

Conquering The Attrition And Tedium
Generated In Waiting For God For Salvation

APPRECIATING AND BRACING ONESELF FOR DIVINE DEFERMENT

"The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD."

(Lamentations 3:25/26)

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*Excerpts From A Pastoral Missive To A Soul In
The Throes Of Anguish And Agony Because Of
The Conviction Of Sin*

It is a good thing to feel the weight of sin so that you may discover the very source of your evil and come to know experimentally the nature of the human heart. For from the heart percolates all the evil to every compartment of the human life. Our Lord Jesus Christ renders these remarks pertaining to the heart, "*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man*".¹ It is astonishing to apprehend the magnitude and extent of the permeation and penetration thereof. "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*"² Yet to encounter the conviction of sin is a very rare experience nowadays. You ought to cherish it because it is the work of the Holy Spirit. You then experience the sense of your sin, its depth and its heinousness; you are also able to affirm that sin is exceeding sinful and exceeding deceitful. It is almost impossible to dissect between sin and the human heart. And then you discover, to your horror, the vileness, corruption and ugliness of your heart; and alas, you realize your unworthiness to enjoy God and His holy blessings. You are now able to inwardly attest to what the prophet says, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*"³ You begin to understand why the

¹ Matthew 15:19,20a

² Proverbs 4:23

³ Jeremiah 17:9

flesh is a source that emits an unceasing torrent of corruption, defilement and contamination. It is impossible to please God with the flesh. Wherefore the apostle vouches, *“That no flesh should glory in His presence.”*⁴ Everywhere we go, everything we do, every sentence we utter naturally and sub-consciously, every thought we entertain, every imagination of our heart is continually and always and only polluted with the defilements that stem from our heart! *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*⁵

But such a manner of conviction must drive us to Christ Jesus. *“I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no Saviour.”*⁶ At least it must infuse the longing in us to yearn for the visitation of Jesus. *“My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?”*⁷ This yearning for Christ Jesus, Who is *“the Propitiation for our sins”*⁸, may not be answered soon. The protraction and anguish caused by the delay may lead us to desperation. But, as John Bunyan is wont to say, we must not

⁴ I Corinthians 1:29

⁵ Genesis 6:5

⁶ Isaiah 43:11

⁷ Psalm 42:2,3

⁸ I John 2:2a

fall into the slough of despair. We should exercise faith. Faith should cause us to hope upon the sweet and lovely promises of God to His people. When doubts torment our soul, taunting us that we may not be eligible for the promises of Christ, we ought to answer as the Syro-Phoenician woman did ⁹ or react as the centurion ¹⁰ or be resolute as the woman with the issue of blood. ¹¹ We ought to hope against hope as Abraham did. ¹² We must not stagger in unbelief at the promises of God but give Him no rest nor peace until He yields. Remember our Lord's teaching concerning the unjust judge and the persistent widow clamouring for justice to be executed on her behalf. ¹³ At length, her importunity paid off. Faith is made of such stuff. Patience, the gumption and grit to go against all odds, warding off all the negative thoughts incessantly and shielding our soul relentlessly from every fiery dart of the evil one: these are elements that eventually make faith persevering and triumphant!

It is inevitable that we tend to be overpowered by a sense of our utter helplessness and impotency when our implorations to God for relief and deliverance are appar-

⁹ Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30

¹⁰ Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10

¹¹ Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48

¹² Romans 4:18a

¹³ Luke 18:1-8

ently not attended to. *“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.”*¹⁴ Yet this must not lead us to abandon our efforts and quit our devotional exercises, particularly when a pall of forlornness overtakes us. Rather we increase our intensity, attentiveness and energy in these spiritual exertions. God forbid that we should be driven to torpidity and inertness when we realize we are altogether at the mercy of the absolutely sovereign God! For He is merciful, compassionate and gracious.¹⁵ *“The LORD redeemeth the soul of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate.”*¹⁶ *“For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee.”*¹⁷ These promises are heart lifting and they are likely to boost our sagging and demoralized spirits. Are we not encouraged when the Lord says, *“Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?”*¹⁸ Faith refuses to take no for an answer. Indeed

¹⁴. Psalm 27:13

¹⁵. Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:8, Psalm 111:4, Psalm 145:8, Joel 2:13

