

“Helps in Things Concerning Himself” — Vol. 3, 1893

“What of the Night?”

Isaiah 21:11-12

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God; and only precious as man, because He is, and as a man, dependent. Yet we have seen the Father in Him."

How blessed to thus contemplate Him in all His grace, and to have the affections of the heart nourished and fed as He is thus before us. Further, observe how that in His grace He made this poor weary heart to know that He loved her, and oh what delight to her heart it must have been to be loved of Himself *after* He had in her own words told her all that ever she did. What a secret treasure had she not found to bear henceforth with her through this weary scene!

Then observe *His joy* here. He had in precious grace made a path for Himself right into her poor desolate heart, and when the disciples came and found Him talking with the woman, and pressed upon Him the fruit of their anxiety for the need of His blessed body, His *lips* uttered to them what His *heart* had said to her, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."

He revealed Himself to her as the Messiah and in that revelation she found an object that henceforth was to govern her whole life. It has been so truly and sweetly remarked by another that with adversaries He is simply God -- in grace He is a man yet God, and only precious as a man because He is, and as a man, dependent.

So far we have been meditating on the Samaritan, not her state in any wise, but how He Himself had in His blessed grace come where she was, and caused His pressed heart to flow out to the sorrow and need that were there.

Let us now meditate on the Syro-Phoenician. The Lord leaves the confines of the region of His mission; this was, as we know, to Israel. He was Jehovah's Servant in the midst of that people, according to prophecy and the purpose of God. He is not seen here as among the Samaritans rejected by His own, but going forth to the borders of the accursed region, Tyre and Sidon. Here we see the blessed One seeking retirement, seeking to be alone, that is out of His *sphere* of labor, not in anywise as giving up His *mission*; then it is said of Him, "He could not be hid." Oh what a sentence! full of the deepest grace and blessing, as well as full of most precious meaning to the heart that longs to be filled more and more with Himself.

Further, this beautiful word as to Him lets us into the secret of the types amid shadows of olden days; it accounts for promise and prophecy as well; oh what a charm to the heart that knows His love that sentence is, "He could not be hid" -- the multiplied witnesses to His glory in this great reality, add to this charm, and give its measureless value to this great impossibility -- "He could not be hid."

But observe how suited to the heart of the blessed Lord was this place of hard-heartedness of the people on which the curse of Jehovah rested, as compared with Israel, for here He met *want*, *need*, which sought goodness in power -- this need and misery expressed in this poor woman here draws out what is above all promise, appealing to a riches in goodness able and willing to reach in mercy to *vileness*, *misery*, and *wretchedness without title*.

How blessed, then, to see the glories of the Person of

Jesus Himself shining out in the various cases of want and misery that met Him in his lowly, blessed path on earth, each varied place and case serving to elicit His own worth and beauty. How well it is said that "Grace is the secret of the divine mind, love to sinners is the affection of the divine bosom, and out of a heart so stored there has been a constant utterance."

"What of the Night?"

Isa. 21:11, 12

Another shadow is nearly gone down on the great dial of time, another year will soon be numbered with the past, verily, "We bring our years to an end as a tale that is told," how soon they are fled as a watch in the night! How well it is said that "we take no note of time but from its loss"!

Standing, then, as we do just now upon the confines of the dying year, it becomes us solemnly and earnestly to ask the question: Where are we? "What of the night?"

Now observe the person addressed here is entitled a "watchman," a sentry keeping watch with wakeful eyes and measured step, through the long dreary hours of the night; open to be challenged as the only one who can give a true and accurate account of how things really are. It is the *absence* of our precious Lord and Master from this world which makes it night, and happy would it be if all His own so felt it, as to maintain in *affection* and *heart loyalty* that *outside position* which suits the friends and followers of a despised and rejected Christ; and along with it that *expectant position* which asserts the fact that nothing but His own personal coming for them can turn the gloom of the night into the joy of the morning.

