

The Fullness of Christ

**“A Good Man’s Misinterpretation of a Dark Providence,” or,
“Jacob’s Lament”**

By [Octavius Winslow](#)

Jacob exclaimed, "You have deprived me of my children! Joseph has disappeared, Simeon is gone, and now you want to take Benjamin, too. All these things are against me!" Genesis 42:36

The deep, long shadows of life's evening were now gathering and darkening around the close of Jacob's course- but deeper, darker still were the shadows of God's providence. His sun, whose race had been so long and so prosperous, was now setting- but setting, oh, how gloomily! It would seem as if the residuum of life's cup of sorrow were reserved for life's close. And thus it pleases our heavenly Father oftentimes that a believer's deepest affliction, his heaviest woes, shall come upon him at the moment that he is about to bid farewell to them forever: as if his Father would make heaven all the sweeter by imparting an added bitterness to earth. All the brighter, by accumulating around its last stage the darkest dispensations. All the more a perfect rest, by letting loose the wildest storms as the vessel enters the port. Thus was it with the patriarch.

And as he contemplated the cloud, he could think of nothing but a speedy grave to which his gray hairs would descend with sorrow. And yet, how different the reality of the whole scene to the aspect which it wore to his dim and darkened vision! In those clouds of woe he could see no silver light. Those mystic symbols of God's providence he could not decipher; the handwriting upon the wall he could not interpret. The only conclusion to which he could come was- all these things are against me!

In nothing is a child of God wider from the mark, more truly at sea, drifting away among the breakers of doubt and uncertainty, than when, unaided by the Spirit, he attempts to interpret the strange, trying, inexplicable procedure of God. Thus it was with Jacob. We propose, in the further prosecution of this subject, reviewing some of those DARK PROVIDENCES now accumulating around the patriarch; his MISINTERPRETATION of their import; and the TRUE SOLUTION of the whole.

Affliction seldom comes alone. A single, solitary trial is but half the recipe designed by our heavenly Physician to effect the cure. God seldom works by units in the unfolding and perfecting of His gracious purposes of love and mercy

towards us. There is a combination, a plurality of trials, all uniting, aiding, and assisting each other in working out the great, the grand, the holy result. David's experience is the experience of all God's people- "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters." Thus was it with good old Jacob: many waves were surging around him- but his covenant God drew him out of all.

Let us look at these dark providences in their order. His first sorrow was that of bereavement. The shadow of death was upon his home. "Joseph is not." To him Joseph was virtually dead. The supposed circumstances of his end were of so painful a character as greatly to aggravate the affliction of his loss; and long and sorely had the patriarch mourned his rude and early death, doubtless treasuring, as a sad and only relic of his slaughtered child, the bloodstained coat of many colors which he wore, woven by his mother's hand. This, the saddest of all sorrows, still lingered in the good old man's heart, shading its brightest and latest joys.

How few of us are exempt from this sorrow! Who has not accompanied far into the shaded valley, loved ones of the heart? It pleases God sometimes to visit us with this calamity under circumstances peculiarly and unspeakably aggravating and distressing. We are born to die. The treasured ones around us have within them the seeds, and upon them the sentence, of death. The brilliant eye, the roseate cheek, the vermilion lip, the tall, graceful form shooting up, as in a night, like a cedar, are often to a skillful and discerning glance but as flowers blooming for the tomb.

Our home-circles, with all the powerful barriers which affection and influence can cast around them- guarded as by angel-sentinels of love- are not proof against the entrance of the "king of terrors." Youth cannot resist him- beauty cannot awe him- wealth cannot bribe him- eloquence cannot persuade him- learning cannot confound him- skill cannot baffle him- tears cannot move him- religion cannot evade his icy touch. To all this his uplifted dart is inexorable. He takes the prince from the throne, the ruler from the state, the orator from the senate, the judge from the bench, the minister from the pulpit, the head from the family, the light from the home, the babe from its mother's arms. None, none are spared.

