

Articles by H. P. Barker

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Remember Me

We naturally like to be remembered. It would pain us to know that our friends never think of us when we are absent from them. "My people no longer remember me," said a late Queen of the Belgians; "it is time to go." The words were the last she ever uttered. Her heart was broken by the forgetfulness of those who were dear to her.

Before the chief butler left the precincts of the prison, Joseph made a very simple request of him: "Think on me, when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me" (Gen. 40:14). When once again the butler moved in the high circles of the Egyptian court, it says of him: "Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him" (Gen. 40:23). Sad words, telling once again the story of human forgetfulness and ingratitude.

Has it ever struck you, Christian reader, that your Lord and Savior has made of you a request similar to that of Joseph? He does not want His people to forget Him. It is well that we should note the exact terms of His request. "Take, eat...in remembrance of Me." Observe that He does not say "in celebration of your blessing," or "in remembrance of the benefits conferred upon you," but "in remembrance of ME" (1 Cor. 11:24).

How can we explain the indifference of many Christians to this touching request of their Lord? I can understand anyone saying, "There are so many sects and companies with divergent views, that I am puzzled where to go to join in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus." But it is difficult to understand that one who owes his all to

Christ should be content to let the years slip by without being concerned as to partaking of the Lord's supper at all! Does such an one understand that it is the way He Himself has appointed for His people to show that they do not forget Him, but cherish His memory and desire His company? There is nothing that can so touch the heart and renew the affections as this remembrance of the Lord Himself. Our cold, forgetful hearts may be warmed; our affections renewed and fixed afresh on Christ, as we are gathered, even if only two or three in number, for the remembrance of Him.

The Field of Clover

"Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22). "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, Who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 5:5). "....ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13,14).

As the "earnest" the Holy Spirit is given to us for our comfort and assurance. But there is more than this in the word translated "earnest". The Holy Spirit is the pledge that we will one day be put in possession of the inheritance reserved in heaven for us. Hence some translations render the word "pledge, foretaste, installment".

It is like this. I am going on a voyage overseas, and I promise to take my boy, a lad of twelve, with me. For his enjoyment on board the ship I buy him a telescope, not a mere toy, but a serviceable instrument. The gift is an assurance to him on my part that I intend to take him on the voyage.

But it is more than that. When the voyage is nearly ended word goes round the ship that land is in sight. I can see nothing, but my boy, with his telescope to his eye, says he can see the hills quite clearly. Soon I can trace the outlines of the hills, but my boy exclaims: "I can see the trees and some houses". These things a little later can be just discerned by unaided sight, but he sings out: "Father, I can see the people down on the wharf".

The telescope give him a clearer vision of the land to which he is going. It enables him to get glimpses of it before he arrives. That is what the Holy Spirit as the "earnest" does for us. He gives us a keener spiritual vision; He brings within the arena of present enjoyment the great things that constitute our eternal inheritance. He enables us already, as it were, to breathe the atmosphere of heaven, and to gain acquaintance with what is there.

I remember hearing, when quite a youth, an address on this subject by George Cutting. He pictured a farmer buying some sheep at a market, and entrusting them to his man to take them safely home. "Turn them into the enclosure by the barn, John, and cut a few armfuls of that sweet clover from the field behind the house, and put them into the enclosure for the sheep to feed on this evening. Tomorrow, we will turn them out into the field itself."

Does not this exactly describe the situation? We are the sheep that have been purchased and entrusted to the care of the Holy Spirit to be conducted home. In the glorious by-and-by for which we wait, we are going to be turned into a wonderful field of clover, so to speak. Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit, as the "earnest" of the inheritance, gives us tastes of that sweet clover. Things which will be actually ours when we get to heaven are made real to us now.

Let us, then, do something more than continually thank God that He has given us the "earnest." The Holy Spirit opens to us the garden of God's delights. Let us walk through the length and breadth thereof. By faith we

know that all is ours; by the power of the Spirit we appropriate and enjoy it; a different thing altogether.

