

ISAIAH ... who saw God's love in disguise
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(ISAIAH 30:15-26)

It has often been said that affliction is the Good Shepherd's black dog. When God's people wander from the fold of the Great Shepherd and stubbornly refuse to return, God permits affliction to act as a sheepdog. It would appear that this statement is based upon fact, for oftentimes trouble has begotten blessing in the hearts of men when prosperity only increased indifference to spiritual realities.

God's Love Disguised

" For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel ; In returning and rest shall ye be saved ; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No ; for we will flee upon horses. . . . And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction . . ." (vv. 15-20). It is a stimulating thought that God's love always outlives man's rebellion. It is also a cause for eternal thanksgiving that, although His methods of dealing with sinful man may change from time to time, God never abandons His children. The grapes of Eshcol may be superseded by the bread of adversity, and the glittering joys of triumph may be temporarily overwhelmed by the waters of affliction ; but through all the changing scenes of life, God's unfailing love safeguards His people. He makes all things work together for their good, until the people shall dwell in Zion ... and shall weep no more (v. 19).

God's Love Displayed

" . . . yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers " (v. 20). There is always hope for a nation which possesses a prophet! A man's outlook can never be completely dark when he holds an open Bible! The very fact that God desires to speak with sinners is evidence that He wants to win them. If the Lord had abandoned the nation, He would have ceased sending His messengers. In spite of the disguise, God's love was still visible. The prophet was thrilled when he was able to say, " He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry when he shall hear it, he will answer thee " (v. 19).

God's Love Disturbing

" And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left " (v. 21). The road of correction may be very grievous, but the Lord is never far away. His eyes watch, and His care plans, and whenever sinful man begins to flounder in uncertainty, a still small voice whispers, "This is the way, walk ye in it." Turn around, O silly one. Don't you know that I am helping you? Can't you hear that I am calling you? Turn around, O backsliding Israel, and I will heal thy backslidings. "This is the way, walk ye in it." An interesting parallel is found in the first chapter of Revelation. The great phases of John's spiritual experience are clearly outlined. (i) " I heard behind me a great voice " (Rev. 1 : 10). (ii) "And I turned to see the voice that spake with me " (1: 12). (iii) " And being turned, I saw ... one like unto the Son of man " (vv. 12, 13). (iv) " And when I saw him, I fell at his feet " (v. 17). God is never too busy to seek His wandering children.

God's Love Delivered

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"Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light
of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the
light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the
breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound "
(Isa. 30: 26). Many competent teachers declare that this
ancient prophecy has still to be fulfilled. They assert that it
can never be completely realized until the Lord Jesus returns
to set up His earthly kingdom. Probably their claim would
stand the test of inquiry, nevertheless we need not wait until
that glad day before we discover proof of the accuracy of these
words. They are being fulfilled every day in the experience of
multitudes of people. Wanderers are even now hearing the
whispers of God's Spirit, and those who are tired of straying
are already turning in response to the call of God. The " and
ye would not " of Isaiah 30:15 refers to a people who turned
before it was too late. A similar statement is found in
Matthew 23: 37. Alas, it refers to people who had no desire
to turn.
A stitch in time saves nine; a turn in time saves eternity!

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