What mean those echoes of the muffled bell still lingering on the ear? What mean these broken circles- this vacant chair- those unread books- those portraits on the wall- this treasured locket- this unworn apparel? Oh, how sad, how touching their mute, expressive eloquence! They remind us of the departed- they tell of the spirit-land where they have fled, where they will return not again until time be no more.

And often does our heavenly Father see fit to take the dearest and the fairest first. Precious thought! If He plucks the ripe and leaves the green; transplants the tree of righteousness to a sunnier sky, and leaves the barren tree for time and culture, perchance for fruit.

But what is this sad visitation of bereavement but one of the appointed dispensations of our heavenly Father, sent in unerring wisdom, righteousness, and love? It is in the covenant of grace, and must therefore be included in the schedule of the believer's charter of blessings. "All things are yours- death"-be it our own, or be it that of one nestling in our bosom, sheltered beneath our wing- it yet is a covenant mercy. Christ has changed both its character and its name; and death to the believer is now a covenant privilege and a peaceful sleep. Is our Joseph no more? God Himself has done it- has done it righteously. Sleeps he in Jesus? Then he sleeps sweetly, and shall do well- for "those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Yes! they are not lost, nor lost to us, who die in Christ. With Him they are now, with Him they will come again, and with Him will ever be. Even at this present we seem to be nearer to them, and in converse holier and closer, sweeter and dearer, as faith deals closely with the invisible, than when they were on earth. "God calls our loved ones, but we lose not wholly what He has given. They live on earth in thought and deed as truly as in heaven." We owe them much! They have taught us how to die; and by their death we are learning how to live. They have lessened and loosened our ties to earth, and have increased and strengthened our ties to heaven. And now that they are gone, heaven is nearer and dearer, and is to our conception more than ever a reality and a place.

Oh yes! we are their debtors! Well are we repaid for our anxious, weary watchings, tears and parting. They have, by sanctifying grace, made room in our hearts for Jesus, have brought God more fully into our souls, have made earth less sweet, death less bitter, Christ more precious, and heaven more winning.

Another dark cloud resting on the home of the patriarch was separation. "Simeon is not." Simeon was still alive, but far removed from the eyes of his father. He had been detained in Egypt by Joseph as a hostage, as a pledge and covenant of the return to him again of his brethren. This was an added drop of bitterness to the full cup of the aged saint. Another link was broken, another tie severed of domestic happiness, a new sorrow blending with the many now shading the parental heart. Are we entirely exempt from this peculiar form of trial- separation from those we love, whose presence and companionship seemed necessary to our happiness, yes, essential to our very being?

Ah no! Who, in this life of vicissitude, this world of change, has not felt it? It is part of the moral discipline- the discipline of the affections- the fitness for heaven- through which our God sees fit we should pass. He loans us the blessing of human companionship a while- the loving heart, the kindred mind, the responding spirit, the sympathizing nature- to cheer, and soothe, and help us on our way: then removes it. The noblest specimens of our nature have been sensible of this sorrow.

Listen to the elder Edwards- a man whose colossal intellect might be thought to have absorbed every drop of sensibility, and yet he possessed a nature as exquisitely tender as a woman's- "My heart is heavy at the remembrance of all the miles that lie between us. Oh, I can scarcely believe that you are so distant from me. We are parted, and every parting is a form of death, as every reunion is a type of heaven." He seems to have caught the poet's idea, "To die and part is less evil; but to part and live, there- there's the torment." Listen to the words of the Psalmist- "Lover and friend have you put far from me, and my acquaintance into darkness."

Yes! the tie that bound us, as we thought, too closely and too fondly ever to be broken, to a loved minister, a faithful friend, a fond relative, our Father dissolves, but to instruct us not to set our hearts inordinately upon any place or being on earth, and to remind us that if He separates us from friends- from the society, the counsel, and the soothing of those who had lessened life's sorrow and had increased its joy by affection and sympathy- it is but that He himself should enter and enshrine Him in the vacant recess, and be all in all.

The Lord Jesus sometimes holds our blessings as hostages. They are not entirely and forever removed from us, but are reserved to Himself for a while, as pledges of our unswerving confidence, filial obedience, and supreme love- that we will perform the vows and fulfil the promises we made when His hand was upon us. If this be the sorrow you are called to experience, dear reader, be still and know that He is God; yes, that He is your own God, and that whatever may be the painful, distant, and prolonged separation from the creature, there shall be no separation from Himself- His love, care, and sympathy.

