

The Matter Cleared Up!

~Other Speakers S-Z: James Smith:

I had been passing through a series of trials--had been exercised with bitter disappointments, and was plied with powerful temptations. Gloom rested on the spirit, discontent was working in the mind, and the whole body was in a very irritable state. Everything looked dreary, and the spirit was crying out, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." Oh, how sweet the thought of rest--how desirable repose appeared. Heaven itself was longed for now, principally, as a place of rest--as the sabbath of the soul. Sore weariness and painful languor were felt, and a disposition to fret began to appear. The way was rough, the soul was discouraged, and the design of the Lord was not perceivable.

Just at this moment, when under these circumstances, the word of the Lord came home, and three words were enough to produce an entire change; they were, "to humble you." Deut. 8:2. Ah! then I saw what the Lord was about. I understood the design of the painful dispensation. I bowed the head in reverence, and exclaimed, "Be it unto me, according to Your word."

All my heavenly Father intended, by allowing me to be tried as I was, was to humble me. The design of my most gracious God was holy, just, and good. Yes, yes, I need humbling. The low place--is the only safe place for me. The lower the safer--the lower the happier. It is when I have very low views of myself--that I have high and exalted views of Jesus. It is when I feel that I am viler than the earth--that free grace sparkles before my eyes. O, I have found it sweet to feel as Jacob felt, and to exclaim as Jacob exclaimed, "I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies!"

But our proud nature hates this low place. It is always aspiring and seeking to 'be something'. Therefore it is that our heavenly Father has to use such painful discipline, and has to lead us by such a rough path. The old man must be crucified--the flesh must be abased--the members must be mortified--the body of sin must be subdued and brought under control. Tried believer, do you ask, "Why am I thus? Why is my path so thorny, my trials so numerous, and my disappointments so painful and so frequent?" It is to humble you!

Do not complain, my brother--for we must be humbled, or we shall be undone. We pray for humility--and this is how the Lord produces it. Poverty, sickness, pain, opposition, inward darkness, the discovery of hidden corruptions, and the apparent lack of success in the Lord's work--all are employed to humble us. And God humbles us in mercy--for, "before honor--is humility." We must lie in the dust--before we shall sit on the throne! We must feel that we are less than the least of all God's people--before we shall be crowned with glory. "Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar!"

"But what does the Lord want of me?" He wants you to submit to him. To allow him to be God, and do as he will; to be King--and exercise his sovereignty; to be Father--and choose your lot; to be your Lord--and rule you at his pleasure. You have professed all this--but you have not carried out your profession. You acknowledge it to be right in your judgment--but you do not conform to it in your practice. If God did not love you--he might allow you to go on in your pride; but he loves you too well to ruin you. If God had given you up, you might escape the trials you complain of--but as the Lord cares for you, he will cross your will, hedge up your way with thorns, and by very painful discipline humble you.

He wants you to depend on him. To depend on him always, and to depend on him for all. He has all you need, and he intends to glorify himself by supplying all your needs. Now you feel at times, as if you need not depend on the Lord for all. You imagine you can do, or manage some things yourself. You are not a mere child now. You have judgment and experience, and grace; and, therefore, you can manage this, or you can do that. As you do not feel that you are absolutely dependent on the Lord--you do not seek his aid as you did; then the Lord leaves you to yourself, and you soon turn to folly, run into difficulties, and are overwhelmed with disappointments. Ah! it is to humble you--and bring you to feel your dependence on the Lord afresh.

He wishes you to look for everything to him. He would never have his children dependent on anyone but himself. Therefore, when we seek aid from creatures, depend on creatures, and expect to receive from creatures, he says, "Well, go and try what they can do for you." And what do they prove themselves to be--but broken cisterns, empty wells, and brooks that dry up! Nor is it until, like Hagar, we have given up all hope in the creatures, and laid our most valued comforts down under the shrubs to die, that we honestly and heartily say, "I will look unto the Lord--I will wait for the God of my salvation."

If our eyes are taken from the Lord--and fixed upon the creature; if we consult men--when we should consult God; if we expect help from men--when we should expect it from God; we only stir up His jealousy; and painful

experiences are sure to follow, to humble us, and break us down, and show us our sin.

He wishes us, as we receive all good from him--to ascribe all glory to him. He has a right to be worshiped as God, to be obeyed as King, to be trusted and treated as a Father; it is his glory to be so; and he says, "I will not give my glory to another!" If, therefore, we honor the creature--rather than the Creator; if we obey the subject--rather than the Sovereign; if we trust our fellow-men, and treat them with more confidence than our heavenly Father; and if we ascribe to ourselves, or to others, what God has wrought in us, or wrought by us--then we shall be chastened! And when we fret, complain, or are surprised at the Lord's dealings, and ask, "Why is this?" The answer is ready: "To humble you!"

If we were but humble, and honestly rendered to man only the things that belong to man, and rendered to God the things that belong to God, it would often be very different with us. O, for that genuine humility which...

lies prostrate before God,
looks to God,
trusts in God,
expects from God,
approves of all that is done by God, and
surrenders everything to the will and disposal of God!

And when in deep trials, or sore conflicts, or distressing troubles, may I accept the punishment of my iniquity, kiss the rod, and fervently pray, "O Lord, correct me--but with judgment, not in yours anger, lest you bring me to nothing." "Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects! Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty!"