

Luke 8:17–25 — Nothing Hidden

Light, True Relationship, Sovereignty of Grace, and Contrary Circumstances

Scripture Reading: Luke 8:17–25

“For nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, neither anything hid that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how ye hear. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.

Then came to him his mother and his brethren, and could not come at him for the press. And it was told him by certain, which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to see thee.

And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.

Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples, and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth.

But as they sailed, he fell asleep, and there came down a storm of wind on the lake, and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, we perish.

Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water, and they ceased, and there was a calm. And he said unto them, Where is your faith?

And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”

Light Makes Everything Manifest

The principle stated in verse 17 — that nothing hidden shall remain hidden — is not introduced here as a threat but as a statement about the nature of God and of light. God is light. The entrance of His word gives light. And the true light coming into the world shines upon every man, making every man's state manifest. That is not the same as saying every man receives the light; it means that no one's condition remains concealed in its presence.

Adam's fig leaves mark the beginning of hiding things in the Bible, and the connection was sin. The entrance of sin brought with it the instinct of concealment. But fig leaves gave Adam and Eve no clearness of conscience — otherwise they would not also have gone and hidden among the trees of the garden. Their fig leaves were no more adequate than a cardboard box. There was no apprehension that what they needed was a shame-coverer that could only come through death and bloodshed. The Lord's cursing of the fig tree in the Gospels touches the same theme: a profession of fruit where no real fruit existed.

The principle "nothing hidden that shall not be made manifest" appears in Luke 12:2–3 also, and is taken up by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:5: "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." This is not a call to suspend all judgment — the saints are to judge righteous judgment and to judge those within (1 Corinthians 5). It is a restraint on judging the things that are hidden, which cannot yet be seen. Once light shines on them, their true character is manifest.

For the believer who has walked in the light, this principle is a ground of freedom rather than dread. When God has already brought one's sins into His light and forgiven them, Satan loses the tactic of threatening that they will one day come out. They have already come out — before God — and have been covered by the blood of Christ.

Take Heed How Ye Hear: The Moral Posture of Reception

Verse 18 repeats the exhortation that ended the parable in verse 8: “Take heed therefore how ye hear.” It is not only what one hears but the moral condition of soul in which the hearing takes place. Whosoever hath, to him shall be given. Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even what he seemeth to have — a profession that is not real, a seeming without substance.

The Bible can be read from beginning to end in a search for loopholes, and loopholes can be found. But that is not receiving the light — it is using the darkness that remains to cover up what one does not wish to see. The moral state of the reader determines what he takes away from the word.

My Mother and My Brethren: True Relationship by Sovereign Grace

When the Lord is told that his mother and brothers are standing outside desiring to see him, his answer redefines relationship entirely: “My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.” This is not a cold dismissal of natural affection — the Lord had natural affection, and on the cross he commended his mother to John’s care. But in this moment, something else was being established. The claim of natural relationship cannot stand before fruit and light. It is the wrong basis.

Sovereignty of grace is a characteristic theme of Luke’s gospel. One test of this is to look up the word “certain” in a concordance and observe how this gospel uses it compared to the others — it appears repeatedly in connection with unnamed, unspecified individuals brought in by the sovereign pleasure of God. The relationship the Lord describes here — those who hear the word of God and do it — is a relationship that sovereign grace has produced. It is not something the flesh can generate by natural connection, no matter how close.

There is something beautiful in the picture. The Lord was in the midst, surrounded by those who were good ground. And these — he said of those right around him — these are my mother and my brethren. Not those down the road. These. There is always room for more good ground near the Lord Jesus, because he likes it that way.

As for his natural relatives standing outside: the reason for the distance was not that the Lord refused to receive them but that they were approaching on a fleshly basis. They could have come to him on the right basis. Acts 1:14 tells us they eventually did: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” They made it. Not on the ground of natural relationship, but on the right ground. Thank God for His grace.

Barnabas in Acts provides a cautionary parallel. He took Mark, who was his relative, against the judgment of Paul. The result was a dispute, a parting of ways, and Barnabas stepping out of the record of scripture. Natural relationships pressed into the service of the Lord’s work can bring exactly this kind of trouble.

Hearing and Doing

The words “do it” in verse 21 answer directly to verse 15: “having heard the word, keep it.” Hearing and doing are coupled strongly together in this gospel. The idea of receiving Christ as Saviour at one point and then choosing to receive him as Lord some years afterward finds no support here. These things are morally connected. The only gap that scripture acknowledges is between quickening and the full conscious assurance of one’s standing before God — a person in the exercises of Romans 7, concerned to do the will of God but not yet fully instructed. But that is entirely different from the notion of a gap between Saviour and Lord.

The first step is faith — for by grace are ye saved through faith. The doing that follows is the fruit of that faith, the outworking of the life that has been implanted. The law is outside a person and imparts nothing but a curse to the one who fails. But the word of God sown into the good ground is inside — it has fallen there and taken root, and what springs up is not legal compliance but the fruit of a living thing.

Contrary Circumstances: He Went In, They Launched Forth

Salvation, as these verses show, does not bring us into easy circumstances. It brings us where the power of the enemy is against us and where contrary winds blow. Verses 22–25 give a vivid illustration of this. The disciples, having heard the Lord say “Let us go over to the other side,” launched forth — and found themselves in a storm.

But there is a comfort built into the very first words of verse 22. J.N. Darby’s translation emphasizes the pronoun: “He went into a ship with his disciples.” He. He was the one who went in. He was the companion in the circumstances, the preeminent one present. And He had already said they were going to the other side. Before the storm began, before they launched, His word had given the certainty of arrival. He is in control of circumstances that appear to be in control of everything else.

When we are in hard circumstances, the first prayer of our hearts tends to be: Lord, get me out of this. Not: Lord, what do you have to teach me here? That is an honest admission. But the one who said “Let us go over to the other side” was the one in whom faith was to be placed. He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging water, and they ceased. And then: “Where is your faith?” Not, where is your courage, or your endurance — but your faith. That is what the contrary circumstances were designed to exercise.

He commands even the winds and the water. And they obey him.