

THE BELIEVER'S DAILY REMEMBRANCER

A review and appreciation

Margaret E. Thackway

Imagine you are at home, and there is a knock at the door. Your pastor is standing there, and delighted, you invite him in. After exchanging pleasantries, he draws up a chair and comes to the main purpose of his visit. He asks how things are with you spiritually. Grateful for this kind inquiry, you confess to having found the way hard-going of late. The world, the flesh, and the devil have combined to bring you low but here is a welcome opportunity to be helped by a kind friend.

Hardly knowing where to begin, you feel that perhaps a good place is the many trials that seem to have come one after the other. You tell Pastor that they have seemed overwhelming. The waves have been mountainous and the winds boisterous, and at times you have been ready to cry out with the disciples, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"

Your spiritual guide insists that if the thought ever occurs that God has ceased to care for you, you may be sure it has come from the enemy of souls, for God's Word says, "He careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7). However, this does not exempt us from trial, for Psalm 11:5 says, "The LORD trieth the righteous," and,

"Where the Lord gives grace, He always tries it; therefore His own people must expect to pass through the fire. He will try our faith, of what sort it is; our love, of what strength it is. He will also try our patience and our constancy. Let us not therefore be surprised at trials, nor let us be discouraged by them; for He tries out of pure love, with the best design, according to a wise rule, and at the fittest season. He considers our frame, our circumstances, and our foes; He does nothing rashly or unkindly. He would not put us to pain if we did not need it; trials are preservatives or restoratives; they keep us back from evil, or are intended to bring us out of the evil into which we have fallen. Your trials then are from the Lord; His wisdom selected, His love appointed, and His providence brings them about. If you ask, "Why, Lord, am I tried thus?" the answer is, "to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to do thee good at thy latter end." Receive every trial as from God, and go to Him for strength to bear it, grace to sanctify it, and deliverance from it; and so all will be well. It is not for His pleasure, but for your profit, that you are so tried.

Often the clouds of deepest woe,
A sweet love-message bear;
Dark though they seem, we cannot find
A frown of anger there."

Then you go on to share what is, perhaps, your most painful trial: that of the inward conflict with a wicked heart and remaining sin. After all, outward trials come and go when God's purpose in sending them has been accomplished. But what is to be done with the heart, for you carry that about with you always? You pray to be delivered, not only from individual sins, but from the very love of sin but

you fear the workings of sin are getting stronger and more vigorous.

God has confirmed to you the truth of His Word concerning your nature, and how painful the revelation has been. Daily you experience the conflict between the old man and the new. Your renewed nature loves God's Word, and is anxious that it should search the heart and discover any sin that would grieve the Holy Spirit and cause His sweet Influences to be withdrawn. You increasingly long to have your heart directed into Christ's love, but realise that such joys are reserved only for those who walk closely with God and keep His commandments. You are anxious, therefore, to make the slightest departure from His precepts a matter of conscience, for you long to please Him in all things.

Alas, the carnal nature wars against the spiritual, and you feel yourself being brought into the law of sin. How well you understand that the flesh and the Spirit are contrary the one to the other, for they unremittingly strive to get the mastery over you, so that you are ready to cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Pastor, who is no stranger to such exercises, is sympathetic to all you say. How grateful you are for his wise counsel, for he proceeds to quote Job 7:20, "O thou preserver of men," and goes on to say,

"We have neither wisdom nor strength to preserve ourselves; we are daily liable to fall, and unless God preserve us, we certainly shall. Our hearts are so deceitful, our corruptions are so strong, and Satan is so vigilant, that we need look to God as our Preserver every hour, and call upon Him to uphold us every moment. He can preserve; He does preserve; but only in the way of obedience. Except we are watchful, prayerful, and walking humbly with Him, we have no security; we may fall into the grossest sins, and commit the greatest crimes. O believer, never think yourself safe, but as you are leaning on Jesus, calling upon your heavenly Father, and cultivating communion with the Holy Ghost! Indeed you are in danger: Satan, the world, and your corruptions are all leagued against you; nothing but omnipotent grace can keep you. Cease from man, trust not your own heart, but keep close to the good Shepherd. 'He is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.' Your Preserver is also your Observer; He notices every thought, word, and deed."

The time comes for Pastor to leave, but not before commending you to the God of all grace. As you afterwards reflect upon the blessed effect of his visit, you can only thank God for His promise fulfilled: "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jeremiah 3:15). How grateful we should be for such men, and yet who of us values them as we should?

The pastor I have mentioned in this imaginary visit is James Smith (1802-1862). His gracious words are from his devotional readings entitled *The Believers Daily Remembrancer*, otherwise called, Pastor's Morning and Evening Visit (Morning, 21 February and Morning, 1 November, respectively). As is clear from these examples, "Mr. Smith's" readings are experimental and deal with heart religion. We cannot help feeling that this is a missing dimension in much of biblical Christianity these days. Mr. Smith's style is plain and easily

understood, and can help us towards a more exercised knowledge of the Lord. In the Preface to the Morning readings, he further explains his purpose,

“In this little work, I aim to speak in the closet, in the cottage, in the kitchen, and even in the field, to the different classes of the Lord’s family; endeavouring to draw them nearer to their God and gracious Father. My desire is to promote the power of godliness; and these little pieces are written to convince, comfort, and correct; to fan the flame of devotion, and to produce holiness of heart and life.”

The Believers Daily Remembrancer, first published in 1846, was originally produced in two volumes as separate Morning and Evening readings. As a family we proved their usefulness over many years as part of family worship, and we felt a burden to have these reprinted. My husband asked in the *Quarterly* if anyone would consider publishing these for us. Friends at Calvary Bible Presbyterian Church in Singapore volunteered to undertake this project, and in 1997 the two volumes were brought out in one attractive volume. The original, being a nineteenth-century publication, had many printers’ errors that were not all rectified in the new edition, but this did not detract from the value of this richly spiritual work.

However, the Singapore edition sold out and it was felt a new edition was needed. This would have the advantage of being able to correct the errors and check the work with original editions to make sure it is complete. A Scripture Index was also thought desirable. All this has been done with the new edition and we heartily recommend this volume, believing that if it is used each day it will prove a lifelong treasure.