

"For which cause we faint not, but though out outward man perish yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal".

11 Corinthians 4. v 16-18.

The apostle in this Epistle, perhaps especially in the first chapter, seeks to comfort the Lord's people in the midst of all their tribulations. In the preceding chapter he has shown the difference between the ministration of the law and the ministration of the Gospel and how the Gospel excels the law. So that he expresses in this chapter, "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry", that is, the ministry of the Spirit, of the Gospel, "as we have received mercy, we faint not", and in the text - "For this cause we faint not". There were reasons why he should faint as he enumerates in the first chapter.

David knew this and he found comfort and strength from the same source as Paul here. David said, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living", here, in the living Gospel, in the Sanctuary, in the provision of God's House, and in the land of the living, in eternal glory.

"For this cause we faint not". What he saw was greater than what he suffered, and that is what gave him that spiritual reckoning, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us". And there is another cause why he fainted not. In the preceding verse, "All things are for your sakes". He was speaking to the Corinthians, but speaking to the whole church of God. "All things are for your sakes" is a far reaching statement. All the things of the ministry, "Whereas seeing we have this ministry", the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel of salvation, the whole of the eternal and immutable love of Jehovah, the ministry of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, embracing the whole of His matchless condescension, His incarnation, the glory and the dignity of His Person and His finished work, His glorious resurrection, "For all things are for your sakes", and the whole of the ministry of the Gospel is for your sakes, and the whole sufferings of Paul and the Apostles which they suffered in the ministration of the Gospel are for your sakes. so it leaves a very great responsibility upon the people. You look at it - and we do need to look at it and for it to reach our conscience. Look what a provision is made in Christ, a covenant provision. Look at the work that the Lord Jesus accomplished in salvation, and look at the inheritance of the saints, even here below, their inheritance in the Gospel, in the Church of God, and see how that all things work together for their good.

"All things are for your sakes". It is a tremendous word. You look at yourself and then look at the statement, "All things are for your sakes", everything, that the abundant grace, that is, in the first place, the abundant grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, He came full of grace and truth, of heavenly grace that is in Christ Jesus and that abundant grace was in Him in everything that He did. But the apostle gathers up that grace in one most blessed declaration: "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich". "For your sakes", and this is the

abundant grace in Christ Jesus. But then there was the abundant grace in the apostles which sustained them in all their persecutions, for the Words sake, for the Gospels sake. Paul, writing to the Philippians speaks of this, he says, "Those things which we suffered have fallen out rather to the furtherance of the Gospel", so that all the sufferings and privations and daily deaths and persecutions that Paul and the apostles endured, fell out for the furtherance of the Gospel in the experience of the people. "All things are yours".

"For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many, redound to the glory of God. "Everything in the Gospel redounds to the glory of God because that is the end which God had in view in all that He sovereignly did. The salvation of the church was secondary, you might not think so, but the end for which God was pleased to act outside of Himself was His own glory, but that glory is in the church throughout all ages, world without end, and therefore it is for the church's sake, for your sakes. "For all things are for your sakes that the abundant grace might, through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God, for which cause we faint not". So the gathering up by the Spirit of all the benefits of Christ, the saving help of the Gospel, the fullness that dwells in the Lord Jesus Christ, outmeasures and outweighs all the tribulations and conflicts of this present life, this wilderness journey, and sometimes you will feel it. There are the balances, there are the scales, some of you have been able perhaps at times to weigh matters up, to bring in one side of the scales all your sufferings, tribulations, conflicts, pains, everything else, the heaviest of all your sins on one side of the scales, but O if the Lord by His Spirit brings into your heart a little of the unsearchable riches of Christ, gives you to feel the support and comfort of His love, the sufficiency of His grace, the brightness of His glory, why my friends, it outweighs everything else, and that is how the apostle comes to the 17th verse really.

