

1 Samuel - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

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The Old Testament does not give us the history of the man, but the faithfulness of the servant, so far as it was typical of Christ who was to come. Thus the faithful servant represented in his faithfulness the Christ who was to come—the faithful servant now represents Christ who has come. There are two things in the Bible, man's ruin and God's remedy for that ruin. A good physician must know both in order to meet your case properly: he must know what is the matter with you, and what will cure you. And this is what baffles the infidel, for here I find what is the matter with me, viz., that I am a lost and ruined sinner, and I also find God's remedy for my real state. Another book will tell you of your neighbors, a clever satire or lampoon on the human race; but here you find yourself—God speaking to your conscience; for the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4). This book tells me I am lost and brings salvation to me, and the knowledge of forgiveness and peace with God, and the hope of glory; and all through Jesus Christ, and that is what suits me. God tells me my sinful state and what meets it.

In 1 Sam. 17 we find the people were in a state of fear because of the giant, and that is the state of man. As it is written, Heb. 2:14, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." But perhaps you say, "I was never afraid of death." Well, I pity you, for if you have never been afraid of it you have never got relief yet from the fear of it. There are but two states proper to man, the fear of God because of sin, and release from that fear through the work of Christ: for "perfect love casteth out fear." Death is the wages of sin, and is a terrible thing. There is not one but would quail before it. It might rob you in a moment of the dearest thing you have on earth, and if it overtakes you in your sin it would launch you into eternal judgment. It is the only power on earth that has not a head. Death is an anomaly in God's creation; it is the judgment of God, and the power of Satan. It is justly styled the "king of terrors." And this is the state people are in—the fear of death.

Now David was sent by his father to inquire how his brethren fared (chap. 16:17), and just so Christ was sent of God; and this is the fundamental truth of the gospel—the truth that rests your heart—that salvation springs from the heart of God and not from your own. "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

David came and found the terror of the people. His elder brothers rebuked him; and so it was with Christ (John 1:11; 2:18), but He passed on without minding the rebuke, for He had something else before His mind. And that is the sign of being a true servant of God, to go on with His work and never mind what man says to you. "The poor heareth not rebuke" (Prov. 13:8), and if you are really poor in your own eye you will not mind; so Christ passed on to death to glorify God and work deliverance for His people. But besides this there is another thing, viz., the work that goes on in the soul of the believer before he is brought into the knowledge and enjoyment of this deliverance wrought for him by Christ. And there are different stages of this work in the soul. Everyone has to go through this same experience, though it may be in different ways: the experiences of all are alike in kind though different in degree.

First, there is what you might call the anxious state. Jonathan sees David going to encounter the Philistine. Now, this is a real state, and the soul must go through it for itself—they passed through the Red Sea for themselves, i.e., Christ's death for me (not through the Jordan, i.e., my own death, when they got to that the waters of Jordan were dried up), but you do get the sense that by Christ's death you are clear of judgment. In Ex. 12 The blood being outside to meet the eye of God; they were themselves inside eating the roasted lamb, i.e., they were to have the sense of God's own Son bearing the judgment of God. They were not to eat of it sodden, i.e., they were not to speak lightly, nor in terms of natural intimacy of Christ, without knowing the greatness of the person and work that has met for as the judgment of God. This is one of the great sins of the day.

Now, safety from judgment is got in the place of judgment, but the great thing is to get out of it; and this brings me to the—

Second state, the hopeful state. Jonathan sees Goliath down, and he is hopeful, but not happy yet. He is not sure if it is a complete success. Goliath may rise again. How many there are who, if you ask them Are you saved I will answer, "I hope so." They are in this state hopeful, but not happy.

Third. Then there is the assured state, for the giant's head is off, "he is destroyed" (Heb. 2:13). The debt is paid, and the receipt made out in my name; and the resurrection is this, the living David holds in his hand the head of the dead giant. Now, resurrection was not for Christ but for me. He was raised for our justification, and as a risen man He appears in the midst of His disciples (John 20) and says, "Peace be unto you." Now, peace is not merely a victory, nor a great one, but it is as much as to say I have silenced the enemy—there is no longer a disturbing element, and He comes to conduct us into the very scene and place in which He is Himself. And this you never can lose. The sense of it may be darkened for a time through carelessness, but the moment you come back to Christ you will find it still the same. Christ has risen out of the scene of death, like the frigate bird that rises above the clouds in a storm into the region of calm, and He conducts me above my ruin and darkness into the region of His own peace.

