1 John 4:17 (John Gifford Bellett) 57734

Words of Truth: Volume 3, Boldness in the Day of Judgment (4:17)

John says, teaching us under the Holy Ghost, “Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). A most wondrous and very blessed Scripture.

John himself afterward experienced the boldness of which this Scripture speaks, in a very remarkable way; he had his own doctrine made good to his spirit by the same hand that brought him the doctrine.

In the Isle of Patmos he was introduced to a day of judgment. The Revelation he got there of the Lord Jesus Christ was a revelation of Him in judicial glory. He saw the Son of Man standing among the golden candlesticks, with white garments, eyes of flame, a voice as of many waters, a countenance as of the sun in his strength, and with feet as though they burnt in a furnace. A solemn, terrible exhibition of Christ in the day of judgment all this was. John falls to the earth as one dead. But the Lord tells him not to fear, speaking to him as the One who had been dead and was alive again, having the keys of hell and death. That is, He imparts to the spirit of His saint, then in the presence of judicial glory, all the virtue of His own condition. Jesus was there, through death and resurrection, holding in His grasp all the power of the enemy, for He had the keys of hell and of death. Such an one speaks comfortably to John. He imparts, as I said, the virtue of His own condition to His saint, though in a day of judgment. “As” He himself was, “so” would He have John to be, even in the place of victory, the other side of judgment. (Rev. 1)

This was surely wonderful and full of blessing, and John at once feels the power of it and acquires “boldness” in that “day of judgment.” For, though the Son of Man is still before him in the same attire and character as he had already seen Him, in judicial glory, with eyes of flame, and feet as though they burnt in a furnace, and a countenance like as the sun shineth in his strength, John has boldness. And then he listened to the voice challenging the Church again and again, but he remains unmoved from beginning to end.

This is very beautiful, and has a great character in it. But still more: another scene of judgment succeeds this, of the Son of Man walking among the candlesticks, and John is yet in the presence of it.

He is carried or summoned by the sound of a trumpet to heaven, preparing itself for the execution of judgment. The thrones were there, thrones of judgment—for the elders are seen clothed in white raiment, befitting those seated in judgment. Voices, lightnings, thunders, instruments of wrath, or witnesses that the Lord was rising up out of His holy place for judgment, proceeded out of the throne; and from thence, as we proceed through the book, all that succeeds is in character, trumpets, vials, fire, smoke, earthquakes, and other terrible sights and symbols, enough to make another Moses quake, as in the day of Sinai. But John maintains the “boldness” he has already acquired, and all through is as unmoved as the divine creatures or crowned elders themselves. They were on high, but he was still in “this world;” they were glorified, but he still in the body; yet he is as calm as they. As they were, so was he. And when the terrible sealed book is seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, and a loud voice, as of a mighty angel, challenges all to loose it; instead of dreading the moment when such an awful volume should be opened, he weeps because no one was found equal to do so. He longs to have the secret of the throne disclosed. The day of judgment has no terror for him. He is “as” Christ, and has “boldness.”

But this security, God’s own calmness and assurance in the day of judgment, has had its witness, or expression, in different forms, again and again, in the course of God’s dealing with his elect. As in the time of the flood, in the day of the overthrow of Sodom; at the time of the Exodus; and also at the time of Oh, passage of the Jordan.