"Our light affliction". When you weigh things by faith, it is only faith that can thus estimate things according to God's valuations, and therefore, it is to see light in God's light, and if we do not see things in God's light we do not see them as they really are, every other light is artificial light. O what a mercy it is for the true light to shine, that light spoken of earlier in the chapter: "For God Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shone in our hearts". We shall never see things as they are apart from the inshining. It is the inshining, the revelation of the Holy Ghost and it gives the light of knowledge, a revealed knowledge, that the apostle prayed for the Ephesians, "That they might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ," because every other kind of a knowledge of Him is short. We must have wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the truth, and we need it because we are earthen vessels. If we have the wisdom of God in our hearts, for we have a body of sin and death, we are fallen frail creatures compassed with infirmities, but if we have this inshining it is an anointing which teacheth of all things, an anointing which will abide, an anointing which will also return in its unction. Those of you who have been touched, whose hearts have been touched by the Spirit of God and His grace, it has given you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the things of the Gospel, to know them in a different way from mere study, mere acquisition. It is an experimental knowledge and although you do not always live in a sense of the sweetness, life, light and power, yet when it comes again you will say that is the same anointing, it sets up a standard in your soul, a standard of taste and you will know immediately whether what you are hearing, what is set before you has the right taste about it; it will set up a standard of hearing. You will know the joyful sound and detect immediately if there is a discord in the proclamation of the Gospel.

"For which cause we faint not". The greatest cause why His people do not faint is because God is God. I am compelled, and it

is a mercy to come back to that from time to time, if God was not Who He is, if Christ is not What He is, if the Holy Ghost is not what He is, what foundation should we have? We should have every reason to faint, to be in despair, but the everlasting God, there flows from Him streams of life, the everlasting Gospel and therefore, for that cause we faint not.

"But though our outward man perish". It must, David said, "My flesh and my heart faileth", it does naturally, and it is solemn to realise it, "We all do fade as a leaf" in our body. But he meant more than that, my flesh and my natural heart fails, fleshly religion and a natural heart fails when the ~~Love~~ of God is applied. There is nothing in us, nothing in nature that can comply with the Gospel. "For the natural man cannot receive of the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned". We speak of things, how do they enter? Very solemn if we are among those of whom Paul speaks here, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost". So that the natural man cannot possibly receive or know the things of the Spirit. Do you find yourself from time to time brought to self examination? Do you receive the things of the Spirit? You may not feel that you possess them, but you receive them, you long to be put in possession of them. You long for salvation. Well that longing is spiritual. It is not an unregenerate man that longs, desires the things of God. Be thankful then if you have that mark, to be a longing soul. If you can really say, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God". If that is really true of you, that God is yours, and you have an interest in that invitation, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters". "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me", ME "the fountain of living waters" and drink.

"Though our outward man perish". It does perish naturally, and if we are under the teaching of the Spirit it will blessedly perish. Be brought to see that it is of no use with respect to salvation". Natural wisdom, self righteousness, self confidence, it all fails "My heart," "My flesh and my heart fails". O it is a mercy! this is a part of the work of grace that everything in nature shall fail, all give way. It is a real experience. All around your soul will give way except Christ, "All other ground is sinking sand", it will all fail.

But there is a cause for which His people do not faint even when their flesh and their heart fails. When they prove that there is nothing in nature that is spiritual or living, that a natural man is dead. So Paul says in the 1st chapter, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves", for this reason, "that we should not trust in ourselves". We should, except for the sentence of death, when we have the sentence of death, we fail, everything gives way, everything becomes useless. Paul knew it: "Those things that were gain to me I counted loss for Christ". He was alive and lively in religion as a Pharisee, but when the law came his flesh and his heart failed, all gave way, his righteousnesses were as filthy rags, his strength was turned to weakness, his wisdom into ignorance. But there is a cause, "For which cause we faint not".

"But though our outward man perish", and the apostle here intends more particularly our bodily strength, "Yet the inward man is renewed day by day". What a mercy to have an inward man. It is not everybody that has got an inward man. If we are not born again we have no inward man. The inward man is a new creature. "If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature". O and you will be brought to feel that nothing else but a new creation can do you any good, you cannot put new wine in old bottles. Nothing less than what David prayed for will reach your case: "Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me". We might pause for a moment and look at ourselves. We are met together, it is very blessed to meet together, but we shall not die together, we shall have to die alone.

