

It takes something to move the soul deeply before we can do what the Lord wants us to do.

An invitation to Christian workers:

Stirred to the Depths to *STIR* Heaven

by Hannah Lowe

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27). “Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me” (Matthew 26:38).

Jesus is talking about His soul being troubled. We have read that a man’s soul is the seat of his emotions, and that is probably so. I do know that when the soul is moved by light-heartedness and by things that do not touch its depths, much of the result is light and frivolous.

The verses preceding this 27th verse tell us that if we want to save our lives we will lose them, but if we lose our lives we will save them. When the soul is stirred by something merely on the surface, I know there is not much done for the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes something to move the soul deeply before we can do what the Lord wants us to do.

In this passage from Matthew, Jesus said, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,” and in John, He said, “Now is my soul troubled.” Unless we get into the place where our souls are exceeding sorrowful; where our souls are in anguish—in anguish of Spirit, not bitterness of spirit—there is not much accomplished.

We read that Jesus’ soul was afflicted, and in Isaiah God addressed one who was beloved to Him and said, “Oh thou afflicted and tossed about...” There are afflictions that come upon the children of God, and He allows them. In James, He tells us if there is any sick among us, let him call for the elders to pray, but before this He asks, “Is any afflicted? Let him pray.”

No wonder God says that afflicted ones should pray. We might come to the altar with an affliction, something that God has allowed the enemy to put there, or that the Lord has put there Himself. We might want to have it immediately lifted and be entirely free. But God’s word says, “Let the afflicted one pray,” so that the afflicted one may be driven to God. Our flesh is such that unless some circumstance, or condition, or affliction is laid upon us, we will escape with as little gain as possible. We will escape with just as much light-heartedness as we can; with as little dealing of the Spirit as possible; with as little stirring, as little yielding and as little giving as possible. But the Word tells us, “If any is afflicted...let him pray.”

We are driven to the Lord to go deeper...

God intends that the individual soul should be driven to the Lord where he can go deeper in God, and where he can become more acclimated in the Spirit. Unless we get into that place, there will be little done in our lives. If we have skimmed along on the surface in a half-hearted fashion, we will be able to tell by how little we are advancing how deep we have gone into the Lord – how little we have been pressed into Him.

We see homes broken up and many things that were beautiful destroyed. I do not believe that God would have had it happen that way. I do not believe that He would have homes split and hearts cut in two. He is not a taskmaster who wants men and women lashed out of measure, but it seems that our flesh will not come to Him in any other way.

Many people seem willing to take Jesus as a last resort. When they think nothing else can be done, then they will try Jesus and think He might do something for them. But Jesus would not have had it that way. Homes could be happy, lives full of life and joy, conditions pleasant, peace in hearts—everything could have been different. But God must work in the circumstances He finds.

Have you wondered why things have not worked out smoothly in your life, and why you are now discouraged?

As we read about Adam and Eve sinning, we remind ourselves that God warned them. He did what He could to admonish them. He told them that everything in the garden belonged to them except for that one thing, which He did not want them to touch. That was exactly the thing they yearned for, and they fell. But God did not will it that way. God warned them, but after their disobedience, He had to do the best thing under the circumstances.

In your own life, have you wondered why things have not worked out smoothly, and why you are now discouraged? It is not because your life is meant to be that way. God had a better way, but we find ourselves in the conditions we are in and, for the most part, it is our own fault. We have used our own wills. God must deal with these conditions and work for you and for me in them, not because it is His best plan, but because there is no other way that He can get us to Himself. It may be that it is the only way our flesh will come.

It is wonderful in the end that we even get through. The best thing we can say is, "Don't leave me, Lord. No matter what, don't leave me." What good is anything if God's Spirit is taken from us? We may lash ourselves as did the prophets, but it will be no use, for God will have shut the doors of heaven when once the Holy Spirit has been taken from us. If we are afflicted tonight, if the waters are high for us and it seems we have had to go through deeper waters, it is our own fault. It is because our wills have been preeminent. God has had to use force to bring us to our senses.

That is the condition of our flesh. Most of our afflictions result from it, and we deserve them. But Jesus' afflictions were of an entirely different sort.

We see that Nehemiah stepped forward to bear the brunt of the burden in his day. He took responsibility for seeing that the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt. We see that Abraham took upon himself the burden of interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah. There are aspects of God's plan that He cannot work out any other way, except that we bear affliction for the needs of others. We have a calling, thanks be to God, that is past our flesh and the confines of our own hearts. Thank God we can look up to holy men of old who went through their afflictions and did not accept deliverance from bearing burdens for others.

