

Printed Pamphlets

“From Heaven”

Acts 26:17

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on the other hand, declaring that his tomb should bury out of her sight all else valuable on earth! For her, if Jesus dies, He carries all of hers down into the grave with Himself. That "pound of ointment of spikenard very costly," answered to all that was around Jesus, in the hatred and malignity of man in that hour. Very blessed to see Him sit there to be thus served; to see Him accepting and vindicating the affection and sympathy which His own Person had created and called forth; to see her, too, fruit as she was of His grace, expending on Him to whom she owed her all -- that *all*, as another has touchingly and blessedly expressed it, Mary, as it were, says by this action of hers, "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof."

There is another point of solemn interest in the very affecting scene, namely, how opposite the thoughts of men are to what suits the mind of God and His Christ. The most that could be said concerning Mary's act was, that it was waste that was stamped upon it in their eyes. Oh, how little was He in their estimation who measured the service His blessed Person called forth at this worth! For it is the Person to whom the service is rendered that is the true measure of its value. Jesus the eternal Son of the Father; Jesus the spotless and perfect Son of God; Jesus the willing and ready Friend of need and want and sorrow, stood so low in their estimation as to call forth the expression of waste in regard to that which was thus voluntarily expended upon Him. It is the same to-day -- the present is but the continuance of the past; the family character, as it were, is not wanting in the present generation, namely, a growing indifference to Christ -- no sense of who He is or what He is -- marks each succeeding generation; and that of to-day, with all its boasted light and advancement in science and knowledge and arts, uses even these things to manifest how little it thinks of, or cares for Him. (See Eccl. 9:15.)

There is one bright spot here in this dark background, as it were, on which let us turn our eyes for a moment. Jesus understood her action and its motive, appreciates it, and vindicates her. How blessed! Was it not enough for her? Let me say, Far more than enough and hence He lets all know what He felt and received in that act of hers. "Let her alone" were blessed words for her, "against the day of my burying hath she kept this," was all her heart could desire. Oh the joy of being vindicated by Christ, and the satisfaction of knowing, that however feebly, we have truly and really ministered to the longings of his heart!

The Lord impart this devoted intelligence to us all in such days as these, that more genuine affection for, and true sympathy with Him, may mark us, and that nothing may be able to divert our hearts from Him, nothing may engage our powers but Him, and satisfy our affections but Himself.

"From Heaven"

(Acts 26:17)

It is of peculiar moment rightly to apprehend the force of the expression, "delivering thee from the people, and from the

Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee." It would come painfully short of the intention of the blessed Lord in these words, if it were not clearly understood that He means by them *an entirely new and heavenly mission*; "delivering thee," &c., signifies really a taking him out from either Jew or Gentile as to nationality, or country, and then sending him to them as one who had come forth from on high, from a *heavenly Savior*, with whom He was now united by the Holy Ghost whom he had received at the moment when, through the instrumentality of Ananias, his natural vision was restored to him. (See Acts 9:17.) Observe, the Savior in glory was revealed IN him, this the apostle himself tells us in Gal. 1:16. In that expression, "to reveal his Son IN me," lies the distinctive character of his apostleship and mission; Peter, for instance, could have spoken of how the Father had revealed the Son *to* him; Paul could say "IN me." This great reality is connected with the truth of which the great apostle of the Gentiles was the chosen minister and witness; it is connected with the truth of the union of Christ and the church, this very truth having been *intimated* at his conversion -- "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me." How wonderful and how blessed this inward revelation of the glory of the Savior in Paul; herein consists the true *source* of all his witness and ministry. It has been truly said, that Israel had cast the heir of the vineyard out, and that a new testimony was therefore now to go forth, a testimony which, while it proclaimed the loss of the hopes, both of Israel and the earth, as clearly announced the call *out of the earth of a heavenly people*; of this, in surprising grace, Saul the persecutor, is made the special bearer. Let us dwell with adoring praise on the rich grace displayed by the Lord in choosing Saul to be the vessel of this heavenly treasure; all connected with him at that moment illustrates that grace; viz., it was when his enmity against God and His anointed had reached its highest point; it was when the witnesses whose hands had been first upon Stephen, had laid down at his feet their clothes, now such is the abounding grace and goodness of the Lord, that at that moment, and in such a man, the heavenly glory of the heavenly Savior is revealed. I would use the words of another in setting forth this grace, namely,

Before this, man's fullest enmity had been met by God's love; for the cross was at the same moment the witness of both, as the witness of Saul now is. The soldier's spear, as one has observed, drew forth the blood and water -- sin has drawn forth grace. And now, as we may say, Saul's journey to Damascus was the spear making its way a second time into the side of Christ, for he was now going with commission and slaughter against the flock of God. But it was on this journey that the light from heaven arrested him. The blood of Jesus thus again met the soldier's cruel spear, and Saul is a pattern of all long-suffering. The sovereign grace that saves the church was thus displayed in Saul. But the heavenly glory that is reserved for the church was also displayed to him, for he sees Jesus in it. And by these things his future ministry is formed.

