

ROAD TO REVIVAL

By

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and
The Secret of Christian Joy"

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POWER, LOVE AND A SOUND MIND

This becoming an accepted fact that we are living in the most insane age of human history. The high pressure and terrific pace of the times have produced a generation of high-strung, tense neurasthenics, subsisting to an amazing extent on cold drinks, chewing gum, and aspirin tablets. Indeed, the fact that America consumed last year four million pounds of aspirin is a significant straw in the wind.

It is said on good authority that in zoological gardens monkeys have been driven crazy watching people on the outside of the cages, so crazy that a rest cure has been necessary. Considering the way we live nowadays - a way that someone summed up in these words, "Hurry, worry, bury" - it is not surprising that our antics should drive even the apes to distraction.

Unhappily, many believers carry their nervous makeup over into their Christian experience, and, instead of gaining the victory over it, become introspective neurotics, forever taking their spiritual pulse and temperature, jabbing their inner selves with morbid proddings, until their hearts are sick and sore. During the past year I have met more unstrung, fearful, doubting, defeated Christians than ever before. They move from Bible conference to Bible conference. They wade through stacks of books on victory, joy, and peace. They follow preachers with pitiful stories of imaginary troubles, vainly seeking to escape from spectres and hobgoblins of the mind. They chase the will-o'-the-wisps of fad and ism across swamps of confusion, and flounder year in and year out in the murky fogs of chronic bewilderment.

There is a very depressing brand of mysticism that talks a great deal nowadays in holy phraseology, but gives little evidence of Christian joy and victory. I have observed that those who talk most about being crucified with CHRIST are often not so dead to self as those who do not have so much to say about it. I recall once in awhile that some of the fine old Christian characters of my boyhood days probably had never read a devotional book and knew little about the different theories of sanctification, but they had a rugged, sturdy, simple faith and a wholesome spirituality that would put most of us to shame.

One becomes a little weary with these inlookers who never can get themselves into just the mood they crave; who emphasize being dead to sin more than being alive to GOD, and consequently they never seem to become successful corpses; who are always trying to crucify themselves so that they never get around to "**Christ liveth in me**"; who put their burdens above their blessings, their faith below their fears; who glory in crosses of doubtful make, but wear no crown of rejoicing.

These talk much of the "**fellowship of his suffering**," but we have observed that those who have entered most truly into that, advertise it least. The whole life of such poor souls is shot through and through with such a pallor or artificial saintliness that one recoils from such gloomy piety to say, "Surely this cannot be that hilarious faith of the early church, that new wine of Pentecost, that victory that could cry out from Roman prisons, '**Rejoice in the Lord alway**.'"

We believe that GOD in offering up His own SON for us all procured for us a more radiant and healthy life than most of us believers have. Surely we "**have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but . . . the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father**" (Romans 8:15). Yet the spirit of fear which today grips our national life, which throttles the business world, which is driving the peoples of the earth to arm themselves to the teeth - this same spirit shows up in sickly Christians and in perplexed churches.

How often we have been hampered in evangelistic meetings by having to spend so much time stirring up the church that we had little opportunity to preach to the unsaved.

The church should be in such healthy condition that it would never need to spend weeks checking its own symptoms and doctoring its own troubles, but could occupy its time going after the lost. Much time is taken in defending our positions and holding our own that ought to be spent in aggressive, forward action, carrying the war into the enemy's territory. The devil has seen to it that individual Christians and churches take so much time treating themselves that they never get around to attacking him on his own premises.

Now, surely we recognize the need of heart-searching and taking stock of ourselves, keeping our own vineyards while we look after the vineyards of others. A periodic visit to the doctor for a physical examination is a good thing; but to go every day to learn how our blood pressure and heart action get along is the way of a neurotic. So Christians who keep themselves in a morbid state displease GOD, and waste time that ought to be spent in objective testimony and service when they become overconscientious and self-condemnatory.

It is possible to become so afraid that we may get out of GOD's will, that in the very fear itself we are already out of His will! After all, GOD is our Father and what sort of father would that be whose child must walk in nervous tension before him?

Of course, this does not excuse wrongdoing. Sin must be confessed and the heart cleansed if fellowship is to be restored. But the Word itself declares that the very antithesis of this bondage of fear is the glorious fact that ours is the Spirit of adoption whereby we may nestle in confidence close to the heart of GOD and call Him, "**Abba, Father**."

His Word also tells us, "**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of**

love, and of a sound mind" (II Timothy 1:7). Ours is the spirit of power, but one never would get that impression from watching many Christians today. There ought to be that about every believer which would declare his having come into contact with GOD, a spirit of victory and strength, an overcoming might that all hell cannot withstand. The very boldness of Peter and John was a testimony, as well as what they said, for we read, "**When they saw the boldness. . .**" (Acts 4:13).

But right here the devil gets in his deceitful work. We realize, of course, that in ourselves we are nothing, that it is by the HOLY SPIRIT that we prevail. We dare not offer "**strange fire**" to the Lord, and the flesh cannot please Him. But when we surrender all to Him and receive the fulness of His SPIRIT, we have a right to rise from our knees declaring, "**I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me**" (Philippians 4:13). Now, some are so afraid that they will not be humble, so afraid that they will work in the energy of the flesh that they never have liberty. They are afraid to "let go," for fear that they will displease GOD. So they live hampered and repressed in the bondage of fear. They are so afraid of making mistakes that their lives are one big mistake.

