Micah - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), "Showers Upon the Grass."

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Mic. 5:7.

IT is the absence of effort which characterizes the working of God. “The Lord of hosts is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.” (Isa. 28:29.) Marvelous indeed are the achievements of man. He has done great things. But what noise, what laboriousness, are manifested in his working. And how often does he set some mighty engine in motion, which, despite all his caution, he is not able to control, and the creature of his hand asserts its power in the destruction of him that formed it, and set it in motion. But not to travel into the region of man’s latest boast, that utility has made science its vassal, and that the genius of man has made every department of nature tributary to his own convenience; let us regard agriculture, and mark the contrast drawn in the Scriptures between the skill of man, and the blessing of heaven. “For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowest thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs: but the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” (Deut. 11:10-12.) The fertility of Egypt depended, and still depends, on a laborious process of irrigation from the Nile. The narrow strip on the banks of the river, which the river, when it rises, overflows, or which man can water by artificial means, are amazingly fertile, but beyond this comparatively narrow margin all is sterile. But the land of Canaan depended entirely for its fertility upon the showers of heaven. If the early and the latter rain were not given from heaven, famine was the necessary result. Among the awful curses threatened against Israel for disobedience, is this, “Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.” (Deut. 28:23, 24.) This threat was fearfully verified in the days of Jeremiah. “The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads: because the ground is chapter for there was no rain in the earth.... there was no grass.” “Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art thou not He, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon Thee; for Thou hast made all these things.” (Jer. 14) How easy far God to execute His threatening’s. “The showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain’ (Jer. 3:3); and thus “He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground: a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.” But how easy for Him to change the scene without any preparedness on man’s part, like “showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” “He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and there He maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city of habitation, and sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.” (Psa. 107) “Immanuel’s land,” “the glory of all lands,” is at this moment desolate because of the consummation of the wickedness of Israel in betraying and murdering the Son of God. Its blessing is deferred till they look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn, and find in Him a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. (Zech. 12:10-14, 13:1.) And then God shall send Jesus whom the heavens have received, and the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. (Acts 3:19, 21.) “Then the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.”

There is in our day a laborious effort to meet the physical misery, the moral degradation, and intellectual darkness of our dense population. For one or other of these objects, men associate together, and some with the energy of their minds, some with the liberal distribution of their money, and some by untiring diligence, manfully combat with the gigantic evils connected with a high state of civilization. Yet disappointment appears to characterize all those laborious efforts. “Behold, is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people shall labor in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:13, 14.) God has sounded the depth of human nursery, and in accordance with his knowledge of its extent, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Nothing short of salvation really meets the necessity of man as a sinner; and salvation is of God. God begins with sin, the root of misery, man only battles against the effects of sin, and leaves the cause of all misery untouched. Where God acts, there is no laborious process, no noise, no excitement God needs no pioneer. This is beautifully set forth in the prophet Hosea, with respect to repentant Israel. “I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek My face; in their affliction they will seek Me early. Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning, and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the former and latter rain unto the earth.” (Hos. 5:15, 6:1-3.)

When God is graciously pleased to reveal Jesus to the soul of a sinner, how noiseless and without effort is the operation. Yet in that operation the mightiest act of divine power has been exercised, a power of the same order which raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at His right hand in heavenly places. How unconscious is the sinner whom God hath quickened, that be himself is the subject of such mighty power. The process to him has been “as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.” He is conscious indeed of being in possession of a blessing, for which he has not in any wise labored. It must be of God. It is above either what he could have asked or conceived. He has a peace which passeth all understanding.

Such then is the way of God’s action in grace. The mightiest of His operations is going on unheeded. It is not only the way of God above our ways, but the way most opposite to the spirit of the world, or of that even which presents itself as religion. How aptly is the false Church characterized by the harlot of the Proverbs. “She is loud and clamorous,” entrapping souls by her sorceries. But even in the midst of the combinations of men for advancing the kingdom of God, how much more of human machinery is apparent, than dependence on God. Notwithstanding all this, God is pleased to work silently and effectually by His Spirit; in a manner unexpected by man, who often finds the

machinery he has set in motion disturbed by the quiet, yet powerful action of God. The kingdom of God is presented to us, in the fourth chapter of St. Mark's gospel, under two different aspects. The one showing to us the quiet, unseen work of God, overlooked in the midst of the hurry of human interest, to shine forth as the effectual working of His power in transcendent glory. The other, the mighty system raised by human energy, yet bearing the name of Christ, to be met with destructive judgment at the appearing of Jesus in glory. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

"And he said, whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? and with what comparison shall we compare it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than' all the seeds that be in the earth; but when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it."

IF we dwell much on the mystery of the Lord's death upon the tree for us, we shall be able to praise God for withholding, or removing, as well as for giving. When Job was in the habit of offering burnt offerings, he met his most trying bereavements with "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:5, 21.)

Is not the contrite heart always connected with the joyful lip? (Psa. 32:5, 11:34:1, 18.)

If we are found speaking to our souls about God, as Psa. 62:5, Psa. 103 &c., we shall very soon be found speaking to God about our souls, as Pa. 43:1, 5, 8, 9.

WHERE God gives faith, does He not usually try it? and when He tries faith, is it not to increase it?

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