

FAITH REWARDED – "THY SON LIVETH."

– FEB. 5 – JOHN 4:43-54. –

"Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house." – John 4:53.

TWO days were spent preaching to the woman of Samaria and completing the journey into Galilee, etc., ere the nobleman's son was healed. Galilee was a part of the territory which formerly belonged to the ten-tribe Kingdom of Israel, and the district called Samaria lay between Galilee and Judea. It will be noticed that, while our Lord journeyed hither and thither, he never went outside the territory occupied by the twelve tribes. It will be remembered that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, not far from Jerusalem, and that his parents, shortly after his birth, fled into Egypt, under the Lord's direction, before the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem: and on the return from Egypt, instead of returning to Bethlehem, they located at Nazareth in Galilee, – "that he might be called a Nazarene," and that thus odium for eccentricity might attach to the Lord, as an offset to his wonderful personality and the "gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth" – "such as never man spake" before or since; – to the intent that only the Israelites indeed might hear in the true sense of the word, and be healed and accepted as sons of God under the New Covenant of grace.

It will be remembered that our Lord's disciples were known as "Galileans," and himself as the "Galilean." And recognizing the truth expressed in the proverb, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country," our Lord did not begin his ministry in Galilee, but in Judea. It seems probable that after his first miracle at Cana he, with his disciples, went to Judea, and was present there at the time of the Feast of the Passover, and at that time performed many notable miracles, on account of which his fame went abroad, not only throughout Judea, but also into his own country, Galilee: for it was the

custom for large numbers of the devout Jews to go to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover every year, and these from Galilee had brought back word of the works and fame of their countryman. Hence our Lord was now returning to his own country, a great prophet, because of the fame first gained elsewhere.

Our Lord's experience was no exception to the general rule: it is a trait of human nature to lightly esteem things with which we are intimately acquainted. "Distance lends enchantment to the view." When one sees [R2424 : page 28] a mountain at a distance, its outlines stand out with boldness and symmetry, but when he comes close to it the beauty and grandeur are apt to be marred, in his estimation, because his eye rests upon the smaller fragments and the silt and soil and tangle of common weeds. Nevertheless, the view and thought from a greater distance are the truer ones, the proper ones. So, too, some of earth's characters who are highly esteemed to-day were much less esteemed by those who came most closely in contact with them in their day: not that the present view is the false one, but because those who were closest to them, and who were affected by the commonalities of daily life, failed to rightly appreciate them. This is often true in the households and family connections of the world's notables. The little things of life are seen, and the character is measured by these, rather than by its larger features, which alone are seen in the distance. For instance, Julius Caesar, who by all the world is acknowledged to have been a great man, was lightly esteemed by Cassius, his intimate friend and servant, who once saved his life from drowning, and who was with him when sick, and who measured him by the weaknesses of these occasions and others, rather than by the largeness and greatness exhibited at other times. He, for instance, called attention to the fact that "when Caesar was sick he cried, 'Give me some drink, Titanius,' *like a sick girl.*" His closeness hindered him from seeing the greatness which others, less close, could readily discern; and thus he says, –

"It doth amaze me,

A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world,
And bear the palm alone."

So it was with Jesus: "Neither did his brethren believe on him" (which expression in olden times signified kinsfolk, including cousins as well as brothers). They knew Mary, his mother, they knew his brethren, they knew Joseph, the husband of Mary, and apparently they knew also that Jesus was not the son of Joseph, but was conceived before Joseph had taken Mary as his wife (Matt. 1:18); for this was the evident purport of **[R2425 : page 28]** their sneer at him, when contending with him they said, "*We* be not born of fornication." (John 8:41.) They knew him as the young man who probably had worked as a carpenter in their midst for years. They knew that his home city, Nazareth, had never been reputed for its wealth or its learning – its sons were not the bright ones of the Jewish firmament. It was correspondingly difficult for them to realize that this one whom they knew so well could be the great one of whom Moses and the prophets did write.

Hence we find that in his own city, altho they said, "Whence hath this man this wisdom, and this miraculous power?" they also said, "Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary, and do not his brothers James, and Joses, Simon and Judas, and all his sisters, live with us?...And they stumbled at him. ...And he did not perform many miracles there because of their unbelief." – Matt. 13:54-58.

But, returning to our lesson: The news that the great Galilean Prophet and healer of the sick had returned to his home, soon reached Capernaum, which was only about twenty miles distant from Cana; and a person of social and political rank in that city was amongst the first to manifest his faith, and to receive a corresponding blessing; for we are told that the healing of his son was the "second miracle" performed by our Lord after his return from Judea.

It was doubtless by way of testing his faith that our Lord seemed at first to object to his petition, saying, in effect, You do not have faith in me as the Messiah; it is my signs and wonders that you are interested in. The troubled and affectionate father showed by his answer that his interest was not merely one of curiosity and desire to see a miracle performed: his was a true faith in Christ's power, which, he did not question, was able to save his son from death – "Sir, come down ere my son die." His true faith had its reward, and yet he was required to exercise it still further, and to believe that his request was answered, notwithstanding he could have no proof of this for several hours. His faith again stood the test, and he went his way, ascertaining later that the child had begun to mend at the very time our Lord had granted the request. And his faith brought him a still greater blessing than the physical recovery of his son's health, for it made him and his family "believers" in the Messiah, and thus brought them within reach of the great privilege of sonship and joint-heirship mentioned in John 1:12.

