

## Night of Weeping

*Why GOD's Children Suffer*

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### CHAPTER 13

#### THE RECOLLECTIONS

**"HE HATH MADE his wonderful works to be remembered."** (Psalm 111:4). Yes, they are for **"everlasting remembrance."** They are not meant to be forgotten, and therefore, they are so made as to render forgetfulness almost impossible. Still we lose sight of them. They pass away **"like a tale that is told."**

Among the most wonderful of GOD's works are His chastisements. They are to be specially remembered by us. In themselves they are worthy of this. In their connection with us more so. None are so ineffaceable, for none are written so deep upon the heart. They are entwined with all that we feared or hoped in other days. They are **"graven with an iron pen, and with lead in the rock for ever."** No pen is like that of sorrow for writing indelibly upon the soul.

Simple as sorrow GOD's dealings with us are not likely to be soon forgotten. We take pleasure in recalling our tears and griefs. But this is often mere selfish melancholy, brooding in solitude over a strange history.

- Sometimes, too, it is pride. We take proud pleasure in thinking that none has ever suffered as we have done.

- Sometimes it is worldly sentiment, sitting down to muse over faded blossoms, or to recall the images of suns long set, or sometimes it may be to contrast the decay of earth with the abiding beauty of yon unwrinkled azure.

But this is not what GOD desires. It is not merely the remembrance of sorrow that He seeks, but of sorrow as chastisement - of sorrow as linked all along with His gracious dealings toward us. The natural heart separates these two things. It remembers the one but forgets the other and so frustrates GOD's design. Himself He ever presents to us; Himself He strives to keep before us, not simply as connected with all our present and all our future history, but as inseparably entwined with all the past.

It was thus that He expressed His mind to Israel regarding this very thing. **"Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth**

**out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy GOD chasteneth thee" (Deuteronomy 8:2-5).**

These recollections of the wilderness He wished to write upon Israel's heart forever. He evidently lays much stress on this. He would not have them lose the benefit of their desert wanderings, and His desert dealings. They were too precious to be forgotten. Forty years close and solitary intercourse with GOD in such various ways ought to have taught them much, both of Him and of themselves, which deserved everlasting memory.

Each name had some wondrous scene attached to it; each rock had its story to tell. Their enemies and dangers, their hunger and their thirst, the manna and the water, the murmurings and the thanksgiving, their journeys and their encampments, their raiment that waxed not old, their shoes that were as iron and brass, their feet that swelled not, and above all, the cloud that rested over them, and the tent of Jehovah that was pitched in the midst of them - these were memorable scenes. And they were all connected with the wilderness.

Never before had there been such an assemblage of wondrous dealings, and never since has anything like this been seen on earth. It could occur but once. And that once was to furnish matter for remembrance to Israel, descending as a precious heritage to their children and to their children's children forever.

It is thus with the saint in reference to his desert days and desert trials. They must not be forgotten as if they had served their purpose. They must be ever rising before us - not merely preserved in memory like the manna in the ark, but brought forth to feed upon every day.

In this way sorrow may be most profitable to us long after its bitterness has passed away. It may furnish us with a treasury of blessings for a lifetime. It may be a mine of gold to us all our days. We are too little aware of this. We look on trial too much as we do upon a passing shower, which falls and then is gone. Whereas, it is truly the smiting of the rock and the issuing forth of a new stream, whose waters are to keep us company through all our days of wandering.

The benefits of chastisement should never be exhausted. They should be coming forth in freshness with every hour.

Even when sitting calmly in the sunshine we may be drawing profit from the stormy past. This is consolation to the chastened soul; for how often in this way will a short sorrow be turned into lasting gladness. And it does seem as if what is thus obtained by us were a richer kind of blessing, a holier, deeper joy. Oh, let us remember past trials and carefully treasure them up as the choicest of our earthly possessions! The saint who has many of these to look back upon has some reason to glory in his inheritance.

**"Truly no cross should be old to us. We should not forget them, because years are come betwixt us and them, and cast them by hand as we do old clothes. We may make a cross old in time new in use, and as fruitful as in the beginning of it." - S. Rutherford**

It is this that especially exercises that softening, mellowing influence which has been often

observed in affliction.

During the actual pressure of the sorrow there was less of this. Perhaps we were so stunned and stupefied as almost to be deprived of feeling. Or if we did feel, still there was so much of sharpness and bitterness about it that we were bruised rather than softened. There was such a struggle and such confusion of spirit that we sometimes wondered if we were profiting at all, and thought that the sorrow was too great to be productive of benefit.

But in the retrospect all is different. **"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."**

The wound has ceased to bleed, and, though it will remain a scar forever, it is no longer open. It is then that the mellowing process goes on, and each remembrance of the past helps it forward. This is less perceptible than the others; we are not so directly conscious of it; but its silent influence upon our character, our temper, our will, our judgment, is wonderful.

The deathbed, the farewell, the funeral Scene, the open tomb, the earth striking rudely on the coffin, the grave filled up, the turf rolled on by stranger hands - these are like swords going through the very vitals. But they sadden more than they soften.

It is the remembrance of these scenes, the frequent visit to the closed tomb, the calm after inquiry into, and meditation upon, GOD's meaning in all this - it is these that so gently exercise a whole lifetime's influence upon the soul. They surround us with a softening atmosphere, and the light they shed down on us is the light of sunset, mellowed and shaded in its passage through the clouds of evening.

In another way also these recollections are precious.

They teach us that GOD is true. The trials themselves taught us this; but their remembrance teaches us this more. And it is a lesson which even the saints need much to learn. Even they need to be taught how surely He is the Amen, **"the faithful and the true,"** and in all that He has spoken to His Church He has spoken truly.

What refreshing confirmations of this do we gather as we call to mind the past and see how the Lord hath led us!

We can add our Amen every day to what Joshua declared to Israel on his deathbed, **"Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your GOD spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof"** (Joshua 23:14).

Yes, **"all things work together for good"** - the past as well as the present. And thus the stream of which we drink is a swelling one. Innumerable tributaries are flowing into it.

This year it is **"to the ankles."** Next year it will be **"to the knees."** After that it will rise **"to the**

**loins,"** And as it reaches the ocean, bearing us calmly on its bosom, it will be a great river "**that cannot be passed over.**"

Yet, oh, how little have the saints learned to prize these memorials of chastisement, these recollections of the wilderness, which are so rich in instruction, so fraught with blessing and with joy!

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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