

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php

“O GOD, WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE?”

A. MCD. REDWOOD •

The Psalmist (in Ps. 71:19) is overflowing with a profound sense of the reality of the Divine Glory. But he was no mere visionary, nor was he a slave to emotionalism or capricious moods of the soul. In fact he shared with Moses, the stern and rugged Leader of a previous generation, the capacity of faith in knowing, in ‘feeling’, and ‘seeing’—as far as poor human nature can—the Lord God Almighty. And it is not improbable that David had been deeply moved by the Song of Moses recorded in Exodus 15; e.g., verse 11, ‘Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty ones? Who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?’ (Exodus 15:11. Cf. Ps. 77:13, 14).

It is ever an uplifting and ennobling exercise for heart and mind to try and capture something of the spirit of the Psalmist’s moving appeal as expressed in Psalm 34; look, for example, in verse 3—‘O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt *His Name* together’. But, we may query: ‘What’s in a name?’ To begin with, it can of course have no significance; but it may also have a very definite meaning, as for example in the Lord’s message to the church in Sardis: ‘*Thou hast a name* that thou livest, but *thou art dead*.’ The church had a ‘reputation’, a *name*, but altogether contrary to the true facts of their spiritual condition. As used in reference to the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, however, it ever refers to the Divine nature and character of the Godhead. For example, in Proverbs 18:10, ‘*The Name of the Lord* is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is set on high’ (see marginal note). Again, in Psalm 20:5, 7, ‘We will triumph in Thy victory, and in the NAME of Jehovah our God’.

For our present study, however, we are not dealing with the Biblical names of God as such, interesting and profitable as such a study is, but rather we shall consider very briefly something of the manner in which God manifests Himself to His people in the various experiences of our lives, specially in training us to ‘grow in *grace* and in the *knowledge* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 3:18). We have to remember that God’s dealings

with us to-day are not new in any vital principle; they are the same as ever of old in grace and mercy, whether in regard to such as acknowledged Him and were obedient to His will, or to such as refused and rebelled and were judged accordingly. Today, in this era of divine grace and mercy, God is longsuffering, patient, and merciful, not willing that any should perish: But none the less He can never condone with sin and sinning.

We shall take time to look at five simple pictures, all of them from the Old Testament: each will repay some study for our edification. The *first* is

The Regnant Lord

Read Psalm 93: vs. 1 and 2. 'The LORD reigneth; He is clothed with majesty: the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself The world is established, that it cannot be moved. THY throne is established of old: THOU art from everlasting'. The whole Psalm is a panegyric to the Lord God Almighty, 'Who inhabiteth Eternity'. The Psalmist is attempting to describe the ineffable glory and surpassing majesty of the Most High God; Creator of the heavens and the earth. The more we read and ponder over it, the more is the soul filled with a real sense of awe, and is lifted up to the spiritual heights of the very presence of God Himself.

This may be realised even more sensitively if we read Isaiah's account of the glorious vision which God gave him in the year that King Uzziah died, at a most critical period of Israel's history; it is described in chap. 6 of his prophecy: 'I saw', says the prophet, 'The LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His skirts filled the Temple. . . .' (read the whole passage carefully). It was not the first time God had revealed Himself in similar fashion to His people. Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu were also given a like vision of the Lord God on Mount Horeb: 'And they saw the Lord God of Israel. . . . Whose footstool was as it were the very heaven for clearness' (Exodus 24:9, 10. See the R.V. and marginal reading). Then in later eras of national crisis, He again and again revealed Himself, as may be seen in such passages as 1 Kings 22:19 ff; Amos 9; etc.

