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Provision FOR The Way.



By the late C. E. Stuart.



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Provision for the Way.



HE heart needs divine ministry. And as we travel along the pathway of life, and make up our experiences of the road, we prove the need and then can thank God that He has foreseen it, and by His Word can meet it. He who has formed the heart knows well what it requires. To some of this provision for the heart of the Christian we would here call attention, summing it up under three heads : *love, care and peace.*

First as to *love.* To the love of God our thoughts are directed. God is the God of love (2 Cor. xiii. 11). He is the author, the source of it ; for He is love (1 John iv. 8, 16). He engenders it in the hearts of His people, since they are partakers of the divine nature. But He also ministers of His love to them, and would have them know that, and count upon it.

Now, the love of God is revealed as meeting need ; first that of the sinner, and then that of the saint. The need of the sinner is met through the activity of that love, as the Lord declared (John iii. 16), and as the Apostle Paul was directed by the Holy Ghost to teach (Eph. ii. 4). The manifestation of divine love is not restricted to the sinner's need. It is treated of as flowing out, so as to be enjoyed by the saint in his need. Of this the epistles teach us.

In the times of *declension* of which Jude writes, part of the directions furnished through him by the Holy Ghost is to keep ourselves in the love of God (21).

Nothing is there like that to keep the heart warm and true ; for it will take us back, as we think of it, to the gift of His Son to die for us on the cross. There then was displayed, in a way man never thought, and never could have hoped for, what in divine love God could give for guilty creatures—nothing short of His well-beloved Son. Would selfishness govern us ? What a rebuke is that manifestation of God's love toward us ! In times of declension, how apt to be selfish, and to get wrapped up in thoughts of our own interests. God thought of us ; gave His Son for us. A rebuke to selfishness indeed. The times of declension are characteristically those in which coldness may creep over the soul and benumb the saint ; but that love, shown in such a way to those once dead and guilty too, should warm, and, as it were, revivify the heart, stirring it to renewed activity, and keeping it from settling down to float lazily with the current. Jude foresaw the danger, and thus provided against it.

Now let us hear Paul speak, as well as his fellow Apostle Jude. What had been the latter's personal experience and circumstances we know not. With those in which Paul found himself we are acquainted. He who had a path of trial, opposition, and suffering such as few, if any other disciple of Christ had (Acts ix. 16), reminds all of that love of God, in which he consciously shared, as an unfailing resource for Christians in their pathway down here. Was it *persecution* that was raging ? Perhaps few saints knew more what persecution was in apostolic days than the Thesalonians (1 Thes. i. 6 ; 2 Thes. i. 4). Suffering as

they were at the time severely, the apostle wrote to encourage them with the certainty of deliverance and final rest in the future (2 Thes. i. 7), giving them an exhortation suited for their then present : "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ" (2 Thes. iii. 5). What had God done for them in the past? He had given His Son for them. Could He forsake these for whom His Son had died? Impossible! "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32). The remembrance of that love, and the sense of it in their hearts would reanimate them; and the patience of Christ—His waiting for the appointed hour to come for His people—would encourage them to wait for full deliverance in the future. How well did that expressed wish of Paul, just referred to, for these saints become him. Persecution seemed his constant experience almost. When others were in comparative quiet, the storm raged fiercely round him. That love, however, doubtless, supported him, in an immediate atmosphere of quietness of spirit in the midst of angry passions and manifestations of intense hatred.

But other trials might befall Christians. Of these, too, the apostle had his share. And he could write of "glorying in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience (or probation); and experience hope; and hope," he adds, "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). Christians are at school down here, and lessons of patience they have to learn. But hope springs up when in *tribulation*, and assures us that school-time with all its exercises, will end, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given to us. Now that love was proved, and measured for us by the gift of God's Son. "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (8). We are ever taken back to that never indeed to forget it; and ever to learn what it can be to us in all the vicissitudes of our life in this world.

In seasons of *declension*, in times of *persecution*, in moments of *pressure*, the great cordial for the heart is the love of God manifested in the gift of *His Son*. Can the Christian, after battling with one or more of these adverse elements, find that all is lost at the last; that hope has vanished; and that despair has rightly darkened his soul? No. "Justified by the blood of Christ, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life," *i.e.*, because He lives (Rom. v. 9, 10). Are we feeling our utter weakness, like shuttlecocks tossed about by powers we cannot control? No power in the universe can shut us out from the reach and the enjoyment of divine love (Rom. viii. 39), the unfailing universal *recipe* to revive the drooping heart. Should not this simple truth of the love of God shewn in the gift of His Son, yet how little grasped really by the heart, put to silence

and banish all unbelieving thoughts so apt to cloud the Christian's soul?

Next, of *care*. We have cares. Placed as we are, we cannot be without them. For them ministry about the Father comes in; and that ministry is provided by the Son Himself. Apostles could tell us of the value and sustaining power of the love of God for us as Christians; but the Son it is who tells us of the Father's care for His children. How suited that is! "No one knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him" (Mat. xi. 27). Here, in humiliation, He proved the Father's care. He would have all His disciples to rely on that care for themselves. Of a Father's interest and a Father's care each one is to be assured. And with a Father's ear open to His children, and His heart occupied with them, they can go to Him and unbosom themselves, as children address their parents.

Of perfect freedom to ask we are taught in what is called the Lord's prayer, and in that petition of it which treats of daily wants: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Mat. vi. 11). And of our Father's full acquaintance with all that we need, we are assured by the Son Himself. The heathen may use vain repetitions, thinking to be heard for their much speaking. Not such is to be the practice of God's children. "For," adds the Lord, "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him" (vi. 8). We cannot really acquaint Him with any want of which He is not already fully cognisant, nor which, if really requisite, He is not as willing as able to meet.

