

# 12 Foundation Stones—Class 11B

## Three Steps to Victory

### Overcoming Problems, Part 2

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#### (Section 1) Step 3: Move On!

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Now we're ready for Step 3: "Move on!"

➤ **Recognize the lessons and grow**

Life is a constant learning process. Receiving Jesus as your Savior is just the beginning of becoming what God wants you to be.

The learning process is a marvelous thing! Nobody's perfect, and that's what life is all about!—It's about not being perfect. It's about learning and growing.

Perhaps one of the best ways to understand this is to look at the illustration that Jesus gave in John 15. It is the fruit-bearing branch that is pruned.

*John 15:1–7—I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. (2) Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (3) You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you. (4) Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (5) I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (6) If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. (7) If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

➤ **Experience to your spiritual development is like exercise to the body!**

What does exercise do for your body?—It strengthens you. So every experience you go through, every test, every trial, every new thing, everything that you learn along the way, causes you to gain experience, and experience is to your mind and your spirit what exercise is to your body. Every experience you go through, God designs to make you stronger!

➤ **Learn your lessons and keep moving forward!**

There can be a danger in dwelling too much on your mistakes and problems. Many Christians spend a lot of time trying to perfect themselves. Some sit around reading the Word and praying and going to church just so they can "get better" and learn lessons for themselves alone. They have in effect enrolled themselves in a personal advancement course.

That's not what we're talking about! Although we all have some spiritual learning and growing to do—and particularly if our problems are hurting others, they need to be dealt with—still, we do not want to spend all of our time focusing on our own problems, sins, shortcomings and lacks. Acknowledge your lessons, then move on. It is better to invest most of our energy in helping others.

**Burdens can be a bridge**

A biologist tells how he watched an ant carrying a piece of straw which seemed a big burden for it. The ant came to a crack in the earth which was too wide for it to cross. It stood for a time as though pondering the situation, then put the straw across the crack and walked over upon it. Here is a lesson for all mankind! A man's burden can be made a bridge for his progress.

**If you fall, don't just lie there!**

An elderly woman slipped and fell in a busy street. Passers-by hastened to assist her, but she was already struggling to hoist herself up.

"Thanks, I'm all right," she assured them. "I always fall forwards, never backwards."

Nevertheless, she accepted help to a seat in a nearby store. "I seem to be very fond of kissing the ground of my native town," she mused wryly.

Obviously she knew how to take life's tumbles with a smile, and the incident made me think. We

can't all fall forwards physically when our feet stumble; sometimes we inevitably fall backwards.

But when life gives us a hard knock mentally, we can try to take it courageously so that we "fall forwards"—that is, looking to the future instead of dwelling on the past. In the words of Aldous Huxley: "Experience is not what happens to a man; it is what a man does with what happens to him."

### **Finish the race**

We can find inspiration from the life of John Stephen Akhwari, as told in Bud Greenspan's book *100 Greatest Moments in Olympic History*.

When the winner crossed the finish line in the 1968 Mexico City Olympic marathon, officials thought the race was over. Then, an hour later, John Stephen Akhwari, a runner from Tanzania, entered the stadium. Bloodied and bandaged from a fall, he limped painfully with every step.

As Akhwari made his way around the track, the crowd began to cheer loudly. When he crossed the finish line, you would have thought by the roar of the crowd that Akhwari had been the victor.

Later, when asked why he had not dropped out, Akhwari replied, "I don't think you understand. My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race. They sent me to finish the race."

When you're bruised and bloodied by life, press on; your Creator did not send you here to start the race, but to finish it!

Keep going, no matter what the cost. Keep fighting, no matter what bruises you get. Keep running, no matter how many times you stumble and fall. Your cuts and bruises and scrapes and scars are medals of honor in the Lord's sight, signs that you had the faith, courage, determination, and commitment to keep going, even though it was tough! You may have fallen, but you refused to quit.

At the end of the race, you'll then be able to say like Paul of old did: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day" (2 Timothy 4:7–8).

### ➤ **Keep your eyes on Jesus, not yourself.**

*Romans 7:18a—For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.*

*Galatians 2:20—It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*

*Isaiah 26:3—You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*

Get your eyes on Jesus. Think about the Lord! Jesus is your best friend and He is the One who can help you get the victory, whether over your personal problems or whatever obstacles you face.

