



## The Guest of The Soul

### Chapter 4 – THE TRIAL OF FAITH WROUGHT INTO EXPERIENCE

The world owes an immeasurable debt to Christianity for its treasures of music and song. Jesus sang (Matt. xxvi. 30). Oh, to have heard Him! And in his Letters, especially, to the Ephesians and Colossians, Paul exhorts the Christians to speak to themselves, "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord," and making melody in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. iii. 16; Eph. v. 19). They were to sing to be heard not of men only, but of the Lord Himself.

Every great revival of religion results in a revival of singing and of the composition of both music and song. The Franciscan revival in the thirteenth century was marked by exultant singing. And so it was in the days of Luther, of the Wesleys, of William Booth, and of Moody. And so it will always be.

The joys, the faith, the hopes and aspirations, the deepest desires, the love and utter devotion, and the sweet trust of the Christian find noblest and freest expression in music and song. And yet it is probable that in no way do people more frequently and yet unconsciously stultify, befool and deceive themselves, and actually lie to each other and to God, than in the public singing of songs and hymns.

Languidly, lustily, thoughtlessly in song they profess a faith they do not possess, a love and devotion their whole life falsifies, a joy their lack of radiance on the face and of light in the eye contradicts. They sing, "Oh, how I love Jesus!" while their hearts are far from Him, with no intention of doing the things that please Him; or:

I've wondrous peace through trusting,

A well of joy within;



This rest is everlasting,  
My days fresh triumphs bring –  
while they are restless and defeated; or:  
Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in ceaseless praise –  
while they live selfishly and spend much of their time in murmurings and complainings, instead  
of in praise.  
It is a solemn thing to stand before God and sing such songs.  
We should think. A hush should be upon our spirits, for we are standing upon holy ground, where  
mysteries are all about us, enshrouding us, while the Angel of the Lord looks upon us through  
pillar of cloud and fire, and devils leer and lurk to entrap and overthrow us.  
Nearly fifty years ago, at The Salvation Army's Training Home, at Clapton, we Cadets were  
singing:  
My will be swallowed up in Thee;  
Light in Thy light still may I see  
In Thine unclouded face.  
Called the full strength of trust to prove ...





and there my heart cried out, "Yes, Lord, let me prove the full strength of trust!

And then I was hushed into deep questioning and prayer, for a whisper within me, deep within, asked: "Can you, will you, endure the tests, the trials, that alone can prove the full strength of trust? A feather's weight may test the strength of an infant or an invalid, but heavier and yet heavier weights alone can test the full strength of a man. Will you bear patiently, without murmuring or complaining or fainting, the trials I permit to come upon you, which alone can prove the full strength of your trust and train it for larger service and yet greater trials?"

My humbled heart dared not say, "I can," but only, "By Thy grace I will." And then we continued to sing:

My will be swallowed up in Thee .....

Let all my quickened heart be love,

My spotless life be praise.

And my whole soul consented to any trial which the Lord in His wisdom and love might permit to come upon me. I willed to be wholly the Lord's; to endure, to "bear up and steer right onward" in the face of every tempest that might blow, every whelming sea that might threaten to engulf me, every huge Goliath who might mock and vow he would destroy me. I was not jubilant: my soul was awed into silence, but also into strong confidence and a deep rest of quiet faith.

I felt sure from that hour that if I was to do a man's work, to be a saint or soldier of Christ, a winner of souls, and a conqueror on life's battlefields, then I was not to be a pampered pet of the Lord: that I must not expect favours; that my path was not to be strewn with roses; that acclaiming multitudes were not to cheer and crown me; that I must walk by faith, not sight; that I must be faithful and hold fast that which God had given me; that I must still pray when Heaven seemed shut and God not listening; that I must rejoice in tribulation and glorify any Lord in the fire; that I must keep hot when others grew cold; that I must stand alone when others ran away;



