

The Assets of the Christian Life

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In the business world at the present moment there is, I suppose, a very great deal of anxious drawing up of balance sheets. The slump in values has been so great that it is a very trying time for many business men. They have the assets side, and they have the liabilities which have to be faced, and many of them are pulling long faces over the amount of the liabilities. They are like not a few Christians who somehow seem to have the knack of always thinking of the responsibilities and obligations that rest upon them, and who unfortunately forget to bring into their account the great assets with which they have started.

Now I am sure that what we have before us in this 5th chapter of Romans is calculated to make us feel how immense are the assets that we possess. We observe, for instance, in the first two verses, three great items that we do well to carefully bring into our calculations. These two verses speak first of all of peace with God which is ours now.

What is said here is not exactly that peace has been made at the Cross. That, thank God, is a fact, and if you want to find it stated in Scripture you turn to the first chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, verses 19-21, and there you will read of the way in which God intervened that He might secure for Himself that which He desired, for the gratification of His great heart of love. Eventually He is going to reconcile unto Himself all things in heaven and on earth, and already He has reconciled us; but both the reconciliation that has reached us, believers, to-day, and that grand reconciliation of all things which is to come, find their basis in the blood of His cross. Oh, thanks be to God! whatever we know or don't know, whatever we feel or don't feel, the blood of His cross is a great accomplished fact, and the basis upon which the reconciliation rests is as sure as that God Himself is in heaven. The cross is an accomplished fact; the blood has been shed; so peace has been made.

Now what is said here in the beginning of the 5th of Romans is that we have it. Have you act it? This is a very pertinent question. My friend, have you got peace with God? Can you look up to God as one who has been brought, consciously brought, to Him, now through grace one of His children, and therefore turning to Him with filial reverence and joy, knowing there is not one outstanding question between your soul and Himself; not one cloud in your sky? Can you say, I know that since Christ has been delivered for my offences and raised again for my justification, there is absolutely not one disturbing element between my soul and God? A wonderful thing it is to see that this is proper Christian blessing, the first asset that we put down upon our balance sheet. Thus through our Lord Jesus Christ, the believer writes down "I have peace with God" — plenty of trouble in the world likely enough, but with God absolute peace.

Then it goes on to speak of the fact that it is by faith we have access, or entrance, into this grace, or favour, in which we stand. I wonder if this would be news to any young Christian here to-night — that you stand as fully and as securely in the favour of God as the apostles Paul or Peter. We can indeed go even further than that in the light of the truth set forth in the 6th verse of the 1st chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians: we are "accepted in the Beloved."

In the spring of the year they have, you know, certain functions at the palace in London. A "Drawing Room" is held for the ladies, and people are introduced to their Majesties, and the only way

to be introduced into these Court circles is to have behind you powerful influence. You must be presented at Court by someone who already has a well-assured standing in those high circles. If Her Majesty Queen Alexandra, the Queen Mother, expressed a wish to present, perhaps without any evident cause, a very ordinary young lady with a very ordinary name, you may be perfectly certain she would get in. Why? Because of the acceptance in those circles of the one who presents her; and as the ushers open the door, and she enters the Royal circle, and kisses the Royal hands, she enters in the acceptance of the one who puts her name down on the Court sheets, and who is responsible for her. The King could not favour her perhaps in her own personal rights — she has none — but he favours her in the light of the fact that she stands in the acceptance of that august lady who is his mother.

This illustrates the wonderful fact that if anybody gets acceptance it is "in the Beloved"; and there is no other acceptance in which you can stand. People talk sentimentally of getting in at heaven's back door. Let me say there is no such place for you. You will either get into heaven through Christ, and stand in His favour, accepted in His acceptance, or you will not get in at all. We stand in the favour of God, and the favour in which we stand is the very acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We have access by faith then into this favour in which we stand. Let us write that down as a very big asset. We walk the streets of Edinburgh and perhaps the wind blows keenly from the East, and we shiver and feel very uncomfortable and sorry for ourselves as regards our circumstances, but we are in the favour of God, and faith gives us access into it. We look at Christ who is our great Representative seated in glory, and we say to ourselves by faith, "His place is my place; His favour is my favour; the smile that rests, and worthily rests, upon Him, rests upon me." Do you think that is no asset to a Christian? A wonderful asset is this.

