



## The Burning Bush - Online article archive

### A work which only the elderly can do!

*"Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come," Psalm 71:18.*

This state of affairs comes on most of humanity who live out their allotted span as stated in Psalm 90. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away," verse 10.

Lovers and readers of the Bible are very familiar with David's life story. They have followed, and that repeatedly, his pilgrimage from his days as a teenage shepherd looking after his father's sheep until his death bed as recorded in 1 Kings 2.

"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying...So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David," verses 1 and 10.

David's story covered 70 years of one the most tumultuous periods of Israel's history. He left his kingdom secure and greatly enriched and it was taken on by his son Solomon to even greater heights until Solomon, wise man and all that he was made to be by the Lord, turned from the Lord and His truth and embraced great folly due to the evil influence of his many wives. What a sad episode that makes! It is nevertheless, a solemn lesson for all of God's people throughout the ages. Despite the warning, there have been many occasions when 'Solomons' have had their hearts turned away from the Lord and not always by carnal lusts. Money, earthly glory and political power have played a part in the downfall of many of God's favoured servants down through the years!

However, if we might return to our text, please consider:

#### 1. OLD AND ALL AS DAVID WAS HE WAS NOT TOO OLD TO PRAY!

These words are directed to the Lord by David in prayer. The whole psalm is a glorious example of the godly spirituality of this, the first God-appointed king of Israel from whom the Redeemer sprang.

David's spirit of prayer has guided, comforted and encouraged millions of believers since he was inspired of God to write down the psalms he composed. He has taught us to hope and to cling to the Lord and His promises in the darkest and most trying times. His prayers in times of trouble were, on many occasions, foreshadowings of the prayers of the Lord Jesus. Indeed, the Saviour was pleased to take up the words of David in His sayings and prayers on the cross. Psalm 22 is most certainly a portent of Calvary!

#### Others

Here in our text, aged David is praying with regards the needs of the younger generation that surrounded him and from the midst of which he was soon to depart.

For the child of God there must ever be a concern for the wellbeing of others, a desire expressed in prayer.

Today, Christians are confronted by a very sad scene all around. There is a dearth of understanding, an absence of the fear of the Lord. Darkness spreads itself over the world. Never were the words of John more true. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John 5:19. Those nations, where once the gospel light shone brightest, have now become spiritual wildernesses, populated by the most evil creatures and marked by the most depraved cravings and fixations!

#### Christendom

There is a deliberate and defiant rejection of God's truth within that called Christendom akin only to the days of Noah, when "GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," Genesis 6:5.



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Like the earth in those far-off days, the earth today is heading for a confrontation with the Lord and an experiencing of His judgment. Of that event Paul wrote: "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day," 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10.

If David, the aged had cause to pray for the next generation in his day we have even greater cause to do so!

### **2. BUT DAVID HAD A DESIRE NOT JUST TO PRAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION BUT HE DESIRED TO WITNESS TO THEM.**

"O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." David had something to 'show' to the next generation.

It is commonly believed by each new generation that it has nothing to learn from the previous generation, the 'old fuddy-duddies'! What a deceitful lie of the devil that is?

#### **Abandoned knowledge**

If each new generation were to dispense with all the medical and scientific knowledge gained by previous generations, mankind would go back to the 'dark ages' indeed! Disease, poverty, deprivation and distress would be the outcome of that folly! And yet, to a far greater degree, mankind repeatedly has followed just such a path when it turns its back upon the wealth of spiritual knowledge that previous generations have gained under God.

On a previous occasion David had written: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread," Psalm 37:25. Here he records his experiences of God's mercy. 'I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' What a benefit faith in God, and the resultant pardon and salvation from sin, brings! There is no mention in these words of the ETERNAL SPIRITUAL BENEFITS that salvation by faith in God brings. David just mentions the temporal blessings. These are constant divine companionship and defence and abundant provision.

These are the portions of those who trust God.

#### **Forsaking**

How disastrous therefore is the sight that meets our eyes on a daily basis as we see the rising generation turning its back upon God! It is like Israel of old to whom Jeremiah the prophet witnessed. "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jeremiah 2:13. That is what we see today. There is a casting away of the glorious truths of the gospel, which are able to save to the uttermost (Hebrews 7:25) and a drinking again from the once rejected pots of poisonous waters that flow from the springs of hell and damnation!

That is the religious course upon which our nation is headed, led by false prophets and apostates and encouraged to do so by civic and political personages!

Like David, the 'oldies', who have experience of God's mighty power to save, must cry out against such a folly, irrespective of how their witness is received. Ezekiel was told "Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear," Ezekiel 2:7. So must be the witness of the believing generation which stands on the verge of eternity, to the generation to whom they must soon bid farewell.

### **3. THAT OF WHICH DAVID WISHED TO SPEAK MUST BE OUR WITNESS ALSO.**

"O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one



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that is to come." David wished to speak of the strength and power of God.

