

“THINGS THAT ARE NOT SEEN”

We have been singing about God. In a very true sense God is the truth. All the elements that constitute what we call the truth will be found to be rooted in Him. Why, for instance, is man mortal? Because God, who made man, was disobeyed in the beginning. Why was Christ crucified? Because God, though willing to show His kindness, will be kind only on the basis of His exaltation. Why is Christ coming? That the will of God may be done, and that the purpose of God in the creation of the earth, may be realised. All these items of truth detached from God, are dry and dead. Sometimes they are held in this detached form. Sometimes men are to be met with who are very much interested in what we may call the details of the truth, with no sympathy for the whole scheme of which they are the subordinate sections.

They are much taken up with the signs of the times, say, but with no relish for that to which the signs of the times relate, for the signs are only signs of the coming glory of the Lord. Or keenly interested, it may be, in questions scholastic involved in the system of the truth; questions of the original tongue, and of lexico-graphical reference, but with no sympathy for the large and sublime ideas of which any or all words of any language are but the symbols. Such men you may sometimes find eager to discuss the nature of Christ, with no real love for Christ, as shown by their total disregard of his commandments. All these belong to the category of spiritual abortions. True growth in Christ, while not ignoring technical instruments as an indispensable means of access to the truth in our age, shoots up through and beyond it all, and lays hold of the actual things that constitute the truth, of which God is the kernel, yea, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end.

While the breaking of bread is intended to bring Christ to remembrance, it is for that very reason also intended as a memorial of God; for Christ and God are one: the one is but the manifestation of the other. Spiritual success consists in having these things always in remembrance. To some it appears a barren form this continual pumping-up from memory. No doubt it is easier to deal with things that we can see, and hear, and feel, but in the economy of things to which man stands related, it often happens that the things he can discern by understanding are of greater moment than the things he can handle. Things that are matters of memory may be inherently more real than things actually in hand. It is the function of intelligence to discern the difference between appearance and reality. We have to learn that things out of our sight are very real, though unseen, if they are true in themselves. The sun at night for example, shines as brightly at the other side of the world as with us at noonday, though the darkness would make us think there was no sun, or that it never would come back again. And so, in the depth and misery of winter there are spicy breezes, and balmy zephyrs, and glassy seas in the tropics. We may not be able to imagine that it is so, but such is the fact.

This is a parallel to these things in our position in the truth. We do not see God, but the reality of existence is not impaired by our want of perception. It is the part of wisdom to discern the fact of His existence; we have never seen Him, though we are hoping to see Him. We could see Him at this moment if He chose to reveal Himself; and if we saw Him, we should behold what Paul beheld a mile or two from Damascus, a dazzling figure, above the brightness of the sun. Let us remember this in the darkness and squalor of our present state. We are like children living in cellar; we do not see the sun, but the fact is the blue sky and the sun are there for us to see, if we were so placed to be able to see them. The fact that God and Christ exist carries that other fact, that the Kingdom of God will come, and that evil will vanish from the earth; for the one springs out of the other.

Consequently, it is no vain thing to remember. It may sometimes be a painful effort; so is education in all departments. People who refuse education because of the fatigues associated with it, refuse good and choose evil. And so those who weary in faith act the part of the foolish. The memory of truth discerned is faith, and is very powerful. The man who believes and remembers the truth feels himself able to wait for the developments connected with it, and to do the duties that belong to it, even if distasteful, and to abstain from the things it prescribes, though they might be very agreeable. This is where the advantage lies in our regular readings and meetings connected with the truth. The chapter read from Isaiah puts a prayer into our mouths appropriate to our position,

“O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for Thee.”

This position of waiting is the position he enjoins.

“Wait ye for me,” He says by the prophet Zephaniah, *“until the day that I rise up to the prey:”*

And it is put on record that it shall be said in that day,

“Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him.”

With what perfect satisfaction shall we be able to declare the fact, if it be the fact with us then, that we have waited.

There is everything worth waiting for. Most of the things we are waiting for are plainly stated to us. Take for example the command,

“Avenge not yourselves, for vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Who is there of us as natural men, who would not desire to avenge the wrongs inflicted upon us, whatever they may be? And who is there that does not wince and chafe in some degree under this interdict, which forbids our doing what nature prompts? Consider the incentive to obedience which God places before us in the matter. It is not only the fact of his giving us the command; though that, at last, is in itself sufficient incentive with every man of God; for he at last so profoundly recognises the Divine prerogative, and the perfect wisdom of God; and the utter inadequacy of man, as to feel a command of God, because it is such, to bring with it a sufficient motive for obedience; so that, like Abraham, he believes and offers up his Isaac readily, accounting that God is able to put all things right, and willing and wise to do it. But there is more than the command; there is the promise of vindication. He says,

“Vengeance belongs to me, I will inflict it.”

He therefore tells us that the injustices inflicted upon us will all be rectified by Him, and that those who do us wrong will not go unpunished; but the condition is, that we abstain from avenging ourselves. How sweet will be the infliction of Divine vengeance, I mean to those on whose behalf it is inflicted; for there will be the certainty that no wrong will be done, and at the same time that injury will be repaired, and the wrongs of many a dark day, to which we have patiently submitted for God’s sake, will be avenged.

Again, who is there of us who is not pained from year to year by the spectacle of unscrupulous might achieving its own ends in all the earth, riding in the high places, and living on the fat of the lands laughing at the fear of God, and trampling on the weak and defenceless? Are we not constrained, with Jeremiah, to enquire with groans,

“Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper, and all they that deal very treacherously are happy?”