It is well to remind ourselves in these days of threatening dangers, national and international, that GOD is still on the Throne of the Universe, even as Jeremiah declared in his day: 'A glorious Throne set on high *from the beginning* (mark the exact words!) *is the place of our sanctuary*' (Jeremiah 17:12). But you will lose the fulness of the divine promise if you fail to read the previous verses 5 to 8. THAT Throne, be it remembered, is still the Governing Centre of the Universe, as well as the unflinching Source of help and comfort and refuge for every soul who humbly seeks Its refuge in the Crucified, Risen, Glorified and *Returning* Christ of God! Speaking of the believer, the Psalmist declares: 'he that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty' (Psa. 91:1, ff.). In verse 14 also there is the divine promise: 'Because he hath set his love upon ME, therefore will I deliver him; I will set him on high, because he hath known MY NAME' (see also Psa. 93:1, 2. Psa. 97:9-12).

The second picture is that of the LORD as

"The Rebuker of the Devourer"

The setting of the theme is sad and depressing, for it reveals the spiritual degeneracy of the nation of Israel upon whom God had bestowed such unique blessings down through the centuries.

But God is holy and righteous, and will never tolerate the persistent violation of His righteous claims by any nation or by the individual. The Lord's own indictment of His people through Isaiah is only one of many: 'This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour Me, but have removed their heart from Me, and their fear is a commandment of men which hath been learned by rote' (Isaiah 29:13, R. V. margin).

It was inevitable, therefore, that God's righteousness and justice should be vindicated before the eyes of the surrounding nations, and within the nation of Israel itself. This divine disciplining took the form which would be most obvious to all outside nations, namely the destruction of Israel's fields and crops by successive swarms of destroying insects, as are referred to in the prophecies of Joel (chs. 1 and 2), of Amos (ch. 4:9), and Malachi (ch. 3:11). Incidentally, it is significant to see God dealing in the same way

with the nations as described in the Book of Revelation: note the locust-swarms, similarly 'Satanic' in character, mentioned in ch. 9:1-11.

But the Lord is ever at hand to deliver His people by all means and at the least sign of genuine repentance, with appeals for forgiveness and restoration. This is vividly expressed in Malachi's message from the Lord to His people: 'I will rebuke *the devourer* for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground . . .' (see vs. 11 and 12). Moreover, what He did for them on the *earthly* plane in the midst of their calamities, He is still doing in the present in the *spiritual* realm, where He and He alone manifests Himself as '*The Rebuker of the Devourer*'. The apostle Peter speaking from his own experience of having been tempted into denying his blessed Lord and Saviour, speaks in words of solemn warning: 'Be sober, be watchful; your Adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, *seeking whom he may devour*, whom withstand steadfast in faith' (1 Pet. 5:8-10. Read the full text; and mark the word 'devour', specially as it literally means, 'to overcome' in such a manner as to render helpless; useless).

How greatly we should rejoice in the glorious promise of God to His people of each successive age until He return: 'Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy. . . . He will tread our iniquities under foot' (Micah 7:18, 19). Whilst this primarily refers to the restoration of His people Israel in a coming day, it is a picture of what He is doing to-day for His ransomed on earth: '*rebuking the Devourer*'.

But it needs to be further understood that the exercise of the divine sovereignty is twofold in its application: it consists not merely in 'rebuking the Enemy', but positively also in *perfecting* our souls by stablishing and strengthening us in our faith and courage. Every occasion of the Lord's 'rebuking of the Devourer' is first a positive enrichment of the whole personality, if only we are wise enough to learn the lessons every such experience holds for us. David learnt something of this in his own experiences:

'Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I observe Thy Word'. And again, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes' (Psalms 35:27; 119:71).

Turn next to the Picture of the Lord as

"The Refiner of Silver"

Malachi's descriptive writings will again help us. The theme of the book is largely prophetic in character, and concerning the restoration of the Nation of Israel in a coming day; at the same time the divine principles and purpose are applicable in broad outline even to-day for us His redeemed people. Redemption, conversion, the new birth are but the 'beginning' of a new life-experience of enlarging knowledge of God and His Word. That is to say, it implies growth in character and personal testimony.

