

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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The Refining of Men

Dr. H. T. Spence

In the booklet *Scriptural Separation*, my earthly father opens with the following statement:

Christian martyrdom is the result of biblical separation. Church History is replete with the testimony of millions who sealed their testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ in this final act. Today there are satanic forces gathering in the wings of the last-day theater, and soon they will move to center stage in the concluding act of this drama of hatred against the children of God.

He goes on to clarify the two definitions of a martyr: "(1) one who submits to physical death rather than renounce his Christian Faith; and, (2) one who submits his whole life through many sacrifices, sufferings and

tribulations as a living sacrifice for his Lord." It is in this second category that we find ourselves daily; such suffering will only increase as we near the coming of Christ. We will find our appointment either in the furnace of fire (Daniel 3) or in the furnace of affliction (Isaiah 48:10, "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction").

What is a Trial or an Affliction?

The word *trial* simply means, "to try." It is the examination to determine the facts and issues of a matter. It is to determine the guilt or innocence of someone; the act or process of trying or testing; or it is to put the proof on the matter being tried. Within the Christian life this trying

often comes in the form of trouble, hardship, and affliction.

In their unfallen state Adam and Eve needed no trials, for there was nothing to prove. If they had not sinned there would not have been the need of trials and afflictions to come to humanity. But God did *test* them by placing two trees in the midst of the Garden of Eden. They failed and fell in that testing. Therefore, God had to rearrange life on the planet. There probably would not have been any sorrow or labor in bearing children if Adam and Eve had not fallen; the total experience of childbearing would have been one of joy and absence of pain and travail. Even the labor of man upon the earth would have been one of ease and pleasure. However, life changed with the Fall—it became filled with trials, sorrows, and sufferings. These changes and appointments by God came to discipline man, to humble him, and to see what he would do with God. The

Holy Spirit through providence brings all of these circumstances upon man in order to try him and call him unto God.

God deals with all men. According to James 1, testings and trials come directly from the hand of God; temptations to sin, however, come from the Devil. Both sinners and Christians experience trials. Sinners experience them without God; Christians experience them with God and with the promise of their working for their good (Romans 8:28).

Daily life is made up of an unending series of circumstances. Every moment of the day the individual is in a circumstance: reading, meditating, attending to duties, interacting with family or friends, etc. From the time you wake up in the morning until you go to sleep at night, circumstances are ever with you. All of life's circumstances become the things from which God draws to try and test one's life. Although life will have to be lived whether one is a Christian or not, the question may be asked will life be to my destruction or be to my good? The critical key is how one will handle these tryings of life.

We tend to view a trial as only an affliction, a suffering, or a trouble. But all circumstances are trials; they are given to find out about something in our life. God is in control of them. There are stages in the life of trials. All the years of one's life

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are to be found in the pale of providence. The older we get the deeper the trials are, because it takes a deeper working of circumstance to do what God is intending.

The Trials that Children Face:

Although Psalm 139:13-18 speaks of the wonder and the direct involvement of God in the conception of a child, there is also the truth of Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." This Adamic pollution has a profound effect on a child coming into the world. In addition, the child also inherits certain proclivities from his forefathers. It is estimated that half of the proclivities of a child comes from his two parents; one-fourth comes from his four grandparents; one-eighth comes from his four great grandparents; and one-eighth will be original. As the child grows, these proclivities become influenced by his interaction with the world, his peers, his education, etc. God must therefore begin bringing a series of circumstances into the child's life early. From the beginning, even before the child is conscious of what is happening around him, God is bringing circumstances into his life. These are trials, tryings, or testings.

It is most proper to protect our children from certain things that could destroy them. This includes protection from certain actions and reactions, from the wrong kinds of music and videos, and from wrong or poor companions. There should

be regular parental admonitions to guard each child from the world. Nevertheless, amidst such protections we must be careful not to protect them from God and His dealings with them. God carefully chooses the appointed timing of circumstances and trials.

There are a number of reasons God sends trials of circumstances to a child. One is found in Proverbs 20:11, "Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right." The Lord uses circumstances in a child's life to bring out his inclinations and disposition. The future of a child's character can be seen in how he responds to the circumstances God sends into his young life. Proverbs 22:6 states, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Parents should dictate much of the child's circumstances when he is young in order to declare the way he is to follow for life. In Proverbs 31:1,2 King Lemuel's mother warned him of several dangers, thus indicating the parent is to contribute to the child's character and moral breeding. Proverbs 22:15 states, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Circumstances tend to bring out the foolishness of a child. Foolishness must be brought out in order to correct it. And Proverbs 29:15 states, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself

bringeth his mother to shame.” This declares that the parent must be with the child in as many circumstances as possible including the discipline needed for his training. A parent provides the child an invaluable blessing by dealing with his heart and life early.

