

ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH

by

Harry A. Ironside

Colportage Library #230

Copyright @ 1945

CHAPTER EIGHT

~ P – R ~

PASSING TRIALS

“Our light affliction, which is but for a moment” (II Corinthians 4:17).

He was a very illiterate Negro, who could only spell his way through the Bible with great effort and often failed to grasp the full import of the passages he tried to read. Rising to his feet in a testimony meeting where the leader had called upon each one to give his favorite portion of Scripture, the aged, colored brother said, “I am more help from dem bressed words ‘**And it came to pass**’ than anything else in the Bible.”

Asked what he meant, he explained, “When I’s e so upset wid trouble and pestered wid trials, I goes to the Bible and begins to read, and I never goes far before I come across dem words, ‘It came to pass’ and I says, ‘Bress de Lawd. It didn’t come to stay. It come to pass!’” Surely we may all learn from his simple faith.

PATRIOTISM-PLUS

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13)

“When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” (Romans 5:10)

When nations are engaged in deadly strife, it is common for patriots to declare that he who gives his life for the defence of his country may be certain of a home in heaven because of having made the supreme sacrifice.

This teaching is in accord with the principles of the Moslem religion and not with true Christianity. Mahomet promised his fanatical followers a place in Paradise if they died for the faith in conflict with the “infidels” who rejected his teachings.

Patriotism is a virtue of which any man may well be proud.

“Lives there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land?”

But patriotism, praiseworthy as it is from a human standpoint, will never fit the soul for the presence of God. It can never wash away the guilt of sin.

The testimony of Edith Cavell, the brave British nurse who was killed by the Germans during the former world war, is well worth considering in this connection.

This noble woman was born at Swardeston, Norfolk on December 4, 1865. She entered the London Hospital for nurses' training in 1895. In 1907 she was appointed first matron of the Berkendael Medical Institute at Brussels, Belgium. This became the Red Cross Hospital for Belgium at the outbreak of the conflict in 1914.

From August of that year, until August, 1915, Nurse Cavell helped to care for wounded French, Belgian, English and German soldiers alike. She ministered faithfully even to those who had fallen while fighting against her own nation. Naturally, her sympathies were with the Allies, and in cooperation with the efforts of Prince Reginald de Croy, she aided many derelict English and French soldiers who had fled from the Germans. These escaped by “underground” methods to the Dutch frontier, where, with the aid of guides, they were conveyed across to Britain.

When some of these fugitives were traced to her house in Brussels, she was immediately arrested and after a court-martial was sentenced to face a firing-squad. All her kindness to the German wounded was forgotten. Her captors considered her a spy and treated her accordingly.

Just before the bandage was placed over her eyes, as she stood fearlessly facing the soldiers who were about to take her life, she gave a last message to the world. “I am glad,” she said, “to die for my country. But as I stand here I realize as never before that patriotism is not enough.”

Then she went on to give a clear, definite testimony to her personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and her assurance of salvation, not through laying down her life for others, but because He laid down His life for her. In perfect composure, she submitted to the bandaging of her eyes and, in a few moments fell, pierced by many German bullets.

Her words, patriotism is not enough! have spoken loudly to many in the years that have gone since she died a martyr to her convictions. Yet many forget this.

“What more is needed?” you may ask. The answer is “Christ!” It is through faith in Him alone that the soul is saved and heaven assured.

POSSESSING OUR POSSESSIONS I

“He that . . . believeth . . . hath everlasting life” (John 5:24)

Believing God’s testimony is like endorsing a check and cashing it. A gentleman went into the home of a very poor old lady who had applied for relief. He saw something on the wall that attracted his attention. It was a piece of paper in a neat frame.

He asked, “What is that on the wall?”

She replied, “I just don’t know what it is, but it is a paper my uncle sent me and I just don’t like to throw it away and so I keep in there in remembrance of him.”

He exclaimed, “Don’t you see what it is?”