that I must look to no man for my example, but that I myself should seek always to be an example to all men; that I must stand on instant guard against the lure of the world, the insurgence and insistence of the flesh and the wiles of the Devil; that I must not become sarcastic, cynical, suspicious, or supercilious, but have the love that thinketh no evil, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and never faileth; that I must not be seduced by flattery, nor frightened by frowns. I felt that, while esteeming others better than myself (Phil. ii. 3), and in honour preferring others before myself (Rom. xii. 10), and while I was not to be wise in my own conceits (Rom. xii. 16), yet I was in no sense to permit my own personality to be submerged in the mass; that I must be myself, stand on my own feet, fulfill my own task, bear my own responsibility, answer at last for my own soul, and stand or fall, when the Judgment books are opened, by my own record.

That moment when we sang those words was to me most solemn and sacred, and not to be forgotten. There God set His seal upon my consenting soul, for service, for suffering, for sacrifice. From that moment life became a thrilling adventure in fellowship with God, in friendship and companionship with Jesus. Everything that has come into my life from that moment has, in some way, by God's sanctifying touch and unfailing grace, enriched me. It may have impoverished me on one side, but it has added to my spiritual wealth on the other, as Jacob's withered thigh, Joseph's slavery and imprisonment, Moses' enforced banishment from Pharaoh's court, and Paul's thorn and shipwrecks and stonings and imprisonments, enriched them.

Pain has come to me, but in it I have always found some secret pleasure and compensation. Sorrow and bereavement have thrown me back upon God and deepened and purified my joy in Him. Agony, physical and mental, have led to some unexpected triumph of grace and faith, some enlargement of sympathy and of power to understand and bless others. Loss and gain, loneliness and love, light and darkness, trials and things hard or impossible to understand – everything has brought its own blessing as my soul has bowed to and accepted the yoke of Jesus and refused to murmur or complain, but has received the daily providences of life as God's training school for faith, for patience, for steadfastness and love.





Paul was right – and my soul utters a deep Amen – when he wrote: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose" (Rom. viii. 28). Listen to Paul's record of some of the "all things" which worked together for his good. He had been ridiculed and treated with scorn by his enemies as an Apostle and minister, and he replies:

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often [long and dangerous, over bandit infested roads], in perils of waters [on stormy seas and icy mountain torrents and unbridged rivers], in perils of robbers [in Balkan hills and Cilician mountain passes], in perils by mine own countrymen [the Jews were always lying in wait for him in every city], in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness [long journeys wearied him, and stonings, beatings, whippings and holding on grimly to a spar after shipwreck, while the surges of the sea beat upon him to and fro for a night and a day, must have meant excruciating pain], in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness.

Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches (2 Cor. xi. 23-28).

What a list of "all things," and yet it is not complete! A study of his Corinthian Letters reveals much more of his mental and spiritual trials and conflicts which meant unmeasured suffering to his sensitive soul, so chaste in its purity, so keenly alive to all the finest and loftiest views of life, and so hungry for human as well as Divine love and fellowship. This is the man who glories in his tribulations, because they work in him patience, experience, hope (Rom. v. 3, 4), and declares that in all things he is more than conqueror (Rom. viii. 37). Indeed, he calls these things a "light affliction, which is but for a moment" (2 Cor. iv. 17).

He looks at them in the light of Eternity and they are so swallowed up in that vastness, that



infinitude, that he says they are "but for a moment." And then he adds that this affliction "worketh for us" – our slave, working out 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 [fleeting, soon to pass away and be forgotten] but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

Paul says, "We know" – his uncertainties, doubts, fears, questionings, had all vanished, being swallowed up in knowledge – "we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

But how did he know? How had Paul reached such happy assurance? He knew by faith. He believed God, and light on dark problems streamed into his soul through faith.

He knew by joyful union with the risen Christ, who had conquered death and the grave. This union was so real that Christ's victory was his victory also.