How many can say they know the least bit of travail for those who are lost?

As Jesus came to the troubled time at Gethsemane when He was shortly to drink Calvary's cup of bitter dregs, His flesh did recoil, but He went back in prayer to His Father again and again until the victory was won. Tonight we hear Him say, "My soul is in anguish." Isaiah prophesied, "He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied." He was in travail and His soul was in anguish, even unto the death of the cross. We do not know anything of this. His soul's travail was for men and women. How many can say they know the least bit of travail for those who are lost? How many know anything about bearing this without taking any consideration for their flesh? It is indeed too deep for us to fathom out, but there are possibilities of our moving on into those depths.

"Is any afflicted?" Most of us here tonight are pressed with conditions, with circumstances, of which you might say, "I do not see why this is so. It is not my fault that they are upon me." We could have been delivered from them possibly, long ago, if we had but yielded more to God. If our wills had been given over to God, we no doubt would be past these milestones and much further ahead tonight. God wants us to

pass them, and if we have not, why not set our faces as flint to pass them? As we read in Isaiah, "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back" (Isaiah 50:5). The Lord had opened His ears and surely His flesh would have repelled the cup, but Jesus said, "My ears were opened."

How many of us have turned away and turned our backs to Him? How many have heard in the distance what it was going to cost? How many have turned their backs when they heard, but Jesus did not rebel. He said, "I turned my back to the smiters." What did He do when He knew the bitter trial that faced him? He did not turn back from the way of hardship or affliction of soul, but He gave His back to the smiters, His cheek to those who plucked out His beard (Isaiah 50:6). How we would have gotten out of the way of the whole thing! How we would have dismissed our responsibility by saying, "I do not have to face this. This shall not come to me. This shall never happen to me." The flesh agrees, "No, it will never come to you." Jesus said, "The Lord God will help me, therefore, I have set my face as flint." (Isaiah 50:7). That is what Jesus did for us, He set His face as flint. He was not one who turned back, or became rebellious, or turned His face away. He came out boldly and did what God wanted Him to do.

God is interested in stirring us to the depths...

How many of us cry out for deliverance! But Jesus said, "Father, should I say I want to be delivered from this hour?" (John 12:27). No, He never asked for that. How little it seems this has entered into our hearts. It seems our ears are dull. God grant that we might say, "My God, open my ears, my heart, my eyes." Is it because we do not hear? Is it because we have not been able to penetrate the depths and cannot hear God's voice? I must come to the conclusion that we do hear, and that God is faithful. He has given us the word, the Spirit moves upon us, and God does His work, but we turn back, we hide our faces from the smiters, we turn our cheeks

away. We flee from those who would spit upon us, and we try to find a soft spot with the best way out possible, just so that we get out.

The afflictions that have come upon us are for a purpose. For the most part, they come of our own fault. If we are afflicted tonight, it is to cry out not for deliverance for the flesh, for that will not do. It will mean more suffering, more hardships, more distress and agony.

I do not know how things will turn out, but I do know that up until tonight, you have not pressed into God desperately. Your soul is still satisfied with living on the surface of things, and God has not been able to get you down to the depths. It is only there that the Holy Spirit can work. He is not concerned about a few tears or a few pennies, but He is interested in stirring us to the depths—and that is what He is offering us tonight. He is anxious that we be stirred to the depths.

Whatever affliction might be pressing you, it is to drive you into God. It is to drive you to desperation – not a desperation of despair, but a desperation for Him. Even as Jacob said, "I am desperate, I will not let you go until this work is done." It stirred him to the depths.

I ask you tonight, what about these afflictions? What about these things that have come upon us? Have they stirred us deeply or lightly? If lightly, they will come upon us faster and harder, and they will increase until at last you will only let down your standards. Your spiritual food will be cut off by your conforming to the flesh.

That is not the way out. You will not be able to sit down with a pencil and paper and figure your way out; it comes by becoming more desperate, more stirred to the depths.

...so that we may stir heaven

I thought of Hannah this morning – how she was confronted day by day with the taunts of her adversary that she had no children. This was a curse in those days. She prayed in the temple, her lips just moved, she was beside

herself. She was stirred, and stirred to the depths, and then she stirred heaven. Though the priest was backslidden, yet even he could see more than just words coming from her lips. She cried out to God and He heard and answered her prayer. God had afflicted her with no children, but she did not try to seek vengeance. No, she went to the altar of God, and she knew where she could get in touch with God, though surrounded by backslidden people. But God heard and answered and removed the affliction. She gave birth to Samuel. God answered the cry of an afflicted soul.

