Proverbs 8:4-11 (Edward Henry Chater) 54286

Christian Truth: Volume 29, Hear ... of Excellent Things: A Call From a Voice of Wisdom (8:4-11)

In Proverbs 8 we get a world-wide cry. Wisdom lifts up her voice—"Unto you, 0 men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man. O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart. Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things" etc. (vss. 4-11).

We would present to our reader four excellent things which this voice proclaims. They are found in the pages of the New Testament, and we trust that each reader will have ears to hear, so that these sayings will sink down into his heart and become a source of lasting profit.

The first is found in Hebrews 1—the presentation of the Person of Christ. Verse 4 shows that He has obtained a more excellent name than angels. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, bath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He bath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee?"

This wonderful epistle presents in the most blessed way the Person of God's Son as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession Christ Jesus. First, we see Him as the Son Incarnate, the Messiah, walking here upon the earth, in whom God at the end of the days of law spoke to His favored people, the Hebrews. He is the appointed Heir of all things, and at the same time the One who called all into existence by His word. The brightness of the glory of God, and the exact expression of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power; yet He stooped to the awful woe of Calvary's cross to make purification for the sins of His people. And having accomplished this mighty work for the glory of God, He sat down—the glorified, crowned, triumphant Man—at the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, having obtained a more excellent name than they. It was all-important to establish the believing Jews in this blessed truth, they being accustomed to hold angels in reverence, knowing that the law was given by their disposition (Acts 7:53).

In the latter part of chapter 1, the Apostle cites many psalms which present the Person of Christ as the only begotten Son, the Son of the Father, the First-begotten who is the Object of the worship of angels, God whose throne shall be established forever, the Lord of all, whose years shall not fail, when the creation of His hand, wrecked through sin, shall perish, and as the Man exalted above angels at the right hand of God.

What object for the occupation of our hearts is to be compared with the Person of the blessed One who has obtained a more excellent name than the angels! Wisdom's voice speaks to each heart.

The second excellent thing for our consideration is found in figure in Heb. 11:4: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." This verse presents to us in type the wondrous redemption work wrought by the One of whom we have been speaking, for the glory of God and the eternal blessing of every one that believes. If God has revealed that Abel's sacrifice is more excellent than Cain's, how much more can such works be used of the perfect sacrifice of One greater than Abel, even Jesus, the holy Lamb fore-ordained of God!

Cain approached God with the fruit of the ground, produced as the result of his own toil. Abel presented of the firstlings of the flock and the fat. In what consisted the difference? Why did God have respect to Abel's offering and not to Cain's? The answer is simple; but alas, how few, comparatively, have learned its significance. Cain failed to recognize that his life was forfeited on account of his fallen condition as a sinner, and brought the fruit of his own work and toil to God; whereas Abel, by faith, recognized his true state before Him, and approached God upon the ground of a substitute, which was divinely approved—type of the death of the Lamb of God upon Calvary.

The principle is the same today. Tens of thousands approach God continually on the ground of their own works and religious doings—the way of Cain. A solemn woe is pronounced upon all such in the epistle of Jude, verse 11. Others learn that they are sinners, guilty and lost, and believing upon the precious name of Jesus approach God upon the ground of the spotless sacrifice and finished work of Christ. Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts and; by it he being dead yet speaketh. Every one who trusts in the more excellent sacrifice of Christ, is accounted righteous by God also. He is "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26). "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Rom. 5:9. Are you trusting therein? Wisdom's voice appeals to you, saying, "0 ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools [or foolish], be ye of an understanding heart." Pro. 8:5.

The third excellent thing is presented to us in Heb. 8:6: "But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry." He who has obtained a more excellent name than angels and has offered the more excellent sacrifice, lives forever in the glory of God. As the great High Priest of His people, He is seated on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. There He ever lives to make intercession for His loved ones during their desert journey to the land of promise, ever sympathizing with a heart of perfect love, being touched with a feeling of their infirmities (Heb. 4:15). He Himself has known what it is to walk here below as the dependent Man, doing the will of God.

And not only so, but as Minister of the sanctuary (or holy places), and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, He bears, so to speak, the names of His redeemed upon His shoulders and upon His heart in the presence of the unveiled glory of God. And there too, the veil having been rent at His death, His brethren can follow Him in spirit. By faith all who know for themselves the acceptance and fragrance of His Person before God, and the infinite value of His sacrifice upon the cross, can draw near to God according to His word as

presented in Heb. 10:19-22, and pour out their soul in worship, adoration, and praise.

May each believer who reads these lines know what it is to enjoy the blessed privileges which result for him through Christ's ministry on high in the presence of God. It is the desire of His heart that we should both walk in the pathway that He Himself has trodden here below, sustained by Him in the midst of our weakness, and also draw near with full assurance of faith as true worshipers, with a true heart, in the true tabernacle on high.

Fourth, we have another more excellent thing presented to us in 1 Cor. 12:31: "But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way." The detail of it is given in chapter 13. It is the way of charity, or love. Gifts are important in their place, and we are to covet the best earnestly; but the way of love is more excellent still. It is God's way. God is love. He would have His own essential nature exhibited in the practical ways of His people, in whose hearts He sheds His love by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5).

There is much talk about this love; but alas! on all hands we find that a mere human love usurps its place. Many cry out for more love, and complain of the lack of it in others, while sadly failing to exhibit it themselves. There is plenty of so-called love, which really means to be "Hail fellow well met," with everybody, and everybody's will at work in insubjection to God. But this is not the love of God. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. And again, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments." 1 John 5:2. Moreover, we are not taught to go about the world looking for others to show love to us, but we are exhorted, "Beloved, let us love one another." 1 John 4:7. We are to show it. Walking with God (who is love), love will be active in us toward our brethren, and will find its response in all who are treading the same pathway.

Now in 1 Corinthians 13 we have a detailed exposition of the way of love. All would do well to ponder it prayerfully. Space will not permit us to go through it verse by verse, but we may learn from the first that though a man were the greatest of orators, if he is not characterized by love in his daily life, he is become as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Or, if he were the chief of theologians or professors, or the most renowned on the list of those who live or work or heal by faith, and love be lacking, he is nothing. Or even if he were a philanthropist of world-wide fame, or the most heroic of martyrs, and he have not love, it profits him nothing, absolutely nothing.

Love is of God, and love never faileth. This is the more excellent way. Many a man, we fear, whom his fellows have exalted on account of his powers of oratory or of mind, his professed work of faith, his self-denial or liberality, or self-sacrifice for his creed, when weighed in the balances of God's sanctuary according to 1 Corinthians 13, will be found wanting. May our hearts be led to weigh these things before Him now. He is the searcher of hearts, reading the secret counsels and intents of every soul. All things are open and naked and manifest in the sight of Him with whom we have to do.

May each believing soul who reads these lines be found listening to the voice of wisdom with the heart occupied with Him who has obtained the more excellent name, the conscience at peace through His more excellent sacrifice, the soul enjoying the fruits of His more excellent ministry, and his life the exemplification of the more excellent way, that God may be glorified in all.

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