¹⁶. Psalm 34:22

¹⁷. Psalm 86:5

¹⁸. Ezekiel 33:11

*“He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*¹⁹

For the heap of our iniquities, the exceeding evil nature of our heart, the preponderance of levity, the light heartedness and the frivolity that prevail within us, the Lord may not answer us, not immediately anyway. *“They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find Him; He hath withdrawn Himself from them.”*²⁰ Often God judges the sincerity and motives of our seeking and prayers and finds them coming short of His holy standard. Hence His attention is not invoked. *“I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their afflictions they will seek Me early.”*²¹ Yet we should not be easily discouraged. We should respond in the manner that Hosea, the prophet, who wrote the aforementioned verses, prescribes: *“Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up.”*²² He urges again, *“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”*²³ Generally the seeking of God for His mercy can be a

¹⁹. Hebrews 11:6b

²⁰. Hosea 5:6

²¹. Hosea 5:15

²². Hosea 6:1

²³. Hosea 14:1,2

long and excruciating process. It is due for a course of attrition. For if we acknowledge we are unworthy and corrupt, what rational basis do we have to speed up His visit? What justification do we have to quicken His condescension and attendance to us personally? Notwithstanding, it is needful that God's felt merciful dealings with us be not delayed unduly. For the tarrying of God's answer may dampen our soul. Furthermore, the evil trinity (Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet) and their cohorts may take advantage of it. Hence we should pray like the Psalmist, "*Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.*"²⁴ "*But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God, Thou art my Help and my Deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.*"²⁵ And again, "*O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.*"²⁶ Daniel too concludes his passionate prayer expediting divine response, "*O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy Name.*"²⁷ We must be careful not to permit this cry for the hastening of the Lord to degenerate into a kind of irreverent demand or suicidal threat. To show that we are genuine and sincere, we should ensure that our call to God to urgently and swiftly send His help should be coupled with a commen-

²⁴ Psalm 70:1

²⁵ Psalm 70:5

²⁶ Psalm 71:12

²⁷ Daniel 9:19

surate bout of contrition and resolve. *“My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.”*²⁸

God forbid that we should attempt to truncate or abort this process when we fail to see any quick or instant answer. Rather the prospect of divine deferment should make us brace ourselves for the attrition and tedium thereof. Consider the apt words of Jeremiah, *“Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled: Thou hast not pardoned.”*²⁹ Yet we should not forget what the prophet himself says earlier, *“For the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.”*³⁰ The humbling process in waiting upon God is good for our soul no matter how long God will hold back before answering us. This humiliation and agony we endure in this process will rout presumption, levity, light heartedness and love for

²⁸. Psalm 130:6,7

²⁹. Lamentation 3:39-42

³⁰. Lamentation 3:31-33

the world within us. It will mend our broken cistern that cannot hold the living water;³¹ it will extricate and pluck out the roots of our iniquities; it will demolish the strongholds of pride and bring down the strata of conceit within us. Like Jeremiah, we ought to affirm the divine attributes of God. *“The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in Him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.”*³²

There are times when the Lord Jesus Christ seems to restrain His bowels towards us; and there are times when we are discouraged by the bankruptcy of our spiritual experiences; in such times we should magnify the salient attributes of the Godhead and declare our utter unworthiness in deserving the least of His mercies. It is a discipline of the highest sort to still our soul before the Most High so that it may prepare us to usher Him nigh. Acknowledge divine wrath and judgments early if we seek to find Christ soon. The law, including the sanctions thereof, must be most cordially welcomed if Christ is to be summoned early to save us. Wherefore Paul says, *“Wherefore the law was our school-*

³¹. Jeremiah 2:13

³². Lamentation 3:24-29

master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith."³³ It is this preparatory work through the law that conditions our heart to receive the Gospel effectually, lest our heart be likened unto the three grounds that failed to bring forth a harvest unto the saving of the soul and to the glory of God (as our Lord underlined in the parable of the four divers grounds wherein the sower disseminated the precious seeds).³⁴

O what great loss we suffer if our heart fails to be a faithful repository of the truth of God! Our responses to the Word of God and to the Spirit-anointed preaching are often short-lived. The censure of God against us characteristically is, "*O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away.*"³⁵ The cares of this life and riches of the world choke up the saplings that sprout forth from the Gospel seeds. The skin-deep shallowness of the Laodicean character fails to prevent the corruptions and pollutions within us. Instead these corruptions and pollutions painfully grind spiritual growth to a halt.

