

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Seeking Great Things

Harry A. Ironside

“And do you seek great things for yourself?

Do not seek them....” (Jer. 45:5)

This beautiful though brief chapter (Jeremiah 45) of just five verses is pregnant with instruction for the children of God in all ages, and particularly for any who essay to serve the Lord in any public or official capacity.

Baruch had been an instrument, used of God, to communicate His mind to others. His own soul must not be neglected, however; hence the message given him, as narrated in this portion of the Scriptures. It is of the greatest moment that those who minister to others be in a right state of soul themselves. *Nothing is more dangerous than to go on giving out the truth of God while the heart is set upon self-seeking, or the private life of the servant is accompanied with unholiness and lack of humility before the Lord.*

In Baruch’s case, it would seem that he felt the king’s rejection of the word of God as an insult aimed at himself and his master, rather than at the Lord who inspired the writing that was in the roll. Perhaps almost unknown to himself, and unseen heretofore even by Jeremiah, Baruch was seeking a measure of recognition from man. It is so easy to slip into this, especially if one is serving the Lord in the gospel, or in teaching the children of God. There is the secret desire, often, to be accorded a place, with the corresponding grief when that place is refused and one’s ministry is unacknowledged. Baruch felt the personal slight, the setting at naught, the despising of his ministry—always so hard for a sensitive soul to bear, if out of the presence of God. Therefore he fainted, and could find no rest.

But the Lord has been graciously considering his case, and has for him a needed word, both of admonition and of comfort. Surely when all was so obnoxious to God, it was a specially improper scene for personal ambition. When the times were so evil, it was a specially improper season for self-seeking. God was about to bring the then present order of things to an end in judgment, as He will soon bring the age in which we live to a close by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, to be followed by the opening of the seven-sealed book of His indignation, when wrath to the uttermost must fall on apostate Christendom. For Baruch it was no time to be

occupied with self-seeking, or to be troubled because he failed to gain the respect of a people who had so grievously departed from their God.

But the Lord goes on to give His servant a watchword that may well be kept in mind by all who endeavor in any way to contend for the faith once delivered. “*And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not.*” A suited motto this for each of us. How apt is the heart to crave “great things”; but in doing so, how unlike the servant becomes to the Master who “pleased not Himself” (Rom. 15:3), but could say, “I do always those things that please Him (Jn. 8:29); and again, “I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” (Jn. 5:30) And does not the position He took when down here determine our only proper one? Do we desire a place where He had none? Ah, better, far better, to be poor and despised here and have His approval than to seek great things for ourselves and lose His smile of approbation!

If tempted to turn aside from the narrow path of subjection to the truth, for an easier path, or to be better thought of in a world like this, let us remember these words to Baruch; if “*great things*” attract and would lure us on, remember the words – “*seek them not.*” *

The Program Of The Early Church

“The premillennial concept of the present age makes the inter-advent period unique and unpredicted in the Old Testament. The present age is one in which the gospel is preached to all the world. Relatively few are saved. The world becomes, in face, increasingly wicked as the age progresses. The premillennial view holds no prospects of a golden age before the second advent, and presents no commands to improve society as a whole. The apostles are notably silent on any program of political, social, moral, or physical improvement of the unsaved world. Paul made no effort to correct social abuses or to influence the political government for good. The program of the early church was one of evangelism and Bible teaching. It was a matter of saving souls out of the world rather than saving the world. It was neither possible nor in the program of God for the present age to become the kingdom of God on earth.” *

John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, Zondervan, page 134.

Wanted — A Man

T. Ernest Wilson

Ezekiel was a prophet who had been taken captive to Babylon with king Jehoiachin in 599 B.C. when he was twenty-three years old. Seven years later he started to prophesy and continued for twenty years. He was contemporary with Jeremiah who remained in Jerusalem - both were priests as well as prophets. Jeremiah was the man of tears, but Ezekiel looked beyond present conditions to the ultimate triumph.

His book divides into three parts: chapters 1-24 describe conditions in Judah which brought on the captivity. The central portion, chapters 25-32, shows that God would deal with the pagan nations who were jubilant over the fall of the house of Judah. The last part outlines the coming restoration. Ezekiel was prepared for his ministry by the tremendous vision of the throne and the Shekinah glory recorded in chapter 1; he mentions this repeatedly in his book.