There is something very blessed in "keeping watch," it is the only safe condition of the servant in such a night as now hangs around us.

Let us also note here how fully alive and awake the watchman in our scripture is: he answers at *once*, there is no delay in the reply, it is a direct, decided rejoinder immediately. But the reply itself is most significant, and points in a very striking way to what is immediately in our front, as we stand upon the threshold of 1894.

First note, "The *morning* cometh." Let us challenge our hearts as to whether this expresses the real affectionate longing of our breasts. It was on this the watchman's fixed and steady gaze was set; it was this beyond all else that he longed for, with this his mind was engrossed and filled.

Reader, is it so with us? Are our hopes and longings "the day-break and morning star"? "The morning cometh." How welcome its coming! Have we not known what it is to keep vigil by the bedside of a loved one, during the long dreary hours of night, and how eagerly greeted were the first streaks of light betokening the approach of day dawn, and how welcomed they were as well. Oh may it be so, only in fuller, deeper measure, as we wait for and see by faith the speedy coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is another reply of the watchman, which is very solemn, namely, "also the night." It is night now, but there is a darker, drearier one at hand. At the present moment the dark shadows of the "ebon night" are thickly flung around us. True, the present "far-spent night" is very dark, very gloomy, unrelieved by one spark of light save what comes from above but it is as nothing to that which is coming, a real night that will be to the world which will be *left down* in the night, *behind* in the night, to be *overtaken* by a thief in the night. Think of the world's outlook at this moment a kind of universal dread wraps it around, men's hearts are failing them for fear, general insecurity and mistrust prevail on all sides. Men are dreading every moment some fearful outbreak of violence and bloodshed, dreading the bursting forth of national convulsions which will ruin the commerce and prosperity of the kingdoms of Europe, and therefore they would give any price for fixed and settled peace.

Now, amid all this dismal foreboding, the dreary, sullen silence is at times broken by the despairing question, What is this to end in? What is this world coming to? Is there any hope? What is to happen to us? These are the sounds which reach our ears amid the closing hours of the dying year. Alas! how few are more than half awake to the true and real state of both the church and the world? The *departure* in the church from the truth is simply appalling, the *settling down* of the world for coming judgment simply terrible to contemplate. The increase of knowledge, the tremendous stride science has taken of late, the rapid growth of philosophy are all marks of the moment, keeping pace with these is a refinement of iniquity as dark as it is daring, a blasphemous determination to degrade the Son of God down even to the level of Confucius, Buddha, and Mohammed, with the avowed object of benefitting the great "Brotherhood of Humanity."

This has actually taken place in the so-called "Parliament of Religions" at Chicago.

One leading morning paper presents its readers with a description of the scene given by an eye-witness, himself a so called minister of religion. He says:

The spectacle of Christians, Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics, met together for a few brief days in fellowship, if not in unity, 'gives,' as the French say, 'to reflect.' The experiment, endorsed by the pope, discountenanced by the Archbishop of Canterbury, embraced by the heathen Chinese, welcomed by Hindu, Parsee, Cingalese, and the chiefs of almost every acknowledged religion of the world, has resulted in a demonstration, the like of which has perhaps not been seen since the days of Constantine, Arius, and Athanasius.

Then in the close of his account this writer, expressing what the effects produced on himself by all he had heard and seen, boldly asserts that "It is time to proclaim the essential unity of all religions -- they conflict only in their accidents" -- and "Henceforth to accept Christ, the rejection of all the teachers that went before Him is not necessary, and to receive Christianity need not carry with it the dogma that all other religions are in all parts false."

With all this profanity crushing in upon us we may well

say, "What of the night?" what of its blasphemy? of its rebel will to dishonor and degrade the blessed Son of God? We reply, a darker, blacker night of judgment awaits it, and rapidly approaches.

Oh, that His own stood out more distinctly and separately for Him, waiting to hear His own blessed voice, and to be caught up to meet Him in the air!