But not only is the resurrection the receipt on my side, it is on God's side the proof of righteousness. God has been glorified, and not merely satisfied about my sin, and in proof thereof He has glorified the One who put away my sin. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him, and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him (John 13:31). This is divine satisfaction in a wonderful way, and not merely that I have got the receipt. Therefore, the gospel is a ministration of righteousness, and you never can have a cloud on your heart before God, because you have an eternal witness before Him shining in everlasting brilliancy, inviting your heart to behold in the glory of God the proof that God has been glorified by the Man who has undertaken your case from Him. As I was bound up in the flesh with the first man Adam, so I am now by the Spirit with Christ in the

glory of God: and therefore we have the—

Fourth state, viz., occupation with Christ now, who has wrought the deliverance, and not with the deliverance itself—the Deliverer and not the deliverance. If you are not, it is because you have not got complete deliverance. You may be genuine, but you have not yet deliverance, and your own genuineness will never give it to you, but only Christ; and He gives it that you may be occupied with Him, for when He clears the ground He then occupies it. And so Jonathan has now nothing but David. His soul is knit to the soul of David. Is that your case? And he confesses him fully. Now, confession is with the mouth—with the heart man believeth unto righteousness. And confession is two-fold, public and private; and it must be continuous. It is not to save the soul, it is to keep it safe. And if Jonathan had only continued his confession he would not have fallen afterward fighting the Philistine; the very people from whom David delivered him. And Jonathan and David made a covenant together—for he loved him as his own soul—and he stripped even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle; they were the insignia of his royal hopes as son of King Saul and heir apparent to the kingdom; but he gives all to David. And so the soul that knows Jesus as the Great Deliverer strips itself of everything to honor Christ. But his confession, so beautifully made in this chapter, was not continued, and he chose to remain in public association with his father's house, than identify himself with the fortunes of David when he was a wanderer and an exile. "If any man will come after me," says Jesus, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me;" and whosoever will not take up his cross cannot be my disciple. You must continue your confession, and add to your faith virtue, &c. (2 Peter 1), and be diligent to make your calling and election sure—not, of course, before God, who knows everything, but to your own heart and before others.

The Lord's Twofold Comfort to His Disciples. John 14

The thought on my heart connected with the chapter we heard read was the two means of comfort, so to speak, which the blessed Lord left with His disciples when He was about to leave them. He cannot always remain with them; such was not in accordance with the work He had undertaken. He must leave them; but He says, "I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." Now this thought of a coming Lord was less familiar to the disciples than to us. They, as Jews, looked for the establishment of Messiah's kingdom on the earth. We, as Christians—I speak in contrast to Jews—are taught to expect to see the Lord in heaven, and some of us, by grace, look for Him from heaven. But here He would instruct them to know Him by faith, not by sight. The first thing, then, which He presents to them to comfort them is Himself. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself," and the second, as we shall see, is the Holy Ghost. When we know Christ we can go no further. No truth beyond Himself, "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily" (Col. 3:9). He is now about to go back to the Father, therefore He says, "And whither I go ye know." His whole work down here, whilst among them, was to reveal the Father. He had finished this work, He had revealed Him; "their eyes were holden that they should not know him," as we know, but that is another thing, He had done His part, and could say, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," for they had come to Him and He was the way. In coming to Christ we know all things, through a glass darkly, no doubt, but nothing more can be known; we get at the source of all blessing—the Father and the Son, the fullness of blessing. Here we are brought in spirit into the knowledge of all, and the disciples had the same knowledge, though as we know they could not see.

The second comfort He gives them, to keep them during His absence, is the Comforter, and He tells them two distinct privileges which they shall have consequent upon His coming, which they could not have had before: He shall "abide with you forever," and "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." Now Christ, as they knew Him, could not abide with them; it was expedient for them that He should leave them, but the Spirit was to abide with them, and to dwell in them, whereby they were to learn and know that not only was He in the Father, and the Father in Him, but that they were in Christ, and Christ in them. The highest truth we can get we may learn it more fully, but never can get a higher truth. "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." This is a present truth, He is come by His spirit, He is in us, comforting us by His presence.

