

The Editor's Private Corner: "A Cry for Help"

E. J. Waggoner

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We give place here to the following sincere cry of a soul in distress, believing that many readers of the PRESENT TRUTH will find their own experience and longing expressed in it; and I trust it will also touch a responsive chord in the hearts of many others, who know the redemption from sin Christ Jesus, and who will join in prayer that the answer that follows may be blessed to the deliverance of souls from the snare of the enemy.

"I venture to approach you as my friend, and as I am in great trouble I have taken the liberty of asking you to help me. During the past few months I have given way to a black sin, that is slowly but surely dragging me down, away from the Saviour. I am a Sunday-school teacher and Christian worker, and have known what it is to enjoy fellowship with God; but at the time of writing I feel the worst of sinners. Will you tell me *how to overcome*? First, please note these facts; every time I am tempted I yield, and soon after I am filled with sorrow; I go on my knees and implore God's forgiveness; I realise that He has forgiven me, and I promise Him that I will never do it again; but, alas, after a few days the temptation comes again, and again I yield, and so I go on. I have prayed and prayed, but I really cannot resist, much as I wish to do so; for I may tell you that I detest myself for the shameful way I treat my dear Saviour; it seems no use making resolutions, no use asking God's help. Oh! do tell now what I am to do. I feel like giving up altogether, but no! I cannot do that; I must conquer. I cannot, dare not, go on in such a life of sin and misery. It is impossible to remove the cause of temptation; what I want to know is, when I am greatly tempted, How may I *stand and conquer*? Please help me. I do so want to be a real Christian. Yours in great distress."

I am very glad that you have had confidence enough to make the request for help that you have, and thankful that the Lord has provided the answer for you. There is help for you, and abundant victory; the Bible was written for no other purpose than to afford help to people in just your condition; for there is no temptation come upon you but such as is common to man; and "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10.13

It is a glorious thing to know that even the weaknesses of our flesh are, through Christ, made stepping stones to infinite power. One of the brightest passages to me in the whole Bible is the expression in the eleventh of Hebrews, concerning the men of faith who "out of weakness were made strong." (Hebrews 11.34) So the Apostle Paul said, "I take pleasure in infirmities, for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12.10); for God said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, instead of losing heart, we can say, "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Instead of becoming despondent, we are to "count it all joy when we fall into diverse temptations." James 1.2. This shows that the very temptation itself, instead of being against us, is a means of grace, if we look at it from God's point of view. All power in heaven and earth

belongs to Christ; and so even Satan, with all his wrath against the Lord, is but an instrument to carry out His purposes. "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Psalm 124.8. Nothing is too hard for Him.

Your trouble, in short, is this: You are trusting to yourself rather than to the Lord. I know it does not seem so to you, because you pray earnestly, and implore God's forgiveness, and believe and even realise that He has forgiven you. Yet the fact that you invariably fall when the temptation comes, shows that you are not trusting the Lord for salvation; for we read, "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble; and they that know Thy name shall put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee." Psalm 9.9, 10. "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." Psalm 125.1

Not Our Promise, but God's

The secret of your failure is revealed in one sentence, which I repeat from your own words: "I go on my knees and implore God's forgiveness; I realise that He has forgiven me, and I promise Him that I will never do it again; but alas, after a few days the temptation comes again, and again I yield."

Your experience is that of many thousands of sincere Christians; but it is not real Christian experience, because it is not the experience of Christ. *He* "was tempted in all points like as we are, *yet without sin.*" It was not because He was of a different nature from us, for inasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, "He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Hebrews 2.4), and in all things was "made like unto His brethren." Hebrews 2.18. Like you He, "in the days of His flesh," "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death," and He "was heard, in that He feared." Hebrews v. 7. He trusted in God, not in Himself. His words were: "I have set the Lord always before Me; because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved." Psalm 16.8

And again: "The Lord God will help Me; therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth Me; who will contend with Me? let us stand together; who is Mine adversary? let him come near to Me. Behold, the Lord God will help Me; who is he that will condemn Me?" Isaiah 1.7-9. And then we have the words: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and have the light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

Instead of promising the Lord that you will not yield again, you must take His promise that you shall not. Your mistake has been in trusting your own promises instead of the Lord's promise. It is by the "exceeding great and precious promises" of the Lord that we are made "partakers of the Divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1.4. "He is faithful that promised" (Hebrews 10.23), for "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, and to the glory of God by us." 2 Corinthians 1.20. "This is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith." 1 John 5.4. Our promises can add nothing to God's promise; they are not only wholly unnecessary, but they are a hindrance. We promise that we will not do the evil thing any more; but that very promise implies the supposition of strength on our part, whereas power belongs only to God, and our strength is in recognising that.

