

Articles by Various Authors

Multiple Authors

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Bochim

Confession and humiliation suit, and in a peculiar way, become the children of God in the present day. Neither the glory of God, nor the honour of Christ, nor the presence of the Holy Ghost, have been faithfully cared for by us; and, the church - where is it? And what is its condition upon earth?

But it is not the wide range of Christendom, nor the narrower compass of England, to which I look. Is not confession and humiliation called for from many a one in the narrow circle into which these lines may come?

Humiliation and confession for what? Let each think - let each speak - for God and for Christ: and truthfully (according to his own best and eternal interests in the Spirit) for himself, too, in giving the answer. I will do so here for myself; let others see how far they are wide of my mark.

Christ gave himself for our sins, that He might deliver from this present evil world. The friendship of the world is enmity against God, and the minding of earthly things is enmity to the cross of Christ.

Now, speaking for God and for Christ, what shall I say as to myself - as to my brethren in this respect? Are we - have we been - practically, in heart, and thought, and action, that which we are in Spirit - "not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world?"

I speak not now of worldliness, as the men of the world, or even as men (Christian Men) upon this earth speak; but I speak of worldliness according to the sanctuary.

Peter's self-complacency and self-confidence, and the mighty energy of personal love to his master, which (working with mixed motives, and from an unhumbled heart in him,) led him to use the sword and to cut off the ear of the High Priest's servant, was fleshliness and worldliness when weighed in the sanctuary. There has been this, I judge, to be confessed by many of the best in our day - zeal without knowledge; right as to its object; wrong as to many a thing in oneself as vindicator; and wrong as to many a means and course pursued: and much of this through self-complacency and self-confidence in our own line of things.

My conviction is, that worldliness and earthly-mindedness have blinded the eyes, and hardened the hearts, to an extent very few of us have any idea of; and that, as a consequence, no case touching upon the morality of the church's walk can be fairly judged by the mass of believers. In cases innumerable which have occurred, the affections to Christ Himself have not been lively enough to make persons indignant at open insults put upon Christ, and determined to stand apart from that which, in its association, was minded to sanction dishonour done to Him.

God forbid that we should use worldliness and earthly-mindedness, or the pretence of confessing them, as a cloak to cover up indifference of the heart's affections to Christ, or to gloss over want of zeal, to separate from every association with those that avow and act upon a liberty to be indifferent to His honour.

Yet, while I would clear myself of the conduct which looks like indifference to Christ, and from all association with those who plead and act upon their liberty to think

their own thoughts in this respect, the question will rise, - And what is it, after all, that hinders so many dear to you, and dear to Christ, from seeing that His honour has been assailed? The true answer, I fear, is worldliness and earthly-mindedness - the fruit of our own doings. Now I avow this; for I do believe a more Nazarite walk, on my part, and on that of some others, might have given power to act upon consciences; and some how or the other, to get them separate from a course in which I dare not walk - than walk in which I would rather walk alone the rest of my earthly days. Christ's honour has been assailed; the morality of the church has been assailed - directly by some, and indirectly by others, who do not care so much for their Lord and Master as to be willing to separate from association with those who have openly blasphemed Him.

I own that the low, earthly-minded, worldly state of saints, which cannot meet this is a consequence of the Holy Spirit having been grieved and quenched.

I desire to go down as low as possible, bearing any and all blame; but, come what may, never to sanction that which corrupts the morality of the church - never to be tolerant to that which insults Christ; and never to be identified by association with that which cares neither for the glory of Christ, nor for the morality of His church, nor for its unity.

Plymouth, January 23rd 1857, J.N. Darby

"And they called the name of that place Bochim (weepers) and they sacrificed there unto the Lord."

Judges 2:5

Years have passed away since a solemn "cry from Bochim" was heard. The voice is raised no longer among the "weepers". The favoured and faithful servant rests with his Master.

Another cry is now raised by more than one voice. It is the cry of the Spirit of God. It calls us to Bochim. Sad that we should have to gather there, but it is the only place where the Lord can meet us in the matter which presses heavily on so many hearts. If we miss Bochim we shall miss the Lord, for it is His appointed place of meeting.

Away, my beloved brethren! Come to Bochim.

Declension is everywhere evident in our midst. We have let slip, little by little, much that we have received from God. We have failed sadly in the practical expression of even that which is most certainly believed among us. The unity of the Spirit has been most feebly kept; the bond of peace well-nigh forgotten. Party-spirit has run high, spirituality been very low. We have not been "perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgement." Nay we have scarcely sought to be so joined. We have forgotten the grace and power of that Spirit which abides among us. We have been but little subject to Christ when gathered to His name. Our service has been but little the work of faith. Brotherly love and confidence have languished. The bowels of Christ have been straitened in us, and among us. We have had Him but little before us in our daily walk. Devotion to Him has declined, worldliness grown.

