Articles by Robert Agnew

Robert Agnew

First published in Food for the Flock / Ministry in Focus (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Learn of Me (November–December 1971)

From Ministry in Focus, November–December 1971.

Editor's note: We appreciate another article from Robert Agnew of Scotland. In his own country he ministers to the needs of fellowbelievers. By means of his pen, his ministry extends across the Atlantic.

Do not the words "Learn of Me," (Matt. 11:29) penetrate deeper than the thunders of Sinai? The express commands and prohibitions of the law meet a ready response from some proud hearts. Many of these are prompt to say, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do." When He who was meek and lowly in heart, He who made Himself of no reputation, says, "Learn of Me," a path of patient suffering is discovered for which few are prepared to pursue who have not the mind of Christ.

How to learn of Him as to His ways and His will is revealed in the Word of God. Briefly, it is to learn subjection until "every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." The Lord Jesus is our supreme example; He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, and He glorified the Father by the perfect fulfilment of His Will. This too should be our objective.

The Lord was in truth the unique Son of God. By Him all things were created, He was the brightness of the Father's glory and the express Image of His person; yet when He appeared in the form of a servant, fashioned as a man, He yielded Himself unreservedly to a place of

complete dependence upon God and lived by every word that proceeded from God.

It is only as we understand this that we can properly evaluate the Lord's life on earth. He has summarized His life in a very concise statement, "I can of Myself do nothing; as I hear, I judge, and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of My Father who hath sent Me" (John 5:30). It is in the light of His perfect life and this statement that we can enter into the meaning of Jehovah's directive, "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1).

None but Christ could say, "I seek not My own glory" (John 8:50), and "I do always those things that please Him" (the Father) (John 8:29). He lived in unbroken fellowship with the Father. Prophetically it was written of Christ: "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned (the instructed One) (Isa. 50:4).

In this communion with the Father, He rejoiced continually: "I will bless the Lord, who hath given Me counsel: My reins also instruct Me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved" (Psa. 16:7-8).

Into what paths of trial He was thus led! "He was a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief." How His obedience was tested in Gethsemane! What a scene of extreme distress! What a moment when He assumed the guilt of man and met the righteousness of God! "Abba, Father," He prayed, "All things are possible unto Thee; take away

this cup from Me; nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt." When delivered into the hands of sinners, He could say, "I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not My face from shame and spitting." Truly, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "Therefore," says the Apostle, "God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow."

Here then, we learn the force of the words, "Learn of Me for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Human examples are easy to imitate, but he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. It is only as we are united to Him and abiding in Him that we can walk even as He walked. To say with sincere humility, "I can of My ownself do nothing," and to act on the conviction that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, is a proof that we are being taught of God. A naturally pleasant disposition and many natural gifts of various kinds may carry us far in the esteem of men, may even give the appearance of devotion. But to renounce dependence on all that is of the flesh, and to wait only upon the Lord, is an evidence of conformation into the likeness of Christ. God in His power uses the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. Let us therefore go on not seeking the praise of men, but rather seeking to do the will of our heavenly Father.

It is by such a life of simple dependence that we can most effectually glorify God. It is from this good objective that our adversary will attempt to divert us, if at all possible. To direct us in this pathway, our gracious

Lord exhorts us to be humble and to rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit. He frequently has to disappoint our vanity and to thwart our ambition. At times He has to display to us the effect of spiritual decay, a decay in proportion to the pride of gifts which takes the place of simple child-like subjection to His supreme will.

We need to remind ourselves that His strength is made perfect in our weakness: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. 12:9-10).

It ought not to be hard to learn this lesson. If the Son of God with all His inherent and infinite power acted in dependence upon His Father, and submitted perfectly in all His service to His Father's will, what a wonderful example He has set for us.

May we learn more perfectly the wisdom that comes through fellowship with the Lord. Then, and only then, shall we find rest to our souls. We are the only Epistles of Christ which men read, and they judge Him by us. It is possible to walk so as to please God, to walk so that His name will be glorified in us.

As a people taught by His grace, looking for His appearing and constrained by His love, may we indeed be His in zealous works, doing that which is well-pleasing in His sight. As we aspire to so live, we must gird tightly the sword of the Spirit. Only if we are so equipped will we be able to stand in the evil day.

Lord, make my life a bright outshining of Thy life, that all may see Thine own resurrection power mightily put forth in me.

The Suffering Saviour (Oct 1966)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 12 No. 8, Oct 1966.

Meditations On The Twenty-Second Psalm

This Hebrew poem has been called the Psalm of “Broken Sobs,” but it I might well be entitled the Psalm of “Exultant Songs.” It is dedicated to the Chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar which means The Hind of the Morning, a possible melody to which the Psalm could be sung, a melody rightly chosen for the golden rays of morning shine therein, even in the night of Calvary’s gloom.

The deepest sorrows of verses 1 to 21 end in the delightful joys of verses 22 to 31, and the “why” of the Sin-Bearer in verse one is answered by the great “but” of the Holy One in verse 3. Sorrow and song are marvellously linked together as demonstrated by the two exclamations: “O My God, …Thou hearest not” (V. 2), “O Thou that inhabiteth the praises of Israel” (V. 3).

This Psalm of the Suffering Saviour is intensely personal, He cries, “My bones,” “My heart,” “My bowels,” “My strength,” “My tongue,” “My hands,” “My feet,” “My garments,” “My vesture,” “My soul” (Vs. 14-20).

