**Trials Are Not “Strangers” To Us**

(Adapted from an 1893 Sermon by A. T. Jones)

I will refer to a passage found in the 12th verse of the 4th chapter of 1 Peter: It begins with, "Beloved." Who? "Beloved." Is that so? Why, brothers and sisters, how can we be anything else than the gladdest people on the earth, when God talks to us like that? He comes and makes Himself the Wonderful Counselor and wants to counsel and talk with us, and the first word He says is, "Beloved." Now we have thought many a time that when the angel came to Daniel directly, and said, "O man greatly beloved," that that was quite a personal statement. It can be no more personal than this is to you and me. He comes Himself and says, "Beloved." Then, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." The word to us now is, "beloved." Let us use the word in that way. Beloved, are we to treat the fiery trials as strangers henceforth? There is nothing strange about it. Then it will not surprise us when we meet them. You know a great many people are somewhat diffident and bashful, and when they meet a stranger suddenly face to face, they are quite out of countenance. Now if you and I are going to be diffident and bashful about the trials--we are going to come face to face with some of them one of these days, a brawny one--and then if we are diffident and bashful at all, we will be put out of countenance. But just as certainly as anybody is put out of countenance by a trial, just so certainly the enemy has got the victory there. That is the way he wants to catch us off our guard, so that we will be startled and put out of countenance for even a moment, and he will get in his fiery darts and wound us.

 The Lord comes and counsels us like this: "Think it not strange." So then when we meet these fiery trials, we are not going to meet a stranger. Do you see? We will be acquainted. We will know them. I do not care how bashful or diffident a person is, when he meets an acquaintance he is not astonished at any sudden meeting. He will not be put out of countenance, but he is glad to meet his acquaintance. Then the Lord wants us to be so well acquainted with fiery trials that, no matter how suddenly we meet them, we can say, "All right, glad to meet you sir. I know you, come along." Then when he tells us this, let us not think it strange concerning the fiery trials "as though some strange thing happened" unto us.

We are not to meet them and deal with them as strangers, but as acquaintances. Not only that, but we are to meet them as helpers on to Zion. James told us long ago, "My brethren, count it all joy" when we fall into diverse temptations. What did he call us there? "My brethren." James 1:2. He calls us "My brethren" here, and other places we are called "Beloved." What does "divers" mean? Different. What does Peter call it? "Manifold." Then, my brethren, count it all joy when we fall into "divers," diverse, different, and various kinds of temptations. So, we see by these different definitions that the thought is, count it all joy when we fall into all kinds of temptations, and we will count none of them strange, because we are to regard them all as acquaintances.

 We read further: "But rejoice, inasmuch as you"--shall be partakers? Oh no, but "rejoice, inasmuch as you are partakers of Christ's sufferings." That is the point. In James he says, "My brethren." Now let us read a text that will connect both of them. Heb. 2:10-12: "For it became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifies and they who are being sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." This is why he calls us brethren, and this is why we are to count it all joy when we fall into diverse temptations; for He has been there. *He has met every one of them.* He has met each temptation to its fullest extent. He has passed through all these things *for us*. Then He comes back and says to us, I will pass through them *with you.* He passed through them alone for us first; now He passes through them with us. "I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me." But thank the Lord, God was with Him, for "the Father has not left me alone." Thank the Lord that He had the royal courage to do it alone, trusting only the Father to be with Him. And oh, how good He is, not to ask us to try it alone. No. He comes and says, “I will go with you through all these trials”. My brethren, He will go with you. So, then this is why we are not to count them strange. He calls us His brethren, and He has passed through every one of these trials and is well acquainted with them, and therefore we are not to count them as strangers.

**HE IS ALWAYS NEAR***…by Lorrie Rietman*

I disappeared the other day. It was around noon and I noticed the mail had come. Charles was talking on the phone; Lily was busy, and Nathaniel was asleep when I slipped outside to go get it. Our elderly neighbors’ box is next to ours and we make it our routine to bring them their mail as they live directly across the road from us. As I did so, the lady stuck her head out and invited me in “for a minute.” Well, the minute became 45 minutes. When I was finally able to extricate myself from their house, I arrived home to find that Charles was considering whether I had been abducted! He apparently had not seen me leave to get the mail. The house had been scoured; the backyard searched; the basement, the garage…my phone was called and discovered to have been left on the counter. Charles even started calling the neighbors! He called the folks I was visiting but she didn’t answer because she did not recognize the number. Ironically his call elongated my conversation with them because she thought it was a scam number and we started speaking about that topic as a result! I was very amused to learn about this drama happening at home during my neighborly visit.

**UPCOMING EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Things are not always as they seem! While Charles was imaging me stuffed in an unmarked van, I was across the road innocently visiting with our elderly neighbors. It is so easy to jump to conclusions isn’t it?  I was, however, touched to learn of his concern over his “missing” wife. And I found it so ironic that whom we thought was a scammer calling at the neighbors was actually Charles looking for me. When someone is precious to us, we will put effort in to finding him or her, wont we? God says to us, “you will seek Me and find Me*,* when you search for Me with all your heart,” Jeremiah 29:13. I don’t know about you but sometimes I feel far from the Lord and know I need to spend more time seeking Him. But how much effort do I really put in? This scenario brought conviction to my mind that I really need to spend the time and energy drawing close to the Lord as I would seeking a “lost” loved one. Because the reality is that just as I was right there, across the road, God is right here. He is always near. And He is a precious treasure worth our whole heart’s pursuit.

**LADIES TEA:** **July 15** at **1:00 p.m.**: We will meet at the Cracker Barrel restaurant

**VISITATION MINISTRY:** Meets at **3:00 p.m.** in the Seminar Room the 1st and 3rd Sabbath each month.