EXALTATION THROUGH HUMILIA-TION.

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BY THE EDITOR.

"Rejoice not against me, oh mine enemy, When I fall I shall arise. When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." Micah 7: 8.

Here is one of those paradoxes of grace with which the scripture so abounds. Man rarely advances in a straight line, but through repeated reactions and recoils. He is compelled to confess that downward is often the nearest way to upward, and backward the shortest course forward. Consider then these lessons:

1. Exaltation through humiliation: "When I fall, I shall arise." One very wise and worthy saying has been handed down to us from Confucius. "It is not the question whether one never falls, but whether he rises every time he falls." Most true is the sentiment. There are those who stand in such a condition of pride and self-confidence that they are always in peril of being cast down and destroyed; and there are those who are so cast down and broken by their sins that there is the greatest hope that they may be quickened and raised up to newness of life through Jesus Christ. For we must remember that a self-convicted sinner stands a far better chance of salvation than a self-converted saint; and for these reasons:

Christ himself declared that he "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Matt. 9: 13). While this is a very compassionate saying, it seems also like a very hard saying. If the Lord is no respecter of persons why should he discriminate in favor of the bad and against the good? one might ask. But the simple fact is that grace has no field for operation where self-righteousness holds sway. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," says Paul. But where righteousness abounds, grace plainly cannot abound.

Imagine a philanthropist going to a Vanderbitt or a Rockefeller, and giving them twenty-five cents each to buy a dinner or procure a night's lodging. Charity in such a case would be turned into a caricature, and the would-be philanthropist would be set down as either a fool or a clown. And so exactly with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which bringeth salvation. It cannot be bestowed upon one who professes to be righteous, for grace is free, unmerited favor, and one who is meritorious has no place for that which is unmerited. This is clearly what the apostle means in his words to the Galatians: "If righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." That is, if you can perfectly keep the ten commandments, what need have you of the atonement of the cross? Because Christ regarded the world as hopelessly in debt to the moral law, he suffered, the just for the unjust that he might cancel our debt. But if you count yourself perfectly solvent before the claims of the decalogue Christ's work is nothing to you and is an impertinence.

Then it is in the nature of things that one can not be enriched who is not first of all, sensible of his poverty. We say that there must be repentance in order to salvation. But the need is in us, as deeply as in God's plan of redemption. "The full soul loatheth the honeycomb," says the scripture. It is a proverb of universal application. Who can pray very fervently who has nothing to ask for? Who can eat very heartily who is not hungry? Who can flee very earnestly for his life who has no apprehension that an enemy is on his track? Need is the mother of desire, and danger is the incentive to flight.

Oh what hard work we have preaching the gospel in these days of ease and fullness. Down goes Sodom into the lake of fire and brimstone, though Abraham had prayed for it, and Lot had pleaded with it.
and angels had been sent from heaven to warn it—down it goes, to suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire." Ask the reason of the fall, and the answer of the prophet, Ezekiel is, "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom—pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her." These same conditions rule in the world to-day, and keep thousands away from Christ. Pride which will not suffer one to bow the knee to Christ in penitence; fullness of bread which does not permit one to hunger and thirst after righteousness, and abundance of idleness which will allow no place for the serious and weighty concerns of Christ's great redemption.

And the same Christ who pronounced the beatitude on the mountain: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," said also, "Woe unto you who are full, for ye shall hunger." The atmosphere rushes to fill a vacuum, but you cannot force it into a full air-chamber. Fullness and emptiness only need to be introduced to run to each other's arms, but I can never persuade self-righteousness to make even the most distant friendship with the righteousness of Christ. When I see the throngs pressing Christ in our rescue missions, I ask, "Is it so that men must become drunkards and outcasts and moral wrecks before they will come to Christ? Is it so that Christ looking upon many sober and honest and virtuous ones in the congregation, points to these castaways and says, "These that are fallen, go before you that stand on your feet?" Must men become drunkards and libertines before they can be saved? God forbid. But this much I do say, that you will have to take the sinner's place before you can claim the sinner's Saviour. Many of the highest saints were once the lowest sinners—Augustine, Bunyan and Newton. As the ball-player flings his ball upon the ground with all his might that it may bound back into his hand, so God flung these in bitter remorse and agony of soul upon their sins that they might rebound into his hand.