Christendom, including a shocking wide swathe of Protestantism, is abounding with a surplus of false pastors³⁶ who give the im-

³³. Galatians 3:24

³⁴. Matthew 13:18-23, Mark 4:3-20, Luke 8:11-15

³⁵. Hosea 6:4b

³⁶. I Kings 18:19-40, Matthew 7:15-20

pression to their congregational members that they are on their way to heaven. This is even true in the Reformed constituency! Salvation is made so easy and so cheap. But our Lord Himself solemnly warns us, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*³⁷ When our Lord compares the strait gate and narrow way to the wide gate and broad way, He is not comparing Christianity with heathen religions; He is actually comparing the easy requirements for conversion as propounded and declared by myriad of preachers in Christendom to God’s actual standard. Again our Lord rings the alarm bell, *“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*³⁸ This He speaks with reference to those attending the means of grace. Though many have heeded the Gospel overtures outwardly yet they are still not saved, for the Lord has in His sovereignty, not dispensed saving grace to them!

We live in an age when those who occupy the pews in the churches are lovers of this world and hence at enmity with God.³⁹ The trappings of affluence and deceit of riches make them oblivious to their own spiritual

³⁷. Matthew 7:13,14

³⁸. Matthew 22:14

³⁹. James 4:4

disposition. They say, *"I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing"*.⁴⁰ But they know not that they are *"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"*.⁴¹ The cares of this life encumber them.⁴² They have set up idols alongside Christ, defying the very warning of the apostle, *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen."*⁴³ Lo, and behold, the people that attend churches regularly have imputed education, career, family, chattels, recreation and stock markets worthy of more attention and attendance than God. They even profane the Sabbaths for these reasons. Yet they are only deceiving themselves. The Bible tells us, *"Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned"*.⁴⁴ The obsession of professing Christians today is their credit cards, cars, condominiums, country club membership, cash, computers and cyberspace exploits. Yet they dare confess that they love Christ. What audacity! But he who says, *"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world"*⁴⁵ also

⁴⁰. Revelation 3:17a

⁴¹. Revelation 3:17b

⁴². Matthew 6:25-34, Luke 12:22-34, Luke 21:34,35

⁴³. I John 5:21

⁴⁴. II Thessalonians 2:10b-12a

⁴⁵. Galatians 6:14

warns us, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”*⁴⁶

There you have it, two vignettes that present two kinds of Christian profiles. One seems hard, unattractive, at odds with this world and impossible! The other is attractive and easy, catering to the transient and temporal concerns of this world. The temptation is very real, especially when affluence and riches have become prevalent. The easy and worldly type of Christianity is alluring to the flesh. It is very seductive. But let us get back to the Scriptures to dwell therein. Study it diligently. Dwell upon the psalms. Consider meticulously the books of Moses, the historical section and the prophetic books of the Old Testament. Study carefully the Gospels and the New Testament epistles. Ponder the corpus of our Lord’s teachings, including His parables, warnings and denunciations. Mull over what the apostles had to say, especially in the latter epistles. Determine what the Spirit of God is teaching us in all these sacred oracles. This is imperative because our eternal destiny and that of others are at stake. The Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures alone should be our final appeal. Let us not subject our conscience to institutional incarcerations, denominational fetters and the shackles of

⁴⁶. Galatians 6:7

human prejudice. Christ has set us free from the Babylonian captivity! ⁴⁷ Welcome the true work of the Spirit of God. Abhor the alternatives and substitutions of the flesh. Be wary of popular religion. Remember true religion is experimental. It will bring sin, flesh, the wrath and judgments of God to the forefront of our senses. Do not recoil from nor be averse to these spiritual sensations. Do not snuff out these flames of convictions! Rather put on sackcloth and ashes and seek the face of Christ Jesus in a resolute and solemn manner. “Neither is there salvation in any other”. ⁴⁸ We cannot escape the damnation of hell in any other wise. ❧

⁴⁷ Isaiah 51:11,12

⁴⁸ Acts 4:12a



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