And God would have us remember, too, that all present separation, whether by the distance of place, or the bereavement of death, from the holy objects of our affections, is but temporary and for a little while; that, in heaven, in our Father's house, we shall find them all again, and with them spend eternity. Blessed separation from the human, that brings our soul into this high experience of the Psalmist in his fellowship with the divine, "Whom have I in heaven but You? and there is none on earth that I desire beside You."

Another dark providence around this aged man of God was- the sorrow of surrender. "And you will take Benjamin away." This was a peculiarly keen and poignant grief to the heart of Jacob. Benjamin, the child of his old age, his fondling, the youngest, the sunbeam, doubtless, of his house, was to leave him; he was to part with this the last, the dearest, and most precious treasure. My reader, our heavenly Father often asks of us a like surrender, to prove the strength of our obedience, the sincerity of our affection, the reality of our faith- to test whether or not He were the supreme object of our homage, adoration, and love.

To surrender the youngest, the loveliest, and the dearest is often asked by God.

The Lord sees fit to enter the domestic circle, and separate from it its light and its charm. And whether the removal be by death, or by the changeful scenes of life, to surrender our Benjamin is often a trial hard to bear. Be it so. Our blessings are not ours, they are His. He has a right to extinguish this sunshine of our home- to remove this charm and sweetener of life, this treasure which seemed to shed around the winter grey of old age the light and warmth of the spring-tide of youth!

Let us not, then, sorrow and repine; God never asks us to yield anything that seems necessary to our happiness and essential to our being, but, as we would remind you again, He asks His own. Your Benjamin is His; and if He enters your domestic enclosure and breaks the stem of some beautiful flower, it was His plant, and He had a right at any moment, and under any circumstances, to remove it to another and a distant place on earth, or to transfer it to the richer garden and the brighter skies of heaven.

But, superadded to these, there was one more cloud that gathered around Jacob's house. The famine was raging in the land. A man of wealth and of large possessions, he was still, with his beloved ones, dying of hunger. "The famine raged sore in the land." Yes, beloved, God may see fit, in His dealings with His people, to add to the sorrow of bereavement, to the grief of separation, and to the pain of surrender, impoverished circumstances, narrowed income, exhausted supplies.

God oftentimes deals with His people as if His heart were callous, His mind displeased, as if He were cold and indifferent to their temporal comforts and necessities. Be it so. He may see fit to reduce you in life, to blow upon garnered resources, to send a biting famine, as it were, to your home. It is but a page in your history corresponding with the experience of the most eminent of His people. The Lord would thus teach us that this life is not our portion, worldly wealth not our treasure, created good not our God.

Thus some of the saints are called to endure this reverse of fortune, this trial of poverty in extreme old age. The affluence of youth, the wealth of riper years has melted away, and poverty and hoary hairs have come together. But this has its blessings. God intends by this to confirm His love and faithfulness to His people. "Even down to old age I will carry you." When has God ever failed His people? When has He ever forsaken His saints in the decline of life? Straited circumstances may come- sickness may come- dependence may come- the wintry blast may blow- the snow-flakes fall thick and fast- but GOD will come too, and His love and providence will turn winter into spring, and spring into summer, and summer into the ripe, golden fruit of autumn; "for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you."

Now, all these dark clouds, thus draping around the aged patriarch, were well calculated to fill his soul with distrust and trembling, to lead to an adverse interpretation of the infinite wisdom and righteousness and goodness of his

covenant God. Let us then turn our attention to this. "All these things are against me." What affecting, yet what significant words are these! And recollect that they are the words of a man of God; one with whom God had had very close transactions, with whom He had, as it were, talked face to face. Yet behold him, after all the long and deep experience of the divine dealings, a mere child, reduced to the lowest condition in his religion, his faith staggering, his feet sliding and almost gone, his past experience abandoning him, succumbing to trying circumstances, misspelling mystic symbols, writing hard and bitter things both against God and himself. It was a good man misinterpreting a dark providence. He was reading his spiritual Hebrew from left to right, rather than- as Hebrew properly is read- from right to left. Properly to understand God's dispensations, they must often thus be read backward, and not forward. They must be studied in their results- must be viewed in the light of their ends- in the purposes which they are designed to accomplish.