The Name Underneath

Long ago there lived in the land of Egypt an architect named Cnidius. He was employed by the Pharaoh of that day to build a watch-tower to warn mariners from certain dangerous rocks upon the coast. When the tower was nearly finished, Cnidius had his own name engraved on a stone in the wall, and then covered it with plaster. On the outside of the plaster he inscribed in golden letters the name of Pharaoh.

The cunning architect knew very well that as the years rolled by the waves would wash away the plaster, and that then his own name would stand out before the eyes of men, and be handed down to successive generations. His motive is apparent. Self-love and the desire for fame were uppermost in his heart, though carefully veiled under disguise of service to his king.

In the balances of the sanctuary motives weigh very heavily. Words and deeds are weighed, but motives, secret desires and intentions, the designs of the heart, outweigh them all; and at the judgment seat of Christ, when our lives are passed in review under His searching eye, motives will be of much account. "The fire shall try every man's work," and the Lord will take up the question with His servants as to "how much every man had gained by trading." But the question will not only be, "How much?" but, "Of what sort?" (1 Cor. 3:13) The valuation in that day will be made according to quality as well as quantity. And the quality depends on the motives.

It is easy to be zealous of works that are called

"good," and to cover our activities with a coat of plaster whereon the name of "Christ" is inscribed in large letters that all may see. But what when the plaster covering is washed off? Whose name will then be seen? Will our own names appear engraved upon the stone that is behind the plaster? In other words, will our actions, our works, or deeds of service be found, "in that day," to have sprung from motives that will obtain the commendation of Christ, or from motives that have self as their object?

These are searching questions, and we shall do well to give them a place in our thoughts.

The Penknife, The Sack and The Egg

"Kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5):

How many are deterred from coming to the Savior through fear of their inability to stand. Knowing something of their inherent weakness, and of the awful power with which the enemy can present his temptations, they hesitate to take upon them the holy name of Christ, lest by their subsequent conduct they should bring dishonor upon Him.

While respecting such conscientiousness, I venture to suggest that it arises from ignorance as to two great facts. (1) Our own utter and absolute weakness and (2) God's power and willingness to uphold us in the day of temptation. The knowledge of our frailty and the discovery of our complete lack of strength should lead us to conclude that power to sustain us must come from outside ourselves altogether. If we are to continue for a moment to stand, in the face of all the forces which Satan will marshal against us, it must be by the power of God.

I have a penknife which I will try to stand on its end. The end is rounded and smooth. You would say this is an impossible task and you can never make that penknife stand up on its end. Behold, the impossible task, the penknife is actually standing! But you say that you are holding it. Did you think I was foolish enough to imagine that I could make it stand in any other way? But to make it stand by holding it up is neither impossible nor difficult.

Let me now read you a line from Romans 14:4, containing a magnificent promise: "He shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand". Can you find room for those misgivings which have tortured you, in the face of such words as these?

But we are not mere machines, nor does God treat us as such. If we are "kept by the power of God," it is through the exercise of faith on our part: "kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Pet. 1:5). We need to know how God holds us up.

Come with me to yonder flour mill. Do you see that heap of empty sacks in the corner? Take hold of one and try to make it stand up. What! You cannot. You say I am asking you to do an impossibility! No, ask the miller to make it stand, and to show you how he does it. The miller takes the sack with a smile and holds it under the chute down which the white, newly ground flour is falling. Soon the sack is full. Now is there any difficulty in making it stand? No indeed, it stands by the weight of what it contains.

Learn then thereby, that in order to make us stand God feeds us and fills us with what will strengthen our souls. Christ is the food of His people. As we appropriate, by faith, His death in its far-reaching significance, as we feast on His love and enter by the grace of the Holy Spirit into the enjoyment of those things which will be our everlasting portion, our souls are made strong. We look up to Christ with grateful and adoring eyes, and as we walk with Him, study Him, listen to His words, feed upon all that He is, we are "kept by the power of God."

