

General Topics :: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement**A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/22 11:46**

Brethren, I've been wanting to post these excerpts from William Bridge's *"A Lifting Up for the Downcast"* for sometime now. They have been a great encouragement to me after failures and a wonderful remedy for healing the pangs of condemnation. I post these for our edification here on SermonIndex, knowing in my spirit that this thread is timely and needful for a soul in current distress. My word to you is this: Take courage, dear brother or sister, and drink down this good medicine. God is full of mercy and blessed restoration:

"God never permits His people to fall into any sin but He intends to make that sin an outlet unto further grace and comfort to them. The Scripture tells us that the Lord permitted Hezekiah to fall, that Hezekiah might know all that was in his heart. He did not know his own heart before, and therefore the Lord let him fall that he might know his own heart. Sin gains not, but is a loser by every fall of the godly. And if you look into the Scripture, you will observe that when the people of God fall, they usually fail in that grace wherein they most excel. Wherein they did most excel, therein they did most miscarry. Observe:

1. Moses did most excel in meekness, and therein did he most miscarry -- we read of no other sin concerning Moses but his anger.
2. Job did most excel in patience, and therein did he most miscarry.
3. Peter did most excel in zeal and resolution for Christ -- *"Though all the world forsake thee, yet will not I"* -- and therein did he most miscarry, denying Christ at the voice of a damsel. Yea, you will observe that the saints fell and failed in the grace wherein they did most excel; and they did most excel wherein they did most miscarry.

What is the reason of this? The Lord, by the overruling hand of His grace, did make their very miscarriages, inlets and occasions to their further grace and holiness. God has a great revenue from the very infirmities of His people. *He never permits any of His people to fall into any sin, but He hath a design by that fall to break the back of that sin they fall into.* Now, then, have the saints and the people of God have any reason to be discouraged in this respect?

You know how it was with the leper in the times of the Old Testament, when he was carried from his own house by reason of his uncleanness; or even now, with a man that has the plague and is carried from his own house by reason thereof. The man may say, "Though I be removed from mine own house, and have not the use of my house, yet I have the right to my house still. And though I cannot come to the use of my land, yet I have the right to my land still."

So likewise a godly man may say as concerning his own sin, "This sin of mine is indeed the plague of my soul, and a leprosy, but though by this leprosy of mine I am now suspended from the use of my comforts -- yea, from the full use of my interest in Jesus Christ -- I yet have an interest in Christ. I still have a right to Christ, although I cannot come to the use of Him as I did before -- *yet I have a right to Jesus Christ now, even as I had before.*"

And if all these things be so, why should a godly man be cast down or discouraged in this respect? Surely he ought not be so."

- William Bridge, from *"A Lifting Up for the Downcast"*, 1648

Re: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Depression - posted by tjservant (), on: 2007/9/22 11:59

Thank you brother.

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Re: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Depression, on: 2007/9/22 12:26

Brother Paul, this is appreciated.

I could write a small pamphlet sized auto-biography entitled, "Confessions of a former Legalist".

Brother, I understand legalism first hand.

How were my ways changed ? By what you have posted. "Let he who thinks he stand, take heed, lest he FALL."

I never "fell" in the sense of backsliding - but fell straight unto my face in resignation that HE "uses" our failures but uses them to show our insufficiency --- "having none of our own." It's a spiritual cause and effect. Walking after the flesh/the letter will never cause us to stand - but fall.

I understand in 'some' cases that legalism is a person's sincere effort to Love or please, the God they have finally found - but HE only receives the Glory when we walk in the Spirit and not the letter of the law --- the letter killeth --- the Spirit brings Life - His Life -- and we can be in the position to more readily be "transformed into His Image", which whom He did foreknew, predestined us to.

I've relaxed in that - He **knows** those who are His and all the screaming in the world will not transform a goat into a sheep. That transformation of a willing soul, is for the Office of The Holy Spirit.

We either love Him or we don't -- how can we force 'anyone' to love Him ?

Thank you Brother!

Re: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Depression - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/9/22 12:37

Quote:

PaulWest wrote:

He never permits any of His people to fall into any sin, but He hath a design by that fall to break the back of that sin they fall into.

These *excerpts* blessed me greatly, thank you brother.... I needed this

Seems to be a very good book judging only from this

Christian

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/22 13:28

Quote:

-----I could write a small pamphlet sized auto-biography entitled, "Confessions of a former Legalist".

Believe me, I could be the co-author and write the preface. God finally had to utterly demolish me through repeated failures -- break my spiritual arms and legs -- and bring me down to a crumbling ruin.

Quote:

-----I never "fell" in the sense of backsliding - but fell straight unto my face in resignation that HE "uses" our failures but uses them to show our insufficiency --- "having none of our own." It's a spiritual cause and effect. Walking after the flesh/the letter will never cause us to stand - but fall.

For me it was the finality of being totally crushed and ground to powder. Before that I lived a victorious Christian life (as many legalists would describe it): I preached hellfire and repentance, preached Hebrews 9:27 open-air, layed hands on kids at youth rallies and they would fall down, had entire *chapters* of the Bible memorized, was careful to never forget my quiet time and read a certain amount of Scripture each morning and evening. For a period I was even fasting two times a week, inspired by John Wesley and so I could get more power in the pulpit and on the streets. And the power would co

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me! Demons would sometimes manifest at the rallies I preached at, and this, of course, would only further bolster my pride and self-sufficiency.