Faith must look rather at the end, than at the beginning, of a dark providence. Beloved, we are but little acquainted with our own selves if we do not find much in our Christian and personal history that corresponds with this. Therefore, forgetting for the moment the case of the patriarch, let me state when it is, and how it is, that the child of God, tried and afflicted by the dispensations of his heavenly Father, is led to misread, misspell, and misinterpret these dispensations, and come to the conclusion, the wrong and erroneous conclusion, that because he cannot penetrate the darkness, unravel the mystery, and solve the problem, therefore God and His dispensations are against him.

In the first place, when spiritual exercises, when the dark dispensations of God's providence are viewed simply and only with the eye of sense, it will invariably lead us to a misconception, a misunderstanding, and a misinterpretation of His dealings with us. It is utterly impossible for you thus to look at a dark cloud, a paralyzing event, a crushing calamity, an unfortunate circumstance in your history, and not feel that it is a foe coming to despoil you of happiness; that it is a frown of your God; that it is an electric cloud sur-charged with some element of destruction.

But, beloved, this is not the eye with which we are to look at God's dealings. The moment faith made its home in our hearts, that moment God gave us a new eye, a divine organ of vision; we professed to have ceased to deal with God and His dispensations as men of the world, as men of sense who looked at things only through the spectacles of carnal reason; we then professed to become believers in Christ, to commence the life of faith, to walk by faith, to fight by faith, and by faith ever to look at and deal with the visible, as with the invisible; by faith spelling the dark letters, and interpreting the mystic symbols of God's providences, and by faith resting in the firm conviction and assurance, that though clouds and darkness were round about Him, righteousness, faithfulness, and love, are about us, pointing, ordaining, and guiding every step of our feet homeward.

Looked at with the eye of sense and the eye of faith, the aspect of God's providences will be essentially dissimilar. If with the eye of sense, they will appear dark and overwhelming, and you shall come to the conclusion that all is against you, conspiring to destroy your happiness and well-being. But looked at with the eye of faith- faith's farseeing vision- the picture changes, and those very events, circumstances, and incidents in your history that looked so somber and threatening, are all disguised blessings, veiled mercies, elements under the control and government of God, all combining for your greatest good and His highest glory.

Cease, then, to view your dark shadows, your trying dispensations, your overwhelming afflictions with the eye of sense, and look at them more simply, directly, and constantly with the eye of faith. "I would have fainted unless I had believed I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

Again; when God is judged by His dealings rather than by His sayings, by what He does rather than by what He is, the child of God will invariably be involved in doubt and perplexity, and come to the conclusion that God's dealings with him, clothed with the drapery of woe, and uttering the voice of the stranger, are making against him. My beloved ones, God will not be judged by His saints according to His dealings; He will be judged by them according to His words. If you judge of God's character, of His love, His purposes, and the intents of His heart towards you, by His conduct, rather than by what He is in Himself, marvel not that you come to this conclusion, "all these things are against me."

But let us thank God that we have this high principle of interpretation of what He does- namely, His revealed and written Word- His promises sustaining, tempering, interpreting His providences. The Lord's government of His saints is like a dissolving panorama. Scene after scene, picture after picture, each one differing from the other, passes before the eye. Some are tinted brightly, others are shaded darkly; some portray battles lost, others battles won. Yes! what is life but a daily succession of dissolving views? But what is God, He whose pencil tints and whose hand moves the picture? He is immutable, unchangeable, and eternal. He may change the lesson, vary the discipline, diversify His dealings, but He will never change in His love, falter in His faithfulness, or falsify His word. Life shall change- others shall change- most of all, we shall ourselves change; but our covenant God and Father never changes.

