Acts 4:23-33 (Robert Kerr) 71579

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Acts 4:23-33 (4:23-33)

“Being let go they went unto their own company.” Is not this, in a small way, what we, as believers, have been doing since Saturday? “Their own company,” we clearly understand, were believers in Jerusalem. In chap. 2 we read, “All that believed were together.” They had one center, one object of attraction—the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was there they found rest, sympathy, and genial society; and “our own company,” as saints of God, is as great a reality as at the beginning. For sanctified, or set apart, by the Holy Ghost, we are Christ's, and are claimed by Him.

In Malachi's day those that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard. There you see a company of “their own.” When you see one who claims to be a Christian going on in fellowship with the world, you may be sure that he is going wrong. Must we not do business in the world? Certainly. But to find congenial society in the world that cast out the Son of God is another thing.” If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). The apostles Peter and John had been brought up before the Sanhedrim as criminals because they had healed a poor cripple, for the natural heart of man will not have Christ. So they went to their own company, and they tell them all that befel them. “And they lifted up their voice,” etc. Could they have done better? Nothing so good. They brought the matter into the presence of God, where is always our resource and hiding-place. One greatly admires the conduct of these men. They bring the matter to God, and that is truly the wise course. In this day we are not troubled by the authorities in the same way as they. There is no violent persecution; but there are often things we find ourselves powerless to move. The stolidness of the masses against the gospel; hearts bent on pleasure; how difficult to get people to hear the gospel. The best news that ever reached the ears of men and women is treated with contempt. Instead of sitting down and sighing over this great indifference, let us rather lift up our voices with “one accord” to Him who can control everything in heaven or earth. Let us get His ear; for can we not go into “the holiest” with assurance?

Here is a model prayer meeting—a sample of what a prayer meeting should be. There is great danger of falling into mere routine—there must be a hymn, and then a long pause, and then—instead of asking what we want—a further pause! I was once in a meeting of this kind, where only three opened their mouths during the hour, and yet the Lord was waiting to hear if they would call upon Him. I could not help saying to them, Brethren, you remind me of that scripture, “rich... and have need of nothing.” You have nothing to ask!

But how different was it with these two apostles! These must have help from God, or be swamped! They address God as the supreme Ruler who made heaven and earth. It reminds one of Nehemiah” Remember the Lord which is great and terrible,” etc. Are we not in danger of forgetting the might and power of our God? We need to take hold of the Mighty One. If we came together with one mind and heart there would surely be a gracious awakening. “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done.” You have heard that before. Here you see these men acting on it. There is the promise to the individual saint, “Every one that asketh receiveth,” etc. God has promises for individuals as well as for assemblies.

I commend to your notice that wherever you find saints “of one accord,” there is power and blessing. In Acts 1 they all continued with “one accord,” etc. In chap. 2 also; then in chap. 5, “and believers were the more added to the Lord.” Watch over that evil heart of yours that no jealousy be allowed to hinder your being of one accord with your brethren. Notice ver. 29. All they say about their enemies is, “Behold their threatenings.” They bring the matter before God and leave it to Him; they do not attempt to get better laws, etc. The Lord had said, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight,” etc. (John 18:36). Their second petition is for boldness. They cry to be moved themselves; and that has its application to some of us. We may pray for others to be moved, but how are we moved ourselves? To act with power on those around us it needs that we be right. They had nothing but the word in those days, and they stuck to it. It is a two-edged sword—nothing sharper. What a short prayer! Four petitions only! Yet they were “of one accord,” and in earnest, waiting for the answer, like Elijah sending his servant to watch for the cloud from the sea. The little cloud was the answer. We want to be real with God. I am certain that if some of the things we ask were granted to us, we should be perfectly astonished. It was not one answer they got, but a perfect golden cluster.

