

2 Kings 22 (Edward Denny) 72328

Bible Treasury: Volume N12, Deuteronomy 17:18-20 and 2 Kings 22-23, Notes on (22)

(Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 2 Kings 22; 23:1-3)

This scripture was suggested by the remark in prayer as to the comfort and value of the word of God. All scripture is God-breathed, and it is our only reliable guide. Good men may expound and rightly divide the word of truth, but when all is said and done they can only make clear to us what is there.

Deuteronomy is the book which claims obedience. I suppose every godly Jew has trembled at the things he has read there, and has seen his God to be a consuming fire. We too should tremble—not from dread of God, for He has revealed Himself as the God of love, as well as of truth and holiness, who desires truly the blessing of His own.

That the obedience of Deuteronomy is the obedience of the law is true; but it was the only obedience which God recognized at the time. Since Christ came the standard is the obedience of Christ to which the Christian is now set apart.

Now our question is, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? What wilt Thou have me to do with my time, my strength, my money, my ability?" "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 2:6). But the direction must come from the word of God. Sometimes we do not know what to do— we want to do what is right and we don't know what is right. Well, you lack wisdom, don't you? and "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God" (James 1:5). It shall be told you, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21).

Some now gone home have impressed the advice, "If you do not know what to do, stand still." Wait on the Lord—do not act for the sake of acting. Saul wrecked his whole life through not waiting. If I were to say, "I will be with you at the seventh hour," I should mean any time between 7 and 8 o'clock; Saul interpreted Samuel's appointed time in the very narrowest sense. He said he "forced himself" (1 Sam. 13:12); but men do not need forcing to take their own way. If we wait on the Lord in subjection of will, His guidance is sure to come. Over and over again have I known a scripture come very clearly to my mind in a case of perplexity. Not that the Bible is a dictionary, to tell me what I am to do at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning, for instance. Yet it does tell me. Do not seek to please yourself—that is a very sure guide. "Even Christ pleased not himself" (Rom. 15:3). Even in the Lord's work there is a danger of doing what it pleases me to do, and of leaving what I do not like. What is my motive? First I am to please the Lord—am I doing this in the name of the Lord Jesus? Then I am to please my neighbor, but only to edification; otherwise it becomes mere man-pleasing. "If I yet pleased men," says the apostle, "I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). How can I best use any ability I may have for the comfort and upbuilding of the saints? These are questions we do well to ask ourselves.

All saints fail at one time or another through not attending to the revealed will of God. Abraham failed when he went down to Egypt. Paul failed when he went to Jerusalem—he had no word for it, but much against it. Not that Paul would fall into the pernicious reasoning of some—'Show me a scripture against it.' No, you must show a scripture for your actions.

There was no book of the law for the boy king Josiah: it was hidden under the rubbish; but his heart was turned towards God, and when the book was found he gave heed to it.

In the word of God we find guidance, comfort, exhortation—yes, and rebuke—but above all we find Christ. If we look for Him we find much more. Many Christians can give an excellent biography of Biblical characters; but what is their standard? Is it Christ? Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Christ is the standard; Paul might fail. If we want a type of Christ as a man we go to Adam; if we want a type of Christ as a priest we go to Melchisedec; if we want to set Him as a king we go to David and Solomon—David in His rejection, and Solomon in His glory; if it is the servant we want to see, possibly we should go to Ezekiel. Ezekiel had much to pass through, he had to give up everything; yet he makes no lamentation. He seems to have been a strong, stern man, unlike Jeremiah, who was a man of deep feelings and emotions, and was no doubt chosen by God for that reason, that he might depict the Lord's intense human sufferings.

It is the measure of likeness to Christ that we admire in all these men. Whilst there is in David what we may not be able to admire, yet how much there is that we can! Take his love for Jonathan. He does not "talk" much about it, but he acts. When he and Jonathan parted, we read, they wept "until David exceeded" (1 Sam. 20:41). Then we have David's beautiful lamentation over Jonathan, which shows how deep his affection was; and later we find him asking for one of the house of David to whom he can show the kindness of God for Jonathan's sake; so that he sets at his own table one who was naturally repulsive to him as the son of his enemy. So Christ does with us—our deformity is hidden under His table. David's mighty men were not lame or blind; they were all of them valiant men; but David had taken them up when they were morally in debt, or distressed, or discouraged, and he had made them what they were.

David failed because of unbelief, as we all do sooner or later. "I shall one day perish at the hand of Saul" —but he did not. True, there was only a step between him and death, humanly speaking; but God was between him and death, and with God between what did it matter if there was one step or a thousand?

It is a very great truth that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Rom. 8:28). Times come when everything seems to go wrong, but when we remember that all things are working for good, the darkest cloud is not only given a silver lining, but it is made bright all over. God has one purpose—to have a people conformed to the image of His Son, and everything is working to that end. A sculptor hews the rough stone away until the outline of the figure corresponds to the image he has in his mind; but he is not satisfied until he has brought fine

tools. to work upon the details, and perhaps he does not leave it until it has a highly polished surface. So does God with us. Sometimes He hews us, and takes big pieces away from us. At other times He takes His fine tools and gently brings out some detail of likeness to Christ. In one sense our salvation is complete; but in another sense He has much to do in us, and very much depends upon us as to His manner and time of doing it, though I doubt not He will do all before the end.

It is in the small things that we most show our unlikeness to Christ. In big things we think—Christ did that: then I must. He laid down His life—we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren; and perhaps a supreme effort is made and something noble is done. But the real test is not in one supreme thing, but in a long course of little things. We have known men whose lives were one long current of the reflected grace of Christ. I do not say they were without blemish, but in the main their lives carried the odor of Christ. In the perfume that set forth the perfections of Christ some of it was to be beaten very small—there you have the tiniest details the finest thoughts, or gestures, or actions.

What a treasure we all have in our hands! The word of God is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. But we must know it, read it, search it, assimilate what we find there. Most here have known the word from childhood, and it is a great privilege, for the Holy Spirit can apply any part of His word at any given moment.

I must say I envy—not those who have knowledge, for knowledge is a dangerous thing and puffs up, but I envy—those who make a practical use of the word of God. One is often put to shame by a simple saint who really puts in practice the truth he knows. In the schools this is called “applied science.” There are many theorists, but big fortunes are to be made by those who can take advantage of other men's brains and apply their knowledge to practical uses. I doubt not it is the same with the things of God.

We need the sincere milk of the word—the little comforting portions that we can easily take hold of. We need too the strong meat—the great things of the word which take all our powers to lay hold of.

How easily things come in to hinder our study, even with those who are set apart for the ministry of the word. Yet, in the Lord's grace, where little is gathered in the field where the manna has fallen, because of little ability, “he that gathered little had no lack” (Ex. 16:18). He can make our little much—He can also make our much little.

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