

Common

When we hear the word “common” we sometimes underestimate its power. Synonyms that come to mind are plain, ordinary or simple. Yet, in the Bible we find the word “common” touches us in a most uncommon way. For instance we discover:

1. This was the type person that was willing to hear Jesus.

"...and the common people heard him gladly" (Mark 12:37). In the common person, I see a person willing to uncomplicate their life. I see the person willing to live without duplicity. Jesus said, *"Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light"* (Luke 11:35,36).

2. This describes the faith we share.

"To Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Titus 1:4). In Jude's epistle, verse 3, he spoke of *"...the common salvation..."* God does not play favorites. *"For there is no respect of persons with God"* (Romans 2:11). Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached a sermon on May 19, 1881 based on the text from Song of Solomon 2:1, *"I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys."* He pleaded with his listeners to see the free offer of God's salvation. Better than my comments about the sermon, allow me to let you savor a few rich eloquent words he used: "I have been talking about my Master, and I want to show you that *he is accessible*, He is meant to be plucked and enjoyed as roses and lilies are. He says in the text, 'I am the rose of Sharon.' What was Sharon? It was an open plain where anybody might wander, and where even cattle roamed at their own sweet will. Jesus is not like a rose in Solomon's garden, shut up within high walls, with broken glass all along the top. Oh, no! He says, 'I am the rose of Sharon,' everybody's rose, the flower for the common people to come and gather. 'I am the lily.' What lily? The lily of the palace of Shushan, enclosed and guarded from all approach? No; but, 'I am the lily of the valleys,' found in this glen, or the other ravine, growing here, there, and everywhere: 'I am the lily of the valleys.

"Whatever kind of rose it was, it was a common rose; whatever kind of lily it was, it was a well-known lily that grew freely in the valleys of that land. Oh, blessed be my Master's name, He has brought us a common salvation, and He is the common people's Christ! Men in general do not love Him enough, or else they would have hedged him in with all sorts of restrictions; they would have made a franchise for Him, and nobody would have been able to be saved except those who paid I know not how much a year in taxes. But they do not love our Lord enough to shut Him in, and I am glad they have never tried to do so. There He stands, at the four-cross roads, so that everybody who comes by, and wants Him, may have him. He is a fountain, bearing this inscription, 'Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' 'I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.' Why do roses grow in Sharon? Why do lilies grow in the valleys? Why, to be plucked, of course! I like to see the children go down into the meadow when it is decked in grass, and adorned with flowers, gilded with buttercups, or white with the day's-eyes; I love to see the children pluck the flowers, and fill their pinafores with them, or make garlands, and twist them round their necks, or put them on their heads. 'O children, children!' somebody might cry, 'do not spoil those beautiful flowers, do not go and pick them.' Oh, but they may! Nobody says they may not.

They may not go into our gardens, and steal the geraniums and the fuchsias; but they may get away into the meadows, or into the open fields, and pluck these common flowers to their heart's content. And now, poor soul, if you would like an apronful of roses, come and have them. If you would like to carry away a big handful of the lilies of the valleys, come and take them, as many as you will. May the Lord give you the will! That is, after all, what is wanted; if there be that grace-given will, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the valleys will soon be yours. They are common flowers, growing in a common place, and there are plenty of them; will you not take them?"

Did not the grand old English preacher tell it truthfully! This blessed Rose and Lily is not for the elite few. These flowers are not on the mountain high where only the agile may claim them; they are on the level plain where the lame, the weak and all my find Him!

3. This grants us the promise to overcome every trial.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13). While in the red hot heat of our trials and temptations, God assures us an equalizing power to escape the hold over us. God is telling us that absolutely no temptation has taken us that has not also beset other people. At times, we as Christians are tempted to say, "No one has suffered or been tried like I have." It may seem so, but the fact of Scripture denies that claim. God is more than willing to help every need we have. One of the amazing purposes of Christ emptying Himself and becoming a man and dwelling with us was to feel what we feel, suffer what we suffer, and even be tempted like we are "*yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15) so that He might vicariously through His risen power and residency of the Holy Spirit supply all the power we need. "*For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted*" (Hebrews 2:18). The word translated "succour" is from the Greek word: *boetheo*, which means to help, succour, bring aid.

One of my favorite stories my dad used to tell was of a girl named Peggy and her horse called, "Old Mace." One day Peggy went for a ride on her horse beyond her known perimeters and soon sundown was approaching and although she was far from home, she trusted her instincts. After several attempts to go home, to her dismay, she ascertained she was instead going in circles. Weeping, she let go of the horse reins and cried, "Old Mace, I don't know how to get home; it's up to you, girl." And following those words she gently kicked the sides of her horse and said, "Get us home, Old Mace." And the knowing horse made a bee line straight for home." What a joy to understand that when we have resisted temptation and cannot find the strength to fight another inch, if we will drop the proverbial reins and trust in the Lord who was tempted as we have been, we most assuredly will discover that God "*... will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (I Corinthians 10:13). God will, by His grace, get you home before the darkness engulfs you.

- Pastor Pope -

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