It is an oft-quoted principle, “Bring all the tithes into the store-house and prove me now.” That is God's gracious way. And is it not just like Him? We ought not to be surprised that our souls are filled with blessing. When they had prayed, the place was shaken; and better still, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” They had not asked for this; they had asked for boldness, and they got it.

I have been greatly refreshed by the ministry of the last two days. There has been much said about the Holy Spirit. We started with it, and have had much throughout about it, and this scripture has been on my mind, but no one touched on it. No doubt we know we are born of the Spirit, and are sealed with the Spirit; but to be filled with the Spirit goes farther. This blessing is not confined to the apostles. “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). God has given the Spirit to them that obey Him, but how many are filled with the Spirit? Do you think that is only attained by a few? In Ephesians 5 we are exhorted to be “filled with the Spirit.” Is that an impossible thing? or is the exhortation not needed? We all should seek to be “filled with the Spirit,” which means our whole being to be under His control. We may hear outcries about weakness, smallness of numbers, not much gift, no big brothers. It may be so. So long as you are thinking of yourselves, no wonder if there is lack of power. Does not the Spirit dwell in us? Is He not God? Trace what scripture says of His mighty acts since He brooded upon the face of the deep. By His Spirit He garnished the heavens, and by the Spirit the Lord Himself was quickened from the dead. In the eyes of the world we are despicable, but the Spirit dwells in us. If we remembered this, we should not hear croakings of weakness. The Holy Spirit dwells in each saint; He dwells also in the assembly and divides to each one severally as He will. Do we believe in these things as realities?

To the woman of John 4 the Lord spoke of the water which He should give, “springing up into everlasting life.” That is individual, as also in chap. 7, where also there is distinct advance. “The Holy Ghost was not yet,” etc. But when Jesus was glorified, then was He given to abide and be in us; and so there flow from our belly rivers of living water. When He fills the soul there is overflowing. Do we covet such a result? You see the secret. “He that believeth on Me"-our faith resting on Christ glorified at God's right hand. He is the fountain, we but vessels-leaky, no doubt, but if constantly poured into, even leaky vessels may be kept full. It is no use to work oneself up to some ecstatic feeling; it is more solid. Let the Holy Ghost assume control, our bodies being His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). How many of you will take this up and reflect upon it? The Lord said, “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you.” How careful we should be not to grieve or quench Him. The only power in this world in which God's work can be carried on is the Holy Ghost. Only God can draw sinners to Christ, and this He delights to do. The Holy Ghost is here to maintain the interests of Christ. Let us see to it that we give Him His right place. He is the power; the word of God, the means.

They needed very great spiritual strength and courage; and see the result! “The multitude of them that believed were of one heart,” etc.-thoroughly knit together in love. Why not now as then? We have the same Spirit, the same throne of grace. But we need to gird ourselves in these days, when it is fashionable to be religious. Satan is more to be dreaded for his wiles than for his roaring. There is much of the enchanted ground around. “They were of one heart and soul,” etc. They were not commanded to have all things common; it was the power of the Spirit in them. When saints are enjoying the love of the Spirit there is no lack; the poor are cared for, and every need met. When saints are happy they are glad to do anything for Christ, like David, who could say, “Of thine own have we given thee.” They were filled with joy. As to niggardly souls, what can we say of them? But “the liberal soul shall be made fat.” It holds good to this day. “Honor the Lord with thy substance,” etc., is a word we do well to remember. Will it not impoverish us? Not a bit. God knows how to deal with begrudging souls, and to get the money out of their pockets in spite of themselves.

Finally in ver. 33, it is all in answer to that short prayer. The place shaken, all filled with the Holy Ghost, great power and great grace upon all. Is our God less gracious now? Let us seek to know Him better. “Some have not the knowledge of God.” It is when we come to know Him, and how He is for us, and with us, that we become strong; though we shall never boast of our strength, for without Him we can do nothing. But all is of Him, and His strength is perfected in weakness. To our faith then, may we add courage, and quit ourselves, as says the apostle, like men. R. K.

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