

There may be much weakness and infirmity, even in a true Christian

... take heed of condemning these disciples hastily. ... Say not, because your heart is lifted up just now with a strong sense of Christ's mercy, 'I shall never forget Him as long as I live.' ***Oh, learn to abate something of this flattering estimate of yourself. You do not know yourself thoroughly.*** There are more things in your inward man than you are at present aware of. The Lord may leave you as He did Hezekiah, to show you all that is in your heart (2 Chron. 32:31).

... I do want young Christians to understand what they must expect to find in themselves. ***I want to prevent their being stumbled and puzzled by the discovery of their own weakness and infirmity. I want them to see that they may have true faith and grace, in spite of all the devil's whispers to the contrary, though they feel within many doubts and fears.*** I want them to observe that Peter and James and John and their brethren were true disciples, and yet not so spiritual but that they could be afraid. I do not tell them to make the unbelief of the disciples an excuse for themselves. But I do tell them that it shows plainly that, so long as they are in the body, they must not expect faith to be above the reach of fear.

Above all, I want all Christians to understand what they must expect in other believers. You must not hastily conclude that a man has no grace merely because you see in him some corruption. There are spots on the face of the sun, and yet the sun shines brightly and enlightens the whole world. ... There are flaws in some of the finest diamonds in the world, and yet they do not prevent their being rated at a priceless value. Away with this morbid squeamishness, which makes many ready to excommunicate a man if he only has a few faults! Let us be more quick to see grace, and more slow to see imperfections! Let us know that, if we cannot allow there is grace where there is corruption, we shall find no grace in the world. ***We are yet in the body.*** The devil is not dead. We are not yet like the angels. ***Heaven has not yet begun. The leprosy is not out of the walls of the house, however much we may scrape them, and never will be till the house is taken down.*** Our bodies are indeed the temple of the Holy Ghost, but not a perfect temple, until they are raised or changed. Grace is indeed a treasure, but a treasure in earthen vessels. It is possible for a man to forsake all for Christ's sake, and yet to be overtaken occasionally with doubts and fears.

I beseech every reader of this paper to remember this. It is a lesson worth attention. The apostles believed in Christ, loved Christ and gave up all to follow Christ. And yet you see in this storm the apostles were afraid. ***Learn to be charitable in your judgement of them. Learn to be moderate in your expectations from your own heart.*** Contend to the death for the truth, that no man is a true Christian who is not converted and is not a holy man. But allow that a man may be converted, have a new heart and be a holy man, and yet be liable to infirmity, doubts and fears.

The power of the Lord Jesus Christ

... Study the subject in particular as placed before you this day. I dare be sure your heart has sometimes

been tossed to and fro like the waves in a storm. You have found it agitated like the waters of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. Come and hear this day that there is One who can give you rest. Jesus can say to your heart, whatever may be its ailment, 'Peace, be still!'

What though your conscience within be lashed by the recollection of countless transgressions, and torn by every gust of temptation? What though the remembrance of past hideous profligacy be grievous unto you, and the burden intolerable? What though your heart seems full of evil, and sin appears to drag you whither it will like a slave? What though the devil rides to and fro over your soul like a conqueror, and tells you it is vain to struggle against him, there is no hope for you?

I tell you there is One who can give even you pardon and peace. My Lord and Master Jesus Christ can rebuke the devil's raging, can calm even your soul's misery, and say even to you, 'Peace, be still!' He can scatter that cloud of guilt which now weighs you down. He can bid despair depart. He can drive fear away. He can remove the spirit of bondage, and fill you with the spirit of adoption. Satan may hold your soul like a strong man armed, but Jesus is stronger than he, and when He commands, the prisoners must go free. Oh, if any troubled reader wants a calm within, let him go this day to Jesus Christ, and all shall yet be well!