The early life of the prophet Samuel is a classic example of God’s dealings with a child. Although his first years were at home, Samuel was left early in life at Shiloh with an old priest. What testings and trials must have come upon him in those years! Many would say that he was too young to face the circumstances he did; however, this was in God’s plan, and the mother knew it. As the child grew, each year she brought him another ephod coat. Within these years, God spoke to this young man and gave him a sobering message (I Samuel 3). Was he too young to face all of this? God did not think so—neither did his mother.

The older the child becomes the deeper the trials are needed to further God’s purposes in his life. The deepest trials will be reserved for the final stages of preparing for heaven. It is through circumstances that God carves character into the lives of His people; Christian character is a life dominated by biblical principles. Principles have no meaning unless there are circumstances and tryings to implement them.

Trials in Prime and Later Years

Adam and Eve received their first

trial at the moment of the fall; this trial concerned how they would deal with their sin. Areas such as guilt, remorse, failure, and changes all became aspects of the tryings of their lives. How would they deal with it all? What would be the side effects on their lives and on their children’s? What kind of trial did they go through as parents in becoming aware of the death of their son Abel and the departure of Cain? What thoughts and emotions overwhelmed them in all the circumstances they faced?

The Old Testament is full of the historical circumstances that God’s people faced. Abraham, the father of the faithful, had to face a multitude of circumstances that simultaneously were trials and testings: his leaving home, the death of his father, the arrival in a new land, a famine prompting him to go into Egypt, almost losing his wife in that wrong move, Lot’s leaving him, facing five kings in battle, the agonizing griefs concerning the tension between Ishmael and Isaac, the casting out of Ishmael and Hagar, the offering of his son upon Moriah, the death of his dear wife Sarah, etc.

Isaac, a younger child, had private emotions and thoughts as he faced an older brother. After that older brother was cast out of the family, Isaac then became an only child; at twenty-one he was taken to Moriah (this was a trial for his father and for himself from different

perspectives); he later yielded to his father and a servant to gain his bride; he then confronted neighbors over the wells he had dug. We must also include his physical maladies in later life and a scheming wife that added misery and sorrow to the home. One son grieved Isaac in the godless wives he took and the life he lived, while another son left home.

Jacob was a man whose life was filled with trying circumstances. Many of his trials were brought upon him because of his passive father and dominating mother. Then there was his deception with a brother. He left home in a decep-tion with Esau wanting to kill him. Twenty years of trials canopied his life with wives and a father-in-law. While returning to his nativity he entered a deep, spiritual trial at Peniel where he finally faced him-self. Later his son Joseph was sold into slavery, while his other sons deceptively convinced him that a wild animal had killed Joseph. Oh the thoughts, feelings, and physical effects that came upon him during those years! “And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be com-forted; and he said, for I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning” (Genesis 37:35). How often such circumstances affect our theology if we are not careful: Jacob exclaimed, “All these things are against me” (Genesis 42:36). But finally, when Joseph brought him down to Egypt, Jacob rose above all the trials and circumstances of his life and ended truly

as a Prince with God.

The Refining Power of Affliction

The refining process of metals often typifies the Divine dealings of God with man in Scripture. Isaiah 48:10 states, “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver: I have chosen thee in the furnace of afflic-tion.” God is in the refining work through the redemption of His precious Son. However, this refining is not with silver, or as silver. According to Psalm 12:6, silver is tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. In silver the crucible is one of great severity. Had God dealt with Israel according to her iniquity the nation would have been utterly cut off. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an ex-pected end” (Jeremiah 29:11). He dealt with them in measure rather than all at once.

To the Christian the trials of life are identified in the word *redemption*. God wants to deliver us from all evil and establish us in all goodness. The Lord is constantly working on spots, blemishes, and wrinkles. All circumstances that come into our lives are working for good (Romans 8:28), but they are working to conform us into the image of Christ (Romans 8:29).

