

Night of Weeping

Why GOD's Children Suffer

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CHAPTER 6

THE TYPES

THE ORDINANCE in Israel concerning the meat-offering of the firstfruits was of a very peculiar kind. Thus it was commanded, "**If thou offer a meat-offering of thy firstfruits unto the Lord, thou shalt offer for the meat-offering of thy firstfruits, green ears of corn dried by the fire**" (Leviticus 2:11).

CHRIST is, we know, preeminently the firstfruits. It is He, then, who is specially prefigured by these green ears of corn dried by the fire. In this "**corn**" we discern the type of one who belongs to earth, partaker of our very nature. It springs up in our fields, it is nourished by our soil, it is watered by our showers, it is ripened by our sun. So was it with JESUS. He was truly Man, one of us, "**the Word made flesh,**" the Man who "**drank of the brook by the way.**"

This corn was to be plucked when green and then dried by the fire, not in the ordinary gradual way by the heat of the sun. It was to be prematurely ripened by what we would call unnatural means, the exposure to artificial heat. In this also we see JESUS, the Man of sorrows, subjected to the Father's wrath, the wrath of Him who is a consuming fire, and withered into ripeness before His time. He did not come to His grave "**in a full age, like a shock of corn in its season**" (Job 5:26). He did not grow up to manhood in the calm, refreshing sunshine of Jehovah's smile.

He was scorched with fiery heat, within and without, till age appeared upon His much-marred visage, while as yet the greenness of His strength was upon Him, so that the Jews, looking upon His wasted form, spoke of Him as one who had well-nigh reached his fiftieth year (John 8:57).

Such is the view He gives of Himself in the Book of Psalms.

In these we at once recognize the "**green ears of corn dried by the fire.**" For thus He speaks, "**My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death.**" Again, He says, "**Mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly; for my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth . . . my bones are consumed**" (Psalm 31:9). Again, we hear Him saying, "**Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies**" (Psalm 6:7). Such, then, was JESUS withered and dried up before His time by reason of the sorrow which He endured for us.

But these green ears dried up by the fire are no less a description of the saints than of their Lord. Certainly they apply to Him in a way such as they never can apply to us. Yet they do stand forth

as a type of the whole Church, who are also called like JESUS, "**the firstfruits.**"

All the members of His body from the beginning have been just such as these dried ears of green corn. Hear, for instance, one of them speaking, "**I am like a bottle in the smoke**"; or again, "**My bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long . . . my moisture is turned into the drought of Summer**" (Psalm 32:3).

By such an emblem as this was the Church's career of tribulation set before Israel. And it is most interesting for us to look at our trials in the light of so expressive a figure. Their object is to ripen us: it may be before the time; it may be in a way such as the flesh shrinks from; but still their object is to ripen us. The sorrows that compass us about are all ripening our graces, as well as withering out of us the green, rank, unripe luxuriance of earth. The heat may be great, but it shall not consume us; it will only make the ripening process a speedier one. It will shorten the way to perfect holiness and eternal glory; and shall we shrink from that which makes the process shorter?

But there was another ordinance in Israel setting forth the tribulation of the Church.

The mercy seat and the cherubim were to be both made of pure gold, "**of beaten work**" (Exodus 25:17, 18). Now, as the cherubim were doubtless the symbols of redeemed men, the Church of CHRIST, this type is very striking. Both the mercy seat and the cherubim were to be of one piece, for "**both he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one.**"

They are of pure gold, and this denotes their exceeding preciousness. They are made of "**beaten gold,**" to intimate the process through which they both had passed. The mercy seat was fashioned into shape and made after the pattern showed in the mount by the stroke of the hammer.

So JESUS was "**made perfect through suffering.**" In like manner the cherubim were to be beaten into the intended shape and model. So with the saints. It is through this process that they must pass, and it is thus they are brought into that perfect shape which GOD has designed for them.

What, then, is the process through which the saints are passing now but just this? They are now under the hammer of the Spirit, that by this they may be fashioned into the likeness of cherubim, which in the Book of Revelation are set before us as the upbearers of Jehovah's throne and glory, as well as the inheritors thereof. And what is all the "**beating**" to which we may be subjected when compared with the glory for which it is preparing us?

There is another figure used by our Lord in speaking of His Church. He compares her to an injured, afflicted, friendless widow. Widowhood, then, is properly the Church's condition here. And this is her grief. Her Lord is absent, and His absence is one of her bitterest trials. It forms one long-continued sorrow. It makes such a blank on earth that we feel as if this of itself were grief enough, even were there none besides. And were the Church to realize fully her estate of widowhood, until the Lord come, she would find in this, no doubt, a new grief to which she was blind before, but a grief which operates with most blessed efficacy in sanctifying her and in keeping her apart from the world.

She is a stranger in a land of strangers. She is lonely and unfriended, sitting apart from earthly joy and fellowship. He whom she loves is far away. This separation is, as a saint of old expresses it, "**like a mountain of iron upon her heavy heart.**" She longs to be with Him. She sighs for the day of meeting. And all this though sad is both sanctifying and solemnizing. It is a daily burden, a continual chastening, yet it is well. It loosens from earth. It lifts up to Heaven. It makes the world less fascinating. It prepares for the inseparable union: the meeting time - the bridal day.

There are other figures given us at the suffering Church. But let these suffice. They will help us to understand our true condition and to expect nothing else than tribulation here. No strange thing is happening to us. It is no strange thing that the green ears of corn should be dried with fire.

It is no strange thing that the cherubim should be made of beaten gold. It is no strange thing that, in the absence of the Bridegroom, the bride should mourn.

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