Our sad declension has been the occasion of more than one direct inroad of Satan, and the evil he has wrought there is but little power to meet.

In the present sorrow and shame more than one of the foremost among us, in honest endeavours to remedy some of these evils, have mournfully failed, and jeopardized if they have not falsified, the testimony of God committed to us.

It is not Gilgal, GOD GRANT IT MAY BE BOCHIM! Assuredly it is the Lord that calls us there. He calls not the elders, not the younger - He calls us all. When He touches the conscience doubtless the leaders should be the first to go: "beginning at the eldest even to the last." But it is not some, it is all that the Lord bids, invites, would DRAW to Bochim.

But say some, "it is not the time for humiliation and prayer, but for action." Stay! Is not the first action of the Spirit of God to draw us to our knees to confess as our own failure with which we have to do, and the sorrowful and general declension which has laid us open to it? Till we have been to Bochim we have not vindicated God against ourselves.

Joshua 7: 6-13 has been cited but little discernment of spiritual appreciation of our real condition. Are we indeed at Gilgal or is Bochim our place? Are we a united people from whom God has just rolled away the reproach of Egypt, and led triumphantly against the mighty power of the enemy? Have we been overtaken by a single sin - however great - which nevertheless there is power to meet? Far from it, alas! Moreover was Joshua, with the elders, really on his face to vindicate God against themselves? Read the narrative! Still he was in measure upon his face and it was there the Lord met him. It was there he received direction and power to "act." Would God we had reached even this point!

Have we corporately a judgement from the Lord as to how to "act." Alas no! Individuals have a judgement or rather have different judgements, but no manifestation in a united judgement of the "One Spirit" who assuredly remains among us. Yet the church of God cannot act without this. It would be a section acting - a party, and not the assembly. And if we have not such a judgement is it not evident that WE MUST GET TO BOCHIM, one and all?

We have no longer even the measure of spiritual power that can send out a cry from Bochim. Have we the sense of weakness that bows there for ourselves and bows before Him whose strength is made perfect in weakness?

Let us be on our guard against a false strength which would cry, Act! Act! Have we confessed the carnality which keeps us from being "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement?" Has the sense of our condition made us "weepers" before the Lord? Has it brought us into the dust in His presence? May we, my brethren, be found there honestly, earnestly, unitedly "sighing and crying" (Ezra 9:4), "and confessing my sins and the sin of my people"! (Dan. 9:20). It is there the Lord has ever met His people in days of darkness. It is there the Spirit of Christ is ever found. Our God has blessing for us. The testimony He has raised must last till the Lord comes. But the first drops of His reviving and refreshing shower will mingle with the tears of Bochim.

But must not evil be judged? Undoubtedly, but in the Lord's way, in His grace and by His power. To "act" without humbling ourselves is to provoke the Lord to

jealousy. Pretension to power which we have not will but make us repeat the history of Hormah, and in a still more humiliating way.

There is no place for us, my brethren, but Bochim. We have all grievously failed - we must all be "weepers" before the Lord. "TO US belongeth shame and confusion of face." Had we been faithful - had we walked with the Lord as children weaned from their mother, none of this sorrow would have come upon us, none of this dishonour been done to the Lord.

But "there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared." "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word."

BELOVED BRETHREN, THE LORD HAS APPOINTED TO MEET US AT BOCHIM. MAY WE NONE OF US BE ABSENT AND MISS OUR LORD.

May 1879, Thomas Neatby

Since these two letters were written, the intensity of our weakness is more openly manifest, worldliness is more thoroughly evident. Wealth and ease have removed exercise far from our experience. Indifference to the Lord's deepest glory exposes our Laodicean attitudes. May the Lord help us in our day to respond with godly sorrow and repentance.

The Secret of Success - And. Fyfe

(Adapted from an article that appeared in "Knowing the Scriptures", May-June, 1936)

You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

I was somewhat struck with this remarkable and thought-provoking statement which I read sometime ago: "The practice of the presence of God is one of the lost arts of the Church of God." Surely a sweeping statement, yet nevertheless one which is amply vindicated by the noticeable proneness among the people of God to wander and stray in the alluring yet sinful paths of unrighteousness. One cannot close one's eyes to such a sad catastrophe, to such a true fact.

I know that you will agree with me when I say that the great basic and foundational truth upon which the whole structure of our lives must be built, if they are to be successful in the things of God, is the art of secret communion with God. For after all, if the foundation is faulty, it follows that the whole fabric will be insecure. A firm and reliable foundation is essential for a sound substantial building. So it is then, if what is seen of me, that is, my life before men, is to be a credit to my Master, I must pay very strict attention to that part of my life which is not seen, the seasons I am engaged in communion with the Most High in the secret of His presence. "You shall hide them in the secret place of Your presence." (Psalm 31:20)

Do I know what it is to practice the presence of God. In other words, is the practice of the presence of God a reality in my life, something tangible, something concrete, or on the other hand, is it something abstract, something unfamiliar, an experience I know little or nothing about?