Then it proceeds, moreover, to say, "We . . . rejoice in hope of the glory of God" — that is our destiny, that is our future. What an asset it is to have a prospect. I wouldn't give much for the prospect of this world. I was recently telling some Christian young fellows in Scandinavia that they need not fret themselves because they belonged to the minor nations in Europe; the prospects as to future conflicts amongst the nations are far too dark, and the minor nations are less likely to be involved. Men are concerned about the development of chemical science. Alas! for human skill, human knowledge! They are digging the grave of this world by scientific inquiry. What are its prospects? Go and ask the politicians, and you will get some very grave looks. Ah, the Christian has prospects; glory is the prospect of the Christian: we are rejoicing "in hope of the glory of God."

Did you ever notice in this 5th chapter of Romans how the argument runs in connection with this word "rejoice"? Unfortunately the translators have used other words to represent the same Greek word. In this chapter the word "rejoice" in verse 2, the word "glory" in verse 3, and the word "joy" in verse 11 are all translations of the same word. The pity is they did not use one word and stick to it. Let us use throughout the first word, and we read that "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and not only so but we rejoice in tribulations also."

Now at this point many of us at first sight might be inclined to disagree. "Paul," we might say, "this will not do. You must not write down our trials and tribulations amongst our assets. Why, they are to be put down upon the liability side of the account. These are the things that trouble us; these are the things that make demands upon us." Yet here is the apostle Paul writing down our tribulations on the asset side of the account. He writes them down as being something for us and not against us, and, thank God, he knew what he was writing about; he was writing under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

He does not only write down tribulations on the asset side of the account, but he tells us why he does so. The reason why we rejoice in tribulations is that we know the healthful effect of tribulations

upon our souls; we know what they work in our hearts. We rejoice in tribulations, knowing that tribulation works patience or endurance, and patience works experience. As we endure, so we gain true experience, doubtless of our own folly and frailty and foolishness and insufficiency, but coupled therewith true experience of the blessedness and sufficiency and all-satisfyingness of the Lord Jesus Christ — and to learn that lesson well is something that is well worth while.

He tells us further that experience works hope — not in this world, but in God. Experience in this world frequently works cynicism; very frequently it works a lot of sarcasm; it works, according to the Psalmist, the idea that all men are liars; we trust nobody. But Christian experience works hope. Why? Oh, because we have God before us; we begin to learn how God can extricate us from the muddles into which we get; we begin to learn how He can make things work together for good to those who love Him, and our very tribulations thus teach us what God is for us. We learn lessons here that we will never learn above.

Troubled Christian, will you take with you to-night this thought — though troubles throng in upon you, bereavement, sorrow, perplexity with yourself, so that you are often cast down, you have by these very things an opportunity of learning practically what the Lord Jesus Christ can be to you in a way you will never have an opportunity of learning in heaven. When you get to heaven with the golden years before you, and never a sorrow, never a testing, never a trial, you will look back and say, "Oh thanks, ten thousand thanks to God for giving me the opportunity of learning His grace, His love, His sufficiency, His tenderness as I learned them when I was tried and troubled upon earth." Oh, what wonders does tribulation often work in the soul of the believer — it does for him spiritually just what bodily exercise does for him physically.

There on an office stool sat a poor pasty-faced young gentleman who was hauled off it for the army. His poor mother felt like weeping when he was taken away. The drill sergeant took him in hand, and there he was racking his muscles and back, and jumping and twisting and turning and going through trials, sleeping in a very uncomfortable bed, and feeling himself often as if he could weep. But after three months of this tribulation he got off on three days' leave. He went home to see his mother. Why! the dear lady hardly knew him; he had put on inches round the chest, and had roses on his cheeks. He had fairly been transformed! The fact is, unpleasant though it was, the training did him a great deal of good physically, and it is just the same spiritually with you and me. In the light of that fact tribulation is an asset.

And another asset we have indicated in verse 11, and this is the crowning thing. As in verse 3, so again verse 11 opens with the words "And not only so." The argument is, we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," "and not only so, but we rejoice in tribulations," "and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Why, the crowning thing is this, not merely that we are justified; not merely that we have glory before us, but that we are brought to God, that we may know God and walk with God, and rejoice in God. God Himself becomes known, in all His love and power and sufficiency, by our souls. Oh, what a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian with assets such as these.