Why is God giving the earth into the hands of the wicked? Why do they “live and grow old,” as Job enquires?

“Yea, are mighty in power, and their houses are safe from fear, and their seed established before their eyes, sending forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dancing to the timbrel and harp, spending their days in wealth, and saying unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways.”

Now the waiting to which God calls us is a waiting that has reference to the rectification of this apparent scandal.

“Wait ye for me,” says He “until the day that I rise up to the prey;”

That is, the day when God will take possession of what is in the hands of the wicked, for that is the idea of “taking the prey.”

“For my determination is,” He proceeds, “to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger, for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”

Is not this an all-sufficient reason for waiting? If we decide not to wait, but to run in and snatch a share with the throng of sinners, we not only forfeit the advantages that will accrue to those who wait for God’s interference, but we actually fail to do ourselves any good; for we make ourselves part and parcel of those whom God purposes to overthrow. How can we hesitate to wait? There is only one principle upon which we can do so, and that is unbelief. The man who believes in God, and in His declared purpose, cannot do otherwise than wait, and what a reward for waiting, when we consider the use to which God will appropriate the prey which He takes from the wicked. He does not need what they have; as He said to Israel,

“The cattle upon a thousand hills are Mine, if I were hungry I would not tell thee.”

To whom will He transfer the possessions, honours, powers, liberties, and privileges at present monopolised by the ungodly race of mankind that inhabits the earth? He has declared it,

“The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just.”

“Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. I will extend peace to Jerusalem like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream. Then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.”

“The abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the wealth of the Gentiles shall come unto thee, thy gates shall be open continually that men may bring unto thee the wealth of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it.”

All these are elements in the great and precious promises recorded. Well might Jesus say,

“Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.”

We can look round on the glory of godless men with patience and resignation. God will end their glory in due course. Christ comes to do this amongst many other glorious things. The

kingdoms of the whole world will become his, and he will divide it amongst those who honour the Father by obeying his commandments, and hoping in his promises.

The waiting is enjoined *“until the day appointed.”* There is a day appointed; this is the very gospel that Paul preached to the Athenians,

“He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.”

This is the declared work, and it has been accompanied by a very palpable pledge. God has given assurance of His purpose in the matter, Paul says, to all men, in having raised Christ from the dead. We are not standing on flimsy or uncertain ground. No man can dispose of the fact of Christ’s resurrection when the case is fully and broadly looked at in all its evidences. Therefore the appointed day is coming, it is on the wing; it will be here one of these days; it will arrive with all the reality and irresistible power of a storm on a midsummer day. Up to the last moment the sun of Gentile prosperity will shine from the clear blue sky of their power, and all will be apparently securely established in peace and fertility, when suddenly the swaying trees, will announce the arrival of the storm. Quickly will the light be dimmed, overcast all the sky, with rolling clouds. Dark will grow the threatening atmosphere, forth will leap the vivid lightning, in quick and constant play, deafening the crash of continuous thunder-peals, and incessant and terrific the down pour of the long pent-up torrents. God will sweep away the refuge of lies, and bring the happy day covenanted to David, when a God-given king will rule over men with justice, and peace and righteousness will be over all.

“He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; He shall deliver the poor when he crieth, and him that hath no helper.”

We hope to be there to help Him. Brethren and sisters it is worth waiting for. The method of our waiting is told us in a way that we can understand. It is not simply sitting still until it comes. In the song to be sung in that day in the land of Judah, as recorded in Isa. 24, the righteous say,

“In the way of thy judgments have we waited for Thee, O Lord. The desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee.”

The word *“judgments”* here is equivalent to *“statutes”* and *“commandments.”* To wait for God in the way of His commandments, is to pass the time as strangers and sojourners, in harmony with the requirements made known in His word.

This breaking of bread is one of the commandments in the way of which we are waiting for God; for what does this breaking of bread mean, but that we are expecting Christ? But this breaking of bread is only a part of our compliance; it will be vain indeed for us to observe this ordinance if at the same time we are otherwise living inconsistently with the position of waiting for God, and expectancy of His promised salvation. Jesus speaks of such at the last, as tiring at the delay. He refers to some who will say, *“My Lord delayeth His coming,”* and who will eat and drink with the drunken; that is, take part with the godless generation around in the aims and pleasures of life in vogue amongst them. He says that to such His coming will be very unexpected and unwelcome, which we can well believe; for what more out of keeping with a godless life than the arrival of a godly judge and king, to overturn the institutions of sin, and establish a kingdom of holiness in all the earth? Neither may such hope to escape the confusion of His arrival by death, after *“a short life and a merry one,”* for this glorious king is Lord of the dead as well as the living, and will bring them forth, to witness either the joy of their vindication, or the consternation of their rejection.

Let us persevere, brethren and sisters, in the attitude of waiting for God in the way of His commandments. Let us be among those who are able truthfully to utter the language of the prophet:

“O Lord, be gracious unto us, we have waited for Thee.”

The sequel which the chapter exhibits is more than satisfactory.

“Now will I arise, saith the Lord, now will I be exalted.”

Wisdom and knowledge the stability of the times, strength and salvation the foundation of the righteous, oh how glorious:

“Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords be broken. The Lord our Judge, the Lord our law-giver, the Lord our King. The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.”

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