2 Chronicles - Commentaries by John Gifford Bellett

Miscellaneous Papers, Grace and Glory

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It is commonly apprehended among us, and very justly, that grace is the thing exhibited in David, and glory in Solomon. Grace had a very full exhibition in David. It raised its objects from degradation to honor, it comforted and sustained him in sorrow, restored him from wandering, and kept him to the end in safety. But when the time came for glory to shine forth, grace having thus displayed itself to the full, David delivers the throne into the hand of Solomon.

Each of these, grace and glory, has its own peculiar method. It is this which just at the present has drawn and fixed my thoughts a little. Grace only divides the scene with other principles, glory forms it all alone. Grace meets David in either his degradation, sorrow, or defilement, and brings honor, comfort, or restoration, leaving the struggle between the former and the latter things in measure to the end, and the whole a divided empire. But glory holds the entire scene at its disposal, and leaves the trace or reflection of itself on everything. It is not God bringing out His resources to mingle themselves with man's circumstances; but it is the supreme presence of the Lord forming the whole sphere of the action according to itself. This appears in this chapter. There is no darkness at all upon the scene abroad, nor working of nature in the heart within—no trace of man, or of his passions, or his miseries; the finger of God and the Spirit of God delineate and animate the whole picture.

The queen of Sheba is the witness of this. Her consciousness of what she saw tells us of glory being everywhere in the regions of the king of Israel—the stirrings of her own heart tell us of the absence of all the ways and principles of nature. There was nothing minute under her eye that did not to that eye reflect the glory. As the stars of the heaven differ in their glories, but each of them is glorious; and lends something to the common magnificence, so here. There is the house of the king, and his ascent up to the house of God; but there is also the meat of his table, and the apparel of his servants; and the latter are glorious like the former—in other measures, it may be, but still equally parts and parcels of the glory. The glory was leaving its reflection on all she saw. It might be small in the great account, but still it was glorious. And because it was small, it was only the worthier of the notice of the Spirit-led soul, that delights to put honor on the uncomely member, and enable her the more fully to testify to us that glory was everywhere, even, so to speak, on the kitchen furniture —"the sitting of the servants." Just as another voice of the same Spirit, anticipating the sanctity or cleanness of these same days, tells us of "Holiness unto the Lord" being now upon "the bells of the horses," and "of every pot in the Lord's house being like the bowls before the altar." For the glory had taken the whole scene into its hand, and there was nothing hid from the reach of its beams. It was a morning without clouds—there was no shadow anywhere. All was in the light. The very equipage of the attendants and their sittings reflected it. All was delivered into the liberty of the glory, and fashioned by the power of it.

But the kingdom within was as excellent in its way. If the day dawned around, the daystar had risen in the heart. There was no blemish of nature or of the flesh in her spirit, as there was no dimness or uncertainty in the scene around her. She was small in comparison with the king in Zion, but there was full delight and no grudging because of this. She trafficked for wisdom, and esteemed the merchandise of it above gold or rubies. The best of her land she offered to King Solomon, doing all she could to beautify the house of God's glory. Nothing that she had, could she esteem too good for him. O the blessedness of all this within and abroad! Glory abroad, leaving its memorial everywhere, the beauty of the Spirit's mind within, ordering the whole conversation of the soul, without touch or soil of nature! "Scenes surpassing fable, and yet true!" Scenes to be realized to the enjoyment of our hearts and eyes, and to the glory of our Lord, in the days of the kingdom!

Well is it that grace now divides the scene with nature's misery and defilement; and still well is that glory then will know nothing but its own, creation, for light and its principles will be triumphant. The light which God has as yet brought in shines, it is most true, but shines in a dark place; the light that He will bring in by and bye, will be light everywhere, the day-dawn around, and the daystar within (2 Peter 1:19). It is now the valley of Baca with wells of water, by and bye it will be the dwelling of praise still, unbroken, undivided praise (Psa. 84).

"The Lord will give grace and glory."

Short Meditations, 2 Chronicles 6:1, 2

IT was no common moment in the experience of a man of God, when Solomon uttered these words, " The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness; but I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling forever."

A wondrous thought it was, that anything done or erected on the face of this defiled earth, in the midst of this revolted world, should solicit the God of glory forth from that distance into which sin had forced Him, as I may express it. For sin had estranged Him from this scene of His creation. Immeasurable distance, impenetrable darkness, lay between Him and the world that had rebelled; and wondrous, surely, was the thought, the consciousness of this, that He had been brought back to have His tabernacle with man again.

But so it is; and so the spirit of Solomon was given to taste it and know it on this great occasion.

It was a passing, a momentary anticipation of the kingdom. Solomon was then in the combined glories of king and priest. He was as a priest upon the throne. The ordinary priests had been set aside, and he, as the royal priest, was about to bless the people, and worship the Lord, as in the days of the kingdom that is still before us.

For so will it be then. The tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will dwell with them. The glory will then be returned to the earth.

But this coming forth from the thick darkness, or the infinite distance, to which sin had separated God, is known in another way. In spirit, we are called to walk in the full, cloudless light of the divine presence now-in circumstances we shall do so in the kingdom by-and-by.

He is now brought back from this distance, or out of the darkness into which sin had forced Him, by the gospel, which is His own provision for a sinner. And our faith in that provision brings Him back. His grace has thrown up a highway whereby He can come to us-and when faith uses that way, He comes very near to us, finds His place, His habitation, His home with us again. " We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16.)

But there is another darkness in which God still dwells. I mean that which broods or settles over the whole scene around us of circumstances or of providence. In that place, God works unseen; at least, commonly so. In that place He says, as I may express it, " What I do thou knowest not now "-and we must still walk by faith, where God still dwells in darkness. We shall know hereafter. We shall see face to face then, though now it be but darkly. " God is His own interpreter, and he will make it plain." And as faith in His provisions of grace in Christ now draws Him forth from the distant darkness in which He had righteously hid Himself away from sinners, so by-and-by the glory will bring Him forth from the darkness in which He now orders providence for His saints. " There shall be no night there;" as now in spirit, though not in circumstances, we say, " The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.". (1 John 2:8; Rev. 22:5.)

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