*Hebrews 12:1–3—Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

### **Peter walks on the water—and almost sinks when he takes his eyes off the Lord!**

Matthew 14:28–32—And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

### **Put your weight on Him!**

I learned to swim in boyhood, but it was only this summer that I achieved complete mastery of myself in the water. For 30 years I had assumed that I must constantly struggle to keep from sinking.

One day an expert swimmer watched me for a few minutes and then cried: "Stop fighting the water and trust it to hold you up. Use your strength and get somewhere."

Under his direction, a few moments sufficed to convince me he was right. I lay flat in the water without moving hands or feet and to my delight, it held me up. Then I struck out, using my strength to forge ahead. What a revelation! Why didn't someone tell me that years ago?

So many constantly struggle to keep from sinking, when if they would only trust Jesus they would be kept afloat.

### **Above the storm**

A story is told that once the passengers of a vessel steaming along the St. Lawrence River in the US were very angry because, in spite of the fact that heavy fog was encircling the boat, full speed ahead was maintained. At last they went to the first mate, and complained, "Oh, don't be afraid!" the mate replied, with a smile. "The fog lies low, and the captain is high above it, and can see where we are going."

Are you tempted to complain about the way your Great Captain is leading you? Believe that He can see the end of the way. Then, declare, "Thou, Lord ... makest me dwell in safety."

## ➤ **Trust the Lord that He knows best**

*Romans 8:28—And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

Something that can help you to learn to exercise your spiritual muscles is developing the awareness that everything that happens in our lives has a reason! The Lord has a reason for it, and we should always look for that reason.

When you see your life in that light and things that happen to you as being the Lord's voice speaking to you and trying to show you something, it opens up a whole new way of looking at things, and it brings the Lord so close. If you'll stop and look and listen and ask Him what He is trying to show you, you'll become so much more aware of His presence and you can see all of the concrete ways in which He guides you.

When you recognize how wonderfully the Lord uses all the little things in our lives to speak to us, that gives you a more positive outlook. For example, if you get sick, try to look for all the positive reasons why it could have happened, instead of just looking at it as a hindrance and complaining about it, and considering it something that you just have to suffer through.

Sometimes it's not so easy to figure out what He is trying to show us, but if we keep persisting and looking for the answers, the Lord will be faithful to show us that He always has a reason for the things He allows us to go through.

If you can learn to see the good in things that happen to you, your life will be richer, your lessons greater and your mind more tranquil, and you will more easily recognize the Lord's hand in the events of your life. It makes all the difference in the world whether you look at a flood of problems, trials, battles, and tribulations just waiting to see the worst happen, or if you look at them with the excitement and challenge that comes from waiting to discover all the good you know the Lord will bring out of them.

① See *Obstacles Are for Overcoming* page 23, "*Beauty for Ashes*" for more on the Romans 8:28 principle.

### **The end of a bitter trial**

(As told by Corrie Ten Boom in her book, *Father Ten Boom*.)

It happened around the year 1640. A group of Spaniards was traveling through the jungles of South America when one member of the party fell seriously ill with malaria. In a short time, the fever weakened him so much that he was unable to walk.

His friends were at their wits' end. They improvised a stretcher from branches and tried to carry him on it. The condition of the sick man and the difficulties in transporting him became such that they finally decided to lay him down at the side of a pool of water, in the shadow of a tree with thick foliage. There they left him.

His situation seemed desperate. His fellow travelers had left him some food, but he paid no attention to it. Water! That was his only thought. Tormented by a burning thirst, he bent down to the water, only to fall back in despair. The water had a loathsome and bitter taste.

But as time went on, and the fever continued to burn and consume his body, he drank again and again. Then a strange thing happened. After every drink of water, the fever seemed to subside and the pain to become less severe. Strength returned to his weak body.

Healing had come to him through the bitterness of the water. You see, the tree under which his companions had laid him was the Cinchona, or quinine tree. Leaves and pieces of bark had fallen into the water, and the quinine had dissolved. Not only was the exhausted traveler completely restored, but a wonderful remedy was discovered, through which countless lives have since been saved.

This is way it often goes with those of us who have to pass through dark and bitter trials. How easily we rebel against the circumstances that cause us to suffer and which we cannot change. However, the Lord sometimes sends troubles our way in order to heal us. We must believe in His love and wisdom. Soon we discover that the bitterness of the medicine was necessary in order to heal us.