What is this furnace of affliction into which we are appointed? The meal offering presented in Leviticus 2 gives us spiritual perception to the powers of this furnace. In that

chapter we read of the unleavened bread made of fine flour mingled with oil; the cake was then anointed with oil. It was first placed in the oven, then into a pan, then into a frying pan, and finally directly into the fire. In the life of the Lord, the oven represents the sufferings and afflictions He endured during His ministry. The pan represents the afflictions appointed during His passion week; the frying pan was the increased sufferings known in the Garden of Gethsemane. The final stage was the fire that was experienced at Calvary.

We are living in a generation of people who want the quick-fix Christian life, one that will not cost them much. But a life to truly be conformed to Christ, to know the power of His resurrection, must include the fellowship of His sufferings and to be made conformable unto His death (Philippians 3:10). As such a quest and hunger deepen, the fine flour cake life must go from the oven, to the pan, to the frying pan, and finally into the fire. Nevertheless, we must remember that the furnace will never exact more strength than what God provides: “as thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25). When it seems that you are thrown into the appointed furnace of affliction (as with the three Hebrews of Daniel 3), allow the bands that bind you to be burned, but come out of the furnace in God’s timing, without the smell of the smoke upon you. Don’t let

bitterness take hold of your soul in the midst of the furnace.

Conclusion

The first epistle of Peter gives precious principles to govern the life while it is in the furnace of affliction.

1. The Christian needs to greatly rejoice when such testings come – 1:6.
2. Afflictions are to be viewed as something precious from the Lord – 1:7.
3. We must understand that the Christian has been called to suffer – 2:21.
4. When the affliction begins, the Christian is to commit himself to Him that judgeth righteously—2:23.
5. The Christian must make sure that he is suffering for well doing, rather than for evil doing—3:17.
6. The Christian must not think the furnace of affliction a strange thing; it is the norm for the Christian life—4:12.
7. Afflictions must be viewed as a grand privilege—4:13.
8. The Christian must suffer with dignity and grace—4:14-16.
9. There must be the consciousness that one is suffering according to the will of God—4:19.
10. All true brethren suffer—5:9.

How often the Scriptures present

the child of God as a lamb or part of God's flock of sheep. We tend to view such a designation with love and peace, from the standpoint of the Shepherd carrying us or walking with us. There are passages that speak of such a relationship with the Shepherd (Psalm 23). But we must also view the designation from the truth of Romans 8:36, "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." That too is the purpose of sheep: to be given in sacrifice. But thanks be to God, no

suffering, no affliction, no trial can separate us from the love of God.

While the Laodicean church cries for prosperity and health and hates any form of suffering, may we give ourselves willingly to the refinings of Calvary and to the appointed furnace of affliction. This is the "living sacrifice" of Romans 12:1 and the daily martyrdom of the Christian. Without the commingling of suffering and grace, there can be no Christian character.

Men of Prayer

We Stand In Crucial Days Of Sin;
Great Darkness Plagues The Hearts Of Men.
Is There A Righteous Man To Pray
With Fervency Till Break Of Day?

Our Land Now Stands In Disarray;
The Days Are Vivid With Decay.
Empow'r Us Lord To Watch And Pray
So We'll Not Be A Castaway.

The Times Demand Effectual Prayer;
Men's Hearts Must Ferently Declare
The Burden Of A Waking Soul,
To Plead For God To Take Control.

Oh God, Raise Up A Daniel's Band
Of Men Who'll Pray Amidst Their Stand.
Oh Holy Ghost, Empow'r Our Cry
As We In War The Foe Defy!

— H.T. Spence

God's Bible Schools

By Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, Founder
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Straightway Reprint from August-September 1977

Schools that the Lord loves and that God will honor are born, not invented by vagabond dreamers. They are born in the rich hunger for biblical understanding, spontaneously, without legislature or anxious manipulations. God's schools have been, and always will be, organisms, first, not mere organizations. If we need schools merely because there is a deficit of preachers and missionaries, the root is deeper than education. For when we have the correct spiritual posture of evangelical spirituality and evangelistic fervor, we will have more preachers than pulpits, and they will be trained, not following folly; good, not immoral or lukewarm; and, scripturally sound, not mere philosophical wanderers.

The current twentieth century apostasy indicates conclusively that we need *new* schools because many of the old ones have shared in the falling away. However, these new schools need to be born in the *old* way. We live in a time when the old landmarks are being swept away by a "neo" crowd. Denominations are being divided; ecumenical movements are flourishing; and, the boundaries where scriptural affinities formerly held have given way to charismatic fevers in their leaderships.

