

## *Be Not Weary in Well Doing*

Opening Hymn: #270 — “Rest For The Weary”

“On the plains of hesitation bleach the bones of countless millions who,  
on the eve of victory sat down to rest, and resting, died.”

2 Thes. 3:13 Brethren, be not weary in well doing.

On Wednesday evening, October 11, 1916, Brother Russell spoke to the brethren in New York. Although no-one knew it at the time, they were his last words to that ecclesia. Here is how he began:

“There is a natural tendency amongst people to tire of a thing when the novelty wears off. Even the hearing of the truth, strange as it may seem, causes weariness to some after a time. It is the same way with the soldier. It is easy for him to enlist and march forward when the drums are beating and the bands are playing, and enthusiasm runs high; but when the damp, cold weather comes, when ice forms in the trenches, and there is no martial music, he is liable to grow weary. Army life does not seem to be nearly so attractive as it appeared at the first. This is true in our spiritual warfare—in fighting the good fight of faith. There are times when all around seem joyous, when the Christian soldiers are marching, and all are stimulated and encouraged; whereas there are times when the clouds hang low and are dark, chilliness surrounds us, ardor is abated, and we are liable to get discouraged.”—*Reprints 6064*

As I look at myself and most of those around me in our fellowship, it’s clear we’re all getting older. Old people don’t have the energy they once did. They can’t see, hear, walk, taste, smell, or do much of anything as well as when they were young. It is hard for them to have much enthusiasm for new ideas because that takes energy and energy is in short supply. This is the time the adversary finds discouragement to be such a powerful weapon against the Lord’s people. He tells them to stop running the race, walking in the narrow way, fighting the good fight—that they should sit down to rest. If they do, they die.

Many of our Christian friends think resting is OK. They believe that if you accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior, you are saved. We need not be concerned about doing anything because, after all, it is faith that counts, not works. As the expression has it, “Once in grace, always in grace.”

1 Cor. 9:26,27 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

If the great apostle Paul, a man who surely could be considered “saved” in every sense of the word, says unless he continues to “run” and to “fight” he might be a castaway, we must conclude that salvation takes more than saying the right words once in our life. If Paul would not let himself become discouraged and give up the good fight of faith, we dare not do so either.

### **The Importunate Widow**

Luke 18:1-8 (Phillips) Then he gave them an illustration to show that they must always pray and never lose heart [“become discouraged”—become wearied]. Once upon a time, he said, there was a magistrate in a town who had neither fear of God nor respect for his fellow-men. There was a widow in the town who kept coming to him, saying, Please protect me from the man who is trying to ruin me. And for a long time he refused. But later he said to himself, Although I don’t fear God and have no respect for men, yet this woman is such a nuisance that I shall give judgment in her favor, or else her continual visits will be the death of me!

Then the Lord said, Notice how this dishonest magistrate behaved. Do you suppose God, patient as he is, will not see justice done for his chosen, who appeal to him day and night? I assure you he will not delay in seeing justice done.

This is a parable people don't talk much about. Is God like an unrighteous judge who does something only so he won't be continually bothered? Of course not.

The King James says the judge was unjust (other translations say "corrupt," "dishonest," "unrighteous"). The law was clear: the rights of those with no power were to be protected, especially widows and orphans because they became helpless when the man of the house died. Deut. 27:19 says, "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and **widow**." This judge didn't care about what God commands nor about the merits of the cases brought by the people of the town. Although it is a parable, I think the listeners understood that this judge allowed his judgment to be influenced by bribes, something the widow could not afford.

But in spite of that, she did get justice because she never gave up. She kept coming back, and coming back, so that finally the judge settled the case in her favor. Think about the Church in her "widowed" condition and her communion with God. The favor God shows to his elect is so much more than what was shown by the corrupt judge:

Matthew 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, **how much more** shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

If an evil, corrupt judge eventually dispenses justice, "how much more" shall the heavenly Father do the same—even though it might appear that he will tolerate the wrongs taking place around us or that are happening in our individual lives forever. Dare we become weary in well doing? No! Remember the point of the parable: "Then he gave them an illustration to show that they must always pray and never lose heart." One antidote to weariness is prayer, and we know our prayers go up to the most righteous judge in the entire universe.

The closing words (verse 8) are "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" In spite of the faithfulness of God and the positive assurance that he will execute judgment on behalf of his elect, the great danger is that his people will grow weary, that they will lose their faith and stop sending up their prayers to God.

Proverbs 13:12 says, "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick." Few ever quote the remainder of this scripture: "but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life" (NIV). God's "chosen" will certainly see the day when their longings are fulfilled.

Let us learn from this parable the lesson that though our prayers might appear to go unanswered, we must persevere and not grow weary in making supplication to God. May we, at the end of our course, be able to say in the words of the apostle Paul, "I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7).

### **Consider Him**

In that discourse in New York just three weeks before he died, Bro. Russell asked the question, What shall we do if we get weary and faint in our minds? His answer came from Hebrews 12:

Heb. 12:3 Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

We are to consider our Lord Jesus and how much he endured without getting faint and weary. The contradiction he felt from sinners is of the kind the footstep followers of Christ will feel as they seek to do the Father's will.

Heb. 4:15 (NIV) We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.