I must stress the point that David recognised that he could not bear such a testimony unless the Lord helped him. "O God, forsake me not." This is a request for a strengthening by the Lord whereby he may be helped to testify which sprang from David's awareness of his weakness. David felt his declining strength. "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth," verse 9.

How true that is, aged Christian! If we needed God's help in our youth, how much more do we need it now if we are to carry out our last duties on this earth!

There are two words used by David when referring to what it was he wished to testify to the next generation. They are 'strength' and 'power'.

The word 'strength' is translated by the word 'arm' more times than it appears as 'strength'. It appears as 'arm' some 83 times while it appears as 'strength' only here in our text. Now, God's 'arm' is that to which David wished to witness. That is, the times when God 'made bare His holy arm' against His enemies. The phrase is found in Isaiah 52:10. "The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

This phrase, 'made bare his holy arm' is a reference to God displaying His arm as He came to the aid of His people against their enemies. In the verse just quoted, there is a reference to that future 'making bare His holy arm' at the return of Christ. What a display of divine power that will be!

It was common for army commanders to send the signal to 'attack' to his forces by holding up his arm. In the days of flowing garments such a gesture would result in the sleeve of a loose garment falling down to the shoulder and the commander's arm becoming bare. His raised arm was a revealing of his strength and a signal for his troops to advance.

### The 'Few'

David wishes to testify of God's delivering force which He had put forth, and will most assuredly put forth again, on behalf of His people. There were few in his day who could bear a greater witness to God's mighty deliverances than David. Is it not also true of the 'senior' generation of Christians here in Ulster!

Who alive has been privileged to see greater wonders wrought by the Lord than those who lived through the 60s, 70s and early 80s?

Did not that people see revival? In many instances did they not experience the preserving mercy of God in the face of terrorist murderers? Was not the witness of the gospel kept alive and thriving in the face of ecumenically inspired attempts to shut down the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church?

The rising generation are owed the benefits of the last generation's experiences. This the Psalmist states to be so. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them," Psalms 44:1-3. This is a pattern for my generation to follow!

Every act of deliverance wrought by the Lord for His people has been an occasion when the 'arm' or 'strength' of the Lord has been displayed. "O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory," Psalm 98:1.

To a wonderful measure there are those alive still who saw that divine power at work in Ulster! We must speak of it to those who will follow after us.

### Victory



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The word 'power' is also used by David. It first appears in Exodus 32:18 where it is translated by the English word 'mastery'. "And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear." Moses is here speaking of the noise coming from the camp of Israel as he returns with Joshua from the Mount of God. The shouting from the camp is like to a shout of victory!

David wished to tell the next generation of the 'mastery' God had shown over His enemies on the very many occasions He had intervened to the delivering of His people.

Dear Christian, we too can testify of such and the next generation needs to hear that witness!

### Mercy

It must be said that God's arm is customarily clothed in the garments of mercy. It is rightly stated that: "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy," Psalm 103:8. Furthermore, it is stated that judgment is 'His strange work'! "For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act," Isaiah 28:21. Nothing is more surely evident if only men had eyes to see it, when we consider how the Lord has delayed His judgment upon a world richly deserving of it! In truth, divine judgments have been few and far between in comparison to His daily mercies bestowed upon mankind. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities," Psalm 103:10. If men only realised this glorious truth!

### Show

Also, it is to be noted, that David wished to 'shew' or show as the more modern form of the word is, God's mightiness. The word 'shew' means to 'conspicuously make known'. Now that is how we ought ever to testify of God's truth. 'Mealy-mouthedness' is the mark of today's 'evangelicalism'! Christians today seem to have forgotten how to 'call a spade a spade'! They stumble and stutter around a matter rather than plainly speaking of it as it really is. Bible phraseology has been abandoned. It is too blunt. That is one of the reasons why today's 'Evangelicals' favour modern versions. They have, at best, a watered down version of good old fashioned 'Anglo-Saxon' blunt expressiveness!

May the Lord loose our tongues to declare His Word faithfully and plainly. The Lord Jesus gave many an example of just how to 'call a spade a spade'. Here is one. "Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself," Luke 24:25-27.

There is a need today for a tongue like that of which old W P Nicholson was so fond of speaking – the tongue of a cow, rough and sharp!

David's 'gray hairs' were an incentive to him to be urgent and faithful in his witness to those who were following on after him. Likewise, for all who can empathise with him, there is a need for urgency. The lights are going out all around. Those of us who have reached the three score years and ten, and a little more, have seen the closing of witness after witness. We have seen the decay and the departure of places of worship which once were beacon lights in the darkness. Now, that darkness is deepening and spreading. We must feel as did Paul; when he said: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away," 1 Corinthians 7:29-31.

May we so live and witness in whatever time remains to us.

Ivan Foster (Rtd), 4th June 2020.



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