### **It worked for good! (Humor)**

A butter-fingered man who had been unemployed for a long time at last found a job in a chinaware house. He had been at work only a few days when he smashed a large vase. He was summoned to the manager's office and told by that dignitary that he would have to have money deducted from his wages every week until the vase was paid for. "How much did it cost?" asked the culprit.

"Three hundred dollars," said the manager.

"Oh, that's wonderful," he said, "I'm so happy. At last I've got a steady job!"

## ➤ **Forget yourself and help others. Use lessons to help others.**

The Lord lets us go through difficult experiences to comfort others and help them! The best way to forget your own problems is to help someone else solve theirs.

Get your mind on helping others! Seek their happiness before your own. Ask the Lord to help you love Him so much that you'll love others so much that you'll forget your own self, and live for Jesus and for others!

They even say work therapy is a pretty good thing, to get busy physically, work hard, and forget your troubles. That's true to a certain extent, but that only takes you so far. Why not get busy and work hard for Jesus, work hard to help other people! If you get busy helping others, you'll be so filled with His joy that He gives you as a result of trying to make other people happy, that you'll forget that sad self of yours.

Remember also that the lessons you learn, the comfort you receive from the Lord and others, equips you to comfort others. We can sympathize more with others when we ourselves have gone through hard times. If we were all so righteous and we didn't have any of these weaknesses, we couldn't help others much, we couldn't be sympathetic or compassionate, we couldn't even understand them. Use the lessons you've learned to help others through their difficult times.

*2 Corinthians 1:4—[Jesus] comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

### **Saving himself by saving another**

The story is told of Sundar Singh (a Christian from India, 1889–1933) who was traveling with a Tibetan companion on a bitterly cold day. Snow was falling heavily, and both men were almost too frozen to go forward; they felt they would never survive the terrible experience. They reached a steep precipice, and there they saw that a man had slipped over the edge, and was lying, almost dead, on the ledge of rock below. Sundar suggested that they should carry the poor fellow to safety. The Tibetan refused to help, saying it was all they could do to save themselves; and he went on, leaving Sundar behind. With great difficulty Sundar managed to get the dying man up the slope and on to his back, and then he struggled on with his heavy burden.

Before long he came upon the body of his former companion, the Tibetan. He was dead, frozen to death. On struggled Sundar, and gradually the dying man, receiving warmth from the friction of his own body against that of his rescuer, began to revive, while Sundar himself grew warm through his labor. At last they reached a village and were safe. With a full heart, Sundar thought of the words of his Master: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matthew 16:25).

### **Carrying the load**

When someone living in a simple village has a heavy load to carry, he will often tie it to one end of a pole with a stone of equal weight fastened to the other. Then, with the pole across his shoulder he is able to carry his load in the easiest possible way.

It's the same idea as packing our holiday luggage into two small suitcases to balance one another when we're carrying them, rather than in one large heavy bag that weighs us down.

It works like that in life, too. Many people have found that the best way to cope with their own troubles is to help carry someone else's as well. By turning their attention to the problems of another person, it becomes much easier to forget their own.

## ➤ **Patiently wait on the Lord**

You've prayed for help. You've followed the preceding steps. You are trusting, believing, fighting, trying to change.—And yet still you are beset with the same trial! Maybe you have a personal weakness you haven't been able to overcome. You want to stop smoking, or you want to not lose your temper. Or maybe you need healing from a long-term ailment. Or maybe you need a new job to be able to make ends meet. And although you've done everything we've suggested, it hasn't happened yet! What's wrong?

It is a fact that we don't always get answers to our prayers right away. This doesn't mean we're doing something wrong, but the Lord is expecting us to have patience. When the Lord delays in answering prayer, it tests our faith. Patience takes faith, to trust in God for the outcome.

*Psalms 40:1—I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry.*

*Lamentations 3:26—It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.*

*Hebrews 10:36—For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.*

*James 1:3–5—The testing of your faith produces patience. (4) But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

Learning patience seems to be one of God's most frequent lessons, yet one of our own rarest virtues, as it really tests our faith and drives us to the Lord and His Word, to Whom and which we might not otherwise give so much time and attention. Testing our patience is one way God has of getting our attention while we're waiting for His answers!