And it is by what He has written, and what He is, that He will have us judge of Him, and not by what He does. Doing this, you will not come to the incorrect and depressing conclusion, that all these changing, dissolving scenes of life, which form a perfect whole, are working against you, but you will be still and calm in the conviction that the power that controls and moves it all is the hand of a wise, loving, and gracious Father. It is here, beloved, our invested interests are so safe. In all life's chequered, variable history, we have to deal with a Father!

Is our barque amid the breakers? Our Father is at the helm. Does the sword's point press our heart? A Father's hand holds it. Is the cup brimmed and bitter? A Father's love has mingled it. Has the bright and hopeful picture of yesterday dissolved into the somber and despairing one of today? A Father is behind the scene, ordering and controlling all things after the counsel of His own will. Thus, be your daily life what it may, it is just what He makes it. If our nest be pierced with a thorn, He has planted it; if it be soft with down, he has lined it. God makes people, and places, and scenes exactly what they are to us, and with this assurance we may calmly receive all at His hands as sent in love.

One more reason accounting for this strange misinterpretation of God's providences on the part of His people. When we forget that, in reality, nothing can possibly be against the child of God, we shall be plunged in a sea of doubt and perplexity. When you lose sight of the fact that nothing can really touch the interests, imperil the well-being, or affect the everlasting safety of a child of God, you are as a cork tossed upon the ocean. What a grand truth is this to keep hold of! "It is well with the righteous." "The blessing of the Lord is upon his people." "There is no enchantment against Israel, and no divination against Jacob."

Man may curse; but God blesses. Let God's dispensation be ever so dark, painful, and afflicting, it is utterly impossible that anything can be against the best interests of a believer in Christ. If there is one being in the universe that is tenderly loved, daily cared for, prayerfully guarded, vigilantly watched over, and that, moment by moment, whose personal interests are bound up in the heart of God, and on whose everlasting safety He has pledged the honor of His name- it is the child of God, the believer in Christ, he for whom the Savior spilt His precious blood, and whom the Holy Spirit has made His temple.

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" Every being, and everything that is great, holy, and powerful, is on the side of the Triune Jehovah- angels- the spirits of just men made perfect- all the holy on earth- the Church above and the Church below- are all in league and in sympathy with God's elect. Why, then, should we yield to despondency and fear, or believe that anything can really be against us? Oh, it is only when unbelief and sense survey the scene that we extract from God's way with us material for misgiving, despondency, and despair. Environed by His perfections, yes, encircled by God Himself, it is, it must be well with the saints forever, and nothing shall prevail against them.

Having thus portrayed a few of the dark providences which oftentimes shade the Christian's path, tracing the misconstruction of these Divine dispensations to some of their causes, we now proceed to vindicate the character and glory of God in His conduct of His saints. What, in fact, was the true interpretation of all those trials now accumulating around the last days of the patriarch? The very reverse of that to which in unbelief and ignorance he arrived! All those things were working for him and in his favor.

Each event was a link in a chain of blessing, each cloud embosomed a mercy, each symbol was the token of love. The error into which the good man fell was that into which we are constantly, in like circumstances, gliding- the error of a rash and hasty interpretation of Divine providence. We seek to unravel what is explicable only to God- to sound what He only can fathom, and to anticipate, rather than quietly, patiently wait the unraveling of His thoughts, purposes, and end. We distrust God, and suppose it possible that He could have one hard thought, one unkind feeling towards His people. Impatient of mystery and delay, unsubmitive to the law of restraint, so divinely imposed, we wish to break the hedge with which our God has shut us in, to burst through the web of circumstances which infinite wisdom and love has drawn around us; and in so doing, thwarted, lacerated, and wounded, we find ourselves involved in difficulties and exposed to perils from which a love that knows no chill, a patience that knows no weariness, a wisdom that nothing can baffle and a power with which nothing can cope, alone can rescue us. Oh, the patience and goodness of our God! Had we not Him to deal with, no creature in the universe could bear with our rebellion and folly for an hour!