But it is not necessary that one should be a moral reprobate in order to become an earnest Christian. Again I say, "God forbid." But it is needful that we should recognize and acknowledge our true position in order that grace may abound in us. The simple fact is that we are in a fallen condition by nature. Yes, worse than fallen, we are in a burdened condition. We bear the weight of inherited transgressions in our bodies and souls. Every man carries his father and grandfather on his back. People sneer at the doctrine of original sin, but let them look at the facts of human life, and be silent. "Hawthorne, in his note-book, published after his death, says: "I have been reading Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. What a strange figure Christian cuts going through the country with that burden on his back. I wonder what he has in his pack." Had the great novelist had no dealings with his own conscience that he should ask such a question? Had he had no observation of human life and marked how men come into the world weighted down with hereditary tendency and wrong doing under which they stagger to the grave? The pilgrim carried both his own sins and the burden of original sin inherited from his forefathers, and he could never get ease from that burden till he came in sight of the cross, where at one look of faith the burden rolled away and was seen no more. What we need is a divine release and a divine reinforcement. We need to be rid of the old burden and then to be subjects of the new birth. Christ gives both, a divine forgiveness and a divine heredity. His own blessed life comes into us to hold us up to right doing, after he has lifted us up; to give a new ancestral law which impels us to do right as the old impelled us to do wrong.

2. Illumination through darkness. "When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me."
"Shut your eyes in order that you may see." Is not that strange advice to give one? Yet this is what you do when you pray. You draw the curtains of the eyes, and enter into your closet and shut the doors that you may see God. You realize instinctively that you must exclude the world in order to include God. The inward eye, in other words, sees more clearly when the outward eye is shut.

The whole secret of the power of self-denial and fasting lies just here. Why does the gardener cut off half the branches of an apple tree in order to make it more fruitful? Because in this way he can concentrate the vital forces of the tree in fewer branches, and so nourish the bud and fruit of these as to double the capacity for fruit bearing. So exactly, you cut off the fleshy senses from indulgence in order to make the spiritual senses more active and alert. In other words, the same amount of vital force is more powerful when concentrated on one sense than when divided between two. Therefore it is that a blind man has often so much keener hearing, and so much finer sense of touch than he who is not so afflicted. During a heavy London fog, a few years since, so thick that it was impossible for one to see anything afoot beyond his eyes, a merchant got lost trying to find his way home. Running against another man in the dark, he told him his dilemma, when he replied: "Oh, come along, I will guide you home; the darkness does not trouble me, for I am blind." It is a significant story. The loss of one sense had strengthened the others, so that the sense of feeling had now come to fill the place of the sense of light.

And what says the Scripture concerning the Christian? "For we walk by faith and not by sight." And faith is blind, "looking not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen." But the man of faith can lead the man of reason where the latter cannot find his way.

"When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me." If you are willing to choose the darkness of faith instead of the illumination of reason, wonderful light will break out upon you from the word of God.

The deepest things in Scripture can never be discovered by the natural understanding. This is what is meant by that saying: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love him." The sense of sight, the sense of hearing, the sense of feeling—these cannot grasp the mysteries of God contained in the Bible. "But," it is immediately added, "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." And the eye of faith is the organ by which we appropriate what the Spirit reveals.

Count von Schleumbach, formerly one of the most ultra infidels—the German Ingersoll, as he used to be called, the German Moody as he is now called—told me that he was convinced of the truth of Christianity, and converted to Christ by listening to the prayer of a little girl in a children's meeting, when the most powerful reasoners had failed to reach him. Our ability to know and teach others concerning the deep things of God's word depends not on great learning, but on implicit faith. Therefore I urge you to believe much, that you may see much. If you have been brought into darkness through trial or chastisement, be assured that God can use it for a clearer revelation of his Son. "Unto the upright there ariseth a light in the darkness," says the Psalmist, but we have to add also that unto the worldly there ariseth darkness out of light.

Alas, it must be said, the happy, well-doing people of our time as a rule care little for that thing which God holds first and supreme—the attainment of eternal life. This is why God has so often to hurt us before he can help us. "What is the man doing?" asked a little child in a frightened
way, as she sat for her photograph. What he was doing was this—he was pulling a black cloth over his head while he was adjusting his camera. And that was what God was doing for you when that black sorrow or trial came to you. He wants your picture; the great aim of his redemption is that you should be "conformed to the image of his Son." And shame on us that it is so he has often to put on his black pall and frighten us before he can get our photograph. We find plenty of desperate drunkards pressing forward to be saved in our evangelistic meetings, plenty of penniless unfortunates, plenty of stained Magdalenes—but a happy, respectable, well-bred and well-fed young man or woman reaching forth eager hands for salvation is a rarity indeed. Must Jesus say again to us; "The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you."

Not only this, but respectable moralists take offence at us when we tell them that if they would enter the kingdom of heaven they must renounce their morality as the ground of acceptance with God and be saved by grace alone.