*Isaiah 40:31—But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

*James 5:10–11—My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience. (11) Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end intended by the Lord—that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.*

There is a beautiful and wise saying: "Anything wonderful can happen in that little margin of time when you do not give up, but keep on believing and keep on praying."

### **It came to pass**

In a testimony meeting in the South, an old Christian got up and said that she was always encouraged by the words, "And it came to pass."

"When I am upset by troubles, I go to the Bible, and I never get far before I read 'It came to pass.' And I say, 'Bless the Lord it didn't come to stay—it came to pass!'"

### **It will stop (humor)**

As William Dean Howells and Mark Twain were coming out of church one morning, it commenced to rain heavily. "Do you think it will stop?" asked Howells.

"It always has," answered Twain.

### **Short cuts aren't always wise!**

Jeffrey aspired to become a taxi driver in London. Part of the test involved knowledge of the shortest route between any two points in the city. He studied the maps till he knew them by heart—but he failed the test.

In answer to a question about the quickest route from one place to another he gave what clearly was the shortest on the map. It would, however, have meant taking his taxi down a long flight of steps and through a passage wide enough only for pedestrians!

Short cuts are not always what they seem. While we should be grateful when trials end, we should always keep in mind that most of the things worth waiting for come to us through patience and effort. Don't be deluded by life's "short cuts."

## ➤ **Quick Review of Step 3: Move On!**

Now let's review the last step—how to move on from the "valley of trials" to the "mountain lands of victory."

Recognize your lessons and grow. The Christian life is a growing process. Recognize what you should learn from the problem. Even if the problem is not your fault, there still may be lessons to be learned.

Keep your eyes on Jesus, not yourself. Trust Jesus to bring the victories that you need.

Trust the Lord that He knows best. "All things work together for good to them that love God." You will enjoy greater peace in your life if you can trust that the Lord loves you and will not allow anything in your life that will not turn out to be for good, even though you can't understand it right away.

Forget yourself and help others. Getting busy helping somebody else may in itself solve your own problems. Also remember that the Lord allows us to go through things so we can comfort and help others.

Patiently wait on the Lord. The Lord always answers, but His timetable often isn't the same as ours! "Anything wonderful can happen in that little margin of time when you do not give up, but keep on believing and keep on praying."

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## **Section 2: Quiet Time—Refuge from the Storm**

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### ➤ **Quiet time with Jesus**

The storms of life come upon all of us in different ways—personal trials, spiritual battles, physical difficulties. It's wonderful to know that there is a shelter where we can find solace, rest, comfort, and guidance, and that is in the presence of the Lord. Remember that Jesus tells us:

*Matthew 11:28–30—Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*

One of the best ways that you can implement each of these three steps to solving your problems, as well as preventing some problems before they even start, is to set aside a little time each day to come into the Lord's presence. Spend regular time in quiet prayer, praise, and reading the Word. The more time you can devote to this, the more victories you'll obtain and the closer you'll get to the Lord.

This is not the same as study time, but just time to spend in fellowship with Jesus, talking to Him, and listening to Him. Think of it as taking time alone with a loved one, just as you may do with your husband, wife, boyfriend, or girlfriend.

➤ **The strength-giver**

This type of spiritual rest and quiet will renew you and give you strength to face whatever comes your way.

*Isaiah 30:15—For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."*

*Hebrews 4:9–10—There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. (10) For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.*

Jesus can solve all your problems in one little glimpse! He can refresh your whole spirit with one deep breath. He can clarify all your thoughts with just one sweet strain of Heavenly music. And He can wipe away all your fears and tears with just one little restful moment in that perfect peace He gives when your mind is stayed on Him and Him alone, because you trust in Him. It just takes one little glimpse of Jesus to make it worth it all!

**"I can only lie still"**

Hudson Taylor (English missionary to China, 1832–1905) was so feeble in the closing months of life, that he wrote a dear friend, "I am so weak I cannot work; I cannot read my Bible; I cannot even pray. I can only lie still in God's arms like a little child, and trust." This wondrous man of God with all his spiritual power came to a place of physical suffering and weakness where he could only lie still and trust. And that is all God asks of you, His dear child, when you grow faint in the fierce fires of affliction. Do not try to be strong. Just be still.