Well, have you any reason to believe that you have an inner man ? Are you conscious of a separate person inside of you., a separate life ? It is spoken of very frequently in the Word of God as a woman that is in travail, conscious of an inward life, an inward movement, spiritual. It is an important enquiry . Perhaps that may cause you heart searching that will not pass off easily, it might be an enquiry that will press itself upon your heart and conscience. Have I an inward man ? Am I conscious of an inward creation that hungers and thirsts after something entirely different from what my body does ?

"Though our outward man perish yet the inward man is renewed day by day". This inward man is created when one is born again. It is a new life that needs entirely different food, a new light enters into the soul which reveals, which discovers things not seen. It is a life which hungers and thirsts after righteousness, after God Himself. Are these things true ? Do you believe them ? If you do then just ask yourself the question whether you really hunger and thirst for God, for salvation, for righteousness. Whether your affections are set upon things above. Whether your treasure is in heaven or whether it is upon the earth. O what a wonderful thing it is to have an inward man, but that inward man will need to be renewed day by day. Give us day by day our daily bread, and as the body needs to be renewed by the bread that perisheth, so the new man of grace needs to be renewed day by day by fresh communications from heaven by the Spirit. Fresh contact with God in Christ, and these renewings are in the main provided by the means of grace, that is what the provision God has made in His church is for. The renewings, the maintaining of the life that He has created in the soul, and sometimes you will feel that renewing, and that is a blessed evidence that you have an inward life. When Christ makes Himself precious and attractive to your faith, when He gathers up your soul and your affections and sets them upon Himself, when His gracious presence fills your heart, makes Himself a reality, makes His truth to be the substance of your soul, faith to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. Have you ever been renewed ? If you have been renewed it is an evidence that you have life, and it is an evidence of union with the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is by union with Him that any fruit is brought forth. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches", and there is no renewing except by contact with Christ, and it is an infinite mercy that, and it is by contact with Him. He is exalted far above all principalities and powers and dominions and every name that is named, so are His people, for as He became Mediator and His people were united unto Him by an eternal union, everything that He became, they became in Him. All the work that He finished was finished for them. All the righteousness that He wrought out and wove that garment stitch by stitch in His perfect sacred humanity, they have in them. When He was received up into heaven they were received up into heaven also, and it is because of that there is any renewing of the inward man. He is a living Head, the virtue of His Person and work is still exercised by the Spirit bringing Christ, His virtue, into a poor sinners heart. "Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me, because I live ye shall live also".

Is this kind of thing a foreign language to you, or is it a joyful sound ? Are you strangers and foreigners to what we are speaking about, or do you know it and love it ? You may not feel to possess it, but your arms are stretched out toward Him as in the 143rd Psalm, "I stretch forth my hands unto Thee". You will feel your heart ascend to Him sometimes as you are in the means of grace and He blesses the provision, and that will renew the inner man, the inward man. Perhaps some of you are really rejoicing at this moment because you are confirmed that you have an inward life, there is a living response to what you hear, a living Christ you feel there is in heaven. "For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."

Another means that is used to renew the inward man is the Word of God, one of the main means. I could but feel to have to sadly endorse what was expressed in prayer this morning. How often we look at the blessed Word, as cold as ice, unmoved, in fact feeling an aversion to everything that is spiritual. Things seen, things temporal, our interests in life all seem much more real and much nearer. It is very solemn, it is a mercy if we are not left there. But O, have you not known the difference when the Holy Spirit has shined upon the sacred page and has made the Word of God to move, to live, to move in your heart, and as you read it to bring into your soul the very things it says. It accomplishes in you what has been done in those that have gone before. "The inward man is renewed day by day".