But there is yet another means by which God holds us up. Do you see this egg? What will you say if I propose

to make it stand on its end without my holding it? You may think that is impossible. See! I take it and give it a hard knock upon the table. The shell cracks and splinters. There is a dent at the end of the egg. On that dent I set it, and lo, it stands!

It is by means of the hard knocks, the trials under which we groan, the times of adversity and sorrow, that God sometimes holds us up and makes us stand. Prone to be self-reliant, we have to learn, like Mephibosheth, we are not only cripples when grace first reaches us, but cripples to the end of life's story. And of this God has to remind us again and again. His gracious hand is laid upon us in sore affliction in order to break our self-reliance and stubborn wills; in order to save us from the fall that follows pride, through saving us from the pride that goes before the fall. Who would not then take these blows, these trials of faith, these infirmities and sorrows, with thanksgiving, when we remember that thereby God fulfills His faithful promise: "He shall be holden up"?

Twentieth Century Jethro

And Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father-in-law, heard of all that God had done for Moses and for Israel His people...and came with his sons and his wife to Moses in the wilderness....Then Moses let his father-in-law depart, and he went his way to his own land (Exodus 18:1,5,27).

In almost every city and village throughout Christendom there are to be found twentieth century Jethros.

Speaking of them after the manner of men, they are generally excellent folks, courteous, liberal, of good repute among their neighbors, well disposed towards all. There is much to be said in their favor. But they are Jethros. Let me explain what I mean.

1. Jethro was sincerely glad to hear of a good work going on among other people (Ex. 18:9). Moses told him the story of God's gracious dealings with the people of Israel; how He had delivered them from the cruel bondage of Egypt, and had marvelously provided for their need in the wilderness. "And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel."

2. Jethro could give very wise counsel as to how God's work should be done (Ex. 18:19). He saw that Moses was bearing too heavy a burden, and suggested to him that he should share it with others. Able, God-fearing, truth-loving men were to be selected, who should share the judicial responsibilities of the great lawgiver, and relieve him of all concern as to the minor matters that might call for a decision.

3. Jethro was kind and hospitable to his relatives (18:6). Jethro kindly took charge of Zipporah and her two sons under his hospitable roof while Moses was away in Egypt, seeking the deliverance of Israel.

While all this was true of Jethro, it was also true that he refrained from fully identifying himself with the people of God. He took no part in their conflicts with their enemies, nor in their wilderness exercises. He acknowledged the greatness and supremacy of the true God (18:11), but never rose to the height of His glorious purpose for the people of His choice. His action spoke loudly enough that he had no desire to be a participator with them in the prospect God set before them. "He went his way into his own land" (18:27).

It is to be feared that there are many today who bear a striking resemblance to Jethro. In spite of their many excellent qualities, they fail to rise to the height of God's purpose for His people. They apprehend but feebly the nature of the calling wherewith they are called. Their appreciation of the heavenly relationships in which Christians are set is small indeed, and they give a very secondary place to the wonderful portion that belongs to the Church, the body and bride of Christ. They may rejoice to hear of the prosperity of the Lord's work in their own locality, or in regions beyond the seas, but when one speaks to them of God's wonderful purpose for us, and of our heavenly calling, there is little response. They are not practically "strangers and pilgrims" on earth. They do not throw themselves wholeheartedly into the wilderness conflicts which are the experience of those who seek to appropriate, in the energy of the Spirit of God, the heavenly portion of the Church. As a result, they know little of that priceless

treasure of the reproach of Christ which, in Moses' reckoning, was "greater riches" than all the wealth of Egypt (Heb. 11:26).

Do you lay it to heart that the calling of the people of God is a heavenly one, and that we are not left in the world for a while in order to throw ourselves into the current of its ambitions and pursuits (even with the best of motives), but that we may be altogether apart from it in spirit, while serving the interests of Christ as His ambassadors in it? Carry this question into the presence of God, and seek grace from Him to keep you from being a Twentieth Century Jethro.