

The King's Highway

An Advocate of Scriptural Holiness

And an Highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The Way of Holiness.—Isa. 35-

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LOOKING ABOVE THE DEPRESSION

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Dr. J. Stuart Holden, in his new book of Sermons, "A Voice For God", just published by Hodder and Stoughton, calls the above verses from Habakkuk "Irrational Rejoicing".

It almost seems as if the prophet must be out of his mind to rejoice in view of the calamity and distress that has fallen upon the country and people. Surely with Dr. Holden we must feel that to rejoice under such circumstances is irrational in the extreme. We stand amazed at this prophet, who could sing amidst such sorrow, or triumph in the face of such tragedy. It is not merely saying that "I have learned in whatsoever state I am to be content," but rather one step in advance of that, "sorrowful yet always rejoicing".

We cannot believe that Habakkuk was boasting of some exalted position of faith that he had reached. He is conscious of conditions and feels them heavily, yet he would point, not to these, but to the abiding faithfulness of God in the midst of them. Things may be as bad as it is possible for them to be, but the prophet renews his vows and calls upon the people to rejoice and joy in the God of their Salvation.

It is evident that sometimes God permits even His best people to suffer privation and be placed in circumstances of utter destruction. Surely things could not have been much worse than the prophet here describes. There was no blossom on the fig trees, and consequently no figs; the vines were fruitless, and therefore the common drink had run short; the olive trees had failed, and as a result a fearful scarcity of fats and oils; the fields had yielded no grain, and there were no harvests to gather; not only had there been no increase among the sheep and cattle, but disease and treachery had reduced them to the lowest common denominator; the folds and stalls were empty. There was a complete failure of everything. Every prop and stay was removed, and the entire livelihood gone.

Without doubt the prophet suffered along with the rest of the nation. He was not standing on the sidelines watching the slaughter while he himself had sufficient for all his needs. No, he had cried out to God—"how long, O Lord, shall I cry and thou wilt not hear? I even cry out unto thee of violence and thou wilt not save."

As Dr. Holden reminds us, the prophet expostulated with God. He was puzzled and more than puzzled at what appeared to be Divine capriciousness. He resented the apparent unreasonableness of the misfortune that had overtaken him and laid all things waste. And for God to permit the Chaldeans, people of moral excess, to be the instrument of punishment looked like a flat contradiction; yet he still feared God. THE PROPHET PRAYED. Whatever else goes, prayer is always left to

us. It never helps us or changes the condition to run from God or rebel against God. It is far better to run to God and rely upon God. Whatever the calamity, the child of God can always call upon Him and the promise is, "I will answer you." Salary may go, bread and butter may go, home may be taken from us; we may be reduced to destitution, but no one can take the privilege of prayer from us. Hiding from God is the habit of sinners; seeking God is the custom of saints. God men of all times have found God a refuge in the time of storm and the promise will be good to the end. (Ps. 9:9; 48:3; 91:2. Jer. 16:19.)

What a prayer the prophet prayed. He literally laid hold of God. There are only three short sentences, brief, broken ejaculations—"O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy." The conventional and liturgical are gone, but there is strong emotion, spiritual fervour, strength of conviction. The prophet is decisive, definite, deeply in earnest, and consequently got somewhere. Prayer means something to God when it means something to the man who offers it. "Ye shall find me when ye shall seek me with all your hearts." "Prayer gains the heights when it comes from the depths." As one writer reminds us, this is the straightest line from a human heart to God, the shortest distance between two moral points.

"Revive Thy Work." It was the work of purification that the prophet was anxious should be speeded up in order that deliverance might follow. The Chaldean oppressor could not be conquered until the nation was cleansed. The deliverance of any people depends upon the departure of defilement. When grace does its work, then speedily all things begin to work together for good. Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience and experience hope. Afflictions yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness as well as worketh an exceeding eternal weight of glory. Surely many of God's people will come through the trying experiences of these years thoroughly cleansed and more ready to depend upon God and yield to Him. He is perfecting His own and preparing them for that final work at the eve of His coming.

The prosperity which not long since we all enjoyed, cherished pride in the Church as well as in the world, and she boasted in her words and actions, of her own ability to govern the thought and deeds of the world. It was not long ere conformity to the world became the fashion of the Church, and soon followed carelessness in consecration and apathy in service, resulting in complete indifference to spiritual realities. This is not too far back for any of us to remember. The present conditions are a result of this degeneracy and for-

getfulness of God. Truly concerned will do no rebelling against the conditions, but rather voice with im- sioned earnestness the prophet's prayer, "O Lord, revive thy work." Suffering must do perfect work ere deliverance can dawn.

"In wrath remember mercy." Any true prophet knows, whatever age he lives in, that sinfulness is always overtaken by judgment. This cannot be reversed. Wrath succeeds transgression. However, thank God, the power is given to us to pray these words, "in wrath remember mercy." The darkness and depression of the day may have a sanctifying mission if God's people will see their folly and turn to their God. No mere pretense will do in our profession of sorrow. It must be whole-hearted and based on the unchangeable provision of His Word. The wrath might well make the prophet or any of us tremble; the mercy in the midst of the wrath is cause for much rejoicing.

The Prophet Praises

Habakkuk views from his watch-tower the sin of his people and the consequent calamity caused by the Chaldeans; but he sees also the purpose and power of God and believes that the fires are for cleansing, the dross will be consumed. Judgment is the temporary minister of everlasting mercy.

Calamity, chaos, consternation, collapse everywhere, "yet I will rejoice". Nothing will disturb him for he is dead sure that the Divine purposes cannot perish. There is adversity instead of prosperity; sickness in place of health; famine instead of plenty; the fields
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AN APPEAL TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS

Whereas we are so greatly in need of money to carry on the publication of our paper, The King's Highway, and in view of the fact that this money is long overdue because so many of our subscribers are in arrears on their paper, therefore beloved please look at the label on your paper at once and you will see there the month and year that you paid last. I appreciate the fact that money is not easy to get, but remember The Highway cannot be published without money also. And I fear that with many it is a matter of oversight or neglect that you have not renewed before you intended to, but, I know how we neglect and forget. And you see beloved where there are so many behind, it makes it very hard for us to find money to carry on. If each one today will send your renewal, it will help us greatly and we shall be able to go on. If you cannot possibly pay up all you owe, please send us what you can and we will thank God and you and take courage.

Signed, Yours and His for the cause of Holiness. EDITOR

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