2 Samuel - Commentaries by L. Douglas Nicolet

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“Wherefore wentest not thou with me?” (2 Samuel 19:25).

How these two questions search our hearts!

In John 21, the Lord’s penetrating questions to Peter teach that love for the Lord must come before service to Him. Then, David’s question to Mephibosheth in 2 Samuel 19 pictures the importance of following the Lord before serving Him.

Believers, at times forgetting that “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,” may confuse the moral order of love and service for Christ. When this happens, great energy may be spent and grand service performed in Christian undertakings, which in reality are nothing more than the flesh making a display of itself (Gal. 6:12).

The Lord’s evaluation of the condition of the assembly at Ephesus— “thou hast left thy first love”—came soon in their history. Yet in that assembly there was much work, effort and labor being carried on in His name. But the work had become more important to them than their love for Christ. True affection for the Lord grows by walking in fellowship with Him: “Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

While it is true that “love serves” (Gal. 5:13), service cannot be effective if it is not the result of love. Doing does not necessarily prove affection. On the other hand, love does give value to doing, for He has told us that “if ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

The first proof of love for Christ is a true heart desiring to be in His blessed presence. The Apostle John, “leaning on Jesus’ bosom,” was assured of the blessedness of being “one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23). Mary, sitting at the feet of the Lord Jesus, also found that same sweet love and fellowship that good part which was not to be “taken away from her” (Luke 10:42).

In the Old Testament, we read of those who loved David, King of Israel. Yet when this love for him was tested by his rejection, their fidelity to him failed and they deserted him. Though Jonathan ardently loved David (1 Sam. 18:1), he found it easier to abide in “his house” in “the city” when David was being hunted by Saul. Acceptance of an easy path finally stopped Jonathan’s ability to serve the one he loved. How quickly the desire for a comfortable path in this life can hinder our love and service for the Lord Jesus.

In 1 Samuel 18:16 we read that “all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.” Later, this same people allowed their hearts to be “stolen” by Absalom, when he tried to overthrow his father. Because their love was based on what David did for them, when Absalom promised to do even more for them, they quickly rejected the rightful king and followed after the one who made these false promises (2 Sam. 15). A love that exists because of what it receives cannot sustain true service for Christ.

In 1 Samuel 18:20, “Michal Saul’s daughter loved David” and she eventually became his wife. As long as he was honored as the mighty warrior who slew Goliath, she was content. But her love, based on the glory that she received, quickly turned to shame and loathing when David had to flee for his life. A desire for personal glory stops love and its resulting service for the Lord.

Mephibosheth also loved David. The great depth of his love is seen in 2 Samuel 19:24. But though his heart was true, he was deceived by his servant Ziba, thus losing the privilege of being with David. Much as he must have longed for David’s company, he could not serve him by staying in Jerusalem.

Is it not often so with us? Jobs, commitments, even recreation things which ought to “serve” us so capture our hearts that, deceived by them, we become unable to wholly follow the Lord in His rejection here. A dear brother often used to remind believers to carefully ponder whether such things were “wings” or “weights.”

Let us allow, then, these two questions, asked of Peter and Mephibosheth, to exercise heart and conscience, that when asked, as Rebekah was, “Wilt thou go with this man?” the answer, in love to our blessed Lord Jesus, will be, “I will go.”

Ed.

The Christian Shepherd: 2000, "Ten Thousand"

“And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7).

The “ten thousands” slain here by David, in figure, suggest to our hearts the mighty power and victory that our blessed Lord Jesus has displayed over the enemy.

“But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us; neither if half of us die, will they care for us: but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succor us out of the city” (2 Sam. 18:3).

Here, the people’s refusing to allow their beloved king to go forth to battle against the enemy because David was worth “ten thousand” of them gives us a beautiful picture of the priceless value that Christ has to the redeemed soul.

“My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (Song of Sol. 5:10).

The “chiefest among ten thousand” suggests the beauty and loveliness of the Lord Jesus—far above any other object—to the soul that loves Him.

“And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands” (Rev. 5:11).

Here we have the unlimited, eternal praise that He who is victorious, infinitely precious and lovely beyond description will receive for all eternity from redeemed hearts. No longer is it ten thousands, but rather a number is used by the Spirit to convey to our hearts that which is infinite and eternal.

Ed.

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