Read Malachi 3:3. It is vividly descriptive: '*He shall sit as a Refiner and Purifier of silver*, and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord *offerings of righteousness*.' Note that the language is descriptive of well known material things, gold and silver, but the meaning behind them refers to vital spiritual realities which concern the soul. And yet that is not where the emphasis lies but rather it is upon the Refiner who is fashioning the 'silver', our redeemed personality, in order to produce something beautiful and useful, a joy to Himself, and to all who behold His handiwork.

The Divine Refiner and Fashioner of our lives is never in a hurry nor ever behind-hand: '*HE shall sit* as a Refiner, even in the great work of fashioning and disciplining of each individual soul who belongs to Him, and who is a 'partaker of the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). It is, therefore, a life-long process in which He is engaged. But how patient and longsuffering He is; and all because 'He delighteth in Mercy!' (Micah 7:18, 19). In fact, the Lord is never so near to us as when He is 'shaping and moulding' us for and in the sphere of service into which He has brought us, whatever its character or location. Even such is the effect of the divine work of grace in the heart and life being wrought upon by the saving, sanctifying, sustaining power of the Holy Spirit of God. No more should it be possible to say what Isaiah

was compelled to say to the nation in his day by the command of God: 'thy silver is become dross', but rather, as in the Lord's gracious promise: 'I will thoroughly purge away thy dross and will take away all thy alloy' (Isaiah 1:25). Also a second time, in chapter 48:9-11; 'Behold I have refined thee, but not as silver (merely); but I have chosen (or 'tested') thee in the furnace of affliction: For Mine own sake. . . . And My glory will I not give to another' (Isa. 48:9-11). See also a very close parallel in Zechariah 13:9. But do not fail to read again 1 Peter 1:8.

The fourth picture is found in Jeremiah 30:17; in which we see the same blessed Lord our God as,

"The Restorer of Spiritual Health!"

'I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord. . . . ' Nationally, God's ancient people are still in that state of 'spiritual sickness' described by Isaiah: 'The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint . . . from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness. . . .' (Isaiah 1:5-7 ff.) And there are other passages in similar strain in the book of Jeremiah: 'Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of My people recovered?' (Chap. 8:22). And after all the past centuries the people of Israel are spiritually in the same condition of heart. But here, as in every other individual and national declension spiritually the world over, GOD is still the Great Restorer of health for heart, mind and soul, in the spiritual sense. His promise to Israel, even as a nation, is illustrative of this: 'I will not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee with judgment, and will in no wise leave thee altogether unpunished. . . . For I will *restore healing to thee*, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord' (Jer. 30:11, 16, 17; and ch. 33:3, 6.).

But this historical national illustration, as it were, provides an even deeper and more personal meaning for us Christians, members of the Church, the Body of Christ our Redeemer and Lord. For example, turn again to the message which the Lord gave to the church in Sardis, as described in Revelation 3:1-6. For our immediate purpose we need only deal with the principal

features of the history. Verse 1 gives the Lord's message to the church: 'I know thy works, that thou hast a *name that thou livest and art dead*'. That condition did not arise all at once, but it was a 'sickness' of soul which quite possibly was at the first confined to an individual, or a few individuals perhaps, and most tragically permitted to develop. It may not have been recognised in the early stages, or if recognised was neglected. And yet, we shall agree I think, that it could have been prevented and the church, specially its responsible leaders, taken the case in hand in a worthy and Scriptural manner, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and help of the Head of the Church, Christ Himself. He is ever at hand to become the RESTORER of Spiritual Health for the whole Body collectively, and for each member individually.

And that is just what the apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote to the church in Thessalonica: 'We exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient towards all' (1 Thess. 5:14). Take special note of verses 15-18 also.