Remember that Jesus died for our sake, not for His own. He did not need to come to this earth and be tempted, to prove His own loyalty to the Father. He came to declare the Father's name unto His brethren. He came to show that by the faithfulness of God all flesh can be saved. "In Him is no sin;" but He was made to be sin for us, in that He bore our sins. 2 Corinthians 5.21. The flesh that He took was our flesh; the sins that He overcame were our sins; and He did really overcome them. When He cried, He was heard in that He feared. And He still bears our flesh, — an High Priest "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." He can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, because "He Himself also is compassed with infirmity." Hebrews 5.2

Our oneness with God comes through the recognition of the fact that Jesus Christ is, in the flesh. When strong temptation comes to us, our victory lies in recognising that it has already been overcome. Then in the face of it we can say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15.57. "Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." 2 Corinthians 2.14. Do you desire deliverance from the temptation? That desire is the enmity which God has put in you against Satan; it is the evidence of the presence of Christ in you; for "the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Know that it is Christ in you, longing for freedom from that sin for His own sake, and then you will know that just as surely as He overcame in the flesh eighteen hundred years ago, so surely will He overcome in the same flesh to-day; for Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Hebrews 13.8

The Power of Forgiveness

I see by your letter that you are well enough acquainted with Christ to know the *fact* of forgiveness; but what you have not yet learned is the *power* of forgiveness. There is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared. "The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil." When God forgives our sin, that forgiveness is the power by which we resist in the future. The life that cleanses from the sin abides with us to withstand it. Christ is a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people; but His priesthood is according to "the power of an endless life." Hebrews 7.16. So the faith that overcomes the world is the faith that grasps the fact that Jesus Christ, with His endless life, incorruptible life, abides in us to save us from sin, which brings corruption and death. Then we say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in a flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2.20. Mark the expression, "I live by the faith of the Son of God." The faith that Jesus Christ had in the Father, by which He resisted sin in the flesh, is given you for the same purpose in your flesh.

It was to teach us this, that the miracle of healing the palsied man was recorded. This man was helpless, and could not move, but had to be carried. When he was let down in the presence of Christ, Jesus said to him, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." Matthew 9.2. Comfort and good cheer came to the poor palsied man with those words. He knew that he was forgiven, but neither he nor the men that sat by knew the power that was in that forgiveness. So, in order that they might *know* that the Son of man had *power* on earth to forgive sins, and that they might know the power that was in that forgiveness, He said to the palsied man: "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." And in the strength of that word he rose and walked. His rising up and going to his house was the visible manifestation of the forgiveness of sins.

The Powerlessness of Human Resolutions

The same thing is shown in the healing of the man at the beautiful gate of the temple. See how perfect an illustration this is of your condition: a man who was impotent in his feet, and never had walked, having no power to stand alone! He might promise the Lord every day of his life that he would walk, but it would have done no good. Resolutions to walk would never have helped him. But when Peter said: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." Acts 3.1-16. The name by which he was made to stand up, was the name by which he continued to stand, for the same day, as he stood in the midst of the council, Peter said: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole." And it is in this name and in this way that we are saved. Acts 4.10-12

Grace is Greater than Sin

"Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God." 1 Peter 4.1, 2

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus 2.11-13. This grace is given to us all freely, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Ephesians 2.8, 9. Where sin abounds, there does grace much more abound. Romans 5.20. Do you feel sin in your flesh, asserting its power claiming the master? Know that the more abundant grace is there, and that from it you learn to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, "sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Romans 6.14

How are you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts? By confessing Christ came in your flesh; "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10.10. Thus: sin comes like a slave driver, claiming you as its victim, but you say, "I am dead; it is not I who live here any longer, but it is Christ for whom sin has no power." Do you see at once that your victory is gained by your faith in Him? The old slave master may crack the whip to frighten you into submission, but you say with great confidence, "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds." Psalm 116.16. It is impossible for a man to be overcome while holding fast this confidence.

Not an Experiment

Let me impress this thought upon your mind. You are not to try experiments with the Lord. You must not wait to see if you have the victory, before you claim it. That is not trust in the Lord. You must have confidence enough in the Lord to know that He has gained the victory over everything for you, and must live and rejoice in the strength of it. It is the victory that gains the victory. If this message comes to you in the very moment of defeat, you can assert your liberty, saying, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise." Micah 7.8. Then begin at once to thank the Lord for the wonderful deliverance that He has given you. Do not doubt, for it is doubt that brings defeat. Do not receive what you will do, but keep your mind on

what God has already done, and you cannot help singing for the joy of it. I can assure you that while you are in this state of joyful confidence in God, having no confidence in your own flesh, but "strong in faith, giving glory to God," temptations will have no power.

"Be careful [anxious] for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4.6, 7

Purity and Simplicity of Life

I might on go indefinitely in the same line, for the Bible is a vast storehouse full of the riches of God's grace, —an armoury in which all the armour of God is ready for our use. But I cannot close without offering some practical suggestions, which I am sure you will find useful, whatever the temptation may be that besets you. We are exhorted to "abstain from fleshly lusts, that war against the soul," and in order to do this we are told to "make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Romans 8.14

Many sincere souls, earnestly longing and praying for deliverance from sins inherent in the flesh, are unconsciously working against their prayers, and providing for the fulfilling of those lusts, by their habits of life. We may co-operate with the life of Christ within us, or we may work against it and hold it down. Our business in life is to learn the secret of that life, that we may fall in line with it, and not in any way oppose its action. That life is purity and simplicity; which teaches us that all our habits should be simple, and our food and drink and air, by which life is conveyed to us, should be as pure as possible.

The man who drinks intoxicating liquor cannot help becoming intoxicated. So the person who through improper diet generates poisons in his system, cannot help being irritable or passionate. Those things are as really the manifestation of intoxication as is the staggering of the drunken man. We know that God can receive the drunkard from his bondage, but He cannot keep him from becoming intoxicated if he drinks. So God saves us from fleshly lusts, by instructing us concerning the things that beget those lusts, and saving us from them.

I cannot now go into all the details concerning the right way of living, but I shall be glad to answer any further questions you may have on this subject. I only wish to call your attention to the fact that we have victory and salvation in our own hands, for God's divine power "hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness."

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us," (Ephesians 3.20) "who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion, and power, both now, and for ever. Amen." Jude 24, 25