Psalms - Commentaries by Edward B. Dennett

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1

Psalm 69:8, 9

It is in no wise to be inferred from this scripture that natural relationships may be refused. To be "without natural affection" is one of the features of the "perilous times" (2 Tim. 3). What we have here is wholly different. Before the commencement of our Lord's public ministry, He was, as we read, "subject" unto Joseph and Mary. In this relationship, as in every other, He was perfect, and, as such, our blessed example. But when, after His baptism and anointing, He entered upon His service, come as He was to do the will of God, He, as the true Nazarite, had "the consecration of His God... upon His head." And hence, until His work was finished, He was devoted solely and entirely to the glory of God. The claims of God henceforward absorbed Him; the zeal of His Father's house consumed Him; and consequently He became a stranger unto His brethren, and an alien unto His mother's children.

When, therefore, on one occasion someone interrupted Him, and said, "Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee," He answered, "Who is My mother? and who are My brethren?" When, moreover, at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, His mother came to Him with a suggestion as to the wine, He replied, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." But when His work was ended, one thing only remaining to be accomplished, He, in the infinite tenderness of His perfect love in the relationship toward Mary which He has condescended to assume, committed her, ere "He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost," to the care of the disciple whom He loved. The application to ourselves is evident. Every relationship in which we are set is to be diligently observed. (See Eph. 5:22; 6:1-9; Col. 3:18; 4:1.) If, however, the Lord calls to special service, His claims are paramount, and, it might almost be added, exclusive. Accordingly, when He said to one, "Follow Me," and he replied, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father," Jesus said unto him, "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." So likewise Levi at the word of Christ "left all, rose up, and followed Him." (Compare Deut. 33:8, 9.) True that every believer is now a Nazarite, a Nazarite from his birth (the new birth); but it is not every believer who is a Nazarite according to Numbers 6—one, that is, who in the energy of the Holy Spirit, is devoted, as Paul, for example, was, wholly and entirely to the Lord and His claims. To this privilege but few attain, even though it is proffered to many. If, however, we delight ourselves in the Lord, He will give us the desires of our hearts.

2

Luke 23:31

The "green tree" in this scripture is Christ Himself, and the "dry" is the Jewish nation. Together with others, the women of Jerusalem followed Jesus on His way to Calvary, and, in the natural tenderness of their hearts they "bewailed and lamented Him." Jesus, turning, bade them weep rather for themselves and for their children, on account of the judgment that would soon fall upon the unhappy and guilty city and people (vv. 29, 30), adding, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" That is, if such things—wickedness, malice, hypocrisy, unrighteous judgment, and a degrading death—were visited upon Him who was like a green tree (compare Psalm 1:3; Jer. 17:7, 8), what should be done to the people who were as a dry tree, morally dead before God, without fruit or even leaves, and who were now committing their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah? For such a state, symbolized by a dry tree, there remained nothing but the ax and the fire. (Compare Matt. 3:10.)

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The connection between these two verses, as rendered in our English version, is confessedly obscure. The Lord in His pathway through this world, taking as He ever did in the perfection of His life of faith as man, the place of entire dependence and obedience, says, "0 My soul, Thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art My Lord: My goodness extendeth not to Thee"; and then the next verse proceeds, "But to the saints that are in the earth," etc., as if it meant, "My goodness extendeth not to Thee, but to the saints," etc. Some years ago a well-known servant of the Lord made a suggestion which to most minds cleared up the difficulty, besides throwing a flood of light upon the mind of the Spirit of Christ. Instead of reading, "But to the saints," etc., he pointed out, that to bring out the sense it might be thus taken: "I have said to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, In them is all My delight." This makes the parallelism also complete: "0 My soul, Thou hast said unto the LORD... but I have said to the saints." And the spiritual mind will instantly perceive the beauty of the passage as thus explained. There is first the lowliness of our blessed Lord as man; and second, there is His identification with, and delight in, the saints on earth.

The Lord's heart then was upon the saints. It was in them He had His delight; and this He showed when He identified Himself with the poor remnant who went out to be baptized of John (Matt. 3). He Himself was also baptized; and it was then, on His going up out of the water, that the heavens were opened, and, together with the Spirit of God descending upon Him, there was a voice from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight." Chap. 3:17; J.N.D. Trans. He found His delight in the saints, and the Father found His delight in Him. It is surely a lovely scene; and we may learn that the heart of God can only flow out to His people through Christ, and that they can only meet the heart of God in the heart of Christ.

The reader may compare Pro. 8:30, 31—"I was daily His delight,... and My delights were with the sons of men." What wonders of grace, unfathomed and unfathomable, are contained in these few words!

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