Soon, I began to think in my heart: "Hey, my preaching is getting more and more powerful, God is really moving when I preach, I see kids taking out their tongue studs and eyebrow piercings and just prostrating themselves on the floor weeping. It must be because of my protracted prayer life and extensive scripture memorization, and bi-weekly fasting, and avidly abstaining from all things worldly! I'll just keep at it and there's no telling *what* God will do!"

And when I crashed and burned, it happened suddenly and in totality, like the falling of the towers on 9/11. In a blink of an eye it was all over, all my strength and confidence and self-sufficiency and spiritual pride was immediately emasculated as I found myself shackled to a computer screen indulging in pornographic images. I confessed to my wife, and she was staggered. I stopped preaching, open-air, memorizing scripture, waking up early to read the Bible, long prayers, tongues, everything was cut off and I was in utter spiritual desolation.

Well, it was during these times that God rearranged my furniture and did a massive makeover that only He could do. He smashed me in a million shards and then put me in the furnace. After the shards melted, He molded me back together on His wheel and then put me back in the furnace. And again, and again, and again. And I'm still in the furnace, on the wheel, back in the furnace, back on the wheel. Everytime I think the majority of the chaff's finally gone, the flames increase and more just gushes out. I'm like a sponge that always seems to yield dirty water if you squeeze hard enough. And God knows how to squeeze!

But the furnace is the place where God teaches grace, and the furnace is a blessed place. The furnace is where God introduced me to the Puritans and the doctrines of grace and hope in the midst of my failures, and the Holy Spirit has repeatedly used them like a balm to my scorched soul.

I am glad God is not a man, and I bless Him that He is not like me, or Charles Finney, or has the mindset of the average repentance preacher, or my wife. The greatest truth I have discovered about God is that He loves me like a son, and that He is full of mercy and grace and everlasting lovingkindness to those who have fallen. I can weep right now while typing this because it is true. When a believer comes to this blessed understanding, and can truly see God and know God in the fires of brokenness, never again will he be pulled apart by legalism.

In spite of all the wonderful things I did for God before I fell, I can say now with all sincerity *that I did not truly know God*. I was saved, but I did not *truly* know Him, for I hadn't yet experienced His love and mercy and grace in the midst of my own loathsomeness and wretched sin. As result, I will never again preach or teach the way I used to preach and teach. Mine eyes have been opened to His most amazing grace.

Blessed be God who is our Salvation, and who keeps us in right standing by His grace alone, and by nothing that we do or excel at.

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by Tears_of_joy, on: 2007/9/22 17:27

Quote:

-----The greatest truth I have discovered about God is that He loves me like a son,

Thank you.

(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id13468&forum35) when God run!
(http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id8661&forum35#65747) In His Arms

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Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/22 18:24

Quote:

-----Thank you

You are most graciously welcome.

"But as many received Him, to them He gave *power to become the sons of God*, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12).

and also

"Thou didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me" (John 17:23).

These two Scriptures are precious to me beyond words. In them I have blessed assurance and spiritual stability and faith. God loves me just as a Father loves a son; in fact, God loves me just *like He loves Jesus, His Son*.

When a son is disobedient, the Father doesn't disown him, He doesn't stop loving him. I often watch and see the attention a father gives his son. Remember Absalom? Even when he conspired against David his father, David still had such a love and compassion for his traitorous offspring. "Oh, Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son..." David bewailed when he heard of Absalom's death. He wished he could have taken Absalom's place and died in his stead, and that is exactly what God did for us, that we might become the sons of God by His power....He died Himself by the dart of Joab for His own beloved Absaloms who committed treason against *Him*.

I see how wicked men show such affection to their sons, they hug them, kiss them, fret over their safety and peace and health and success in life. How much more attention and compassion and lovingkindness God wills to display to *His* sons. Now couple this with the fact that you have been chosen before the world, according to the foreknowledge of God to eternal sonship...and now it is suddenly beyond all scope of mortal comprehension. This is a wondrous love too deep and amazing for us. All I can do in my finite understanding is realize I am a son to God, a dearly beloved son, one who is reconciled to his Father through His Father's own blood *in the form of His own Son* and that all this was incomprehensibly considered before the very foundations of time.

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by Tears_of_joy, on: 2007/9/22 18:43

Quote:

-----All I can do in my finite understanding is realize I am a son to God, a dearly beloved son, one who is reconciled to his Father through His Father's own blood in the form of His own Son and that all this was incomprehensibly considered before the very foundations of time.

A couple of days ago, in a talk with a mature brother in the Lord, we shared similar thoughts and among the many things we shared, he said something like this:

"My greatest comfort is that HE is my FATHER. God is a Father. Besides His mercy as a Father, He is also ABLE and MIGHTY to train us and make us in what He desires of us.

This is the hope I have in Him, because I have a Father like Him, he will NOT FAIL to make out of me son for HIS glory"

He is our Perfect Father.

Kire

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Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/22 19:16

Quote:
-----"My greatest comfort is that HE is my FATHER. God is a Father. Besides His mercy as a Father, He is also ABLE and MIGHTY to train us and make us in what He desires of us.

Yes, brother. The greatest comfort for me also is that God is my Father and that He loves me like He loves Jesus. It's all about eternal *sonship*, and this, I believe God showed us in the manifestation of Himself in Christ, the *Son* of God.