The words of Isaiah, the prophet, fit quite appropriately with the ecclesiastical leaders and the false prophets of our time.

Therefore the Lord will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed (Isaiah 9:14-16).

The Lord is leading a remnant of God's people back to the days of primitive Christianity. It is a time when it is truly every man for himself before God in these matters of current religiosity. Many conservatives are falling away into the ecumenical movements; many fundamentalists are falling away into the evangelical ranks; and, many old-line Christians are being swept away among the pentecostals. It seems certain that two great religious forces are getting together for a final church: (1) The Ecumenical movements are moving toward a new unity. (2) The Charismatics and Neo-Pentecostals are moving toward that same unity. This is the return of the union of Babel; the Anti-Christ church is being born.

Many Bible colleges and teachers are being carried away—some giving only lip service to truth without becoming involved openly; and others with

outright denials are giving lip service to error. Where are the foundations and fundamentals of the Bible as set forth in orthodoxy and orthopraxy?

The methods, means, mission, and manner of evangelism are becoming more important to the church, as an institution, than the Message and the man of God. They say that we need to “get out where the action is,” and become “relevant to an age.” Much church slang has identified Christ as being “cool,” the Holy Spirit as being a “trip,” and God the Father as being a “god” that a hippy would love. Reverence and truth are probably our greatest needs; and reformation, revival, restitution, repentance, and regeneration our only hope.

May we always remember that the facade of higher learning will never take the place of the need for lower kneeling. “If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3)

As schools across the country begin another year, we wonder which ones will truly set forth the principles of the Word of God?

Here we stand, a person with a talent. Should one strike out and pursue any open door? First of all, one needs to get the mind cultivated with right presuppositions. By presuppositions we mean that our foundations of thought must be right, healthy, and the kind that leads to a right structure for a complete "building." This can only be accomplished by the careful study of the ways of God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit—through right Biblical attention and prayer. The soul must be rich for the seed, and that richness should be the attitude toward such a goal: the cultivation of the mind and the talent. Then comes the cultivation. But should one go by way of the secular humanist, or should one resolve to be dedicated to the ways of God?

It seems very foolish for a man to cultivate a rose, a strawberry, or breed a horse to be a thoroughbred, and then fall short in the cultivation of a vessel created by God—man, one "to be a little lower than the angels" (Hebrews 2:7). In presupposing our reader believes in the Bible as God's infallible Word, can we go any other way than to the Creator of our soul? Yea, the One Who formed us? God did set the superlative! There is no other power above Him.

from *Artistry in Voice*
by Dr. Joye Spence

OCTOBER

“TAPES OF THE MONTH”

SERMONS FROM THE FOUNDATIONS PULPIT
THE EIGHTH CONGRESS OF FUNDAMENTALISTS
AT FOUNDATIONS BIBLE COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER 29-OCTOBER 1, 2004

Theme:

**“For God Hath Not Called Us Unto Uncleaness,
But Unto Holiness”**

Dr. H. T. Spence

“A Call to the Laodicean Church Age”

Dr. Douglas Wilson

“For God Hath Not Called Us Unto Uncleaness”

Dr. Dennis Lowry

“The Holy Throne of God” (Call to Prayer)

Dr. Othello Caturan

“The Call to Holy Living”

Pastor James Harms

“Holiness: The Standard of Acceptable Service”

Dr. H. T. Spence

“Men Who Longed for Holiness”

Dr. Dennis Lowry

“The Holy Intercessor” (Call to Prayer)

Pastor James Harms

“Partakers of Holiness Through Suffering”

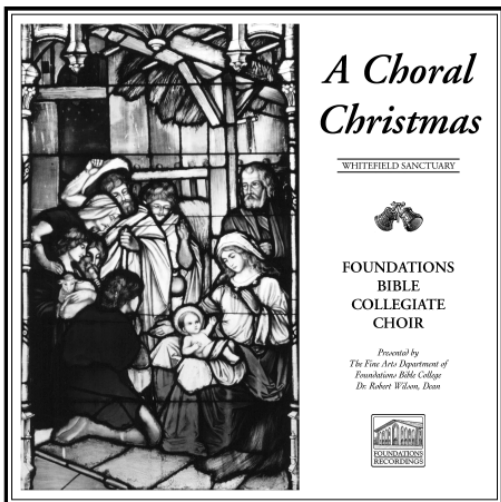
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Dr. H. T. Spence

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Have Heard on High, The
First Noel Medley, The
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