“No, I just don’t understand it.”

“Well, it’s a bank check. Look! There is the name of the bank on which it is drawn and it says, ‘Pay to Jennie Johnson the sum of \$5,000.00’ and there is your uncle’s name at the bottom of it.”

“What,” she said, “did he intend me to have that money? and I have been living in poverty all these years!”

How many people are like that. They believe the Word and God’s promises – in a certain sense. They know Jesus died to put away sin. But they have never cashed in, they have never trusted Him for themselves.

POSSESSING OUR POSSESSIONS II

**“But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness;
and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions”** (Obadiah 17).

While God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, many Christians fail woefully when it comes to the enjoyment of those things which are ours by divine bequeath. Many of us have never really explored the good land which the grace of God has opened up to us.

All of Canaan was given to Israel by God before they ever set foot upon it, but, as they were about to enter under Joshua, He told them that every place that the sole of their feet should tread on should be theirs. As they went through the length and breadth and found out for themselves what God had given them, they took possession of city after city and district after district, but never until the balmy days of King Solomon did they really possess it in all its fulness. They soon lost their hold on it, however, because of sin and unbelief, but Obadiah tells us that, in a future day, the House of Israel shall possess their possessions.

That will be when the Lord Jesus Christ reigns in glory on this earth and Israel will be restored to God. For us as Christians there is a great lesson in all this, a lesson which we have been slow to learn, and that to our own great loss.

The story is told of a man who obtained by inheritance a beautiful country estate. As he lived in the city he thought it best to dispose of this estate and use the money he would obtain from it in some other way.

Getting in touch with a widely known real estate firm, he instructed them to go out and make a careful examination of the house, out-buildings, and the land belonging to the estate, and write it up in such a way as to make it seem attractive to anyone who was looking for a home in the country. When all his instruction had been carried out, a representative of the firm brought in the draft of the advertisement, which they intended to insert in various papers.

In this ad, the old home was described in glowing terms: the beautiful porches, the large hallway, the circular staircase, the drawing rooms, living rooms and sleeping apartments, and all the different appointments which made for a perfect country home. The billowing lawns, trees, shrubbery, gardens and contiguous farming ground were also pictured in language calculated to arouse the interest of anyone who desired such a country estate.

As the agent read the description, the owner of the estate listened carefully, making no comment. At the close, the agent inquired, "What do you think of that? That ought to sell it, do you not think so?"

The owner replied, "Well to be frank, I have changed my mind; I have decided not to sell. I have wanted a place like that all my life and I had no idea that this estate was just exactly what I have been longing for. Your description has shown me what a fool I would be to part with it. So I will pay you for the work you have done, but you need not make any effort to sell it; I will live there myself."

Doubtless, the agent was disappointed as he saw a large fee disappearing, but the owner had learned the value of his possessions and soon moved in and enjoyed what he had been so ready before to pass on to someone else.

Are not many of us like this man? In God's Word we have unfolded for us the riches of our inheritance in Christ, and yet we fail to enter into and enjoy that which has been purchased for us at such a cost.

PRAYING OR TRUSTING

**"As though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead,
be ye reconciled to God" (II Corinthians 5:20)**

Visiting in a hospital not long ago, I spoke to a poor man of emaciated aspect, whom his friends had been anxious that I should see. He was evidently in a very precarious condition, possibly soon to be summoned from time to eternity. I told him I was anxious to know how he stood as to the great matter of his soul's salvation, and asked if he enjoyed peace with God.

"Oh," was the reply, "I'm all right as to that. I'm praying all the time." And a look of intense self-satisfaction settled on his face.

"Well, my dear fellow, I hope you know what Christ had to do to save such sinners as we are and that you know Him as your personal Saviour."

"Oh, that's all right. I've known about Jesus for a long time. I've belonged to a church since I was a boy. I haven't any fear for I'm always praying."