Take for example a little flower growing in arid soil. Because of the parched nature of the ground it is bent and drooping, any life being almost extinct. It is unable to derive sufficient nourishment to ensure its existence. Plenty of stalk perhaps, much to be seen above the ground, but the concentrated rays of the sun focussed upon it, are soon too much for it, and ultimately nothing remains but a sapless, shrivelled weed. Is my life well-balanced? Is it proportionate? Or is it unbalanced? Plenty to be seen, much in view, but what about the nourishment, the foundation, the source? How long do I spend in the place where strength can be renewed, and where spiritual vitality can be obtained to equip me for sanctified service in God's vineyard? That is the true basic fact, the only sure foundation for real Christian living. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." (John 15:4)

There may be plenty of outward activity, undue display in public, but if that expenditure of energy is not derived from hours alone with God, it will be powerless, and will go for nothing. Let us see to it then, that the foundation is laid in the secret place, and the structure will be solid and beautiful. "He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Psalm 91:1)

What a transcending joy it is when we cut the cords that bind us to this world, and climb the hill which leads to God; when we sever entirely our connection with this scene and find ourselves in the Sanctuary; when earth recedes and Heaven becomes nearer and more real. When we are lifted from the depths of despair, or trial and trouble, to the highest pinnacle of joy, to the plains of indescribable bliss, to the very presence of God Himself. Then if my soul yearns after these glorious experiences, how much of my time do I spend in the isolation of His presence? Do I reserve a set time each day which nothing must usurp and thus disallow me of intercourse with my Father? The fact is evidenced today in the lives of many, that too little stress is placed upon a consistent (not spasmodic) waiting upon God. Is it a wonder, in consequence of such negligence, that there are so many spiritual "laggards," those who have made but little headway on the path of spiritual success? May we go in more and more for practicing the presence of God, an act which will undoubtedly produce healthy Christian characters. "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." (Psalm 27:4)

The Trial of Your Faith - J. Tannahill

(Adapted from an article that appeared in "Knowing the Scriptures", Nov. - Dec. 1935)

Peter therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers; bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. (Acts 12:5-6) There is something characteristic about the circumstances in which Peter appears in this incident: "the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers." Luke, who records the fact, has also recounted in his gospel how this same disciple slept on the Mount of Transfiguration. It seems strange that Peter should sleep when a subject of such surpassing interest was being discussed, when Moses and Elijah met with the Savior and spoke with Him about the great event which would terminate their own dispensation, when "they spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." (Luke 9:31) And yet how very up-to-date the situation is, for we who live in an atmosphere that is literally charged with the imminence of the great event which will make the end of our age, are no more alert and no more watchful than Peter and his companions were. And then Mark writes of an occasion also where Peter slept. It was the Garden of Gethsemane. The gathering sorrows which the Savior had to bear alone had driven Him to seek from a few of His own, a little fellowship in His rejection. "And He cometh and findeth them sleeping." (Mark 14:37) Again history is seen repeating itself. For our Lord's rejection

is not over yet. The stigma that attaches itself to His Name may still be felt. The opposition of a hostile world must still be braved, or there is the alternative of lapsing into an unfaithful and compromising inertia. But while these two failures on Peter's part may be censured by those who will, the incident recorded in the Scripture quoted above shows an altogether different side of Peter's character. This time there is attached to his slumber an unquestioning trust, an implicit faith in God, an unwavering confidence in prayer which commands our admiration. "Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for Him." There is the secret of the prisoner's peace of mind. Think of the eloquence of the word "but." Ranged on one side of it is all the power of a selfish and antagonistic monarch and on the other side only a handful of humble believers. They had prayer, and behind their prayer they had God and that was all they needed. Some of Peter's best learned lessons were taught him while he lay in prison. Without this experience, he could never have written in his first epistle, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened unto you." (1 Pet. 4:12) What force is added to his words by his own experience of the fiery trial. Or who knows but that one of God's purposes in allowing Peter's faith to be tried was that he might be qualified to write: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than gold...might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:7) Probably the truth which impressed Peter most was the same truth that Martha and Mary learned - that God is never in a hurry. It seems clear that Peter had endured the privations of imprisonment

for a considerable time. We may also be sure that his brethren had been constant in their supplication on his behalf. And yet God almost allowed the very morning of Herod's intended crime to dawn before He effected His servant's deliverance. But deliverance did come, and surely with it there came to Peter's soul the understanding that "God's time is best" for the testing of his faith resulted in its strengthening. This trustful calm has almost become a lost art. We know more of the bustle of a restless spirit than the sleep of an unquestioning trust. Let us remind ourselves that God is still on the Throne—that He still has an interest in our supplications, and that He is still able to make our extremity His opportunity.