



Love-Slaves

Chapter 18 – My Testimony

Today (June 1, 1919) I am fifty-nine years old, and there is not a cloud in my spiritual heaven. My mouth is full of laughter and my heart is full of joy. I feel so sorry for folks who don't like to grow old, and who are trying all the time to hide the fact that they are growing old, and who are ashamed to tell how old they are. I revel in my years. They enrich me. If God should say to me, 'I will let you begin over again, and you may have your youth back once more,' I should say, 'O dear Lord, if Thou dost not mind, I prefer to go on growing old!'

I would not exchange the peace of mind, the abiding rest of soul, the measure of wisdom I have gained from the sweet and bitter and perplexing experiences of life, the confirmed faith I now have in the moral order of the universe, and in the unfailing mercies and love of God, for all the bright but uncertain hopes and tumultuous joys of youth. Indeed, I would not!

These are the best years of my life – the sweetest, the freest from anxious care and fear. The way grows brighter, the birds sing sweeter, the winds blow softer, the sun shines more radiantly than ever before. I suppose my outward man is perishing, but my inward man is being joyously renewed day by day.

Victor Hugo said (I quote from memory): 'For fifty years I have been expressing myself in sonnet and song, in history, biography, essays, philosophy, drama, tragedy, and fiction, but I have not expressed a thousandth part of what is within me.' And then he added, 'The frosts of seventy winters are upon my head, but the springtime of eternal youth is in my heart.' Truly, that is the way I feel these days

One of the prayers of my heart, as I grow older, is that of David: 'Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not until I have showed Thy strength unto this generation and Thy power to everyone that is to come!' David was jealous for the glory of God and for the



highest well-being of his own generation and every generation that was to follow, and he prayed no selfish prayer, but poured out his heart to God that he might so live and speak and write that God's glory and goodness and power might be made known to the men of his own time and to all that should come after him. And how wonderfully God heard and answered his prayer! Oh, that God would grant me a like grace!

If the eye of any friend falls upon this testimony, let me beseech you to unite with me and for me in this prayer of David, which I make my own.

This past year has been wonderful. Since the first of January considerably over three thousand souls have knelt at the penitent-form in my Meetings, seeking pardon and purity. Seldom have I seen such manifestations of God's presence and power as during these months. I rejoice in God my Saviour, and my soul doth magnify the Lord.

I wish I knew more of it and could better tell to others the secret of growing old gladly. But some lessons that I have learned, or partially learned, I here pass on:

1. Have faith in God – In His providence, In His superintending care, in His unfailing love.
2. Accept the bitter with the sweet and rejoice in both. The bitter may be better for us than the sweet. Don't grow impatient and fretful. If you fall into divers temptations, count it all joy, knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience; and let patience have her perfect work, that you may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

What a high state of grace that is – to be 'perfect and entire, wanting nothing! And yet it is to be attained through the joyful acceptance of annoying trials and petty vexations, as a part of God's discipline.' (James i. 2-7.)

3. Keep a heart full of love toward everybody. Learn to be patient with folks who try your patience. If you can't love them with complacency, then love them with compassion and pity; but love them, pray for them, and don't carry around hard thoughts and feelings – toward them.



The
S. L. Bringle
Collection

Here is a tender little poem by Whittier, our Quaker poet:

My heart was heavy, for its trust had been abused,

Its kindness answered with foul wrong;

So, turning gloomily from my fellow-men,

One summer Sabbath Day I strolled among

The green mounds of the village burial-place,

Where, pondering how all human love and hate

Find one sad level; and how, soon or late,

Wronged and wrong-doer, each with meekened face,

And cold hands folded over a still heart,

Pass the green threshold of our common grave,

Whither all footsteps tend, whence none depart,

Awed for myself and pitying my race,

Our common sorrow, like a mighty wave,

Swept all my pride away, and, trembling, I forgave

4. Don't waste time and fritter away faith by living in the past, by mourning over the failures of yesterday and the long ago. Commit them to God and look upward and onward. 'Forgetting those things which are behind,' said Paul, '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.'

Someone has said that there are two things we should never worry over and two days about which we should never be anxious. First, we should not worry over the things that we can help, but set to work manfully to help them; second, we should not worry, over the things that we cannot help, but commit them to God and go on with the duties close at hand. Again, we should not be anxious about yesterday. Our anxieties will not mend its failures nor restore its losses. Second, we should not be anxious about tomorrow. We cannot borrow its grace. Why, then, should we borrow its care?

5. Give good heed to failing bodily strength. The Founder once said that the body and soul, being very near neighbors, have a great influence upon each other. We must remember that our bodies are to be treated like our beast, and Solomon says that 'a righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.' When young we could stay up all night, eat ice-cream, nuts, and cake at midnight, and go about our work next day, not much the worse, so far as we could judge, for the shameful mistreatment of our bodies; but woe unto the man or woman, growing old, who thinks he can treat his body so!

We must remember that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost; hence, while they need sufficient nourishing food and restful sleep, they must in no sense be pampered, and all nervous excesses must be strictly avoided, or the body will react upon the mind and the spirit, and weakness and impatience and gloom will cloud the soul. And then, instead of ripening into mellow sweetness with age, the soul will turn bitter and sour; and what can be more pitiful than an embittered and soured old soul?

Oh, the joy of living a life of sobriety, of faith, of quietness and confidence, of meekness, of service, of love, of 'growing up unto Him in all things, which is the Head – Even Christ!' Such a life is never old, but eternally renewing itself, eternally youthful, like a springing, sparkling fountain that is fed by unfailling waters that flow down from the heights of the everlasting hills. Hallelujah!



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In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust! Oh, how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men! (Psalm xxxi. 1-19.)

Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be, The last of life, for which the first was made: Our times are in His hand Who saith, 'A whole I planned, Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid.'

Then welcome each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough, Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go! Be our joys three parts pain! Strive, and hold cheap the strain; Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

He fixed thee 'mid the dance of plastic circumstance, This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest; Machinery just meant to give thy soul its bent, Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

The Future I may face now I have proved the Past.