To Him we can go and find the relief of unburdening ourselves in prayer, and in the assured confidence that He needs not to be informed of anything that is lacking. He knows all before we ask. Hence, simple, and short petitions too, are sufficient, if offered up in faith. The heathen hope to be heard for their much speaking. But they address One whom they know not, and with no idea of relationship true of the One to whom they speak. The child is to remember that he is praying to his Father, who is deeply interested in all that concerns him, and who delights, He has graciously taught us, to give good gifts to His children. Would any torture themselves with doubt as to whether they have expressed themselves to Him in a full or clear enough way? If it is the prayer of faith, it has been poured into the listening ear of Him who knew what the need would be before the child had asked, or had even discovered it. What relief of heart will this give, if we remember it.

To proceed. The revelation of the Father is to check all anxious corroding care. Many, how many, have felt bowed down under the weight of cares, which they were never intended to carry, forgetting that it is the Father's part to provide for the needs of the children. And though we can say that the High and the Holy One and the Almighty, is our Father, we are not to think that only great troubles, unusual cares, are to be brought to Him. The smallest need, the daily wants, are His concern. Of this our Lord assures us, as He speaks of the supply of food, and of the need of clothing. All require these—the food daily, the

clothing constantly. Are we put into this scene to shift for ourselves as best we may? Would that be like a Father, our Father who is our God? He who provides food for the birds, and who clothes the lilies of the field, will meet the wants of His children. What He does as Creator, He will not fall short in as Father. So we read, "Take no thought (or, be not anxious) for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on." Again, "Which of you by *taking thought* (or, being anxious) can add one cubit to his stature?" Again, "Why *take ye thought* (or, be anxious) for raiment?" Again, "Therefore *take no thought* (or, be not anxious) saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" And once again, "*Take therefore no thought* (or, be not anxious) for the morrow" (Mat. vi. 25, 27, 28, 31, 34). Why not? Because we have a Father in heaven who knoweth that we have need of all these things. In vi. 8, when warning against vain repetitions, the Lord assures us that our Father knoweth what things we have need of before we ask Him. Here, when speaking of the daily wants, He reminds us of the Father's perfect understanding that we need all such things. Suited is His language in each case.

It is the revelation of the Father, then, that should check in us all such anxious care. Has it always done that? Have we not too often to own how we have forgotten the real interest of our Father in all that concerns His children? Nothing too small for Him to notice; nothing too commonplace for Him

to supply. And, seeking His kingdom and righteousness, all these things shall be added to us (33).

A Father in heaven! Of what provision for the way does this assure us! Man could never, by his own unaided thought, have conceived of this. The devil would never have suggested the possibility of it. God unasked, unsolicited by any, has revealed it. Do we make use of it? Do we habitually own in practice what we subscribe to in theory?

This leads on to the third provision referred to above—*peace*. Preserved from carking care by the remembrance that we have a Father in heaven who provides for His children, the Apostle Paul exhorts us as to the outlet for the heart's desires to God in prayer. "Be careful (or, be anxious) for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. iv. 6). Perfect freedom there is to tell God everything, though He knows it all already; and not only is prayer allowed, but supplication, or entreaty, likewise. What grace on the part of the Almighty! How differently would men in power often act? Enough to hear expressed in the shortest manner the need of the suitor, or at times refuse an audience when sought for. But our God is gracious and merciful. The want of each child He is willing to have brought before Him. None should have a burden on the heart which he has not liberty to bring to Him. But we must not forget "thanksgiving." Surely the remembrance of previous answers, on the ground too on which we can come, and in whose

Name we can ask, as well as the freedom accorded to us to supplicate, all this may well call for thanksgiving on our part.

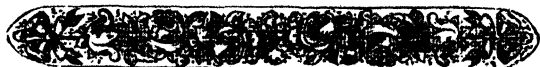
And now for the effect of thus asking. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through (or, in) Christ Jesus." Hearts and thoughts to be kept, and that in Christ Jesus. In Him all is bright and peaceful. Of the peace of God we here read. Of peace *with* God Romans (v. 1) treats. Of the peace of Christ, the Lord Himself (John xiv. 27) and Paul (Col. iii. 15, when rightly read) both teach. Here it is the peace *of God*. God's peace—that in which He dwells—unruffled peace—the atmosphere around His throne; that peace shall keep (or, guard) our hearts in Christ Jesus. It is peace, flowing from bringing our desires to God and *leaving them with Him*. This implies submission to His will. How often do we bring the need to Him, and then carry the care still? That cannot minister peace. But the leaving all with Him after presenting the request will give peace, whether the petition be granted or not.

And here we would cite the Apostle Paul as illustrating what he teaches. "I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things I am instructed (or, have learnt the secret) both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Him that strengtheneth me" (iv. 11-13). With Paul it was a lesson really learnt.

Of us, what shall we say? He evidently knew, and enjoyed in his soul the peace of God. What, let it be asked again, can each reader say about this?

And now to sum up. How full and varied is the provision for the heart of each saint in His word. The love of God to warm and cheer the heart in persecution, tribulation, or a time of general declension; the Father's care to keep the child from being borne down and overweighted with anxieties; the peace of God to guard the heart in Christ Jesus, keeping each one rejoicing indeed in Him. Provision for the way how full! Yet it is not all the provision that our God has revealed.





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