We may as well recognize that some mistakes will be made. The men who have moved the world for GOD have made mistakes. Peter and Paul made them, and so have all who followed in their train. That does not excuse mistakes. They had to be confessed and forgiven. But GOD knew the general purpose of their lives and the intent of their hearts, and when GOD knows that we are utterly yielded to do His will, He puts the inner state of the heart and will above occasional blunders. It is better to make errors walking by faith than to commit the greater sin of never walking by faith.

We have never been impressed by Paul's conduct when on trial in Jerusalem (Acts 23:1-11). It compares poorly with the conduct of our Lord when He was on trial. His opening remarks, his retort to the high priest, his cleverly setting Pharisees against Sadducees does not seem to come up to a very high standard. Yet that night the Lord stands by Paul to cheer and encourage him. That does not condone Paul's behavior on trial by any means, but it does show that GOD knew the inner intent and purpose of Paul's heart to please GOD and preach the Gospel.

GOD bears mercifully with the man who honestly is committed to His will, and will be patient with much weakness if we are utterly His. On the other hand, He will accept no amount of good deeds if the heart is not His. One may do many lovely things from a selfish purpose and, conversely, one may make many mistakes with a holy purpose. A sickly fear of making mistakes has kept many a Christian from living in the spirit of power.

The early Christians started out in the power of the HOLY SPIRIT and were absolutely invincible. Nothing could stand before them. Men could not resist the wisdom with which they spoke. It was only in later years, when the church compromised with the world, that it began to lose power and to resort to human wisdom and enthusiasm to carry on.

There ought to be about every Christian a sense of power and triumph. He ought to impress the world as being charged with a Divine electricity, drunk on heavenly wine. He has no right to cringe through this world and talk in an apologetic tone. If we have the only answer to the world's problem, the only cure for its ills, we have a right to speak with authority and not be

cowed by the fear of man. The world had better cringe, and cringe it will if we call its bluff and meet its bravado with the courage of GOD.

We are persuaded that many precious testimonies are being lost today because of enervating fear. Often a supersensitiveness and overconscientiousness becomes so fixed in the heart of a well-meaning and sincere Christian that he mistakes it for a mark of piety and confuses it with true humility. To distrust self is indeed proper, but when we have committed all to GOD, then to go on doubting is to doubt GOD.

- So Jeremiah needs to be braced up and bidden not to be afraid of rebellious faces.
- Ezekiel is given an adamant face,
- Timothy is exhorted not to despise his youth.

For ours is the spirit of power and Satan dreads that power, so he tricks us with ruses so clever that we fancy we please GOD, while in reality we possess a cowardice that is not humility.

But GOD has also given us the SPIRIT of love. "**There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love**" (I John 4:18). One would have expected that verse to say that he who fears is not made perfect in faith or in courage, since we usually think of these as being opposites of fear. But it is "love," because faith worketh by love.

Just as a mother fears nothing when her child is in danger, because she is overmastered by love, so the Christian fears nothing when love constrains him. This shifts the entire emphasis in much of our striving to master timidity. For instance, we may not be able to muster enough courage, but we can have love enough to cast out fear, for the love of GOD is shed abroad in our hearts by the HOLY SPIRIT if we will receive it. So the issue is not, Am I brave enough? but, Do I love enough?

Ours is also the gift of a sound mind. Matthew Henry calls it "quietness of mind, a peaceable enjoyment of ourselves, for we are oftentimes discouraged in our way and work by the creatures of our own fancy and imagination, which a sober, solid, thinking mind would obviate and would easily answer." If ever we needed sanctified common sense, it is today.

If Satan cannot lead Christians into worldliness, then he endeavors to make them queer. Spirituality becomes perverted into an unwholesome, false mysticism. Feelings triumph over faith, and oversensitive nerves deceive into all sorts of false conviction and repentance. Visions are looked for to decide issues that ought to be settled by sanctified judgment.

Of course, "**sound mind**" means more here than mere common sense. It carries the meaning of discipline, self-control, wise discretion. There is a sound, healthy wholesomeness that honestly and simply commits all to GOD and then moves along doing His will up to the light given, while, of course, through the Word and prayer and all other means of grace, receiving more light all along. We shall learn as we go to drop things that we had thought were permissible, and we shall also learn to retain things that well-meaning advisers would have us drop!

If we are living with clear conscience up to the light given and learning more as we go, there is

absolutely nothing to worry about. No loving earthly father would have his child live in tense strain, forever afraid of making a mistake, and our Heavenly Father has not called us to a tight-rope walk. Mrs. Jonathan Goforth touched a perplexed girl on the shoulder and whispered, "Always remember, dear, that GOD is your Father," and how we need to learn that and be delivered from the bondage of fear to the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father!

I am persuaded that Satan is working havoc not only with the testimony of many Christians, but with their time, talents, even their health, by making them become concerned over trivial worries that are not causing GOD any concern at all. The least imperfection becomes magnified by an overworked conscience, and they wallow in remorse, which becomes a worse sin than the actual offence over which they worry. For **"if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us,"** and then to grieve about it is to add another sin, the sin of unbelief!

Let us exercise the gifts of GOD, power, love, and a sound mind, for fear is not of GOD and whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

~ end of chapter 11 ~