Even though we may be afflicted, though the enemy has been allowed to put it upon us, think of Job as he answered back, "I am so afflicted. My body is rotting away. It would have been better had I never been born."

But in all Job's destitution, thank God for that something within him that could say, "Though He slay me yet will I trust Him." (Job 13:15). The Almighty was the One he was trusting in. There were problems in Job's life. He was self-righteous, but that was not the most important, terrific thing. The most important thing was to see how he passed his test. Was he going to be cast on the ash heap by turning back? No—he proved that he was worthwhile. Though Job was weak, God could work it out.

We see a man who takes clay and works it into some figure. He can do it because the clay lies pliable. It does not rise up to resist him. He can work out the lumps. Though Job had the disfigurements of self-righteousness, he remained in the Potter's hand and allowed Him to mold him as He did. He was not, as Jeremiah said, like clay that could not be molded. In the end, Job was a far better man. He turned out to be something for God.

During the tests God finds out what we are

It is during the tests that God finds out what we are. You can say you will get out of your affliction the best way you can, and God will do what you cannot do. But you will lose out that way.

The great ocean liners cannot come where there are not depths enough for them. The water must be a certain depth before they can come in. God will find out how much water we draw by how we go through affliction. You might say, "Stay your hand," but if He loves you, He will press it in harder. The pressure will not be raised or lifted, but it will be pressed in more. Then, in that pressure, He will find out just what you are. Job said, "I will come through, but I will come through as pure gold." (Job 23:10). We are afflicted, storm-tossed, and cast about tonight, and for much of that, we bear the responsibility.

Jonah was like that. When he was admonished to hear the voice of the Lord, he heard it, but he turned and went to another direction. He got on the boat but the waters became tempestuous. The seas churned because of that man. The heathen waited, and souls were in danger on the boat, until at last he cried out, "Cast me off this boat. Cast me overboard."

God had prepared the fish that swallowed Jonah, but in the belly of the fish, in the heat, where the weeds were winding around his head (Jonah 2:5), he was pressed out of measure. His life was becoming short, and soon he would have passed into eternity. He said, "I will pay my vow. I will pay what I have vowed to the Lord." It did not take long for the answer to come. When he decided in his heart though it was late, he said, "I will pay my vows."

We have made vows; we have said that all that we have is on the altar. We have told the Lord that He can use us for His honor and glory. We find pressure coming upon us; the sea is churning; we find we are being churned, there is agitation, desperation, bitterness. (God grant it is not the root of bitterness that springs up to defile many, but God grant it be a bitterness of anguish and agony until we are thoroughly stirred.)

"If any man is afflicted, let him pray." If you are afflicted, do not ask *me* to pray for you. He wants you to take that thing in hand yourself—that individual pressure—for that is your question and your affliction and trial. You might try to throw over the responsibility all you please on someone else, but it is

yours. In this responsibility, God is contending with you, instructing you, calling to you, "What will you do under this pressure? Will you yield or turn back? Will you go in the opposite direction in your own way, or will you come My way?"

What will you do under this pressure? Will you yield or turn back? Will you come God's way?

Like Jonah in his day, we cause an upheaval, and the boat we ride in is unsafe for many. Remember, many lives were in danger when Jonah got out of the will of the Lord. God had trained him and cultured him for years and now the heathen were to be warned that judgment was just ahead. What a terrific day it was, and what a terrible time for Jonah to turn back, endangering the lives of those on the boat! God in His mercy did cause the thing to work out. I believe it was because judgment on Nineveh was so imminent.

I do not know if any of us are that important to the plan of God, but it is taking a chance and being presumptuous to turn and go another way. God is showing us through hardships, afflictions, and churning of seas that He is speaking. May we say to Him, "I will pay what I have vowed unto the Lord." Deliverance of our flesh will not come. If it did, it would represent only another dive, followed by our re-surfacing into more hardships. What is needed is our pressing into God.

"Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?" Jesus was not thinking of how He would get out of it. He was not concerned about Himself. He had just finished saying, "If you lose your life you will find it." Jesus came to set the captives at liberty, to free those who were bound in prison houses. He came to win the victory over death, and it was through His death that it would be accomplished. He asked that God's name be glorified. Anything less than the glorification of God will end in misery. Anything less than knowing what God wants us to do will end in another botch. It will end in something that will bring us to defeat, but if we stand aside and say, "Lord, let this press

me into Thee," we will get closer to Him. Then we will know some of the really valuable things in God.