Our Lord's object in this and other healing miracles was evidently not merely the recovery of the sick from pain and disease. Had this been his object, he might have commanded the healing of all the sick in one breath: and more than this, he might have remedied the evil conditions which tended to promote sickness. For instance, the nobleman's son had a fever, and quite probably there were many others in Capernaum similarly afflicted, as the city was built near low, marshy ground, and is noted in history as a malarial locality, unhealthful. The Lord did not do this work of general healing, but this is no evidence of a lack of sympathy, nor of a lack of appreciation of what would be necessary to make that and other portions of the earth healthful, any more than it could be considered a lack of interest in mankind on God's part which had permitted malarial and other evil conditions and resulting sickness and disease throughout the whole world for thousands of years. On the contrary, God foreknew the sickness, and designed to permit the evil conditions, as accompaniments **[R2425 : page 29]** of the sentence against man as a sinner – as accessories and concomitants to his death sentence.

The time will come when he who redeemed mankind, and who redeemed also from the curse the earth, "the purchased possession" (Eph. 1:14), will cleanse it from all evil, baneful influences – and there shall be no more death, nor pain, nor sickness, nor crying, for the former things shall have passed away, and all things will be made new. And the period of the renewing of the earth and of mankind, for whose use and blessing it was intended, is Scripturally termed, "the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets since the world began." And this restitution the Apostle Peter, speaking under the inspiration of the holy spirit on the day of Pentecost, tells us will begin at the second coming of our Lord Jesus. – Acts 3:19-23.

At his first advent our Lord's mission was specifically to give himself as the world's ransom price, and secondarily to furnish evidences which to a certain class would be a ground for faith in him, in his teachings, and in his future work – to the intent that such "believers" of the present age might come to the Father, receive the adoption of sons, and the promises; and through faith and obedience unto self-sacrifice might become joint-heirs with Messiah in his great future work of restitution – in the work of blessing all families of the earth.

Bringing the matter down to an individual one, we find that the nobleman received the blessing through faith, and that his faith was attested by his conduct. And so must it be with all who would be acceptable to God, and who would win the great prize set before us in the Gospel. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your *faith*:" but "Faith without works is dead." Faith cannot live without manifesting itself. All of our services to the Lord are valuable chiefly as proofs of our faith in his promises. – 1 John 5:4; Jas. 2:26; Heb. 11:6.

A story is told of how a private soldier in Napoleon's army exercised faith in his word, and as a result of acting thereon received

promotion to a captaincy. Napoleon was reviewing his army in the city of Paris, when the bridle dropped from his hand and the horse started on a gallop. A soldier leaped from the ranks, caught the horse and returned the bridle to Napoleon. The Emperor thanked him, saying, "Much obliged, *captain.*" The soldier immediately responded, "Of what regiment, sir?" And the Emperor, pleased with his quickness and confidence, answered, "Of the Guards." The soldier immediately took his place amongst the officers, altho his clothes were those of a private and notwithstanding the fact that they ridiculed his faith. He believed the Emperor's words, and acted on that belief, and was a captain. So our Lord has given unto us "exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might become partakers of the divine nature;" and those who will attain the exceeding great and precious things which God has in reservation for them who love him will be the ones who take him at his word, become "children of the light," and "walk in the light." Such, ultimately, shall be members of the great Sun of Righteousness, which shall arise with healing in its beams, to refresh and bless the world by scattering the darkness of sin, superstition, evil. – Matt. 13:43.

But let us guard ourselves against the error of some who have great *faith in themselves*, and consider this a proof that they are of the "elect." Only the soldier who *served* as well as *believed* Napoleon was rewarded. Each should therefore ask himself – Are the exceeding great and precious promises to *me*? Are there conditions attached to those promises? and if so, am I living up to the conditions so as to make sure of my calling and election?

To answer his question so as to have "full assurance of faith," he should search the promises – their significance and conditions, and then act accordingly, if he would win the prize: remembering our Lord's word's, "Not every one that saith, Lord! Lord! shall enter the Kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father in heaven."

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ENCOURAGEMENT TO FAITHFULNESS AND PROGRESS.

"Rouse up, O heart, brooding o'er earth's broken friendships,
Mistakes and griefs. Retrospection truly brings
Relief at times; but to scan too oft life's pages
Brings weariness, sapping strength thou need'st for progress.
The past forget! As a mighty vessel swings
To right her course, while the skies, serene and fogless,
And calming seas, tell no tale of tempests' rages,
So thou, O heart, whilst her pennant Mercy flings,
Retrieve the past; and returning calm and sun
Shall not condemn – only speed thine onward journey,
Forgiving and forgiv'n.

"Fret not, O heart! – not because of evil-doers.
They soon shall cease. When their cup of crime is full
To overflow, then the great and just Avenger,
With girded loins, sword unsheathed and wrath enkindled,
Will tread the press, and his blood-stained hand annul
Their ill kept lease, and shall vanquish all the tinsel
Recruits of sin. But, O heart, heed thy great danger.
Besetting sins, and fair vanities which lull
To fancied safety the listless, thou must fear,
Lest that dread sword thee mark also for its victim,
A reprobate despised.

"Awake, O heart! Hurriedly from drowsy slumbers
Arise, arise! Night is sleeping time, not day.
Press nobly on, heeding not the faithless numbers!
The mid-day glare tempts to quietness and shadow;
Suave lethargy, friendly false, persuades the way
Is soon retraced from the cooling brook and meadow;
But he who turns from the strife and glare, and cumpers
Himself with pleasure's delights, will ne'er essay
The path again; and yet thou, O pilgrim weary,

Foregoing rest, shalt be strengthened with all might:
Thy faith, sore tried, shall develop eagles' sight,
And penetrate, past environment, to glory
Unspeakable, where in Heaven's effulgent light,
Thy glorious Leader dwells."
– *Unknown*.