The Lord having put us into this place we are responsible. He says: "If a man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him." Loving Him is not our place, but the effect of being in our place; and thence follows constant present blessing. All through John, you may have remarked, he puts our loving Him first; we know our love did not precede his, but this is the order of John's gospel, because addressed to those who were His; not to the world but to His own. If we walk in His commandments we shall have present and constant sense of His presence—"we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The realization and enjoyment of it. How the Lord counts upon our affections! First, look at that little word, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice, because I said I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I." As though He said, real love is ever forgetful of self, and if ye loved Me, instead of sorrowing thus at your own lonely prospects, ye would rejoice because I go unto the Father. He expects our affections. How entirely was He man, more than man of course, but He was man, expecting the affections, seeking them; the affections of His people. Blessed be His name, He humbled Himself that He might win them, and brought us out of our condition into His own, and now His peace is ours. His peace, how perfect!

Letters of Interest.

1. Have you ever thought of a Sunday school in—? It must be the faith of those who are engaged in it. I can suggest, but cannot myself be present and of course each one must exercise the talent given in dependence on the Lord.

I was thankful the saints got help through the lecture, at all events, on Rev. 1:3. They are the nearest thing to Christ. Then the world.... The gathering at S— I found much reduced.... but some dear souls amongst them. It is a fashionable watering place of England, so you may imagine the poor saints are almost crushed. Some through occupation with the Lord had risen above the stream of worldliness; others, alas! had more or less let the eye turn downward, and had suffered. I was very happy in laboring amongst them, and through your prayers was, I believe, owned of God to some amongst them.

What I find among saints is the absence of private reading of the Word, and I suspect private prayer. Oh that they would remember the words of the apostle (Acts 20), "And now I commend you to God and the word of his grace," and again, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." "Praying always."

2. I was grieved on getting certain tidings of mind, and had a desire to step over at once to be with you in the trouble which that must have occasioned you. But the sea, commonly offensive to me, and the weather, and the time of the year, and other things, were stronger with me, whether rightly or wrongly I will not say, the Lord knows.

But still I was in my little measure troubled with your trouble; indeed it was ours as well as yours.

—’s mind, I found, was not a steady settled one, she was but partially on the ground of “brethren.” When the Evangelical Alliance held their meetings here she attended them with earnestness and pleasure. But she never communicated to any of us her thoughts about the person of the Lord, and I cannot but blame her for it, because she must have known that this would have grieved us. Indeed as another said she ought to have had more respect to the conscience, which she knew was in —meeting, in this matter. I had occasion to consider the passage (Rom. 8:3) in writing to another some time since. But even long before that, for years and years I have been fully assured that such scripture does not contemplate the incarnation but the mission of the Son. All that has been concluded from it, as the doctrine of the Person of the Lord, is founded on a great misapprehension of the mind of the Spirit in the passage itself. “God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” This is not a writing on the Person of the Christ, but on the mission or work of the Son. It teaches us that the Son offered up for sin on the accursed tree, or on the cross, represented and atoned for sin in the flesh, so that not only are actual transgressions cleansed away by the sacrifice at Calvary, but sin in the flesh condemned as well, as an incurably evil thing, has been answered for by that same sacrifice. I speak of the elect.

But—’s thoughts, if I understand them, go to the length of the Irvingites, I suppose, not merely what we have been made so painfully to listen to as the voice of Bethesda, in B—, but even the more startling language that has gone forth from P—, would not at all out—measure the language of her thoughts.

Well, dear—, I can only say I can have no fellowship with it. I love—, her spirit is tender and gracious, but thoughts that are untrue to the glory of the Person of the Son of God must be rebuked by those who have the stewardship of that glory committed to them. Let us pray that she may review her thoughts and exercise revenge on them. It was a “holy thing,” that was born of the virgin; it was Immanuel, it was God in flesh, that journeyed from Bethlehem to Calvary—two natures in one person. The Lord be with you.

3. Just a line; we knew you would be sorrowing, but it is God who would have us sorrow.

There is always a spring of rest, and even of joy, deeper than the sorrow when God is in it. He would not have us without affections. He gave us them. But only as Christ is before us are they pure and true.

Dearest— is just dying, or seemingly so. She has had much suffering for twenty hours now; is quite twisted, and often convulsed. As sweet as ever, and soon will be more so. God is with us; my wife is wonderfully upheld; her “will is taken out of her affections without destroying them,” as beloved J. N. D. says in a letter just received from him from— on hearing of our dear—’s illness.

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