The two great prophetic glimpses of the forsaken, rejected One may be thus joined together.

ISAIAH 53 | PSALM 22

“Despised” (V. 3). | “A worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people” (V. 6).

“Oppressed” (V. 7). | “Many bulls have compassed Me; … They gaped upon Me … as a ravening and a roaring lion” (V. 12-13).

“Travail” (V. 11). | “Poured out like water, … “My heart is like wax; it is melted” (V. 14).

“Uncomely” (V. 2). | “Dried up like a potsherd” (V. 15).

“Grief” (V. 2). | “My tongue cleaveth to My jaws” (V. 15).

“Rejected” (V. 3). | “They pierced My hands and My feet” (V. 16). “They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture” (V. 18).

“Sorrow” (V. 3). | “Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death” (V. 15).

As with the patriarch Abraham in his severe test, the centre of all his blessing was in “This Thing” (Gen. 22:16), the offering up of his only begotten son; so with the great apostle in his testimony, the centre of his appeal was “This Thing” (Acts 26:26), the offering up of the Only Begotten Son of God. In ever-expanding glories, this Psalm is climaxed by the clause, “He hath done this thing” (V. 31). The Forsaken One (V. 1) who was brought into the dust of death (V. 15) becomes the One whose praise is in the midst of the congregation (V. 22), in the great congregation (V. 25). All the ends of the earth (V. 27), all the kindreds of the nations (V. 27), and even a people not yet born (V. 31) shall declare His praises. The praises of God’s Darling One (V. 20) shall go forth unto the ends of the world; the One who called Himself “a worm and no man” shall become the Governor among the nations (V. 28).

Learn of Me (Nov 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 9, Nov 1967.

Robert J. Agnew

“Learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29).

THESE words penetrate deeper than the thunders of Sinai.

The express commands and prohibitions of the law meet a ready response from proud human hearts which are ever ready to say, “All that the Lord hath spoken will we do.” But when the lips of Him who was meek and lowly in heart, of Him who made Himself of no reputation and was despised and rejected of men, are heard to say, “Learn of Me,” a path of patient suffering and service is discovered. For this path none are prepared who have not the mind of Christ and do not love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

To learn of Him, as His ways and His will are revealed in the Word of God, is to learn subjection till “every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” For He has opened to us much of His hidden life, during which He learned obedience on the earth by the things which He suffered, and He glorified the Father by the perfect fulfilment of His will.

The Perfect Example

He was in truth, the only beloved Son of God and by Him were all things created. “He was the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person.” And yet, when He humbled Himself to the form of a

servant and was found in fashion as a man, He yielded Himself in unreserved surrender to a place of dependence and lived by every word which proceeded out of the mouth of God. It is only as we understand this that we can estimate aright His years of childhood, youth and manhood, and the wonderful word He uttered when He said, “I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me.” (John 5:30). It is in the light of such words that we can enter into the meaning of Jehovah’s call, “Behold My servant whom I uphold; Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth” (Isa. 41:1).

None but He could say with truth, “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29). He lived in unbroken fellowship with Him of whom He said, “The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned” (or as the instructed one) (Isa. 50:4). It was in this fellowship He rejoiced continually “I will bless the Lord, who hath given Me counsel! My reins also instruct Me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psa. 16:7-8). Into paths of trial He was led. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” How His obedience was tested, we know from that scene of supreme distress when the moment approached for Him to bear the guilt of man, and so to meet the righteous wrath of God. Let us ponder His words “Abba Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me; nevertheless not what I will but what Thou wilt.” He

went forward into the hands of sinners when delivered up. “I gave My back to the smiters and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not My face from shame and spitting.” And onward still, “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” Therefore says the Apostle, “God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow (Phil. 2:9-10).

The Humble Follower

We must learn the force of the words “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Human examples are easily imitated, but He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit and it is only as united to Him and abiding in Him, that we can walk even as He walked. To say in sincere humility, “I can of my own self do nothing” and to act on the conviction that we are “not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves.” We must be taught of God. Natural ardour of disposition, natural gifts of various kinds, may carry us far in the esteem of men and in the appearance of devoted service. To renounce dependence on all that is of the flesh and to wait on the Lord in the assurance of His power to use the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty are in themselves proofs that we submit to His perfect will. To go on patiently, not seeking the praise of men nor, in any wise our own will or glory, but rather the favour, praise, and glory of our Father only, surely is indeed the fruit of the spirit transforming us into the likeness of Christ. We learn that it is by a life of simple dependence that we can most effectually glorify God. We also know that it is from this objective that our

adversary will as often as he can cast us down. To lead us, our gracious Lord again and again has to humble us, disappointing our vanity and ambition, so that we may indeed learn the lesson that His strength is made perfect in our weakness. In the true knowledge of this, we can echo the words, “Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

It ought not to be hard to learn this lesson for the Lord Jesus, the perfect example, with all His inherent and infinite power chose the place of dependence and submitted Himself perfectly in all His service, from day to day, to His Father’s will. How dreadful is the pride in our hearts that displays our self-sufficiency! May we learn more perfectly the wisdom of fellowship and communion with our blessed Lord and the taking His yoke upon us to find rest for our souls. To live habitually in subjection to Him, to reject our own strength, and to deny ourselves, is not this the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us at all times?