"Well, you see, it is not enough to know about these things, and people are not saved by praying. Do you trust in the precious blood of Christ?"

A violent attack of coughing interrupted the conversation. When he was easy again, he said, "I can't talk more to you, sir. It excites me too much. But you needn't fear for me, for I won't forget to pray."

With this he turned from me, evidently signifying that the conversation was over, so I could do nothing but retire, leaving on the table some simple gospel tracts in the hope that, as he could still read, they might be used of God for blessing to him.

His case is, I fear, like that of many who put prayer, or other Christian practices, in the place of Christ, whereas the truth is, Christ first, then all these other things; or, in other words, life first, then the needs of the new-born babe. Saved people are surely praying people, but there are thousands of persons who pray even long prayers, yet they were not saved.

Nowhere in His Word, does God ask people to pray for salvation. Nowhere is eternal life promised in answer to prayer. People in recognized relationship with God are taught to pray, as children making known their wants to a loving Father.

In the case of the one apparent exception, Simon the sorcerer of Acts 8, to whom Peter says, "**Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.**" (v. 22) It is that of a man by profession already a Christian. His own answer to the apostle is the proof that the secrets of his heart had been made manifest, and thus of his unfitness to pray, for he exclaims, "**Pray ye to the Lord for me**" (v. 24).

Sinners desiring salvation are throughout Scripture urged to trust, to believe, to have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

God has not one plan for one class of sinners and a different one for another. All who ever were saved in any dispensation were saved by believing the testimony of God.

His present testimony is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and rose again, and He says, **“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”** (Romans 10:9).

We are not saying these things to hinder any soul in distress from crying to God, as the publican who cried, **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”** But we warn any soul from putting his confidence in anything which, in the end, would only fail him; and what an awful thing to fail in a matter whose issues are eternal.

“God be merciful to me a sinner” is the acknowledgement of need and guilt, but cannot give peace. The publican might have cried that forever and still have not so much as dared lift up his eyes to heaven had he not believed God’s Word. The moment the testimony of God is believed, that **“Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God”** (I Peter 3:18), the soul enters into peace with God.

Instead of calling upon us to pray for salvation, God Himself is beseeching men through His ambassadors to be reconciled to Him. Through them Christ is pleading with sinners to trust Him.

Precious then to be able to say, “I am trusting all the time” instead of what this poor man in the hospital was vainly repeating.

“READ EZEKIEL 7:8-9”

“He, that being often reprov'd hardened, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” (Proverbs 29:1).

The following incident is vouched for by a Church of England clergyman who knew all the circumstances.

A young woman, who had been brought up in a Christian home and who had often had very serious convictions in regard to the importance of coming to Christ, chose instead to take the way of the world. Much against the wishes of her godly mother, she insisted on keeping company with a wild, hilarious crowd, who lived only for the passing moment and tried to forget the things of eternity. Again and again she was pleaded with to turn to Christ, but she persistently refused to heed the admonitions addressed to her.

Finally, she was taken with a very serious illness. All that medical science could do for her was done in order to bring about her recovery, but it soon became evident that the case was hopeless and death was staring her in the face. Still she was hard and obdurate when urged to turn to God in repentance and take the lost sinner’s place and trust the lost sinner’s Saviour.

One night she awoke suddenly out of a sound sleep, a frightened look in her eyes, and asked excitedly, “Mother, what is Ezekiel 7:8-9?”

Her mother said, “What do you mean, my dear?”

She replied that she had had a most vivid dream. She thought there was a Presence in the room, who very solemnly said to her, “Read Ezekiel 7:8-9.”

Not recalling the verses in question, the mother reached for a Bible. As she opened it, her heart sank as she saw the words, but she read them aloud to the dying girl:

“Now I will shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth.”

The poor sufferer, with a look of horror on her face, sank back on the pillow, utterly exhausted, and in a few moments she was in eternity. Once more it had been demonstrated that grace rejected brings judgment at last.

~ end of chapter 8 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