... there is comfort in Christ. He can speak peace to wounded hearts as easily as calm troubled seas. He can rebuke rebellious wills as powerfully as raging winds. He can make storms of sorrow abate, and silence tumultuous passions, as surely as He stopped the Galilean storm. He can say to the heaviest anxiety, 'Peace, be still!' ***The floods of care and tribulation may be mighty, but Jesus sits upon the water floods, and is mightier than the waves of the sea*** (Ps. 93:4). The winds of trouble may howl fiercely round you, but Jesus holds them in His hand, and can stay them when He lists. Oh, if any reader of this paper is broken-hearted and care-worn and sorrowful, let him go to Jesus Christ, and cry to Him and he shall be refreshed. 'Come unto Me,' He says, 'all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matt. 11:28).

I invite all who profess to call themselves Christians to take large views of Christ's power. Doubt anything else if you will, but never doubt Christ's power. Whether you do not secretly love sin, may be doubtful. Whether you are not privately clinging to the world, may be doubtful. Whether the pride of your nature is not rising against the idea of being saved as a poor sinner by grace, may be doubtful. But one thing is not doubtful and that is, that Christ is 'able to save to the uttermost', and will save you, if you will let Him (Heb. 7:25).

How tenderly and patiently the Lord Jesus deals with weak believers

... But what do you see in our Lord's behaviour towards these disciples all through His ministry? You see nothing but unchanging pity, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, longsuffering and love. He does not cast them off for their stupidity. He does not reject them for their unbelief. He does not dismiss them for ever for cowardice. He teaches them as they are able to bear. He leads them on step by step, as a nurse does an infant when it first begins to walk. ... ***He gathers them round Himself once more. He restores Peter to his place, and bids him 'feed His sheep'*** (John 21:17). ...

Let all the world know that the Lord Christ is very pitiful, and of tender mercy. ***He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. As a father pitieth his children, so He pitieth them that fear Him. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will He comfort His people*** (James 5:11; Matt. 12:20; Ps. 103:13; Isa. 66:13). He cares for the lambs of His flock as well as for the old sheep. He cares for the sick and feeble ones of His fold as well as for the strong. It is written that He will carry them in His bosom, rather than let one of them be lost (Isa. 40:11). He cares for the least member of His body, as well as for the greatest. He cares for the babes of His family as well as the grown-up men. He cares for the tenderest little plants in His garden as well as for the cedar of Lebanon. All are in His book of life, and all are under His charge. All are given to Him in an everlasting covenant, and He has undertaken, in spite of all weaknesses, to bring every one safe home. Only let a sinner lay hold on Christ by faith, and then, however feeble, Christ's word is pledged to him: 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.' He may correct him occasionally in love. He may gently reprove him at times. But He will never, never give him up. ***The devil shall never pluck him from Christ's hand.***

Let all the world know that the Lord Jesus will not cast away His believing people because of shortcomings and infirmities. ... The mother does not forsake her infant because it is weak, feeble and ignorant. And the Lord Christ does not cast off poor sinners who have committed their souls into His hands because He sees in them blemishes and imperfections. Oh, no! It is His glory to pass over the faults of His people, and heal their backslidings, to make much of their weak graces, and to pardon their many faults. The eleventh of Hebrews is a wonderful chapter. It is marvellous to observe how the Holy Ghost speaks of the worthies whose names are recorded in that chapter. The faith of the Lord's people is there brought forward, and had in remembrance. But the faults of many an one, which might easily have been brought up also, are left alone, and not mentioned at all.

... If you stumble, He will raise you. If you err, He will gently bring you back. If you faint, He will revive you. ***He will not lead you out of Egypt, and then suffer you to perish in the wilderness. He will conduct you safe into the promised land. ...***

Who is there among the readers of this paper that has been converted, and desires to do his Lord's will? Take example, this day, by your Master's gentleness and long-suffering, and learn to be tenderhearted and kind to others. ... Deal gently with backsliders. Do not turn your back on them as if their case was hopeless. Use very lawful means to restore them to their former place. Consider yourself, and your often infirmities, and do as you would be done by. Alas, there is a painful absence of the Master's mind among many of His disciples. There are few churches, I fear, in the present day, which would have received Peter into communion again for many a long year, after denying his Lord. There are few believers ready to do the work of Barnabas, willing to take young converts by the hand, and encourage them at their first beginnings. Verily we want an outpouring of the Spirit upon believers almost as much as upon the world.