He knew in part by experience. Paul had suffered much, and by experience he had found all things in the past working for his good, enriching his spiritual life through the abounding grace of his Lord; and this gave him assurance for "all things" and for all the future. Nothing could really harm him while he was in the Divine will, in the eternal order; while he was a branch in the living Vine, a member of Christ's body (Rom. xii. 5; i Cor. xii. 20-27).

#### **Listen to him:**

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Rom. viii. 35,37).

#### **Hear him again:**

We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience and patience, experience;





and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us (Rom. v. 3-5).

**Hear him yet once more:**

I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

Any and everything, present and future, which wrought in him patience, experience of God's love, and hope, he was sure was working for his good, and he welcomed it with rejoicing, for it came bearing gifts of spiritual riches. That is how he knew. We may believe what is revealed in the Bible about this, and enter into peace, great peace; but we come to know, as did Paul, by putting God and life to the test – by experience.

I happened to be present when a young wife and mother was weeping bitter tears of anguish. An older wife and mother, with a face like the morning, full of Heaven's own peace, who had herself wept bitter tears of anguish, put her arms around the younger woman and in tender and wise words of perfect assurance comforted her. And as I noted the gentleness, the wisdom, the calmness, the moral strength of the elder woman, I thought to myself, "Ah, her trials that were so painful, her tears that were so bitter, worked for her good; left her enlarged in heart, enriched in experience and knowledge, sweetened in character, wise in sympathy, calm in storm, perfect in peace, with a spirit at home and at rest in God while yet in the body."

And I looked forward with joy in the hope that the younger woman, believing on Jesus, patiently submitting to chastenings and trials as opportunities for the exercise and the discipline of faith, would enter into an experience of God's love and faithfulness that would leave her spirit for ever strengthened, sweetened, enriched, and fitted to comfort and strengthen others. And so, after years, it proved to be.



Our true good in this and all worlds is spiritual; and trials, afflictions, losses, sorrows, chastenings, borne with patience and courage and in faith, will surely develop in us spiritual graces and "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. xii. 11) which are never found in those who know no trial or sorrow, whose sky is never overcast, whose voyage over life's sea is never troubled by storm and hurricane, whose soldiering is only on dress parade and never in deadly battle, or who, facing storm or battle, flee away and so escape it.

Holiness of heart does not insure us against those untoward and painful things which try our faith, but it does prepare us for the trial; while the patient endurance of trial reveals to ourselves, to angels, to devils, to men, the reality of our faith and the purity and integrity of our hearts and the grace and faithfulness of our Lord.

When Abraham was tried in the offering up of Isaac, "the angel of the Lord" said, "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" (Gen. xxii. 12). And again and again the most obstinate opponents of Christianity have been conquered by the patient endurance and the radiant joy of suffering Christians. It was not only so in the days of far-off persecutions – in Rome, when Christians were thrown to the wild beasts, roasted over slow fires, tortured in every conceivable way; but in our own day, and in the history of the Salvation Army, the blood of the martyrs, the patience and triumphant joy of our soldiers, have won the hardest sinners to Jesus.

Paul looked upon his sufferings as a part of the sufferings of Christ, as though Christ's sufferings did not end upon the cross, but were completed in the sufferings of His disciples. Paul writes: I now "rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church" (Col. i. 24).

Happy are we if we can receive all suffering in that spirit, whether it be suffering of body, mind or soul. It will then work for our good and through us for the good of others, whether or not we can understand how it is to do so.





It will purge us of vanity; it will deepen us in humility, enlarge us in sympathy, and make us more fruitful in the graces of the Spirit.

How bitter that cup no tongue can conceive,

Which He drank quite up that sinners might live.

His way was much rougher and darker than mine:

Did Christ, my Lord, suffer, and shall I repine?

Since all that I meet shall work for my good,

The bitter is sweet; the medicine is food;

Though painful at present, 'twill cease before long,

And then, oh, how pleasant the conqueror's song!