"What, oh preacher, will you force me into spiritual chancery, and compel me to take the poor debtor's oath? Will you set down all my assets of righteousness as 'filthy rags,' and have me say God be merciful to me a sinner?" I assure you from my personal knowledge they will not endure such doctrine from us. "Make people think well of themselves if you would have them think well of you," said a great master of etiquette. I would I could make you think meanly of yourselves that thereby you may be led to think well of Christ who came not "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Only those who have sounded the deepest notes of penitence can reach the highest note of praise. Only those who have confessed themselves the "chief of sinners" have been able to worship Christ as the chief among ten thousand, and the altogether lovely. And mark you what I am saying is not preaching. it is in fact. "Except a man be cast down, he will not rise," is the sentiment of the prophet. "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven," says Jesus. This is doctrine, and life answers to it literally. The Old Testament and the New are the stereotype plates from which more human history is printed every year than can ever be bound up and catalogued. Listen: "I have to thank God that I was ever a drunkard," I heard a gentleman say in a public assembly, "for before I became such I cared no more about God than a stone, but since he drew me out of great waters I have learned to love him unspeakably." And an aged man with whom I was a guest took me into his closed parlor one morning, and pointing me to a sweet face hanging on the wall, said: "There she is: we lived together fifty years, but I never knew communion with God till I lost her." And a brilliant lawyer of fifty, keen and unscrupulous as a sword, said: "See those empty baby-shoes hanging on the wall. Until the little feet which once filled them were taken to walk in Paradise I never prayed or believed in Jesus Christ; but now he is my All.

"Oh fools, and slow of heart to believe!" well may our Lord say to us again. Alas that you have to be driven by the lash to care for those things which are highest and divinest! My friend, must you be goaded into heaven? Must you be made sore and bleeding by being hurt upon the sharp points of afflictive providence before you will obey God? God forbid!

And yet see how our divine Lord classifies the human race and the human conduct. "Enter ye into the straight gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction, and many go in thereat; because straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Years
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ago, as I was going with the multitude, I heard a voice saying unto me “Turn back,” “Repent.” I did so reluctantly, regretting that I must lose so much time by retreating instead of advancing. As I turned I saw a narrow wicket gate, over which was written: “Straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life.” I entered and I found it even so—many self-denials to be endured; many crosses to be borne; many sinful pleasures to be forgone. But this much I can also say: This narrow way has been gradually broadening out as the years have gone by; widening horizons and far-stretching landscapes have spread before me; and now, as I sometimes catch glimpses of the journey’s end I see a wide gate over which is written: “So shall an entrance be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.” And thus I find that the narrow way terminates in a boulevard of the New Jerusalem.

But this much have I also seen that those who have entered the broad way have found it narrowing and narrowing as the years have passed. Contracted views of human destiny, miserly use of God’s gifts, a gradual shutting in of the heavenly horizons till the wide way ends yonder in a grave—the narrow house, and the casket just large enough for one, but no more. Which way will you take? “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” He that walks darkly now by faith shall yet dwell in the light of God’s glory.

If scientists talk of thought, as “a secretion of the brain,” and mind as “matter in motion,” what wonder that souls are very cheap in the market? The devil’s pawnshop is always full of souls where Christ’s estimate of their priceless value is forgotten. If we would make men value their souls let us dwell much on the price paid for their redemption. Peddlers in immortality drive poor trade where the gospel estimate is kept constantly distinct. Read this for a pitiable illustration, and when read apply the lesson:

One of the first diamonds found on the South Africa diamond fields, was picked up by the child of a small farmer, as he was playing beside a brook near his father’s cottage. Some months afterward a peddler came to the cottage with a pack on his back. He had brought calico, and cloth, and all manner of things, which he hoped the colonists might buy. As he was displaying his wares, the peddler spied the stone on the shelf. He took it up and examined it, and then asked the mother what she would take for it. She pointed to the child, and said, laughing, “It belongs to that bairn, not to me.” The peddler then offered the boy a box of wooden soldiers, worth a few cents, in exchange for the stone, and the child gladly accepted his offer. That stone was a very precious jewel. The peddler took it to Capetown where he sold it for a large sum to a jeweler. It is not known precisely how much he obtained but when the jeweler sent it to Europe to be sold, he obtained $12,500 for it and it now adorns a royal neck. Neither the child nor its parent was wise enough to know its real value. Similarly multitudes farther away for a mess of potage, the Pearl of great price which is within the reach of everyone.

Then let us consider how eager Christians would be in their search for souls if they better realized their value, “Theology begets strife; salvation genders unity. The saints will fight over doctrine and weep together over sinners. So have we seen it again and again and wondered as we beheld. Wesley and Whitfield had bitter strifes over doctrinal differences. We are sorry to read words still on record which they used towards each other. But when they were preaching together to win the lost multitudes there was strife no longer.”

The one blessed end secured oneness of