Printed Pamphlets

Kadesh and Hor

Numbers 20

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ministry! Exercises of heart within, pressure and difficulty without, all made tributary to its discharge.

But, further, see how the Corinthians were in the mind of the blessed God, hence the servant is afflicted, is passed through heights and depths of trial, through every variety of circumstance (2 Cor. 11), in order that in him thus, there might be displayed the power of the Christ, and that the very same power might go out through him and reach them. A true servant is ready for everything: stands as an ox between the altar and the plough -- ready for either! How different from the world's, and our own natural thoughts; to be bowed down to, made something of, applauded, is what the flesh craves and the world accords; but to SUFFER for His blessed name's sake, is the divine way, and full of present and eternal glory.

Thus, too, the servant himself learns what God is to him in such moments, both what the Lord can be and do. So the apostle -- "at my first answer no man stood with me," he was forsaken by all; not a hard thought rested in his breast, "I pray God it may not be laid to their charge" -- but then, mark well what follows, "nevertheless the Lord *stood* with me and *strengthened* me." How blessed but His presence comes first -- "the Lord *stood with me*" -- afterwards what the Lord did for His servant: *"and strengthened me."*

Then, besides, there is a reason, a needs be for all these afflictings and conflicts. First, on our side, it is "that we should not trust in ourselves"; this is a great point, those who know their own hearts, -- know the deep-seated confidence in self which lies rooted there. Oh, nothing but the displacing power of death can get rid of that; then that very death removes the hindrances to confidence in Him, "in God which raiseth the dead." What an issue! What meat from the eater! We must go into the gloomy night, into the darkness of the grave, be invested, as it were, with the shroud, and pass into the tomb, that we may come forth in the bloom and beauty of resurrection. Thus we sow in tears to reap in joy, heaviness endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Then, further, there is a needs be on God's side for all these siftings and trials, they are His opportunities or occasions to display Himself in the love that never overlooks or forgets His own. He draws near at such moments and makes Himself known as "the God of all comfort"; as "God who comforteth those that are cast down"; "as one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you" -- these are His own gracious words in a past day, not less true to-day. Thus He turns the sorrows and afflictions of these poor scenes to His own account, displaying in them a tenderness and a compassion that overlooks none. He delights to show how He can heal a broken heart, as well as sustain a weak body. The first is not *beyond* Him, the second is not *beneath* Him.

You will, no doubt, call to mind the touching scene in the history of Joseph and his brethren, how when their father Jacob was dead, they doubted Joseph and gave him no credit for any affection beyond that which connection with Jacob might secure to them; his brethren reasoned thus: "they said Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him" -- their thoughts of him were governed by what was in their own hearts -- they credited him with feelings and motives which would have actuated them in like circumstances. How does Joseph meet this? Does he resent it in any wise? "Joseph wept when they spake to him" -- his *heart* was broken; and then listen to his gracious words: "I will nourish you and your little ones, and he comforted them and spake kindly unto them," or as in the margin "spake to their hearts." How it brings to mind the scene in the future when the words of Hosea 2:14 will be made good:

> I will *allure* her and bring her into the wilderness and speak comfortably unto her, and I will give her her vineyards from thence and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

Thus we see how that as death *literally* will be Jehovah's way of dealing with Israel in the future, so it is the way of the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ with His saints *morally* now. And thus it is that we are educated and trained in God's school, in order that as servants and vessels of His own, we may be fit for His use. Everything must be fully tested and proved. If we are walking with God in the secret life of our souls within, we must be conscious how little we are able to help one another, it is painful to observe how well able we appear to be to find out the weak points in one another, the halting and blemishes which alas abound; but the ability through grace to *remove* these is another thing, and to do it in all the tenderness of one who as "a nurse cherisheth her children," being affectionately desirous of them and willing to impart also our own souls, because they are dear unto us. How blessed the service which has such an object and is rendered in such a spirit; and so it is that, whatever be the call or demand, whether what we have spoken of, or whether comfort or consolation, all alike flows in the grace of Christ, from him who has learned it in God's school, from one who has as it were walked the great hospital of suffering which this present world is, and having tasted the balm of consolation himself which the Father of mercies and God of all comfort has ministered to him, is able to comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God: thus and thus alone out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong sweetness. May our hearts, by His Spirit's power be divinely receptive of such blessed ways of our Father God for Christ's sake.

Kadesh and Hor

(Numbers 20)

It is of great moment to seize the divine connection between scriptures, and to observe their intimate bearing the one upon the other. Now it would hardly be possible to find, in all the word of God, a chapter which presents more vividly what the true nature and character of the wilderness is, than the one which heads this paper.