Before we take a wider scope of this subject, let us trace the illustration afforded by the case of Jacob. Where was Joseph whom he supposed was not? He was alive, and exalted to great power, distinction, and wealth. His supposed death was a dark sorrow, yet that sorrow was but preparing the way for a bright sunset of Jacob's life. Out of that death life was to spring- out of that cloud light was to flow- the event that appeared to curtail so much domestic joy and hope was just the one that would prove the salvation of his house. It was not against him, it was for him!

And where was Simeon? He, too, was one of the links in this unbroken chain of mysterious providences. Detained in Egypt as a hostage, he was, in fact, but a pledge and security of the glad tidings and the good things which were about to chime upon the ear, and unveil to the eye of the perplexed and sorrowing patriarch. Beloved, the very blessings which the Lord takes from us are but pledges and foreshadows of yet greater and costlier ones! God seems to say, "Surrender this mercy, and I will replace it with a better. Yield in obedience this one blessing, and I will return it sevenfold. Lend me your Simeon, and I will return him again to you, and Joseph with him."

Thus it is that God buries our treasures but to raise them again to life, clad in deathless bloom, more precious, beautiful, and fragrant than ever. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and dies, it abides alone: but if it dies it brings forth much fruit." Tremble not, then, when God veils your creature-treasures from your sight- it is but to fasten your eye more exclusively upon Himself; and when the trembling needle oscillates back to its center, when the wayward, foolish, idolatrous heart, smitten; sad, and lonesome, yet disciplined and sanctified, returns again to its "first love," God oftentimes re-inspires its earth-born joy, and restores its creature-blessing.

And what of the famine? Sore and grievous as it was, even it was a link in this golden chain of wondrous providences. It was trying to the heart of Jacob- a large landholder, the possessor of great estates, yet famishing for bread- to behold his family and dependents reduced to such a calamity. Don't we learn something from this? While God can keep alive the soul of His saints in famine, He can cause the worldly to starve in the midst of plenty. The words of inspiration testify, "In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits."

Many a man has great power, large possessions, beautiful domains, and every blessing that earth can supply, and yet his soul famishes for good, his heart pines for joy, his mind searches in vain for peace- he is poor in his wealth, and starves amid his plenty. Nothing but the love of God can satisfy the soul of man- none but God Himself can make him truly happy. My reader, acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace; cease chasing the bubble, catching at the straw, eating ashes and feeding upon the wind of worldly creature-good. Never will you be satisfied. Oh, listen to the voice of Jesus! "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."

But what of the scarceness in Jacob's house? It was evolving God's thoughts of peace and purposes of love. The very famine was sowing the seeds of harvest- the crushing need was creating a full supply. It was providing wealth, honor, and food for Jacob's family. But for the famine- we speak after the manner of men- would Jacob ever have heard that Joseph was yet alive? Would life's close have been amid such golden sheaves of plenty? Would its autumnal sunset have been so serene and glowing? Thus, then, each of these painful events transpiring in the closing history of the aged patriarch was working out God's hidden love in the experience of His beloved child.

A few words of exhortation in conclusion. Thank God for the hedge. He planted it- He encircled you with it, and for your highest well-being present and future. A truer word Satan never uttered than that which he spoke to God of Job, "Have you not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he has on every side?" When God thus hedges a man, the gates of hell shall never prevail against him; nor can Satan touch him without God's permission. But there are often providential hedges in one's path, which, at the first blush, seem to wear an aspect militating against us. But be still. When God plants a hedge around us, we have as much reason to thank Him as when He breaks it down- as much when He closes, as when He opens, our path. That thorn-bush is but interposed between you and some impending, unseen, unsuspected evil from which God would shield you.

Oh, little do we suspect how much one evil is sent to prevent another and a greater! When our purposes are frustrated, our plans reversed, our hopes disappointed; or, when some sudden, distressing calamity overtakes us, then we

begin to exclaim, "This is against me." Oh, could we see, as our Father does, the end from the beginning, could we unravel that mysterious web, decipher the meaning of that unlooked-for trial, unfold the blessing veiled and shaded in that somber cloud- in a word, could we see from what calamity we were saved, from what temptation we were shielded, from what sin we had been kept, from what fatal injury to our happiness and usefulness we have been preserved, we should bless God for the hedge, nor think the discipline too severe, or the mode too painful by which hopes, now crushed, would spring again into brighter bloom, in sweeter and undying fragrance. "Light is sown for the righteous; and gladness for the upright in heart."

