

Printed Pamphlets

Ije-Abarim

Numbers 21:11

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expression of how she appreciated Him, when all hated Him, and when He was about to die. She *felt* the enmity and hatred of both Israel and the Gentiles towards Christ. We are all naturally selfish, engrossed with our own things. Oh, how little are we at leisure from self to be of like mind with Him! Her heart was free enough to think of the enmity of man towards Him, and she as well expresses her own love and appreciation of Him, and therefore she takes what is costly and valuable to her, and anoints His body for the burying, and by this action she as it were declares that if He dies everything in this world has lost its charm for her. She is in His secret; she knows He is about to die; consequently everything she has is as nothing to her; she buries her world with Him, all must go into His tomb. How much have our hearts laid hold of the glory of His person, of the blessedness of that Christ, the eternal Son, ever in the Father's bosom? Has He such a place in our hearts, that everything is esteemed and valued in relation to Him? Is He the simple measure of the value we set on all, even the best below? Here is a poor weak woman, ready to face the enmity of the people, because she enters into God's thoughts about His Son, when the thoughts of nearly all were very distant from His mind. There are hardly any who are independent enough to act simply, in reference to Christ; if you do, you must stand alone. If you are merely a benefactor of man, your labors will be noted. If Christ is simply before you, filling the vision of your soul, if all you do is in reference to Him, if you are ministering to the pleasure of Christ, all the world will consider it "*waste*"; and, alas! many of God's own children.

What was it when she was blamed kept her heart? Three things. First, the blessed Lord *understood* her. How comforting to know that Christ understands me! It is wonderful comfort. Secondly, He *vindicated* her. Thirdly, He *appreciated* her. This kept her in the midst of the non-recognition of those who were half-hearted. There was no heart there to enter into what she was doing but Himself; no tongue to vindicate her but His. But He was enough! We want more of that holy boldness that is satisfied with Christ's vindication, more of that holy satisfaction which Christ's pleasure imparts, to take our stand on that platform of holy elevation -- *the Lord knows*. His smile is enough, His vindication sufficient for me. Thus we find Him communicating to Mary in Luke 10; His fullness waiting on her need in John 11; and in chap. 12 she was in sympathy with Him as to what was then before his soul. We find in Luke 24 He ascends out of this world from Bethany, the spot with which He was most linked in all its varied memories; it was to Him, as it were, the brightest spot on earth, an oasis in a howling wilderness; there and there alone this blessed perfect Man had turned and found solace; but this is the spot from whence He departed when He left the earth. Think of the character this fixes upon the earth; if He left it from the place that was to Him the brightest spot upon it, if any place could be called bright, it marks this earth at once. Its best had become but the platform of His departure out of it. What a sight this, the risen, glorious Man, who has triumphed over everything, going down under the ocean of judgment, forsaken of His God on the cross, now risen out of those

depths into which His undying love had led Him. What a sight for faith! Himself leading His disciples to the place that was familiar to His heart, the only spot where He had ever found refreshment as the weary stranger on earth, and to gaze at Him as He ascends from thence and is carried up into heaven. But first, how blessed to hear Himself pronounce their peace, thus quieting their fears, answering their troubled hearts (vv. 36-40); then the very hands that were pierced and nailed to the cross were lifted up in blessing, and from those uplifted hands showers of blessing dropped upon them. Blessed it is to think that His very last act was blessing. The last they saw of Him was commanding the shower to flow from Himself. Have we hearts free enough to follow the departing One through such scenes? And as we follow, do we find ourselves carried up and away to heaven with Him who has gone from this earth? Thank God, though He is not here, we *know Him in heaven*. Are our hearts familiar with Him *there*? Can we say, "I have gained Him in heaven if I have lost Him on earth, I am *one with Him there*"? Thus it is you miss Him here, thus alone His absence makes the earth a desert to you. There are two ways of looking at this poor earth. First, because of what is in it -- sorrow, difficulty, and trouble of every kind; but secondly, and mostly, because of His absence. This makes it a far more real desert scene to the heart that knows and loves Him. If He is our object, we must miss Him where He is not, as we move on through time; but if we *know Him in heaven*, the world is a dreary, desolate spot to us, because He is gone out of it. I know it is said, What is meant by missing Christ in this world? I reply, Affection for Him understands it, but not reasoning or caviling. If He has left it from the very place where He alone found any response to His heart and affections, what sort of a world must it be with this appraising of it? May the Lord by His Spirit give us to hear Him speaking "*peace*" through His risen lips, and likewise to know the blessing that drops from His outstretched hands, so that we may know what it is to be in the secret of His heart, by having every affection of ours centered in Him.

Ije-Abarim

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It was here that Israel pitched soon as they "set forward." It was a great thing that they were able to "set forward"; it is the very opposite to lagging behind or looking back, not to speak of going back; but what was that which imparted to them both liberty and vigor? In the beginning of the chapter they are in bondage to discouragement and murmuring: the way tried them, its thorns and briars tested them, and in the end they "spake against God." This led to the judgment of the fiery serpents, and the dying of much people of Israel; Moses cries to God, and He interposes, as we know, in a way suitable to Himself, not removing the judgment, but *in type and figure*, removing in judgment the offending thing which necessitated the bringing in of the judgment.