We are still playing. We still live so much on the surface. We are still so light-hearted, and the flesh does not want to get serious. The flesh wants to play around. We find some new light, we go towards it as the moth flies to the flame, but just skim and dart around the surface. We act like some graceful and lovely moth, or as the boats that pass on the sea. One time we go this way, and never pass that way again. One time we go through this life, and we are either stirred deeply enough to stir others or we are light-hearted. God grant that we get to the place where the pressure is more upon us.

I do not believe our God of love wants us to appear in the fight like defeated, mashed down, flattened ones called out of death, but if it takes that, God grant we get to that place. If we will not go in any other way except being afflicted, then God will have to do that to get us into Himself.

We do not know the depths of God. We do not know the value of God. We have no idea of it. We say it is too deep when we see it is so vast. The flesh loves that. The flesh can revel in that and say, "It is too much, let me just float on the top of things." God will not hold us innocent of the truths that He has spoken to us.

It is a serious thing to fall into the hands of the living God, but it is more serious not to fall into them. God grant that we get into His hands. David said, "Let me fall into Thy hand, but not into the hands of men. Men will do too much, but you will know when to stop." (2 Samuel 24:14). He knows when to stop. He does not put any more upon us than we can stand. He will not allow anything to come upon us but He offers a way of escape. No matter how you are tonight, He calls you and says, "Come unto Me. Through Me you will find the values and realities and things that are worthwhile." We are too light-hearted, too fleshly, too much satisfied with skimming along on the surface, not concerned to be stirred to the depths, not concerned that our hearts are not touched. God help us to see the deep need of Him. Unless we are

stirred to the depths we will not reach His depths. Thank God for those who are truly stirred.

“I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.”

Paul said, “We will count this light affliction nothing to the weight of glory.” (2 Corinthians 4:17). All the affliction Paul endured will be nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory he will enjoy. In another place, Paul said, “[I] fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church” (Colossians 1:24). There is an affliction for the Lord Jesus' sake that is not our own fault. We say, “I will not turn my back away. I offer myself, my life that you might pour through me.” He poured out His soul unto death, and we need to pour out our souls unto God.

When we look into it, it is astonishing how little we have poured out, how little we have done for the Lord Jesus. He poured out His soul. He emptied Himself of everything that was within Him, not only His blood but His soul was poured out.

As much as we have had the light, it is alarming the little depth we have known.

How much has your soul been touched? Ask yourself that question, and you will find it is very little.

Thank God that Jesus shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied. (Isaiah 53:11). Someone is going to satisfy Him. Someone is going to repay Him for all that He has done. Someone is going to praise Him for all eternity for what He has done for you and for me. Whether we will appreciate it or not, someone will. Though we would not be in a place to fully appreciate it, there will be those who will appreciate it for us. They will be able to make up what we have wasted. They will make up to God for what we lose.

Ask God to deal with your heart by His Holy Spirit

God help us that we might do what He wants us to do, and allow Him as the pressure comes to stir our hearts to desperation until we have our souls afflicted and let Him lash until it is done. When He begins to touch us, that is when we want to get away. We want Him to keep it back, but that will never get us anywhere.

God wants to touch the depths, and unless He does we will never be what He wants us to be. As much as we have had the light, it is alarming how little depth we have known.

God wants to touch the depths and unless He does, we will never be what He wants us to be.

Even tonight, the Holy Spirit will deal with our hearts, and tonight we can ask Him to give us the

desperation we need. If you want God to press in, He will press in whether you feel worthwhile or not. How much He means to take us through is His business, but I do know He wants us to be stirred deeper than we are tonight. We have not reacted the way He wants us to. We are not stirred as we should be. We are not even stirred to what I am talking about. God grant that He will stir our hearts to the depths, and as the seas are churned, let us see that it is to drive us into Him. Let us allow Him to see that we are willing to go deeper into Him. Amen.

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Hannah Lowe delivered this message to an assembly in Maryland on May 10, 1936. Mrs. Lowe and her husband labored tirelessly in Colombia, South America, until Mr. Lowe, still a relatively young and most vigorous man, died in the capital city of Bogotá in 1941. Mrs. Lowe, vibrant in service to her Lord until her final days, died at Jerusalem in June 1983, having spent a year in the beloved City.