The theme of sonship runs like a silver thread throughout the Bible. The promised son of Isaac to Abraham, David son of Jesse, all the kings of Judah, the genealogies in the book of Matthew culminating with Christ. The sons of Aaron, the sons of Levi, the sons of Jacob which became the tribes of Israel. Ezekiel the son of man, and, of course, Jesus Christ, the son of David, and the Son of God.

What is implied here? There is something significant of God appearing to man and reconciling him to Himself in the form of His own Son. James speaks of us being the "firstfruits of his creatures", created of the will of God by the "Word of Truth" (James 1:18). Elsewhere in Colossians we hear of all things being created by and through Jesus Christ, Who is the "Word of Truth which became flesh" as spoken of by John. There is something so deep here that it is staggeringly overwhelming as we consider this amazing, bleeding love God has for us, the love and care He shows for His own *sons* that He has elected before the creation of the world. The same love God showed Jesus is shown to us, who have been given to the Son by the Father that we might become sons in the righteousness of *The Son*.

That He chose to reveal His plan through the manifestation of the Eternal Sonship in Jesus Christ and the glory He shared with the Father from "before the world was" (John 17:5) is really too tremendous to think upon. I openly admit I do not understand all this, brother. I think if the full revelation were to come to me, my head would explode in rapture. I only know that such sublime truth is much bigger than I am and escapes my mortal faculties of reason and logic like an ant before the gaping universe. The Fatherly love God expresses to me is as big and vast as the sky is above my head, and it cloaks me daily, it envelops me, and I live beneath it, blissfully at peace though not even *close* to grasping its full revelation and splendor.

I have the assurance of God's everpresent bestowal grace to "keep me by His power through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:5) and I rest in knowing it is He Who wills in me to do anything that may be of good godly virtue in accordance to this *sonship* I have so graciously been elected unto (Philippians 2:13).

I echo the sentiments of Bridge: Knowing these precious truths, how can I ever be discouraged? Precious grace! Precious transforming grace!

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by tjservant (), on: 2007/9/22 19:34

This thread has been water to a dry land.

Thank you for being so open and honest brother Paul.

Re:, on: 2007/9/22 19:38

Very touched by your testimony Brother. Sounds very familiar ministry wise, except the way I was broken was through other means. Our God has unlimited resources that He can use to show us who we really are. He has Hospitals, mental wards, counterfeit spirits, car accidents, the death of a loved one and on & on --- so many ways to take our cocky side down. He is so good.

The most valuable lesson He gave me was to know that every human - until the day they die, will have "pride" in their lives. Even Hudson Taylor testified to this, as did other great men of days past.

It frightens me most when I hear Saints talk of how humble they are 'now'. I hold my breath now whenever I hear it. I'm sure you know what I mean - that fear that grips you for their sake makes your heart skip a beat, literally. Pride is "the root" of ALL sin and all that is un-Christ-like. Anything un-like Christ is sin - not just those we can list. And we are never full

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rid of this pride until we SEE Him as He is. He's chizeling at it - but to be 100% delivered is not in this life. Only a hungry and thirsting to continually be refined - as you said - in the fires - but to be totally rid of that sly pride in us is only in our hopes. If we could only/always remember that, we'd have it much easier in our relationship with Him and all else. There are no pride-free humans - none. God help us to see that.

We can preach "humility" until the cows come home and in most cases, it only puffs up the reader, because at least they've read about it and agreed.

How deceptive our own hearts are - Indeed.

Another hard lesson to learn is our relationships at home. 1Ti 3:5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

How many Ministers do you suppose have happy wives? Not just Pastors, but any of us in the ministry. 'That' is a hard saying. I find that unless that is in order - there is an "under-current of anger" in the man's (or woman's) life for the unfulfilled relationship - whether the one is at fault or not. There's a tension there that eventually surfaces in some 'not nice' way. The anger will surface somewhere and God will normally try to give warning signs before it's done in public - if we can heed those warnings first, before we blow it in public.

We need to pray for one another's Homes. And for the single among us - for the Lord to show how pride is what stops the flow of His virtue. The mind set that "we deserve better in life or something that we Don't have".

Lord Bless you brother and brothers. I also covet your prayers until we meet by His Side. Thank you.

Re: - posted by BrokenOne (), on: 2007/9/22 19:39

Quote:

-----This thread has been water to a dry land

AMEN!!!

Quote:

-----Well, it was during these times that God rearranged my furniture and did a massive makeover that only He could do. He smashed me in a million shards and then put me in the furnace. After the shards melted, He molded me back together on His wheel and then put me back in the furnace. And again, and again, and again. And I'm still in the furnace, on the wheel, back in the furnace, back on the wheel. Everytime I think the majority of the chaff's finally gone, the flames increase and more just gushes out. I'm like a sponge that always seems to yield dirty water if you squeeze hard enough. And God knows how to squeeze!

But the furnace is the place where God teaches grace, and the furnace is a blessed place.

The furnace is a blessed placeÂ.....

Brother Paul, thank you for sharing so openly. This is a tremendous testimony. As a fellow occupant of the furnace, I too can see it as His mercy.

Danielle

Re: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement - posted by Tears_of_joy, on: 2007/9/22 19:59

Oh there is much here.

Brother Paul, your last post reminded me of that wonderful hymn by Wesley:

And can it be that I should gain

And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain—
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

’Tis mystery all: th’Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
’Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.
’Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father’s throne above
So free, so infinite His grace—
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam’s helpless race:
’Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!
’Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature’s night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

Still the small inward voice I hear,
That whispers all my sins forgiven;
Still the atoning blood is near,
That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.
I feel the life His wounds impart;
I feel the Savior in my heart.