In chapters 20-22, he divides the nation into four classes, the priests, the princes, the prophets and the people, exposing the failure of each class. The priests ignored the difference between the holy and the unclean; the princes abused their authority and were like wolves devouring the prey; the prophets daubed their hearers with untempered mortar, seeing vanity and divining lies; while the people were engaged in violence and oppression. In this dark background comes the word of the Lord through Ezekiel, "I sought for a man."

God's Provision in a Dark Day, a Man

First, there were Enoch and Noah; then Abram was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, and Moses at the Exodus, Joshua stood in the gap for God, while in the dark days of the Judges, God had His men. There was then much failure, but the main lesson of the book of Judges is that at each critical period, when things were drifting into chaos, God had His men ready.

Similarly church history provides many examples. Athanasius of Alexandria stood for sound doctrine against the flood tide of heresy; Luther protested against the abominable abuses of the papacy; John Wesley preached the Gospel of God's grace. Then we may mention John Nelson Darby, who learned the truth of the one body of Christ and its glorified Head, thereby separating from the evils of denominationalism.

Revival and its Backwash

A consideration of these men and the associated revivals shows that they all follow a pattern. First, in the prevailing darkness and apathy, God raises up His man and many are led into the light. As long as he lives, spiritual conditions prevail, though sometimes at a decreasing tempo. A few generations after his death, the revival degenerates into a movement with

a downward trend. Spirituality gives place to intellectuality and finally ends in repudiation of the truth which the man who led the revival preached and practiced.

Where do we Stand Today?

During the past one hundred years, many New Testament assemblies have been planted in most parts of the world. The men who founded them were men of conviction. There was a genuine desire to follow the scriptural principles of gathering. Many of these men suffered severely, both socially and financially; they were ostracized by life long friends because, unable to continue with organized religion, they separated from it. But today, many of their children and grandchildren think differently. We have arrived at the third generation, in which some have slipped right back to what their fathers had left. It is regarded as intolerant bigotry to expose or criticize either popery or clerisy. History is surely repeating itself.

Among assemblies, admittedly, there is much weakness and failure. There is always the tendency to go to extremes. Some have formed sectarian circles of fellowship with centralized control. Others are in the process of breaking down all hedges, allowing no line of demarcation between inside and outside. The two extremes are mutually antagonistic and have little or no fellowship with each other.

But there is a path of balanced truth. The New Testament autonomous assembly still functions, and we believe it will until the end. But a lot depends on the leaders. Where we have men of spirituality and conviction, who hold the truth in love, and who refuse to be swayed by current superficial propaganda, we have the basis for spiritual progress. But where these are lacking, there is nothing to stem the tide of decay. Where are the men to stand in the gap? Will you be one? *

Continued from page 4 — *An Earnest Appeal*

You may reply, "It is a poor thing to be occupied with ourselves, our ways or our works." Yes, but if our ways and works are not what they ought to be, we *must* be occupied with them. *We must judge them.* The Lord, by His prophet Haggai, called upon the Jews of old to "consider their ways." The Lord Jesus said to each of the seven churches, "I know thy works." There is a great danger of resting satisfied with our knowledge, our principles, our position, while at the same time we are walking in a carnal, worldly, self-indulgent, careless spirit. The end of this will be terrible. Let us consider these things. May the apostolic admonition fall with divine power on our hearts. "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward" (2 John 8). *

The Two Mites

(Mark 12:41-44)

C. H. Macintosh

“And Jesus sat over against the treasury and beheld the people cast money into the treasury; and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.”

How little did these people know whose eye was watching them as they cast in their offerings! How little did they think of being scanned by One whose eye could penetrate the deepest depths of their hearts and read the motives that actuated them in what they were doing. It may be the showy Pharisee was there, displaying his wealth and making a pompous exhibition of his religiousness. Perhaps, too, the cold formalist was there, dropping in heartless routine, his stereotype coin into the treasury. Jesus saw it all, weighed it all, judged it all.

It is well to think on this in every occasion in which we are called to contribute to the Lord's cause. Well to remember, as the box or the basket is placed in my hand, that “Jesus is sitting over against the treasury,” His holy eye rests, not upon the purse, but upon the heart. He weighs not the amount, but the motive. If the heart is right, the amount will be right, according to His judgment. Where the heart beats to His Person, the hand will open to His cause. All who really love Christ will count it their high and happy privilege to deny themselves in order to contribute to His cause. It is most marvelous that He should condescend to ask us so to do. Yet He does so and it should be our deep joy to respond “according as God has prospered us,” ever remembering that He loves a cheerful giver because that is precisely what He is Himself, blessed be His holy name!