These were days of judgment, but the security thrown round the elect on each of them was divine; it was God’s own safety which He then imparted to His people. They were in the world when its judgment was executing, but we may say, “as He was so were they.” His safety was theirs. The “Lord God” shut Noah into the ark with his own hand ere the waters began to rise. The waters were there the instruments of Divine wrath, but the Divine hand had shut the door upon Noah; and surely these waters of judgment could no more prevail against the hand of God, than they could against His throne. And therefore, as the Lord was, so was Noah. Their safety was a common one, wondrous to tell it: so even such an one as Lot in another day of judgment. He was saved so as by fire—out of the fire. A salvation in no wise glorious to himself. He suffered loss, for his works were all burnt up. But the angel said he could do nothing till Lot was fully and clean delivered from all possible danger from the judgment. The angel could do nothing till then; and, I ask, was not this Divine security? In the night of Egypt, He who carried the sword had already appointed the blood. He, to whom the vengeance belonged, the judge who was conducting the judgment, had ordained and pledged the deliverance “When I see the blood, I will pass over.” Was not this imparting His own security to His people again? The Lord must deny Himself—and this He cannot do—or Israel must be safe. Israel may have the same “boldness” in that “day of judgment” as the Lord himself in the world through which the sword was going. So, in the passage of the Jordan. The waters were there, as in the day of Noah, ready to overflow their banks, as in the time of barley harvest. But the priests were in the midst of them, and the Ark or Presence of God. And there they stood, the ministers of God in the presence of God, till all the people had crossed the river. Jesus was in the vessel, and He must sink if the disciples did. The safety of the Ark was the safety of the camp. As it was, so were they. Nothing less than Divine security was that of Israel amid the swellings of Jordan. The judgment of Canaan was about to begin, but Israel was in God’s sanctuary. All this sweetly witnesses how the Lord imparts Himself, or shares His condition with His elect-and that, too, in the day of their most solemn necessity, so to speak. He is beyond judgment, above it, the executor of it; but the value of His own place He communicated to those elect ones in days of judgment.

But this boldness of ours has a new character in it. It flows from “perfect love.” God has put the value of the Son of His bosom upon us; and it is not possible for love to take any higher counsels, or do anymore wondrous works than that. The love that has set the value of the Son upon

us is a perfect love; and our boldness, therefore, is conferred not merely by the hand or by the ordinance, of God, but by His heart. Noah, or Israel, or even Lot, in their several days of judgment, might have said, “as He is, so are we.” God’s safety was theirs. But we rest our security now with the love of God, as they did into the hand or ordinance of God. The security is equal, but ours is the witness of a nearer, more affecting title. Ours is personal—Noah was in the Ark; we are in God. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,” and in a new sense we say, “as he is, so are we.” We are loved as He is, not merely secured as He is. We bear an element of full personal affection, investing our spirits, as well as an element of boldness. J. G. B.

THE TWO EAGLES AND THE VINE. Ezek 17

Jehoiachin went to Babylon, thus yielding to the judgment of God, and in the end he was exalted. 2 Kings 24; 25

Zedekiah remained at home; and instead of accepting. the punishment of his sin, by submission to the king of Babylon—the Lord’s rod—he rebelled against him, and at last perished.

This is the two baskets of figs, good and bad, of Jer. 24

The parable of the Two Eagles and the Vine, in Ezek. 17, is to be read in connection with Zedekiah’s history.

But the close of that chapter is very fine: it tells us that another witness shall deliver his testimony in Millennial days. That God takes up the lowly, and puts down the haughty and mighty. His constant, yea, necessary action lit this fallen world.

Israel’s real blessing began in the lowly place—when they stripped off their ornaments, and sought the Lord outside the camp. Ex. 33

So, Israel’s blessing must end in the lowly place. After they had failed in the wilderness, their blessing lay in Babylon, as before it lay outside the camp. They must accept the punishment of their sin, and go there.

And it is thus with us individually. We are in the way or place of blessing, when convicted. We must be broken, in order to be blest.

Now, the Lord Himself took this same place not by being broken in conscience, as we are to be, for He was spotless, without either corruption within or blemish without. But He was broken in circumstances. The heir of the throne was a carpenter—the Lord of the fullness of the earth had not where to lay His head. He was a root out of a dry ground—or, as Ezekiel here speaks, “a tender twig,” a “low tree,” a “dry tree,” but planted in the last days, in Millennial days, “upon a high mountain and eminent,” becoming “a goodly cedar, under which shall dwell “all fowl of every wing.”

This is Millennial Jesus, who once had been the Nazarene Jesus.

But this was not Nebuchadnezzar’s history. His branch spread in its day, as the branch of this Millennial Jesus will do. (see Dan. 4) But Nebuchadnezzar had never been a “tender twig,” a “low tree,” a “dry tree.” Accordingly, this great tree of Babylon, which had never been a “tender twig” in early days, in the last days exalts itself, and meets the judgment of the Lord. Its leaves are shaken off, its fruit is gathered, its branches are cut down. It is preserved, but preserved as “a stump in the earth,” that thus being humbled and broken, God may bless and exalt it, in His own way, at the end. —J. G. B.

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