

Night of Weeping

Why GOD's Children Suffer

by Horatius Bonar

Copyright © 1845

CHAPTER 3

THE FAMILY BADGE

THE FAMILY of which we speak is gathered out of every nation and kindred, and people, and tongue. It is "**a great multitude, which no man could number.**"

Yet it is but one family. There is a family likeness among all its many members; and a family name by which they are known. They have many things in common; nay, there are few things which are not common to all. They are all of earth. It is their native clime. They are all sprinkled with the same blood and begotten again by the same Spirit.

They all sing one song, use one language, rejoice in one hope, and are heirs of one inheritance. This oneness of feature and feeling and habit, throughout so many ages and amid so many diverse nations, marks them out as a peculiar people and reveals their relationship to Him who is "**the same yesterday, and to day, and forever.**"

But they have one mark more peculiar than any of these. It is truly a family badge: they are all cross-bearers.

This is the unfailing token by which each member may be recognized. They all bear a cross. Nor do they hide it as if ashamed of it. They make it their boast. "**God forbid that [we] should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto [us], and [we] unto the world.**" Sometimes it is lighter, and sometimes it is heavier; sometimes it has more of shame and suffering, and sometimes less, but still it is upon them. They carry it with them wherever they go. And it is always a cross: not merely so in name, but in reality, a token of reproach and sorrow. Sometimes they are represented as carrying it, and sometimes as being nailed to it, but it is still the cross.

They took it up when first they believed in JESUS and owned Him as their all.

Then it was that they forsook the world's tents and went without the gate, bearing the reproach of the crucified One. He whom they follow both bore the cross and was nailed to it, and why should they shrink from the like endurance? Shall they be ashamed of Him? Shall they not rather count it honorable to follow where He has led the way, and to bear for Him some faint resemblance of what He bore for them?

Shall anything in the world be esteemed more precious, more honorable than the cross of their

beloved Lord?

The world derides and despises it, but it is the cross of Jesus; and that is all to them. A saint of other days, a cross-bearer of the olden time, has said, "O blessed cross of Christ, there is no wood like thine!"

Besides, this was the Master's will. He has laid on each the command to bear the cross. **"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."** (Luke 9:23) **"He that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."** (Matthew 10:38)

The cross, then, is the badge of discipleship, and no follower of the Lord can be without it. The two things are inseparable. GOD has joined them, and man cannot sunder them. No cross, no saint. No cross, no Son.

- We must carry His cross all our life;
- we must be baptized with His baptism;
- we must endure His reproach;
- we must glory in being clothed with His shame.
- The flesh must be crucified with its affections and lusts:
- our members must be mortified;
- our old man must take the place of shame;

We in whom the flesh still remaineth, though its dominion is broken, must be willing to appear as outcasts and malefactors before the world, as JESUS did when He bore our sins upon the hill of shame.

JESUS, then, with His own hand lays the cross on each one who comes to Him, saying, "Take this and follow me. Take it and be reproached for Me. Take it and endure tribulation for Me. Take it, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of JESUS CHRIST thy Lord. Take it and be willing to go even to prison or to death for Me, not counting your life dear unto you, that you may follow Me to the end and receive the unfading crown."

Learn to endure the cross and to despise the shame.

But further, we have the Master's example as well as the Master's will concerning this. I do not mean merely that He hung upon the cross. I do not refer simply to the fact of His crucifixion. I mean much more than that.

That was but the closing scene of a whole life of crucifixion. He was a cross-bearer from the hour that He was laid in the manger. All His days He bore the cross. His life was but a pilgrimage to Calvary with the cross upon His shoulders.

Tradition tells us that, as He left the Judgment Hall, He was led along the "dolorous way" to Golgotha. But in truth, His whole course on earth was the mournful Way. It was all reproach and sorrow from His cradle to His grave. His was a sorrowing life; His death was but the summing up of His many sorrows, the gathering of them all together and pressing them into His cup at

once, till the vessel burst, because it could hold no more.

And then, for Him, the cross and the shame and the sorrow were at an end forever. But for us the cross remaineth still.

Throughout life He was the "**man of sorrows.**" He was "**acquainted with grief.**" And herein we see something more of the family badge as it was displayed in the Elder Brother.

Acquaintanceship with grief! This is the description given us of it. It is not one visit that makes us acquainted with a fellow-man. Companionship is the result of continued intercourse. So one sorrow does not make us acquainted with grief, however deep and sharp its pangs may be. It may be the beginning of our acquaintanceship, but that is all.