Another important way by which the inward man is renewed is by secret prayer, secret prayer. If your religion is all public it is wrong, whether it is in public, that is in your family only, or in the house of God, if you know nothing of turning aside under pressure and load to seek the Lord in secret as Nathaniel did under the Sycamore tree. Look at this point, my friends, have you a secret religion? Did your religion begin in secret? Do you every pray in secret? When did you last pray in secret? You may say, well, you do interfere, and I intend to interfere; When did you last pray in secret? Well, it is one of the most vital things and the blessed Spirit renews the inward man. I have thought of that word of Hannah, you see how there was a renewing, "He raiseth the poor out of the dust, lifteth the beggar from the dunghill to set him among Princes and cause him to inherit the throne of grace". Right from the dust, the dunghill, gathers them among His people and gives them to inherit the throne of grace; and the Lord can do that in secret prayer in five minutes. He can raise you from the very dust and the dunghill and give you a hope of eternal glory.

It was very evident that our dear late friend Mr. Hunt had something of that experience before he died. I saw him when he was very low in mind, and he told, I think it was his wife, that he had experienced hell, but also that he was brought to the very gate of heaven in that hospital. O renewing. But nothing but the life of God will be renewed. Carnality, death, presumption, self-confidence that is not renewed. Blessed be God, when He renews the soul then He puts all things under His feet. "The inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction". Paul's affliction was not light, it was heavy and this does not refer to ~~those~~ those that have not very much affliction, they have a little, not very weighty, not very deep, not that at all. This refers to the most bitter disappointments, the heaviest afflictions, the most painful dispensations that one can possibly pass through, and when the Lord's presence is with such a person the affliction will be light.

You might say, well that is easy enough for you to stand in a pulpit and say so, but I do believe in my little measure that I have known what it is. In fact those very afflictions, chastenings, conflicts, sense of destitution put new life to faith and prayer. So David said, "Let Thy judgements help me", and the very things that you think will kill you, the very things you feel will overwhelm you and sweep you away, the Lord uses to discover to you His omnipotent power, His immutable love, His sweet mercy that endureth for ever and will show you that glory that is to be revealed at the last day, and your interest in it.

"Our light affliction which is but for a moment", and it may be for years, but then the eyes are upon eternity, eternal glory. It is said of Moses that he had respect unto the recompense of the reward, and that was one reason why he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He refused a lot, for only a man possessed of faith could have refused what Moses refused, all the wealth of Egypt and the honour of the Queens Court and to be the King's son and

therefore, an heir, heir of everything in this world, he refused it. Mr. Worldly Wiseman would call him a fool, but he saw something better, he saw that all the riches of the Court, all the riches of this world must pass away. Of course an atheist cannot gainsay that, they would if they could, but they cannot. You look at some of the obituaries of some outstanding people, and some of them I have noticed are only comparatively young, but it must pass away. But to have faith and to receive in the heart these true riches and righteousness that endureth, an enduring substance, a hope of heaven, a taste of it, an earnest of it here below, you will say my affliction, it is light and but for a moment.

I wonder how many there are here that have been brought to that pass, to that point. How many can truly say I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord? How many can really say I count all things but dung that I might win Christ and be found in Him? O I think that is a beautiful word, I long to say it. I believe really there is something, even in my wretched heart, that agrees with it. Count all things but dung, that I might win Christ. O this winning of Him by faith! and be found in Him at last. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord".

"For our light affliction which is but for a moment". No doubt some of our afflicted friends find a night long. We want to use sense when we are speaking of these things. I often think of our dear friends Mr & Mrs Bridgeland, no doubt they have some nights that are very long, but when the Lord shines into the heart and renews the inner man and His sacred presence and a hope of glory, why the heaviest afflictions will seem light, the longest affliction will seem to be for a moment. These comparisons of faith are very sweet, and a great comfort.

It reminds us of that kind word in Isaiah, in the opposite direction, but the same thing: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer". O if you have been brought into that you will have heaven in your soul.

Well, look at the words, "All things are yours", blessed people. Only rich people in the world are the people of God. A poor pensioner in a poor cottage possessor of the kingdom of God in his heart is richer than the richest man in his palace without God. Yes, I believe it.

"All things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God, for which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory".

Amen.

(Transcribed verbatim and not edited for publication).