

Chapter 55

Three Felt Things

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness *which* may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

(Exodus 10:21-23)

The basis of our faith is the Word of God, and the Word of God alone. I fully agree with Martin Luther who wrote...

“Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving.
My warrant is the Word of God;
Naught else is worth believing!”

With David, I say, “*My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.*” — “*Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*” — “*Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.*” — “*I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope*” (Psalm 119:81, 114, 49). Our feelings are no basis for hope. Our hope is in that which God has caused to be written in Holy Scripture. If I have “*a good hope through grace,*” I ought to be able to turn to some text, or fact, or doctrine of God’s Word as the source and basis of it. Our confidence must arise from something that God has said in his Word, that we have received and believed with our hearts. — “*The heart is deceitful above all things*” (Jeremiah 17:9). — “*He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool*” (Proverbs 28:26). Good feelings are deceiving, unless we can point to “*Thus saith the Lord*” as the basis of our hope. Our hope is found in, arises from, and is based upon the Book of God. — “*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope*” (Romans 15:4). The Book of God was written specifically to give believing sinners an assured hope of grace, salvation, and eternal life in Christ (1 John 5:1-3).

The basis of hope is the Word of God. And that which is revealed in the Word of God which gives us hope is the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Substitute (Romans 8:34-35; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Christ is the Foundation upon which we are built. — “*Christ is our Hope*” (1 Timothy 1:1). — We “*hope in our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). — “*The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him*” (Lamentations 3:24). — Our hope is in Christ, our Covenant Surety, our blessed, sin-atonement Redeemer, our Righteousness, and our Advocate and High Priest in heaven. — “*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*” (2 Timothy 1:12).

The basis of our hope is the Word of God. That which is revealed in this Book that gives us hope is the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want you to see that the good hope of grace and salvation that God gives to his elect is something that is felt in us, felt inwardly in our

hearts. The Apostle Paul speaks of God's saints as people "*rejoicing in hope*" (Romans 12:12). We read in Romans 5:5, "*Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*"

I would not give a nickel for any religion that is nothing but feeling. Emotionalism and religious excitement is not grace. But I would not give a penny for religion without feeling. That religion that has no feeling, that is all intellect is always cold and dead. That hope that has been begotten in us is called "*a lively hope.*" And I say with Peter, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*" (1 Peter 1:3). When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he felt it! A prisoner released from prison, delivered from the hole of the pit in which no water could be found, feels it. You may not feel a pardon; but if ever you experience forgiveness, you will feel forgiveness!

Christianity is a matter of the heart. A man believes with his heart. He repents in his heart. Prayer is found in and comes from the heart. And those things that are found in the heart are felt things. It is "*Christ in you*" whom the Spirit of God calls, "*the Hope of Glory*" (Colossians 1:27). And if Christ is in you, he will stick out. And if he sticks out, you will feel it.

There are three things specifically spoken of in Holy Scripture as things people felt. All three are things experienced and felt. They are all physical things; but they are physical things that vividly portray spiritual things. The first is found here in Exodus 10:21-23.

Felt Darkness

When the Lord God brought his ninth plague upon the land of Egypt, by which he destroyed the land, that is to say by which he destroyed the strength and confidence of the Egyptians, it was a plague "*of thick darkness...even darkness which may be felt.*" And when God the Holy Spirit comes in the mighty operations of his grace to save a sinner, his first task is to destroy all creature strength in the sinner. He does so by bringing into the soul of the chosen sinner the thick darkness of guilt. When he comes to convince a sinner of his sin, he brings into the land of man's soul "*thick darkness...even darkness which may be felt.*" Darkness is often used in Scripture in this symbolic way (Isaiah 9:2; 29:18; 42:5-7; 50:10; Matthew 4:16; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:12-14).

This conviction of sin is something felt in the soul. Jeremiah wrote, "*I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light*" (Lamentations 3:1-2). Before God reveals grace, he causes grief; and both the grief and the grace that follows are according to God's sovereign, eternal purpose. Salvation is obtained by simple, childlike faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; but that faith that does not arise from a felt need of Christ and is not accompanied by a genuine conviction of sin is not true faith. Where there is no conviction there is no conversion. Where there is no misery there is no mercy. Where there is no grief there is no grace. "*But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies*" (Lamentations 3:32). Jeremiah describes the darkness he felt in his soul in Lamentations 3:3-20.

“Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones. He hath builded against me, and compassed *me* with gall and travail. He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked. He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and as* a lion in secret places. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins. I was a derision to all my people; *and* their song all the day. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgot prosperity. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD: Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.”

All who know the Lord God in the experience of his saving operations of grace freely acknowledge and frankly confess that God is strictly righteous in the exercise of his grace and truly gracious in his righteous judgments. These are the things that Jeremiah learned by deep, painful experience, and recorded in this third chapter of Lamentations for our learning and comfort.

Jeremiah was a man who had experienced terrible grief in his soul; but, being a man of God-given faith, he understood and acknowledged that the cause of all his grief was the Lord his God. He acknowledged God in all his ways and owned him as the origin of all things. Twenty-two times, referring to his woes in verses 1-17, he said, “God did it!” — When he was afflicted, he said it was by the rod of God’s wrath (v. 1). — When his soul was brought into bondage, he said God had hedged him about and put a chain upon him (v. 7). — When he was overwhelmed with grief, he said, he “*hath pulled me in pieces*” (vv. 8-19). — When he was, by these things brought to utter hopelessness in himself, he found hope in the Lord God (vv. 21-31). Oh, blessed, blessed, blessed are those sinners who have been brought down to utter hopelessness in themselves that they might find hope in the Lord God!

Jeremiah said, “*He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old.*” — “*He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death!*” — He makes “*darkness his secret place.*” — “*Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne!*”

“Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron; Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to help. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.” (Psalms 107:10-16)

When Jeremiah was, by these things, brought to utter hopelessness in himself, he found hope in the Lord God.

“This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. *It is of the LORD’S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach. For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.*” (Lamentations 3:21-32)

The sinner’s only hope is the Lord God himself (vv. 21-25). The only thing an utterly helpless, hopeless sinner can do for God’s salvation is wait (v. 26). The place where a sinner must wait for God’s salvation is in the dust of repentance before the throne of grace (vv. 27-31). The sinner must bear the yoke of his guilt under Holy Spirit conviction (v. 27). Each one must do business with the Almighty personally (v. 28), making his headquarters in the dust (v. 29), justifying God in his own condemnation (v. 30), looking to God in Christ for mercy (v. 31). — “*Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.*”

This is what Jeremiah is teaching us. I cannot explain it to people who have not experienced it; but this is the experience of every heaven born soul. — There is a felt darkness and confusion in the soul when God convinces a sinner of his personal vileness and hell worthiness. This is the grief Jeremiah is talking about. It is a spiritual grief caused in the soul by God. We recognize that every event of providence that brings grief is God’s work. He brings the cloud over the earth as well as the sunshine (Genesis 9:14). If there were no clouds, you would never see a rainbow. He makes peace and creates evil in the earth (Isaiah 45:7).

The eye of faith also sees that spiritual grief and sorrow are the works of God’s hands. God’s holy displeasure with sin is seen everywhere. It must be experienced and acknowledged. When Adam sinned in the garden, God made him feel his hot displeasure (Genesis 3:17-19). When God gave his law at Sinai, the thunder and the darkness, and the trembling made known his displeasure with sin in a way that Israel felt it and heard it. And when God comes to a sinner in saving operations of grace, the very first thing he does is make that sinner to know his displeasure. God will never give grace where he does not cause grief (John 16:8-12).

I once heard Pastor Harry Graham say, “When God deals with a sinner in mercy, he takes him to hell first.” This is God’s strange work. He causes grief so that he may bestow grace! As Thomas Bradbury put it, “Where sin is not felt and hated, salvation will never be enjoyed. Where wrath has not been dreaded, love will not be experienced. The heart that is a stranger to misery must be a foreigner to mercy.” God creates “*the waster to destroy*” (Isaiah 54:16) all earthly, creature comfort to bring us down to hell (Psalm 107), so that we might look to the crucified Christ

and find all comfort for our souls in him alone. Those who are grieved by God, God alone can gladden. — “*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*” (Matthew 5:4). — “*Though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.*”

Felt Healing

The first thing the Holy Spirit does in the sinner in the experience of grace is to bring felt darkness into his soul by the conviction of sin. Then, he brings felt healing by the conviction of righteousness. He convinces the sinner of righteousness, because Christ has returned to the Father, having accomplished what he came into the world to accomplish. He brought in everlasting righteousness. The bringing in of righteousness involved two things: — Obedience and Satisfaction (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:12, 17-21)

If ever God gives you, a poor sinner, faith to touch Christ’s clothes, his righteousness, “*the garments of salvation*” (Isaiah 61:10), you will feel the healing of his grace in your soul, when you discover that he has made you whole, righteous before God. We see this beautifully illustrated in Mark 5:25-29.