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th’eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.
Bold I approach th’eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Re:, on: 2007/9/22 19:59

Thank you, brother Paul, for sharing the article first of all and then sharing what God has been doing in you. It’s been wonderful to read it all throughout today! And it’s been a blessing to read the words of the others also...this is a truly edifying thread, to God be the glory.

I pray that God continues to take all of us deeper in the process of conforming us to the image of Christ Jesus.

~Joy

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Re: Sonship - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/23 18:12

Quote:

-----Brother Paul, your last post reminded me of that wonderful hymn by Wesley:

It's wonderful you mention this hymn, as it is one of my all-time favorites. It is a most glorious hymn to sing with a pure heart. Charles Wesley wrote another amazing hymn I love: "Arise, My Soul Arise" The part about the Spirit of God answering to the Blood of Christ and confirming to my discouraged spirit that I am *born of God* -- that is, a *son of God* -- is just staggering.

I don't think I've ever come across such deep truth so effortlessly conveyed.

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by pastorfrin, on: 2007/9/23 19:51

Thank you Brother Paul,

This brings back what so many of us have learned the hard way, but bless God and Saviour that it did happen. I believe it is the only way we could ever really know what it means to have the Son to make us free.

Quote:

-----And when I crashed and burned, it happened suddenly and in totality, like the falling of the towers on 9/11. In a blink of an eye it was all over, all my strength and confidence and self-sufficiency and spiritual pride was immediately emasculated

I stopped the quote here to add my own failure: looking at the horrors of my past through pills and a bottle that only led to four years of unrelenting torment, and then; oh how wonderful it was to read these lovely words and have the Holy Spirit quicken them to my heart.

WHOM the SON sets FREE is FREE INDEED.

The apostle Paul wrote:

Philip. 3:8-14

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

That we may never tire of seeking to know Him more.

Thank you again Brother Paul.

In His Love
pastorfrin

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Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/23 20:44

Quote:
-----This brings back what so many of us have learned the hard way, but bless God and Saviour that it did happen. I believe it is the only way we could ever really know what it means to have the Son to make us free.

Yes, my brother. I do know that in my case, it was *the* only way. It still is. The Lord knows me as His son, and as an omniscient Father He knows all things *for* me best and does all things *to* me well. I would never know true freedom had I not fallen. What compounded the pain was that I fell into the very sin I preached so vehemently against. When I heard reports of pastors falling into pornography, I would secretly sneer and say to myself, "If they had the type of walk I have, that would have never happened..." I would actually think these things in my heart as I listened and put on an empathetic face.

Oh, the secret inward whisperings. That's where it all started. The success, the continued victories over the flesh had a paradoxically ruinous effect to me because I let it swell my head with spiritual pride and blind my eyes to the plights of *real* soldiers laying bloodied and tattered in the trenches. I was too immature to realize how great a tactician Satan is, how silently beguiling the flesh can be, and how transparent victory over the world may seem. I thought I had crucified those giants, but they had only gone into hiding, like the five Canaanite kings sitting low in the cave at Mekkedah.

Like I said yesterday, and to echo your sentiments dear brother, to sit in torment and suffering and then to have the Holy Spirit quicken a precious word to your spirit -- this is true freedom. Such was the shock when I suddenly realized the true God of the universe was unlike the other deity I once preached and thundered mercilessly to awestruck kids and adults. I only saw the true God from the shadows, but as the fires of affliction came upon my soul, the shadows began to dissipate and I started to see His awesome nature in the bright blaze of suffering...and discovered in the hour of my greatest need that He alone was my full sufficiency of grace and mercy and fathomless love. This amazing and eternal God of all creation told me I was *His son*, and that He loved me more than I could ever comprehend. This blessed revelation of God's incomprehensible *acceptance of me despite my failure* had an immediate annihilating effect on me and utterly smashed my entire domain of religious self-sufficiency into a million pieces.

I began to think of how close a son is to his father when he is being spanked. I saw that he is on his father's lap, and the father's hands are on him. I soon discovered that the hands of God are big and strong and firm, but that they are also most loving and warm and good during His correction. The balance between pain and comfort is always perfectly tempered, and my soul has since learned to bow in humility and thanksgiving before His most noble rod.

The reminder that I am a *son* never diminishes with the spanking; it grows stronger, and by each spanking I am more assured of sonship. I am a *son* and my Father loves me as such, and therefore He spans as such. O the blessedness of *sonship* through the blood of Christ, to meditate thereon in brokenness and crushing failure. To despise self to such a deep degree until an awareness of God's acceptance enters through the portals of heavenly glory, beyond space and time...up to the place where the magnificent Father of Lights dwells in eternity and cares for His earthbound sons and cleanses them by faith through the everflowing fountain of blood streaming like a crimson rainbow from heaven to earth.

I do bless God that He is my Father, and I am His son.

Brother Paul

Re: failings and falling - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2007/9/24 9:28

Paul,

thank you for your post, for your openness. I can relate to so much of what you are saying. Though I have fallen and failed in different areas, it still caught me so off guard.

Like you, at one point I was so 'proud' that I knew the way to live the 'victorious' christian life. I even had my own website to prove it. I thought I had done the hard part of surrendering all to the Lord and then everything would be just fine. How wrong I was.

I cannot call myself an expert at anything anymore. I cannot give people my quaint little 'remedies' for overcoming

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anymore. I do not dare.