There must be daily, hourly intercourse. Thus it was with JESUS. Thirty-three years daily converse with grief made Him acquainted with it. And so it is with us. The saints are men of sorrows still; and their acquaintanceship with grief must be obtained by daily fellowship. The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord.

We need not think of another process than that which He underwent. He was made perfect through sufferings, and so must we. The Captain of our salvation is, in this respect, the model and pattern of His saved ones. We are always to bear "**about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body**" (II Corinthians 4:10).

It is the Lamb that we follow: the Lamb "**as it had been slain.**" This surely speaks most plainly of the family badge. We are followers of the Man with the pierced hands and feet, the Man who is covered all over with the marks of the buffet and the scourge and the spitting, the Man with the crown of thorns. Yea, He is our Elder Brother. He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. And if we see so distinctly the family badge on Him, shall we shrink from taking it up and binding it in triumph as a jewel on our forehead - as a crown upon our head?

Surely the purple robe of mockery may beseem us better than it suited Him.

There is one mark by which, from the beginning, He has been distinguished as the woman's seed predicted in Eden.

It is the bruised heel.

This is, in truth, only another way of expressing His character as the suffering, the crucified Son of Man. This was the mark which GOD gave by which He was to be known. Yet it was just at this stumbling stone that Israel stumbled. They had no eyes for the dying Saviour. The humbled JESUS found no favor with them. The bruised heel they could not away with. The very mark which GOD set upon Him as Messiah was that on account of which Israel rejected Him. Yet it is the bruised heel in which we rejoice.

It is the Man with the bruised heel who has won our hearts. It is He whom we follow; and His bruised heel we engrave upon our banner as our most honorable badge.

The similar bruising we look for as our portion here. Nor are we ashamed of it. All the saints before us have experienced it; are we better than they? Shall the soldiers of the last days be ashamed to wear the uniform which the army of the saints has gloried in for six thousand years?

It is very remarkable that the apostle fixes upon affliction as the mark of true Sonship. Truly, he makes it the family badge. Nay, he makes it the test of our legitimacy. "**What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons**" (Hebrews 12:7, 8). Strong language this! Had any but an inspired apostle used it, there would have been outcry against it as absurd and extravagant.

Let us, however, take it as it is, for we know that it speaks the mind of GOD.

Chastisement is, then, really one of the chief marks of our lawful and honorable birth.

Were this characteristic not to be found on us, we should be lacking in one of the proofs of our sonship. Our legitimacy might be called in question. It might be said that He was not recognizing us as His true-born sons, and that either He had never received us as such, or had rejected us. There must be the family badge to establish our claim of birth and to be a pledge of paternal recognition on the part of GOD our Father.

It is a solemn thought. Flesh and blood shrink from it. We look around to see if there be no way of escaping, and ask if it must be so. Yes, it must be, as we shall shortly see, and the attempt to shun it is vain. Yet it is also a blessed thought. It cheers us under trial to remember that this is the Father's seal set upon His true-born sons. Oh! how it lightens the load to think that it is really the pledge of our divine adoption.

We need not then count upon bright days below, nor think to pass lightly over the pleasant earth as if our life were but the "shadow of a dream." Joy within we may expect - "**joy unspeakable and full of glory**" - for that is the family portion. But joy from without, the joy of earth's sunshine, the joy of the world's ease and abundance, the joy of unsevered bonds and unweeping eyes is not our lot in this vale of tears.

Still, in the midst of the ever-wakeful storms through which we are passing to the kingdom, there is peace - deep peace - too deep for any storm of earth to reach. In the world we have tribulation, but in JESUS we have peace. "**Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you.**"

And it is this which gives the peculiar aspect to the saints, the aspect of mingled joy and grief. The eye is dim with tears, yet, behold! it glistens with joy. There is the brow of shaded thought, yet peace is playing round it. Clouds overshadow them, but on every cloud we see calm sunshine resting.

Their "**peace... [is] like a river.**" It is not stagnant as the lake, nor tumultuous as the sea, but ever in calm motion, ever flowing on in its deep channel like a river. The course may sometimes be through rocks, sometimes through level plains, sometimes through tangled brakes, sometimes along the cornfield or "the hill of vines," yet still it moves unhindered on.

It may be night or day, it may be winter or summer, it may be storm or calm, but it is there - flowing on till the embrace of ocean receives it. Such is our peace! Let us hold it fast.

Nor need we hide our peace any more than we should hide our cross.

Let the world see both and learn how well they agree together. For it is the cross that makes this peace feel so sweet and suitable. Amid the tears of grief peace keeps her silent place like the rainbow upon the spray of the cataract; nor can it be driven thence so long as Jehovah's sunshine rests upon the soul. **"The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."**

~ end of chapter 3 ~
