

The Lesson of Sorrow

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One of the leading effects of sorrow and bereavement is to cast a veil over things present, and to bring us into the presence of God and eternal things in heaven. The result of this is that we are astonished to find how strange we are to the things of God and of heaven. To know what faith in Christ secures to us, and to be practically in the familiar use of it, are two very distinguishable things. I know that faith in Christ makes me His for eternity, and makes His Father to be my Father, and the Spirit to be Comforter to me. It gives me eternity and heaven, and cuts me off from earth. But, alas! the being so blessed, and knowing it too, and the being able to act upon it, are two very different things, more so than having learnt a language theoretically and thoroughly, and being able to speak it.

Now when sorrow and bereavement come, things present for a time fade, and things heavenly and eternal assume more substance to our minds. The object of your love gone to heaven and God and Christ, there is a void down here. The place that was ever full of refreshing water is dried up. You are left, and your mind in grace follows the one you love upward. But, then, perhaps you find how little you know of the God he has gone to, of the Saviour who is there, of his present state, of the connection of the pool down here, and the grace that gave it to you, and the present bereavement of his presence in the pure light above, and of the restoration in the end to God's glory and his own profit.

How often have I learnt in such a season that I had not been living to the glory of God; that "Lo, I come to do Thy will," to suffer Thy will, had not been my principle of conduct; and God in such hours has seemed a strange God, a God I had neglected, and practically been living without. *Self-ignorance*, too, giving Satan power against us at such seasons; for, if we do not attribute to our own sin the having been living practically so far from God, not to be at *home with His ways of dealing* and with *Himself*, Satan will boldly inspire not only hard thoughts of God, but hard words against Him too.

Now, it is clear that God is perfect in wisdom, love, power, and goodness. It is only because I, His child, am not in the light of His plans and wisdom that I think I could have done better for myself than He has done. He gave me a pool, and I thought of its suitability to myself and others more than of Him who gave it; and when He took it away, then I found that I had not been thinking of Himself but of His gifts, like Job. Poor Job, self-ignorance led him to mistake God for Satan and Satan for God! I have known this lesson too, and how, if I did not see the hardness of my own heart, *God seemed hard*; and how, if I had been living at a distance from God and did not confess it, God seemed at a distance; and how, if I did not confess that the selfishness of fallen humanity had led me, a saint, to walk as if there were a veil between God and me down here, I felt as if the heavens were brass, and that *He* made it so. I had not leaned upon the arm of God, and to confess this according to the Spirit, or to leave Satan to suggest that God's arm was raised against me was the alternative; to confess that I had forgotten God, or that God had forgotten me.

But then, it is love divine which, having made us to be everything to Christ, insists upon teaching us now to make Christ EVERYTHING to ourselves down here. The jealousy of His love, who, as the Father, is not satisfied that we take or have anything but Christ as the portion of our souls or our joy, and the jealousy of Christ's heart cannot be satisfied that we should have anything but His Father as our choice. These lessons break us, and let God and Christ into our souls and make us feel our need of them. G. V. W.