That is exactly the method and the means by which our blessed Lord and Saviour reveals His healing power and grace. Note also how the apostle states the method in writing to the churches in Galatia: 'Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in a trespass, ye which are spiritual *restore* (mark the word) such a one in a spirit of meekness (or gentleness); looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted' (Gal. 6:1). The word 'restore' (Gk. *katartizo*) means 'to mend'; 'knit together'; or 'put into joint' (as of a dislocated limb). It occurs again, for example, in such passages as Hebrews 13:21 '*make perfect*'; 'This also we pray for, even *your perfecting*' (2 Cor. 13:9); And again in 1 Cor. 1:11, 'Be perfected together in the same mind, and the same judgment' (1 Cor. 1:11). It was because of the danger of 'divisions', (or 'broken limbs' spiritually) within the body of the church. For every such 'division' implies varying but definite degrees of 'ill-health' within the church as a body. How blessed to realize that Christ, the Head of the Church, is the 'Restorer' of spiritual health and strength, with all its attendant blessings!

Our last picture is found in Psalm 106. In this we may see

the Lord as being, in a very wonderful way, and in spite of all failures of His redeemed people down through the centuries, which—alas, tell a sorry tale often of backsliding and forgetfulness, yet in spite of all He gloriously remains

“The Remembrancer of the People”

In this Psalm the writer is recounting in some measure the history of God's past dealings with His people, and in terms of almost scathing directness regarding their behaviour towards the Lord, in spite of all His longsuffering grace and mercy: *‘They forgot GOD their SAVIOUR, who had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham (i.e., Egypt), and terrible things in the Red Sea’* (vs. 21, 22).

But he also gives us the most outstanding feature of the whole story: *‘Nevertheless, He regarded their distress, when He heard their cry: And He Remembered for them His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies’* (vs. 43 ff.).

That was not the only occasion, however, of His merciful and pitying remembrance of them. The story of their sojourn in Egypt contains many a ‘Cameo of Divine Mercy’, expressed in most simple yet vivid reality. For example in Exodus 2:24, 25; *‘God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant . . . and God saw the children of Israel, and God took knowledge of them’* (R.V.).

How often down the ages in the history of His people has God permitted them to suffer trials and testings in order to prove to them His *abiding remembrance and faithfulness* through all such discipline. Recall the words of the Psalmist, for example, who spoke both from personal experience and divine revelation: *‘Like as a father pitieth His children so the Lord pitieth them that trust in Him: For He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are but dust’* (Psalm 103:13 ff.). Isaiah is even more vivid in presenting this great truth: *‘Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, these may forget, yet will I not forget thee’* (Isa. 49:15, R.V. See also Numbers 23:19).

In closing this study we do well to remind ourselves of the

other side of the picture, the *reciprocal* feature it enshrines, and without which we shall fail to realise the blessing it contains for ourselves as God's dear children, beloved for Christ's sake in spite of all our failures. Malachi gives it in most felicitous language (chap. 3:16; 7): 'They that feared the LORD spake often one with another; and a *Book of Remembrance* was written before Him, for them that feared the LORD, and that *thought upon His name*. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that Day, when I make up my jewels (or 'peculiar treasure', R.V.); and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him'.

'Sing praise unto the LORD, O ye saints of His, and give thanks at the REMEMBRANCE OF HIS HOLINESS' (Psalm 30:4).

PEN PORTRAITS FROM OLD RECORDS

W. WILCOX

5. Servers of the Tabernacle and the Temple 1 Chronicles 6: 31-50

I. The Ministry of Song. vv 31-33.

It is of interest to note how large a part in Israel's Worship of Jehovah was given to song. There are songs found in the works of Moses, in the historical books, in the books of the Prophets, as well as in the more specifically poetical books. These songs were:

(a) *Ascriptions of Praise to the Lord*, giving expression to their wonder at His greatness, thanks for His goodness and praise of His Glory.

(b) *Outlets of Joyous Emotion*. At seasons of rejoicing, at the great festivals, or at times of national thanksgiving, they burst into song; ascribing their joy to their relation with the Lord, bringing their praise to His Name and attributing their conquests