Lectures on the Book of Judges

Judges 5 — The Song of Deborah

William Kelly

A song follows (Judges 5), as to which one need only make a general remark. It has often been a difficulty to many souls how the Spirit of God could indite such a song — a song that triumphs more than usually in the carnage and ruin of the foe. But what is it that persons who cavil at it conceive of the Spirit of God? The root of the difficulty appears to be this, that men are apt constantly to judge from their own circumstances. Now if we think indeed that God's Spirit is bound to do or say nothing but what suits a Christian — that He has never written anything but what is the expression of His power in magnifying Christ to our souls — I grant you we could not have the song of Deborah. But then we could not have had the Old Testament as it is. The same principle that would supplant this song and deny its inspired character would, in my opinion, decapitate and destroy the Old Testament itself. It would leave us nothing at most but a few shreds of prophecy pointing to the Lord Jesus. It would dislocate, nay, blot out, the whole texture of the old oracles of God. The Spirit of God did work, but He wrought according to the state of the people of God then; and who but an infidel can deny the wisdom and the goodness of God in such a guidance? The truth is that the only way to understand or to enjoy the Bible is the very same that we need to magnify God where we are now, and the same unbelief that sits criticising the Old Testament loses all power according to the New. The same men that find fault with the song of Deborah do not understand much better what the Spirit of God is in the Christian and in the church of God now. I am convinced that the darkness of unbelief which is allowed thus to dishonour the Old Testament meets its just retribution. What do such detractors really know of St. Paul or St. John? Nothing as they ought. When we approach the Bible as believers, when we draw near as those who owe everything to God's grace that reveals to us according to His own wisdom, when we bend down before God as those that are willing to learn and grateful to be taught of Him, what then? The beauty, the excellence, the salutary character of every part of scripture more and more dawn upon our souls, and the very portions that were once difficult because of our (perhaps unconsciously) setting up to judge, when we ought still and always to take the place of learners, turn then into streams of blessing and light and strength for our own souls. Is it not the fact that the texts or whole books of the word of God that, even as believers, we felt our total

inability once to read with profit are now what we most of all delight and rejoice in? And can we not therefore draw the simple and just conclusion from this, that if anything else be dim to us — and surely there is still much that is but little and very feebly entered into by our souls — all we want is to be more lowly, to be more thoroughly dependent upon God, who will reveal even this unto us?