Reminds me of something Carter Conlon once said:

Quote:
-----"If we had no problems we'd be impossible to live with. We'd have these pat answers, we'd be throwing little trite scriptures at every body, we'd be an impossible people to live with." -Carter Conlon (Why Do Some Battles Never Go Away)

I have nothing of my own anymore. None of my self sufficiency. None of my own doing. It is truly by grace that I sit here- and I truly know that and understand that now. I don't deserve Him or His grace- yet He offers it anyway. I am so unworthy, yet He says I am not worthless.

I thought it was my responsibility to live the perfect christian life in front of other christians as well as non believers. I tried with all my might to do that. I wanted to make Christ look good. Unbeknownst to me, the Lord didn't want me to look perfect to others. Do I understand it all, understand why not? No. But I know it has to do with pride, with my relationship to Him- for I once thought I had to be 'perfect' for me to be accepted by Him (and I still struggle with this).

I really don't have all the words to say about this; but just thank you. Not many understand this unless they have lived it. You see people talking about living a perfect sinless life, and you kind of just feel like laughing or crying. There is no explaining until you have failed so miserably - despite your best attempts to be pleasing to God.

In His grace, Chanin

Re: A most wonderful remedy indeed! - posted by crsschk (), on: 2007/9/24 10:10

Quote:
-----this is a truly edifying thread, to God be the glory.

Reading through this yesterday brought such an incredible ... speechlessness along with that tremendous sensation that electrifies the hair on ones arms ... it brought out some measures that I would not have even suspected ... I was, and am still humbled by our brothers sharing and the responses that followed. It caused some reflection towards past thoughts shared about past years fellowship, those things shared amongst ourselves, even towards some corrective moments where one of our own expressed the deep heart expressions of prayers for each other ... and then she shows up with a reply ! :-)

In all sincerity of heart and love for the brethren, it is high privilege to be in this company of saints.

Re: The sweet lessons that arise from the smoke of failure and sin - posted by roadsign (), on: 2007/9/24 10:12

Quote:
----- The furnace is where God introduced me to the Puritans and the doctrines of grace and hope in the midst of my failures, and the Holy Spirit has repeatedly used them like a balm to my scorched soul.

Sometimes I think that our greatest fear in the church is sin and failure. The danger is that we either deny it altogether or zealously swarm around it to "pull out the sliver". But then we miss the important lessons to be gained. We fail to see failure as the path to growth in grace - not only for the sinner, but also those surrounding his/her life.

I suspect that the underlying fear is the perceived threat to the organization's "unity" and preservation. Quick! Snuff out the "sin" before we get a bad reputation, or before it gets out of hand, or we totter! Never mind the process of patience, tolerance, prayer, talking/working it through, getting to the root of it, finding God's grace and freedom etc.

Is this not really perfectionism: the fear of the imperfect. Really our fear of sin is greater than our trust in the One who frees us from sin.

General Topics :: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement

This faulty thinking leads to a controlling type of Christianity, where the system is held together by quick remedies: band aids - a form of godliness without the power.

I'm thankful for this article. It brings us back to a correct attitude towards sin and also a trust in our Lord. I'd be interested in modern writings on this. One of the best that I have discovered so far is Larry Crabb's book: "The Pressure's Off". I know there's stuff out there - I've bumped into it on the net. That shouldn't be surprising. Many of us, like Paul West, are discovering God's sweet grace through the process of our failures.

Diane

Re: failure - posted by moreofHim (), on: 2007/9/24 11:05

Diane,

Quote:

-----Really our fear of sin is greater than our trust in the One who frees us from sin.

That statement is amazing, really. Worth pondering on for awhile.

Quote:

-----This faulty thinking leads to a controlling type of Christianity, where the system is held together by quick remedies: bandaids - a form of godliness without the power.

This also...answers some of my questions as to why, even though a group or church may seem to have all the right 'biblical answers', yet still seems lacking somewhere and can't put my finger on it. Those who think they know the most, may actually know the least.

Thank you.

Mike,

blessings to you and yours. My heart will always have a little spot with SI written on it :-)....

In His love, Chanin

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/24 13:56

Dear brethren, I thought this to be as good a place as any to post this blessed hymn. I bless my God for our fellowship here, I bless Him for the sweetness of knowing Him in freedom and without condemnation. May His Spirit impart such revelation to our souls, may we discover what Esther discovered before the king: a scepter of favor. May we discover what Ruth found in Boaz: unmerited lovingkindness and protection. O brethren, He is kind and good and gentle and there is forgiveness and restorative healing in His wings...if we would only but come before His throne in our stained garments of our own failures and weakness. O that we would strip and forever remain naked in His presence, humbled, so that He might clothe us with new garments always.

"Thou knowest, Lord, the weariness and sorrow
Of the sad heart that comes to Thee for rest;
Cares of today, and burdens for tomorrow,
Blessings implored, and sins to be confessed;
I come before Thee at Thy gracious word,
And lay them at Thy feet: Thou knowest, Lord.

Thou knowest all the present: each temptation,
Each toilsome duty, each foreboding fear;
All to myself assigned of tribulation,
Or to beloved ones than self more dear;
All pensive memories, as I journey on,
Longings for vanished smiles and voices gone.

Thou knowest all the future: gleams of gladness
By stormy clouds too quickly overcast;
Hours of sweet fellowship, and parting sadness,
And the dark river to be crossed at last;
O what could confidence and hope afford
To tread that path, but this, Thou knowest, Lord!

