

Chapter 13

Awakening-Experiences Leading to Conversion In Prison

Helplessness

“For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Sheol. I am counted among those who go down to the Pit; I am like those who have no help, like those forsaken among the dead, like the slain that lie in a grave, like those whom you remember no more, for they are cut off from your hand. You have put me in the depths of the Pit in the regions dark and deep. Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and you overwhelm me with all your waves. You have caused my companions to shun me; you made me a thing of horror to them. I am shut in so that I cannot escape; my eye grows dim through sorrow. Everyday I call on you, O Lord; I spread out my hands to you. (Psalm 88:3-9)

The Victory of Love-The Triumph of the Cross

Our God knows what we are going through when we are brought low by suffering of any kind. In other words, in Jesus, God is seen to be capable of compassion for us when we suffer because he has suffered far more in every way than we will ever be called upon to suffer. He knows what we are going through in prison, in nursing homes, and in psychiatric wards. During his trials, he never hates or even shows anger. He gains the victory of love by showing only merciful love and forgiveness to everyone while his ability to love is being tested by a heavier cross of suffering than any of us will ever be called upon to bear. We are called to be most successful in life by living in his love and relishing victory over all adversity in his way.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? Oh my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; my mouth is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. (Psalm 22: 1-2, 6, 14-16)

Overcoming Loneliness

“Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord; and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness sake, O Lord!” (Psalm 25: 6-7)

“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us.” (Psalm 103: 8-12)

Powerless

“Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that would leave me, but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.’ So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.”

(2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Awakening-Conversion

*“Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes from faith in Christ, the righteousness of God based on faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but **this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.** Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.” (Philippians 3:7-16)*

