither fruit nor flower. But the troubles that God sends into the hearts of his people are like the rain that falls upon the fertile soil, causing them to bring forth fruit, and every grace of the Spirit to deepen and fructify in their soul.

"AND HE DELIVERED THEM OUT OF THEIR DISTRESSES." What deliverance can there be except there is some distress to be delivered from? If there were a general jail-deliverance proclaimed through this kingdom, would that interest you and I? It would interest the poor debtor, the chained felon, and the groaning captive in his dark cell--but it would not interest you or I, who can freely walk abroad in the light of day. So what deliverance can we receive except we be in some trouble, some perplexity, some exercise, something that bows down the heart, or distresses and burdens the mind?

Manifestations, testimonies, revelations, and gracious discoveries--these are all nothing to a man except he be in circumstances to need them. What is Christ, with all his glorious offices, what is his blood, what his righteousness, what his love, what his sympathy, to a man settled upon his lees, and at ease in Zion? There is in him no felt necessity for these heavenly realities. There is no groan and cry after them. There is therefore no precious communication of them. It is but a delusion, a deceit of Satan, to think that we can have deliverance except we are in troubles and trials out of which God alone can set us free.

Now, when the soul cries to God in his troubles, he is sure to deliver it out of its distress. But we must not always expect very bright and conspicuous deliverances. I know that such alone can fully satisfy a troubled soul; but we must not think there is no deliverance when it falls short of a powerful manifestation. The Lord does not confine himself to one way; and perhaps the very way to which we are looking for deliverance, is the very way by which it will not come. It is a deliverance when the Lord supports the soul under trouble. It may not come with great peace and joy; but when there is a solid support that the soul can rest upon, and it feels a measure of dependence and leaning on the everlasting arms--that is a deliverance.

What is deliverance? It is a bringing out of captivity. If, then, we are in distress, and any measure of relief is given in that distress, that is a deliverance. If we are in a state of felt weakness, and must sink without support--if there be a measure of support given, that is a deliverance. If we are in a state of rebellion, and a measure of meekness and submission is given--that is a deliverance, because it is a deliverance out of our carnal, worldly state. If in trouble the Lord secretly assures the soul that these trials are working together for its good; gives it faith to believe the word of promise, though sense, nature, and reason fight against it--and enables it to rest upon divine faithfulness, in the very teeth and in the very face of nature, sense, and reason--that is a deliverance, because it is a deliverance from leaning on our own strength,

and trusting to our own wisdom.

When the Lord gives us a testimony that we are his, by raising up love in our heart, brightening our evidences, calling to our mind his past dealings with us, secretly assuring us that we are his children, and enabling us to lean upon him as upon a kind Parent--that is a deliverance, though it may not be accompanied with overflowing joy or super-abounding consolation. To be delivered from our own spirit, our own temper, our own righteousness, our own way, our own justification, from leaning upon self in any shape or form--is a deliverance. If there be a going out of self to the Lord, a putting away of fleshly weapons and a taking up of the spiritual weapons of faith and prayer, a leaning wholly and solely upon the bosom of a kind Jesus--that is a deliverance.

I do not say that these minor deliverances are to be compared with precious revelations, sweet manifestations, sheddings abroad of heavenly love, and the comforting testimonies of the Spirit of adoption. But do not consider that there is no deliverance, no reception of strength, support, or consolation, until the soul feels these overflowing manifestations. I mention this, because some of the Lord's people are so looking after great things, that they put away little; and often forget what the Lord is putting the trial upon them for.

His object in bringing them into trial may be not to raise, but to lower; not to give them sweet testimonies of his love, but to discover to them more and more of the depth of their corruptions; not to clothe them with salvation, but to clothe them with humility; not to reveal in them the blessed manifestations of love and blood, but to stamp upon them more of the mind and image of Jesus.

The object of trouble, in the eyes of the Lord, is, to meeken the soul, to purge the vessel from pride and presumption, and prepare it for the reception of a broken-hearted Immanuel. The Lord's testimonies and manifestations are not to exalt us; but they would exalt us if they were poured into a heart that had not been purged and emptied. The Lord's manifestations are to humble, melt, and soften down; to bring about union and communion with a broken-hearted Jesus. We need, then, perpetual trials, troubles, and exercises to purge the vessel of its baneful ingredients, and prepare it to receive the consolations that the Lord gives to those that call upon his name.

"And he led them forth BY THE RIGHT WAY that they might go to a city of habitation." Did not we read that "they wandered," and that their wanderings were in a "wilderness," where there were no tracked paths? And did we not read that it was "a solitary way"? How, then, could it be "a right way," where there was no way at all; where there was but a succession of ups and downs; and where the path of each traveler was so peculiar, that he scarcely ever saw the footstep of a pilgrim before him? Yet the Spirit of God says, that it was "right way." Reason, sense, and nature, hold your peace. Nature never can understand how a way of trouble, of temptation, of exercise, of sorrow, of perplexity can be the right way. But God never meant nature, sense, and reason to understand it.