Thou knowest, not alone as God, all knowing;
As man, our mortal weakness Thou has proved:
On earth, with purest sympathies o'erflowing,
O Savior, Thou hast wept, and Thou hast loved;
And love and sorrow still to Thee may come,
And find a hiding place, a rest, a home.

Therefore I come, Thy gentle call obeying,
And lay my sins and sorrows at Thy feet;
On everlasting Strength my weakness staying,
Clothed in Thy robe of righteousness complete:
Then rising and refreshed I leave Thy throne,
And follow on to know as I am known."

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2007/9/24 19:11

Quote:
-----I'm thankful for this article. It brings us back to a correct attitude towards sin and also a trust in our Lord. I'd be interested in modern writings on this.

Should the Lord see fit to use me in this capacity, I would be supremely honored to spend the rest of my life promulgating the truths disclosed in this article and thread. I can think of no better course of remedy to those who are broken and crushed in failure than to minister such precious truth. Twin issues of pandemic proportion exist in the church today, where sheep are either brainwashed with apostate junk, or instead misled into trying to live spiritual lives to a contrived dynamic unattainable. What we need are preachers with the glorious remedy of truth; preachers who truly know God, preachers who have failed and failed and failed and have at last surrendered and been *crushed* by God and put in the blast furnace and who have come out the other side with a pricelessly translucent faith and humility as precious and dear as the finest china available. Such worth to God these refined and perpetually broken men are! These are men like Art Katz and Keith Daniel and Zac Poonen and T. Austin Sparks and many others, both known and in yet unknown obscurity. These are in another league of man, another calibre; they are the "fine porcelain" products who have both seen God in the fire and considered it profitable enough to remain there until God seemed fit to show them off to the body as ensamples for whatsoever will.

I will say this with all my heart: the only treasures of any worth I have received in my Christian walk have come only through great pain and utter self-abasement and failure. If I have ever shared anything in these forums that has blessed and edified others, such truth has only come by pain and tears and great hurt. My brethren, I do not say this to boast; no, I say it to further edify and encourage others *that the Son of God is in the fiery furnace*. God is no respecter of persons; if you call on Him He will answer with fire, and you will see that His love is a burning, consuming flame. I write this only for those who have been called to the furnace; others may not yet understand this principle.

General Topics :: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by theopenlife, on: 2007/9/24 23:02

This thread brought back sentimental feelings of my first weeks on SI, right after I got saved. Paul, thank you for this edifying thread, and greater thanks to our merciful God who knew we needed it.

I had a very similar experience as yours. I was zealous, a bible college grad and missionary, and yet unaware of God's deeper character of righteousness known only through a vision of immense grace.

Last August I started visiting SI because of the influence of Abe_Juliot, my room mate. God opened my eyes through the sermons here and I quickly began to see my errors. I had prayed the so-called sinner's prayer and worked hard to "live for God"; though I could recite doctrines and told everyone that salvation was by grace through faith in Christ; yet I had never become poor in Spirit. Finally God revealed that I was beggared by my sin. He brought to see my inner enmity with the righteousness of God. My heart had yet to relinquish control to the Sovereign of all and it was obvious by my compromised lifestyle. I had given up some deceit and some lusting, yet I still indulged in worldly habits and glorified things Christ died to save men from. I had never honestly said, God, take it all! because I enjoyed the sins. Finally God broke me with warnings of hell and of taking His sacrifice for granted.

For a month I cried daily in my bedroom, for the first time praying that Jesus would take away all of my sins and cause me to walk worthy of Him. I didn't want anymore to do those things which offend and dishonor His name. After a month of this awful, painful, private humiliation before God, confessing my weakness to obey Him, something new happened. In a matter of days, less than a week, I realized a powerful zeal to do what was right. It overwhelmed almost all of my fleshly desires. I could think freely, pray longer and harder, my thoughts were vastly purer than ever before. And it was happening with ease! I had been born again, by the Spirit of God!

Since that time I have not become sinless, but I certainly sin less. And when I sin I lament having offended God. Sin makes me cry for hurting Him, though I know I am forgiven. He has filled me with a passionate desire to tell others about this new birth which is essential to escaping the punishment of eternal hell.

Re: A Timely Word for Someone... - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/7/4 16:41

Saints, I thought to resurrect this thread with a timely word I feel is for someone here to read. Someone in addition to myself, of course. Embrace the words of Bridge:

"What is prayer and the nature of it? Prayer is the pouring out of the soul to God; not the pouring out of words, nor the pouring out of expressions, but the pouring out of the soul to God. Many times, words and expressions are a great way off from the soul, but sighs and groans are next to the soul, and have more of the soul in them than many words and expressions have."

I would use this to comfort anyone here who may be heavy-laden with trying to please God. Take your rest from self-defeat and just learn to *sigh* in the inner man, and helplessly confess, *"O Lord, thou knowest all things..."*, and take comfort in knowing your walk with Christ Him was wrought by Him, and shall be kept by Him. Dear brother, it is His hold on you and not your hold on Him, and He is a God that looks into broken hearts.