It has been said, and I think with great correctness, that at the time of calling out *new ministries* there have been characteristic exhibitions of Christ; striking illustrations of

this will be found in the histories of Moses and David and other worthies of old, yet was it reserved for this *heavenly ministry* to be connected with the most blessed exhibition of all; the Lord Jesus having ascended into heaven, and being there head over all things to the church which is His body, He appeared to Saul of Tarsus from that glory, and in him appoints a ministry *formed upon the principle of this manifestation*. Thus it is that heaven was the birth-place of the apostleship of the Gentiles, and according to this, as in the scripture before us, he is sent from heaven to gather out and raise up a new and heavenly company, which should not only be *for* heaven, but *from* heaven as well.

The apostle tells us himself that he was “one born out of due time” but we are now seeing, I trust, how that it was *out of due place*, for it did not come from Jerusalem, as in fact it arose after the number of the twelve had been perfected by the appointment of Matthias. Nothing therefore can be more certain than that his call, mission and endowment were all characterized by heaven and glory. If we contemplate the subject of his witness and testimony, this will be further emphasized; for he comes out with this witness, that Christ and the church were one, that heaven was their common inheritance, and the gospel committed to him was “the gospel of the glory of Christ.”

Another point of great interest here is that spoken of in Gal. 1, how that “he conferred not with flesh and blood” -- he did not go to any of the twelve, nor to Jerusalem, Why? Because his office and mission *were from heaven*. Was such an one as he, who had been ordained, as men speak, by glory, and commissioned from heaven, to get himself sanctioned or in anywise accredited by or from earth? Further, the gospel he preached he did not learn from the twelve, or at Jerusalem, neither was he taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. The previous pillars could not be used to support his ministry. Further, as has been so truly said, he was sent so positively from heaven, and for that which is essentially heavenly, that he says, “Christ sent me *not to baptize*.” Why was this? Evidently because there was now to be no *gathering point* on earth; in that sense, Christ was the center, but then, and mark it well, *He was in heaven*. The economy committed to Paul was heavenly, its source of power and its home was heaven. “For our citizenship is in heaven” sets that forth clearly; the state to which we belong has its existence in the heavens; for this was the enrolling which Paul was the minister. I would for a little refer to that which is of the deepest moment just now, and which flows as a necessary consequence from all that has been already set forth as to Paul’s ministry.

I feel assured that our God is in an especial way, at this present juncture, raising questions with us as to how far in our souls we have by faith *apprehended* the deep significance of the apostle’s ministry and mission, and as to how far in faith we have *submitted* ourselves to it in the power of the Holy Ghost, so as to be *formed* and fashioned in the heavenly manners and ways suited to such a ministry and mission. If I may venture to say so to my beloved brethren in the Lord, I would say that of late His voice has sounded a very solemn and arresting challenge to us as to this. The apostle himself

could say to his son Timothy in forecasting days that have now arrived, that he, Timothy, had “fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,” -- these were the heavenly clusters as it were which grew upon the heavenly tree; these manners and ways of heaven, could not be *formed* in any other place; these were the fruits of the true Canaan, *but they grew there*. It is quite true that the great apostle has passed away and left no successor: but the *ministry* survives *the vessel* of it. How far have we in faith and by the Spirit, drunk in the ministry? This is a question that may well challenge conscience and heart, where there is such to be challenged. I do not now speak of *information* about truth, nor do I raise any question as to *experience* in any way, but I do ask my beloved brethren to challenge their hearts as to FAITH; I am assured before the Lord that in His presence we shall find how little it has been faith, and how much it has been little more than *credence*, by which I mean a *reliance of the mind* on facts derived from other sources than personal knowledge. It may be objected that in thus writing I leave myself open to the charge of turning souls in on themselves; my reply to this is, that in order to produce exercise of conscience and self judgment it must be so; “go call thy husband and come hither,” is the great example of it; it was thus the avenue of her soul was opened up. I am profoundly convinced that the great need of the present amongst us is an *exercise of conscience* as to how far we have but received into our minds information, true and correct in itself, *but without faith*. How easy it is both to speak and write, the Lord knows, but it is another thing entirely to be a man *from heaven* in this earthly scene, exhibiting in a foreign land, fruits and graces, which both grew and ripened in their own heavenly sunlight; *from heaven* and therefore a stranger in a strange land, passing on through it as still *from heaven*, and therefore a pilgrim of faith; I am free to confess as I dwell upon it, and contemplate it, I am overwhelmed with the greatness of the calling; as well as the little measure in which it is *taken up in faith*. I know well nothing calls forth the anger of the devil or his most vigorous assaults, than such a ministry and testimony; and in proportion to the desire to exhibit the fruits of such a ministry among men, is the opposition and attack so skillfully delivered by the enemy. Alas! I also know how failure in various ways, supplies the *exposed spot*, which a keen and watchful foe soon discovers; and further, I do know how it is said by those around in a sort of Galileo spirit, “well it is true, these men are very intelligent in scripture, have cast off all the old superstitions, are wonderfully correct as to their creed and information, but in other respects they are pretty much like all others, if anything a little worse, they live luxuriously, are keen in worldly matters, deepen their interests and enlarge their borders in this world.”

Alas, how true is this unfriendly witness! Lord awaken all Thy saints to a true acceptance in faith of the Christian calling, that they may be, while here on earth, like Thy servant of old, *from heaven* both in their mission, witness, works, words and ways, for Thy blessed Son’s sake.