“And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that plague.”

Felt No Harm

In Acts 28 we see a third felt thing.

“And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the

venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.” (Acts 28:1-5)

When Paul was bitten by that viper, “*he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm.*” Like Paul, you and I have been bitten by a viper, the viper of hell, that old serpent, the devil. What pain the viper’s bite has caused us and is causing us! But as soon as the poor, perishing sinner is convinced by God the Holy Spirit (John 16:11) that judgment has been forever removed from him by the sacrifice of Christ, because justice has been satisfied on his behalf by the death of God’s dear Son, he looks to Christ in faith, shakes off the serpent and soon feels no harm in his soul.

“*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*” (Romans 8:1-4)

“What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? 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? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? *It is* God that justifieth. Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8:31-35)

I cannot imagine a more glorious felt thing than “*no harm.*” Can you? Yet, this is something that cannot be fully felt until that great day (And it can’t be too soon!), when we shall at last shake off the beast of hell, that old serpent, the devil into the fire of hell, and so completely and thoroughly triumph over him that we shall feel no harm! It is written, “*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away*” (Revelation 21:4). — “*He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it*” (Isaiah 25:8).

Notice the very slight, but very significant difference in the way those two texts (speaking of the same promise) are worded. Isaiah tells us that God will wipe away “*tears from off all faces.*” He promises us that God will wipe tears from the faces of all who possess eternal life with Christ in everlasting glory. But in Revelation 21:4 the apostle John tells us that, “*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*” By divine inspiration, he gives an added touch of grace. He tells us that our God is not only going to wipe tears from the eyes of all his people, but also that “*God shall wipe away ALL TEARS from their eyes!*” — In other words, when we have at last shaken the serpent into the fire, we shall feel no harm from his bite!

Put the two texts together and you have the glorious promise of God in the gospel to every believing sinner. It is just this: — When our great and glorious God is finished with all things, he will have so thoroughly and completely saved all his people from all sin and from all the evil consequences of sin forever that there will never be a tear in our eyes again. We will feel no harm from the serpent's bite!

Imagine that! Who can grasp the fulness of this promise? It is too great, too broad, too incomprehensible for our mortal brains. Yet, it is gloriously true! Our great God shall in heaven's glory remove us from all sin, remove all sin from us, and remove us from all the evil consequences of sin. He will remove us from every cause of grief. He will bring us at last into the perfection of complete salvation and every desire of our hearts will be completely gratified. God's salvation is so perfect and complete that when he is finished, we will not even have the slightest tinge of sorrow for anything. We will feel no harm!

In heaven's glory our God will wipe all tears from our eyes. Impossible as it is for us to imagine, there is a time coming when we shall weep no more, when we shall have no cause to weep, when we shall feel no harm from the serpent's bite! Heaven is a place of sure, eternal, ever-increasing bliss; and the cause of that bliss is our blessed Christ! Heaven is a place of joy without sorrow, laughter without weeping, pleasantness without pain! In heaven there are no regrets, no remorseful tears, no second thoughts, no lost causes, no sorrows of any kind!

If God did not wipe away all tears from our eyes, there would be much weeping in heaven. We would surely weep much over our past sins, unconverted loved ones forever lost in hell, wasted opportunities while we were upon the earth, our many acts of unkindness toward our brethren here, and the terrible price of our redemption! But God will wipe away all tears from our eyes — all of them! In heaven's glory there will be no more death to part loving hearts. There will be no more sorrow of any kind. There will be no more crying for any reason. There will be no more pain of any sort. Why? How can these things be? — *"The former things are passed away!"* — We will feel no harm!

Yes, our great God shall in heaven's glory remove us from all sin, remove all sin from us, and remove us from all the evil consequences of sin. He will remove us from every cause of grief. He will bring us at last into the perfection of complete salvation, and every desire of our hearts will be completely gratified. Then, we will be like Christ. We will be with Christ. We will see Christ. We will love Christ perfectly. We will serve Christ unceasingly. We will worship Christ without sin. We will rest in Christ completely. We will enjoy Christ fully. We will have Christ entirely. These things shall be our everlasting experience, without interruption! And we will feel no harm!