Let Psalm 44:21 be soothing: *"Shall not God search this out? For He knoweth the secrets of the heart."*

Re: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement - posted by HopeinChrist, on: 2008/7/5 13:20

Quote:
-----"God never permits His people to fall into any sin but He intends to make that sin an outlet unto further grace and comfort to them. The Scripture tells us that the Lord permitted Hezekiah to fall, that Hezekiah might know all that was in his heart. He did not know his own heart before, and therefore the Lord let him fall that he might know his own heart. Sin gains not, but is a loser by every fall of the godly. And if you look into the Scripture, you will observe that when the people of God fall, they usually fail in that grace wherein they most excel. Wherein they did most excel, therein they did most miscarry. Observe:

1. Moses did most excel in meekness, and therein did he most miscarry -- we read of no other sin concerning Moses but his anger.
2. Job did most excel in patience, and therein did he most miscarry.
3. Peter did most excel in zeal and resolution for Christ -- "Though all the world forsake thee, yet will not I" -- and therein did he most miscarry, denying

Christ at the voice of a damsel. Yea, you will observe that the saints fell and failed in the grace wherein they did most excel; and they did most excel w herein they did most miscarry.

What is the reason of this? The Lord, by the overruling hand of His grace, did make their very miscarriages, inlets and occasions to their further grace and holiness. God has a great revenue from the very infirmities of His people. He never permits any of His people to fall into any sin, but He hath a design by that fall to break the back of that sin they fall into. Now, then, have the saints and the people of God have any reason to be discouraged in this respect?

You know how it was with the leper in the times of the Old Testament, when he was carried from his own house by reason of his uncleanness; or even now, with a man that has the plague and is carried from his own house by reason thereof. The man may say, "Though I be removed from mine own house, and have not the use of my house, yet I have the right to my house still. And though I cannot come to the use of my land, yet I have the right to my land still."

So likewise a godly man may say as concerning his own sin, "This sin of mine is indeed the plague of my soul, and a leprosy, but though by this leprosy of mine I am now suspended from the use of my comforts -- yea, from the full use of my interest in Jesus Christ -- I yet have an interest in Christ. I still have a right to Christ, although I cannot come to the use of Him as I did before -- yet I have a right to Jesus Christ now, even as I had before."

And if all these things be so, why should a godly man be cast down or discouraged in this respect? Surely he ought not be so."

- William Bridge, from "A Lifting Up for the Downcast", 1648

Thank you for posting this and also for reviving the thread. I think I missed the original post but God knew "now" is when I needed to read it. Are there more excerpts available from this work?

Blessings

Hope

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/7/5 20:11

Quote:

-----I think I missed the original post but God knew "now" is when I needed to read it. Are there more excerpts available from this work?

Yes, there are. The whole book is chock-full of this kind of ministry; William Bridge was a very special and unique Puritan writer in that the only type of ministry he is known for is of the "comforting" kind, for those sorely afflicted by trials and tribulations and tests and failures and defeats. He had a very keen understanding of God's purpose behind the sin and sufferings of a saint, and he had a wonderful way of extrapolating Romans 8:28 from just about any circumstance you can face as a child of God.

For those of us prone to valleys of spiritual depression and heaviness, I really can't recommend this book more gleefully. Mine is a worn-out, yellowed copy I came across by serendipity while browsing through a second-hand, secular bookstore...it was in their trash heap (aka bargain bin) for .50 cents. I have found that this is usually the trademark for God's most precious jewels; you won't find them in Christian bookstores and front-and-center with glossy covers where everyone can see them. You find them like you would have found the Lord in Jerusalem - rejected, ugly and worn, outside the gates of the city, down in the refuse pile.

I will post some more excerpts from this little-known masterpiece very soon; I pick them out and hand-type them as I sense the Spirit leading me. I pray others are blessed to also read this gold.

Brother Paul

General Topics :: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement

Re:, on: 2008/7/6 8:50

Quote:

"What is prayer and the nature of it? Prayer is the pouring out of the soul to God; not the pouring out of words, nor the pouring out of expressions, but the pouring out of the soul to God. Many times, words and expressions are a great way off from the soul, but sighs and groans are next to the soul, and have more of the soul in them than many words and expressions have."

I would use this to comfort anyone here who may be heavy-laden with trying to please God. Take your rest from self-defeat and just learn to sigh in the inner man, and helplessly confess, "O Lord, thou knowest all things...", and take comfort in knowing your walk with Christ Him was wrought by Him, and shall be kept by Him. Dear brother, it is His hold on you and not your hold on Him, and He is a God that looks into broken hearts.

Timely indeed Thank you

Re: A Lifting Up in Weak Grace - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/7/6 12:06

[Image: <http://www.book-academy.co.uk/images/Puritan5.jpg>]

Question: "If I were strong in the faith, I should be able to do more service for God. I should be able to always resist my temptations, and overcome the evil one, for the apostle John writes: *'I write to you, young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome the evil one,'* but I have great temptations and but small strength to resist them. I have a great deal of work to do for God, and have no strength at all to do it. Have I not cause or reason to be discouraged?"

Answer : "No, for the spiritual battle is not always to the strong. Our victory lies not in ourselves and our own habitual strength, but in Christ's fresh assistance. How often have the strong fallen, and the weak stood! Our strength lies in Christ without us, and not in ourselves within us. And if you look into the 2nd and 3rd chapters of John's Revelation, you will find that whereas all the churches are charged with some sin or another, only the church of Philadelphia is charged with no sin at all, and instead commended for keeping the word of Christ's patience - and this church, and no other church, is said to have "little" strength. And you know what Paul says: 'When I am weak, then I am strong; most gladly therefore will I rejoice in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest on me'.