However, the point on which we specially want to dwell in Mark 12 is the act of the poor widow. Amid the crowd of contributors who pressed forward to cast their offerings into the treasury, there was one who particularly engaged the attention of our blessed Lord. “There came a certain poor widow and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.”

Now, that was a very small amount indeed if looked at from a monetary point of view. But think of the offerer. She

was a “widow”- a “poor widow,” the very impersonation of all that is desolate, helpless and lonely. A widow always gives us the idea of one deprived of every earthly stay and natural prop. “She that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers, night and day.”

True, there are many so-called widows who are not of this stamp at all—many who look anything but lonely and desolate. But these are quite abnormal. They are entirely outside the sphere of true widowhood. The Holy Spirit has furnished us with a striking photograph of this class in 1 Timothy 5:11-13.

But the poor widow at the treasury belonged to the class of true widows. She was one according to the mind of Christ. “And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, “Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury. For all they did cast in of their abundance, but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.”

Doubtless, had these been the days of public press, the princely offerings of the wealthy would have been paraded in the columns of some newspaper with flattering allusion to their large amount, while the poor widow and her offering would have been passed over in contemptuous silence.

But our adorable Lord thought differently. The poor widow's two mites outweighed in His balance all the offerings put together. It is a comparatively easy thing to give tens, hundreds, and thousands from our accumulated treasures, but it is not easy to deny self of a single luxury or comfort, to say nothing of a positive necessity. But she gave all her living to the house of God. It was this which threw her into such moral kindredness of spirit with the blessed Lord Himself. He could say, “The zeal of Thy house has eaten Me up.” And she could say, “The zeal of Thy house has eaten up my living.” Thus she was very near to Him. What a privilege!

Reader, did you ever notice the shape in which she had her living? Why does the Spirit take such care to say “Two mites, which make a farthing?” Why not be content to say, “She threw in a farthing?” Ah! this would never do. It would not have bought the real point of exquisite beauty, the true touch of wholehearted devotedness. If she had had it all in one piece, she must have either given all or nothing. Having it in two, she had the option of keeping half for her own living. And truly most of us would judge it extraordinary devotedness to give to the Lord's cause half of all we possessed in the world. But this poor widow had a whole heart for God. This was the point. There was no reserve whatever. Self and its interests were wholly lost sight of and she flung her whole living into that which to her heart represented the cause of her God. May God grant us something of this spirit! *

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**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him
should not perish, but have everlasting life.**

John 3:16

June, 2007

An Earnest Appeal

C. H. Mackintosh

Christian reader, I feel constrained to make an earnest appeal to your heart and conscience in the presence of Him to whom you and I are responsible and to whom our hearts and ways are fully known. I do not mean to judge you or speak ill to you. Neither do I wish to write in a bitter or complaining spirit. I only desire to stir up your pure mind - to wake up the energies of your new nature - to exhort and encourage you to a more earnest zeal and whole-hearted devotedness in the service of Christ.

The present is a deeply solemn moment. The day of God's long-suffering is rapidly drawing to a close. The day of wrath is at hand. The wheels of divine government are moving onward with a rapidity truly soul-subduing. Human affairs are working to a point. There is an awful crisis approaching. Immortal souls are rushing forward along the surface of the stream of time into the boundless ocean of eternity. The end of all things is at hand. "The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision."

Now, my reader, seeing these things are so, let us ask each other how are we affected thereby? What are we doing in the midst of the scene which surrounds us? How are we discharging our fourfold responsibility - our responsibility to God, our responsibility to the Church, our responsibility to perishing sinners, and our responsibility to our own souls? This is a weighty question. Let us take it into the presence of God and there survey it in all its magnitude. Are we really doing all we might do for the advancement of the cause of Christ, the prosperity of His Church, the progress of His gospel? I candidly confess to you, my friend, that I very much fear we are not making a right use of all the grace,

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the light and the knowledge which our God has graciously imparted to us. I fear we are not faithfully and diligently trading with our talents or occupying till the Master returns. It often occurs to me that people with far less knowledge, far less profession, are far more practical, more fruitful in good works, more honored in the conversion of precious souls, more generally used of God. How is this? Are you and I sufficiently self-emptying, sufficiently prayerful, sufficiently single-eyed?

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