Be cautious, then, of coming to rash hasty conclusions as to God's dealings. "I said in my haste," says David. It is the dictate of true wisdom and of sound faith, patiently to wait until God explains His own providences. This He will do in His good time. "God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain." Tried, afflicted child of God! be not hasty in your conclusion that God does not love you, that Christ cares not for you, and that all those untoward, painful, and inexplicable events in your history are confederate against your well being, and are evidences against your conversion, your adoption, your saving interest in Christ.

Satan will strive hard to lead your reasoning to such a conclusion. Was not Jacob loved of God? Yes, God affirms it- "Jacob I have loved." And does He not call Himself- "the God of Jacob?" And yet, who was ever more sharply tried by God than he? Upon whose path to heaven did larger, darker shadows gather? Tried by undutiful children- tried by mournful bereavement- tried by painful separation- tried by crushing poverty, and yet, the beloved of God! "Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chastens not?" "Those whom I love, I rebuke and chasten."

Accept, then, these afflictive dealings of your heavenly Father as evidences of your belonging to the seed-royal of Christ, as seals of your adoption, as parts of the discipline by which the Lord is promoting your sanctification and preparing you for glory. Read in this hallowed, soothing light of God's love, you will not conclude that all these things are against you, but rather will exclaim- "He has done all things well."

We learn from this subject that God sometimes removes a blessing but to return it to us again. He never intends to curtail our real happiness. He loves His people too well for that. We know but imperfectly the greatness of God's love to us. It is infinite- how should we fully know it? And yet this should be our constant prayer, especially when His dealings are trying to faith, "Lord, show me how You love me. Lead my heart into Your love. Let me, with all my cares and sorrows, infirmities and sins, sink into the soundless depths of this vast sea."

He asked of Abraham the surrender of Isaac, He took from Jacob first Joseph,

and then Simeon, and lastly Benjamin, but He kindly restored them all again, all the sweeter, all the dearer, all the more hallowed and precious from their temporary removal. Relinquish, then, without a murmur or a misgiving what the Lord asks, dear though it be as the heart's tenderest fibre.

From the grave in which God entombs it, it shall, at His bidding, leap again into life, more beautiful, more sacred, and more precious than ever. And the discipline of the heart, the deepening of God's work in your soul, the weanedness, the prayerfulness, the lowliness, the endearing of Christ which the removal of the blessing has induced, will be an infinite compensation for its painful and temporary withdrawal. Joseph was but a mere stripling, poor and despised, when God removed him from Jacob; he was full-grown, the governor of all Egypt, wealthy and honored, when God gave him back!

"Saints, at your heavenly Father's word,
Give up your comforts to the Lord;
He shall return what you resign,
Or grant you blessings more divine."

And what is the conclusion of the whole? It shall be in the words of God, and not of man, "All Things Work Together for Good to Those Who Love God, to Those Who Are the Called According to His Purpose." Blessed Lord! be Your dispensations bright or cloudy, mysterious or plain, on this Divine truth I can live, upon it I can die, and it shall be my study and praise through eternity!

Courage, brother! yes, take courage,
In life's battle dare to fight;
Though the strife may seem unequal,
Trust in God, and do the right.

Stand up boldly- never falter;
Stand up, though you stand alone;
God will nerve your arm for warfare,
He will make His strength your own

Is your heart well-near to fainting?
Seems the future hopeless, drear?
Is there none to ease your burden
None to whisper words of cheer?

Courage, you are not forgotten
Learn dark doubts aside to fling
God would teach your heart the lesson,
Sweetest joys from sorrows spring.

Fierce may be the outward conflict,

Fiercer still the strife within;
But how sweet the resting, brother,
When we stand "complete in Him!"

Weary heart, then, take fresh courage,
Sins, and fears, and self despite;
Look above! with faith unshaken,
Trust in God, and do the right!

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