Though your grace be weak, yet you may do much for God in your day. The tongue is a "little member" says James, and yet boasteth great things. Great ships are turned about by very small helms, and shall not a "little grace" do as much as a little tongue, or as a little fire, or a little helm? You see how the smallest of things are often the most fruitful in nature: the strong persons have not always the most children, but the weak. The herring is a weak fish in comparison to the shark or whale, but what abundance of herring there are in the sea! The dove is a feeble bird in regard of an eagle, and yet it is more fruitful. The vine is a weak tree, yet more fruitful than the oak. So, in grace ye may be weak, yet fruitful overall. The jailor was weak in grace as soon as he was converted, and likewise Zaccheus and the thief, yet what clusters of divine grapes did immediately grow upon these branches? And if you may be very fruitful in good - though weak - why be ye discouraged in regard of your own weakness?"

- William Bridge, from the sermon *"The Lifting up in the Case of Weak Grace"*, 1648.

General Topics :: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement

Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2008/7/6 12:22

Quote:

-----Saints, I thought to resurrect this thread with a timely word I feel is for someone here to read

that someone has to be me...waiting on His mercy to resolve..faith is strong, mind is sound, heart, however...heading a different direction..how can this be?

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/7/6 13:53

Quote:

-----heart, however...heading a different direction..how can this be?

Dear sister, a better question may be to ask yourself, "how can this *not* be?"

One of the greatest perils in the modern way of living the Christian life is the Western conditioning that our walks in Christ and relationship with God through the faith of Christ is somehow supposed to be a smooth, creamy cakewalk.

This is a great fallacy (as I'm sure you've discovered long ago), and one that is propagated by preachers and teachers who know not God, and it irks me that the reality of suffering, failures and defeats is not taught and explained more from the pulpits. Too often we relegate Christian "trials" to some physical thing - an illness in the body, a rebellious child, having to deal with an ungodly co-worker, not having enough money, a broke down car, etc. While these are unpleasant burdens God may utilize to bring us to our knees, they barely scratch the surface of what I believe are the *real* trials and tests we must face and overcome in Christ.

The hardest, bloodiest, most tearful and strenuous trials I've had to face are the ones that are inside me, silently warring against my mind and inciting the flesh when all on the *outside* paradoxically appears to flourish - that is, when I have plenty of money, when my car is in great running condition, and when all at work is good. Amidst all of this, there is often a deadness inside, seeking to spread like a poison, to infiltrate my mind and give rise to doubt, fear, confusion. And very often it can be set at odds with my intelligence.

People say that intelligence and logic can often hinder the work of grace in the spirit of a person, and this is true. But sometimes I can see the opposite during a hard test: I can know all the doctrines of grace and have appropriate Scriptures locked in memory, locked and cocked and ready to fire at the enemy...and suddenly he does a flanking movement and comes at my heart with a rogue *feeling* I wasn't anticipating. If I'm not careful, I can allow the alien *feeling* to eclipse that which I know is right in my mind.

We shouldn't be ignorant of his devices. I wrote a little sermon called (<http://www.xanga.com/PFWest/633606915/the-battle-scars-of-a-satanic-attack.html>) The Battle Scars of a Satanic Attack that touches on this very thing, but is in no way exhaustive on the subject.

Brother Paul

Re: - posted by mamaluk, on: 2008/7/6 17:17

Yeah...I suppose head knowledge alone cannot lift the wicked heart to the Lord.

Quote:

-----If I'm not careful,

Watch and pray, I can just hear it ..

General Topics :: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement

I do remember we once had a thread on The Battle Scars of a Satanic Attack, didn't we?

Thanks, brother Paul, so much.

Re: - posted by PaulWest (), on: 2008/7/6 17:33

Quote:

----- do remember we once had a thread on The Battle Scars of a Satanic Attack, didn't we?

You're right - we did. I forgot about that! Well, the link I provided is an audio recording of the message, of me reading and commenting a bit on it. Perhaps the Lord will use it as a word in season for some folks here; from speaking to other brothers and sisters, there certainly appears to be some serious times of testing and unrest afoot. I've just come out of a bad storm myself, and I'm still wet from the rain.

Sometimes I think the Lord doesn't want us to "dry off" completely; the eye of a hurricane never really affords us that much time anyhow. The sea to heaven's shore can get extremely tempestuous at times, and one thing we "sailors" of Christ should have learned in bootcamp is that no matter how dire the weather gets, we don't abandon ship. We hang on, we bring the sails down if we must and we get into the hull, but we don't abandon ship. In a little while the storm will abate, and those who didn't jump ship will be better, stronger, wiser sailors and proceed to further and deeper waters in the school of God. Those who abandoned ship will have to face the same storm over and over and over again till they learn to sail through it.

Believe me, "Sinbad" doesn't have anything on the Christian sailor. He only had to go through seven seas; we as children of God will need go through 70 times 7.

Brother Paul

Re: A Puritanical Remedy for Spiritual Discouragement - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2008/12/28 18:37

I have done some extensive digging looking for some certain things, and I found this thread, it is worthy to be "bumped"

So likewise a godly man may say as concerning his own sin, "This sin of mine is indeed the plague of my soul, and a leprosy, but though by this leprosy of mine I am now suspended from the use of my comforts -- yea, from the full use of my interest in Jesus Christ -- I yet have an interest in Christ. I still have a right to Christ, although I cannot come to the use of Him as I did before -- yet I have a right to Jesus Christ now, even as I had before."

And if all these things be so, why should a godly man be cast down or discouraged in this respect? Surely he ought not be so."