The serpent of brass set upon the pole, was not only an ending judicially before God, in type I mean, of that which

was proved irremediable, but it was the bringing in of a new thing entirely. "*Shall live.*" Observe further, this blessed deliverance was not found anywhere on earth; it was "lifted up," even as the Son of man "*must* be lifted up" (see John 3) on the cross; Christ is not on the earth, but lifted up from it, rejected ignominiously by man, but withal through this, presented as a Victim on the altar to God. How solemn this as an exposition of man's condition before God, the divine testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself being rejected by man, was the evidence that man as he was here, was not capable of receiving blessing from heaven: it was necessary that man should be treated according to the truth of his own condition before God, as well as according to God's own righteous character.

Now herein was found their liberty to "set forward" -- as set free, extricated, they can march on. It is so too, thank God, in a far higher way with Christians: the cross of Christ is morally the end of man's history, the beginning of God's; that is the root of all Christian setting forward, until thus liberated, the true prospect for faith is not before the soul. The position of this Ije-Abarim, or heaps of Abarim, has moreover its own voice of instruction and comfort for our souls; we are told it was "in the wilderness which is before Moab, *toward the sun rising*" -- observe those last words, for they are most blessed.

The rising sun is especially and peculiarly the hope of the nation, after their long night of sorrow and weeping they are destined to enjoy the light and heat of the rays of the sun; for us who believe, ere the Sun of Righteousness arises, a hope of a brighter nature remains: we wait for Him who now has Himself spoken to us as the "bright morning star"; He, and He alone, is our Ije-Abarim. It is towards Him we "set forward" -- a heavenly Savior, in whom is centered all our blessedness and our joy; and thus it is that as the bright morning star, the blessed Lord, is held out before our souls, in *brilliance* and a *solitariness* peculiar to it. How blessed and comforting for our poor hearts to know that there is none like Him; He stands alone in all His brightness and blessedness.

But there is a deep moral lesson, too, in the fact that liberated Israel set forward and pitched at Ije-Abarim; for the *morning* has been ever the prospect, whether of the earthly or the heavenly company. The world rejoices in the night, it is to it, the moment of its pleasures and pursuits, and in these it sleeps an intoxicated sleep, and so it is written, "for they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night" (1 Thess. 5:7). What a picture of a drunken world! But now observe the contrast; "Let us who are of the *day* be sober"; -- again, "Ye are all the children of *light*, and the children of the *day*; we are not of the night nor of darkness." What a character this gives the saint of God, a child of light, a child of the day, and that too, observe, while passing through the world's night, the far spent night; night all around him, but he in conscience and heart in the day.

I am here constrained to pause, and ask, Is it really so with us? Is it so in relation to all that we have to say to, and do with? Are we *plainly declaring* that we, having our citizenship in heaven, wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus

Christ? Let us court the reflection of the coming morn and day upon every circle with which we are related. How does our home and family circle appear in the light of it? Is that a witness to the fact of our sunrise being at hand? How, next, as to our business and occupation in life? Is that a witness to the reality of the coming light? Do we conduct our business "like men who wait for the Lord"? Do we conduct our business as those who are not of the night, not of the world? I may be told this is impossible. I have been told it is transcendental and seeking to walk with one's head in the clouds. To all such I reply thus: Not so, beloved brethren, unless indeed Christianity consists in a correct creed which was never intended or designed to have any bearing, either formative or corrective, upon the details of everyday life; unless such descriptions as, "not of the world," "not of the night," have no bearing whatever on our ways. Let us not be deceived by such siren words, or taunts, or sneers, rather let us set forward, openly, plainly, manifestly and pitch our tent toward our Ije-Abarim -- "toward the sun rising." I cannot conceive any words that could more forcibly express a Christian's present *attitude* and *hope*, than "set forward" -- "pitched" -- "toward the sun rising." Here it is set forth in striking type, the pressing on of pilgrims toward their prospect. The Lord grant that it may be ours through His grace.

No doubt there is much outside in the world, and within, amongst the saints, to account for the absence of that decided strangership which surely becomes those who profess to expect at any moment to be caught away, and who in heart and affection, and therefore in their ways, have set forward and pitched their pilgrim tent toward the sun rising; still there is far more in Christ Himself, to make one wonder and ashamed, that anything but Himself is worthy of even a passing thought. One other reflection will bring these thoughts to a close.

In this world everything is going toward the sun setting -- everything is passing away, and will soon be gone. What a solemn reflection for any Lot of the present day, or world-borderer, into whose hands this little paper should come! All here is going down, "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." "The fashion of this world passeth away." In every city and great town, the west is the commanding quarter; there the fashion of the world and its lusts are to be found at home; all goes toward the west, the unpurposed witness of this solemn reality, namely, that all on earth is rapidly going down, its sun will soon have set. On the other hand, all that is really bright and beautiful is coming up with day dawn. The children of light and of the day, can see the morning star, the dawn along its edge, and they can say to each other in heavenly anticipation, "the morning cometh."

"There's nothing left to fix the gaze
But this one blessed orb of light;
And oh, how purely beam its rays
Athwart the dark and wintry night.
"A little while! and ere the day
In all its splendor shall be shown,
Thy vigil-keepers rapt away
Shall find Thy glory, Lord, their own."