



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

The sad silence in today's news reports.

While listening to the daily reports of the deaths of more and more people from Covid-19, and the many, many interviews with the grieving family members of the latest victims, there is naturally a going out of our heart-felt sympathy to those suffering such losses. The nation is in grief today and that to a degree not seen since World War II.

However, there is one feature of the many scenes of grief which I, and I am sure all true believers, will have noted with sorrow of heart. It is the fact that there is virtually no mention whatever of the Lord or any words regarding the passing of friends and loved ones which would indicate the slightest knowledge of what is entailed in death!

Family and friends attending our death bed may appear to be a most essential thing, but in truth, such can really render no help or comfort whatever. Indeed, whatever comfort may be derived is false and empty if not accompanied by the grace of God and will evaporate the instant death approaches.

The nation, even in this awful time of apostasy and departure from God, still has some knowledge of the Shepherd's Psalm, Psalm 23. It is a Psalm of David and in it he speaks of his personal faith in Christ. I can well envisage it being suggested by the undertaker at a funeral service, even if the mourners would not have thought of it. The suggestion of it will jog a few distant memories amongst some and the suggestion accepted.

What gospel truth is set forth in this short psalm!

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake," verses 1-3.

This is one of the clearest testimonies to what it is to have a saving faith in Christ. It is to have a relationship with Christ of a sheep with a shepherd.

1. Shepherds know their sheep from birth, being present at the time. Even so is it with the Christian and Christ. He it was Who attended us in our spiritual birth, when we were "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever," 1 Peter 1:23. As the lamb is born into the flock of the shepherd so the Christian is born into the flock of God by the miracle of the 'new birth'. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust," 2 Peter 1:3-4.

It was this 'new birth' experience that the Saviour spoke of when He uttered those familiar words: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3.

Oh! how the nation needs to hear this truth preached again for it is ever so plain that it is unknown to a most dreadful degree to this generation, for it is so far from the thinking and mind and lips of today's mourners!

2. Shepherds take great care of their sheep. Even more so does the Great Shepherd of the flock of God. David said that the Lord caused him "to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

Every step of the way, David was conscious of the kindly care and the attentive love of His Saviour.

3. For the Christian, this care extends right up to death and beyond! I can well recall hearing in the earlier days of my pilgrimage, the 'old Pastor', as we lovingly called Pastor James Kyle Paisley, the revered father of Dr Ian Paisley, quote Psalm 48:14. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

even unto death." He then went on to explain that the phrase, "even unto death" should actually be translated "even over death." He is not a God for the present only, but for all time to come; not merely for this world, but for that unending duration which awaits us beyond death.

How precious is this truth to the child of God on his pilgrimage and even more so on our deathbed!

While family members gather around our bed in a last farewell, and feel their utter inability to truly offer any comfort, what a joy it is for them and will be even more to us, to know that the Saviour not merely attends our deathbed but will take our hand and convey us personally into His heavenly domain! Not for us the popish notion that Peter or Mary or some of the angelic beings attend the death bed of the true saints of God.

No, it is Christ Himself Who will be there.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory," Psalm 73:24.

Does not David continue his testimony in this psalm in verses 4-6?

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

What words are these! Christ is our Companion, Friend, Guide and Protector in LIFE. But He is also our COMFORTER and CONSORT in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Yet, it is so sad to hear no mention of any such hope in the recorded words of the nation's grieving today. Nor indeed, in the words of rejoicing and thanksgiving of those who recovered from the virus. Many agencies and individuals were thanked and their praises sung BUT rarely a mention of the ONLY One who was the actual cause of their recovery!

Oh! how apostate and deceitful false prophets and self-appointed preachers in the denominations of the land have misled the flocks over which they minister and from whom they have obtained a fat living.

A dreadful eternity awaits such!

Rev Ivan Foster (Rtd)

28th April 2020.