Surely Jesus was tempted to grow weary and faint in his mind even at the start of his walk in the narrow way. Satan came to him and suggested an easier way than the way of sacrifice. Jesus answered, “Get thee behind me, Satan!” Even though we follow in Jesus’ footsteps we will never endure as much as he did. Here’s more from this last talk of Bro. Russell’s in New York:

“In every congregation there is danger of growing weary in well-doing. Well-doing costs something. It means sacrificing. If you are serving the Lord’s cause, you are denying yourself in some way. The world, the flesh and the adversary are pressing hard to draw us, not exactly from the prize, but from the narrow way that leads to the prize. They would make us faint and cause us to say, “Oh, I am so tired; I cannot do any more!” Doubtless we all have had such experiences. If we get faint in **body**, we can rest. If we get faint in **mind**, it is more difficult to become refreshed.”—*Reprints 6064*

By lifting our eyes to Jesus, by considering him, we see that he was put to death as a malefactor, but God raised him to spiritual life. He will do the same for us: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:17).

Bro. Russell gave one more suggestion to avoid becoming weary. He said we should live in the future, not in the past. If we live in the past, we will dwell upon our mistakes and shortcomings and that will surely discourage us. But if we contemplate the future and the part we will have in bringing blessings to the world of mankind, we will become enthusiastic and renewed in spirit.

2 Cor. 4:16-18 Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

## The Metaphor of Farming

Galatians 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall **reap**, if we faint not.

Farmers know if they are to succeed, they must do more than plow the land and sow the seed. They must not grow weary with the constant need to cultivate, feed and tend the growing plants. I am sure they look forward with joy to the prospect of reaping the fruitage of their efforts, even though reaping is a lot of work. After all, reaping is the whole point of farming.

Proverbs 24:30-34 (NIV) I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit, and scarcity like an armed man.

A little sleep, a little slumber . . . a little sitting down to rest . . . and the result may not be poverty for us, but it will be the loss of everything we once thought really mattered. We have made our calling sure. Like good farmers let us apply ourselves each day so that we may make our election sure as well.

Matthew 13:20-22 (NIV) The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away. The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

This parable of the sower and the seed teaches that receiving the good news of the gospel and accepting it is only the first step. It does not guarantee fruitage. Allowing trouble, persecution, the worries of this life, or discouragement of any kind to take control of us will mean that we will be found unfruitful, unfaithful.

**“He who hesitates is lost.”**

“On the plains of **hesitation** bleach the bones of countless millions...” The word “hesitate” does not occur in the King James in any form. Yet there is a hint of a hesitancy of spirit in these words from Ecclesiastes:

Eccles. 11:4 He that observeth the wind shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.

One can almost see the [unsuccessful] farmer standing in his field saying, “Looks like the wind is coming up. I’d better wait until tomorrow,” or at harvest time saying, “Looks like rain, better wait until tomorrow before cutting the grain.” Even if you’re not a farmer, you can guess what will happen: no crop, no success.

Hesitation is a close friend of weariness. Even if we do not have the strength to get involved with the “sowing” or “reaping” work of others, we all should be able to support those who are doing such work by offering encouraging words and even financial assistance if the Lord has made it possible for us to do so. I don’t think we should be overly concerned about whether one approach or some different approach is the better one to use in holding forth the word of life to the world around us. Just two verses later we read:

Eccles. 11:6 In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

*Manna for December 29:* All of the Lord's people, in proportion as they desire to be the servants of the Truth, should be continually on the alert to note opportunities for service, and should expect to be guided and used of the Lord. Wherever we see evidences of devotion to the Lord and His Word, we should be on the alert to extend a helping hand.

2 Cor. 9:6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Brethren, let us not become weary in well doing. Let us not become discouraged because things have gone on longer than we think they should, or because our physical and mental strength may not be what it once was. Let us do with our might what our hand finds to do. Let us be counted among those who sow and who reap bountifully.

“On the plains of hesitation bleach the bones of countless millions who, on the eve of victory sat down to rest, and resting, died.”

Closing Hymn: #309 — “To the Work” [long 4-stanza hymn]

*[First given at San Diego, December 1998]*

## Bearing God's Burdens

I long had borne a weary load  
 Along life's rough and thorny road,  
 And oftentimes had wondered why  
 My friend walked burdenless, while I  
 Was forced to carry day by day  
 The cross which on my shoulders lay.

When, lo, one day the Master laid  
 Another cross on me! Dismayed  
 And faint, and trembling and distressed,  
 I cried, "Oh, I have longed for rest  
 These many days. I cannot bear  
 This other heavy load of care.  
 I pray Thee, Lord, behold *this* one—  
 Shall I bear both while he hath none?"

No answer came. The cross was laid  
 On my poor back, and I was weighed  
 Down to the earth. And as I went  
 Toiling along and almost spent,  
 Again I cried, "Lord, have I been  
 Untrue to Thee? Is it for sin  
 That I have done, that I must still  
 Carry this cross against my will?"

"My child," the Master's voice returned,  
 "Hast thou not yet the lesson learned?  
 The burden thou hast borne so long  
 Hath only made thee grow more strong.  
 And fitted thee to bear for Me  
 This other load I lay on thee.

Thy brother is too weak as yet  
 To have a cross upon him set.  
 God's burdens rest upon the strong—  
 They stronger grow who bear them long.  
 And each new burden is a sign  
 That greater power to bear is thine."

So now no longer I repine,  
 Because a heavy cross is mine,  
 But struggle onward with the prayer,  
 Make me more worthy, Lord, to bear!

—*Poems of Dawn*, page 93