It is most striking to see how plainly this is stamped upon Num. 20. It is a chapter of death, it begins with it, and it closes with it; and more remarkable still, it is death in the same family, for in the opening of the chapter, Miriam (the sister of Aaron) closes her eyes in death, and in the end of it, Aaron the priest, the brother of Miriam, lays aside his priestly robes, and closes his eyes in death. Thus it is a perfect chapter of wilderness experience; it is indeed the very beginning and the end of the wilderness, opening with death, closing with death. How touching to see the sweet singer of Israel's triumph on the shores of the Red Sea, drop her timbrel to take it up no more; she led the song in those palmy days of Jehovah's victory, for His people, now, death seals her lips in a silence which cannot be broken: and as it was with the *prophetess* at the commencement of the chapter, so it is with the *priest* at the close of it, where we see Aaron, the brother of Miriam, laying aside his priestly robes, and bowing to death. It is very solemn to hear Jehovah's words to him at this time,

> And the Lord spake to Moses and to Aaron in Mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land, which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up into Mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son, and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people and shall die there.

Thank God, our great high priest shall never die, continuing ever, He hath an intransmissible priesthood, wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost (that is, to carry right through to the end) them that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

But to return to our chapter in Numbers, we read that Miriam died, and there was no water for the congregation, and the people did chide with Moses; death and dearth and dissatisfaction are all found in it on man's side, to him a scene of resourcelessness is in itself an "evil place," Egypt is preferable to it in nature's eye: "it is no place of seed or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates," such is the language of murmuring unbelief. What a picture of discontent, complaint and rebellion, death in their circumstances, and death in their families!

How is this met? By *glory* and *grace*. First we read the glory of Jehovah appeared unto Moses and Aaron, and next we hear the gracious words of the Lord unto Moses, saying, "Take *the* rod." The place these beloved servants of the Lord take here, is in painful and striking contrast with their action in the scene that follows; here they are in their right place: we read that "they fell upon their faces," blessed place to be in, at such a moment, indeed at any moment. –

> "Truly blessed is the station,
> Low before the Lord to lie."

It is this place taken by us, beloved, as owning our resourcelessness, that brings in the glory of the Lord, "The glory of the Lord appeared unto them," how blessed! glory appearing for weakness and expressed nothingness: then follows the acting of grace toward the murmuring camp on God's part, and the actings, alas, of flesh and nature on Moses and Aaron's part. Oh what poor things at best we are, how little continuity we have, how soon we can pass from the spot where nature and flesh are silenced, to the place where they are in full activity; these, beloved, are sad and solemn considerations for us to-day, divine beacons and danger signals, which our God and Father would have us ponder and weigh well before Him. It seems to me that nothing manifests where we are in the state of our souls before the Lord, as evil and departure from Him in His saints; and it does so in a twofold way, first, in the way of discernment of what the evil is, the ability to "put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Lev. 10:10). Next is the power to deal with it in grace according to the way of the Lord. It is evident if there is no discernment there can be no dealing with it, but it is also to be kept in mind that too often the action towards the evil discerned, takes the character of that of Moses and Aaron here, not priestly service in grace, but a judicial process than which nothing is more hateful to God; it was this false representation of God here, which brought forth from Him the solemn words,

> Because ye believed me not to *sanctify me* in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

Now observe, beloved, wherein their not having sanctified Jehovah in the eyes of the children of Israel consisted. Let us trace the narrative a little, and we shall see. The words of the Lord were, "Take *the* rod . . . and speak ye unto the rock." The history of *"The Rod"* is found in chapter 17, and a most blessed history it is. "*The Rod"* was prepared, as it were, ere the needs-be for its service arose; it was the rod of Aaron, it was laid up before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness, and on the morrow it was found budded, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds; it set forth, in the most precious figure, victorious *priesthood,* founded on death and resurrection; it was by this the murmurings of a guilty people could alone be taken away, and in the power of this alone could they be carried through the wilderness, it was this rod then, that Jehovah pointed to when Moses is commanded to take *"The Rod,"* further, he was to *speak* to *"The Rock."* Now contrary to all this, the action of Moses and Aaron here, was an entirely false representation of God to Israel. Jehovah had said, "Take *the* Rod . . . and speak ye to the Rock," but Moses instead, takes his own rod, the rod, not of priestly grace, but of judgment, that with which he had smitten the river, and he smote the rock twice; thus he misrepresented Jehovah in every way, both in smiting the rock twice, and in speaking to Israel as he did; in very truth he stood before guilty rebellious Israel, the very contrast to that character in which God was dealing with them. May we lay this to heart in all our ways and mode of acting, so that through His grace we may be enabled to give a true and proper representation of our Lord Jesus Christ in His present acting in grace.

Let us now dwell a little on a scripture in Deuteronomy, which records for us the government of God toward His servant Moses, in respect of this very sin. This 34 {34th