The Lord gives faith to his dear people, that his dealings may be believed in, not reasoned upon; and he raises up this precious gift of the Spirit in their soul, not that they may confer with nature, sense, and reason, but that they may believe His own testimony in their heart and conscience. For this reason God leads his people by such paths as are directly contrary to nature, sense, and reason, in order to baffle them; for these loquacious talkers in a man's bosom are ever ready to thrust forward their arguments; and our foolish hearts are continually lending their ears to their subtle discourses.

The wise God, therefore, leads his children in such paths that nature, sense, and reason are baffled, and obliged to hold their peace. If I may use the expression, they are 'outrun by God's dealings'. They may come in, panting and out of breath, to understand them; but God will not explain his ways to such flippant rebels. There is one of his own blessed graces in the soul, one of his own heavenly gifts--faith, that prudent handmaid, who has eyes to see, ears to hear, and feet to walk step by step with the Spirit's teaching.

By faith, then, only can we understand how it is "a right way." And when faith is in exercise, then it is known to be "a right way." Your losses, your crosses, your trials in providence, your afflictions of body, your perplexities of mind, your sorrows of heart--all are then to you "a right way." 'Once,' you say, 'they were a labyrinth--I could not find my way through them--they were an enigma, which I could not unravel. But now I see that those things, which so puzzled, perplexed, and tried me, led to my greatest blessings. I could not see the hand of the Lord at that time--but how plainly do I see it now? In that sickness, that painful dispensation, that agony of soul, that trouble of mind, that distressing path, how plainly do I see now that the Lord's hand was leading me!'

Well, will it not be so for the future? Does God intend you should see it now? What says the scripture? "We walk by faith, not by sight." But if you or I could see the outcome of our troubles and trials--if we could believe that every trouble we were passing through was intended by God for our special good, it would take off half the burden. But that would take off half its object. When God sends troubles and trials, he means them to be burdens. But if we could see the Lord's hand laying them on, half the burden would be taken off; and we would need fresh burdens to be added in order to complete the process, and create that effect which the Lord means to produce.

When the Lord sends a rod, he intends that rod to cut deep into our flesh; when he lays on a burden, he means it to weigh us down; and when he lays on a trial, he means it to pain us deeply. Trials not severe, temptations not harassing, exercises not perplexing--why, they are feathers, not troubles. It is like a person tying two straws together, and calling it a cross; or laying a pillow upon his shoulders, and saying, 'What a burden I am carrying!' No! It is because they are heavy, cutting, and perplexing that they are profitable. The weight is the indicator that gives them value; take away that indicator, and they are useless.

Yet, after all, it is "a right way." Does not scripture most emphatically declare, that "we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom"? If we walk then through much tribulation, it is "a right way." If you did not know your way to a place, and a person were to direct you, and say, 'It is a very rough path, my friend; there are high mountains and deep valleys, huge crags and deep precipices--the road is almost impassable; but it is the only road to the place which you have started for.' Then, if you were to see a broad road, almost as easy as a turnpike-road, would you not start back, and say, 'Surely I must have made a mistake--this is not the road pointed out? So spiritually. If our path is one of ease--if we are never burdened or distressed, must we not have gone out of the way?'

It was a strait and narrow path, a road of tribulation, that the Son of God trod to the land of glory--but if ours be a smooth and easy path, must not this be the conclusion of every heart honest in God's fear, 'Surely we must be out of the road altogether?'

Strange creatures! that when out of the path we want to be in it--and when in the path we want to be out of it! "Uneasy when I feel my load, Uneasy when I feel it not!"

Shrinking from burdens, yet condemned for not having them; trembling at trials, yet fearing because they do not come; wanting to walk in a smooth path, and yet when it comes, exercised because it is so smooth! And yet all "the right way."

"HE LED THEM FORTH." Forth out of the world--forth out of sin--forth out of a profession--forth out a name to live--forth out of everything hateful in his holy and pure eyes.

"TO GO TO A CITY OF HABITATION. "They had no city to dwell in here below; but they were journeying to a city of habitation above, whose walls and bulwarks are salvation, and whose gates are praise; where there are eternal realities to be enjoyed by the soul; where there is something stable and eternal; something to satisfy all the desires of a capacious and immortal spirit, and give it that rest which it never could find while wandering here below. If we have a city here, we need no city above; and if we have a city above, we need no city here.

This then must be our state and case; either to be pilgrims, journeying onwards, through troubles, to things above, or taking up our abode below; seeking heaven here, or heaven hereafter; resting upon the world, or resting upon the Lord; panting after the things of time, or panting after the things of eternity--satisfied in self, or satisfied only in Christ. One of the two must be our state and case. The Lord decide it clearly in the hearts of his people that they are on his side--and give us to know and feel that our very restlessness and inability to find food and shelter in the things of time and sense, are leading us more earnestly and believingly to seek after the things that have reality in them--that finding no city to dwell in here below, we may press forward to be manifestly being citizens of that city which is above, "which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God!"

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jc-philpot/the-houseless-wanderer/>

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