

Psalms 40:6-8 (Edward Denny) 129988

Miscellaneous Papers, Thoughts on Various Texts. (40:6-8)

1.—THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK.

{vi 2083-2084}Ex. 21:5, 6; {vi 14532-14534}Psa. 40:6-8.){vi 2083-2084}EXO 21:5-6 {vi 14532-14534}PSA 40:6-8

"IF the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever." (Ex. 21:5, 6) In this passage we see, in the case of the Hebrew servant whose ear was bored through with an awl in token of his engagement to serve his master forever, the principle of willing loving obedience: and this is commonly (and rightly, I believe) thought to explain the following word of Christ in Psa. 40 "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened [or digged, see margin]: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." The truth is, our blessed Lord Himself was the antitype of the Hebrew servant of Ex. 21, devoted as He was to God's service, the one who offered Himself as a victim to die on the cross for the redemption of sinners. This then being the case, may we not gather from hence what "volume" it is of which the psalmist "here speaks? To my mind it is a simpler idea than is commonly thought. 44 THE VOLUME OF THE BOOK" wherein these things are written of Christ I believe to be, not the volume of the eternal counsels of God, as some have supposed, but THE BOOK OF THE LAW, bearing reference, as it typically does in this Ex. 21, to our blessed Lord, as the only Hebrew servant who ever did or ever could without imperfection or failure do the will of his Master; within whose heart the law of God was; whose love to His God and Father was such as to lead Him to give himself up, without any reserve, to serve Him forever.

2.—WRATH AND DOUBTING.

"I WILL therefore that men [or the men] pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." (1 Tim. 2:8.) The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, begins the epistle whence this passage is quoted with grace. Contending with those who were upholding the law, he speaks of himself, blasphemer and persecutor as he had been, as a signal example of this-of the grace of God to poor sinners, without any distinction as to nation or name. ({vi 29700-29715}1 Tim. 1:3-18.) Next he exhorts, because of this outflow of love to the world, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, should henceforth be made for all, and no longer confined, as in the times of the law, to the holy land and the temple. "Every where" prayer was to be made. ({vi 29718-29725}1 Tim. 2:1-8.) Thus we have the clue to the closing words of the above passage; "without wrath and doubting:" here the apostle evidently glances at two distinct states of mind, which, in the case of disciples born under the law and still cleaving thereto, would in a measure hinder their sympathy with such a precept as this.

"WITHOUT WRATH"—here he hints at the natural opposition of the Jewish mind to the thought of God showing grace to the Gentiles; as seen in 1 Thess. 2:16, "Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved." "AND DOUBTING."—Observe how in Acts 10 we have an example of this; I mean of one born a Jew, even Peter, not exactly opposing, but doubting, in the case of Cornelius, the goodness of God in converting the Gentiles: and then mark on the other hand how the Lord meets and sets aside his misgivings, on the occasion of Cornelius sending for him to teach him the truth: "The Spirit said unto him, Behold three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing." ({vi 27279-27280}Acts 10:19, 20)

3.—THE PASCHAL EVENING ANTICIPATED.

THE Passover, according to the Levitical law, was kept by the Jews on the fourteenth day of the, first month, at even. It is evident however that Christ, in the especial year that he suffered, anticipated the day of this feast; that He and His disciples kept it together the evening before, at the close of the thirteenth day. If it, be asked how He came to do this; and whether in thus altering the time He was not breaking the law, which even He as a son of Abraham was bound to obey; we answer, that He was also the Jehovah of Israel, and therefore that He had full title to set aside the law as He pleased. In this case however, while He seemed to be transgressing, He was in reality keeping it; that is, antitypically doing so; inasmuch as He Himself was the true paschal Lamb; so that by this arrangement on His part as to the feast. He was offered up on the fourteenth day, the day appointed by Moses. Thus the type and the antitype met; so that, while the nation, lost and degraded as they were, were merely observing a powerless ordinance, the faithful among them (though not as yet realizing it themselves, it is true) were spiritually feeding on Him who had already died for their sins, and who was, at that solemn moment of darkness in Israel, lying dead in the sepulcher.

And now, in proof that the day was thus changed, I cite the following passage. "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. (John 18:28.) Then again we read," And it was the preparation of the Passover; and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!" (John 19:14.) Now here the Passover is spoken of as not eaten as yet by the Jews, but as that for which they were making preparation; whereas, as we know, Christ had eaten it already, even before His betrayal. This then explains the following passage:" Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself," &c. ({vi 26632-26635}John 13:1-4.) Here observe, that it was after the paschal supper eaten by Himself and the twelve, but at the same time before the feast kept by the Jews, that He rose from the table in order to serve His disciples. Thus we see how a comparison between the above three passages, namely, John 13:1-4, 18:28, 19:14, clearly establishes the fact that Christ acted in this case in the sovereignty of His own power in thus changing the day,

with a view to the fulfillment of the eternal counsels of God as to the time of His death.

4.—THE GREATER SIN.

"THEN saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." (John 19:10, 11.) "The greater sin" here referred to, of which Israel was guilty in delivering Jesus to Pilate, was that of making use of the power of the Gentiles in carrying out their designs against the Lord's life. Had they, as they ought to have done, received Him as their Messiah, their King; then Caesar, and Pilate his representative in Judea, would have been deprived of that power, which at the time of the Babylonian captivity had been given from above to the Gentiles; and Israel, as the people of God, would have recovered their proper place in the earth. But instead of this they enlisted the power of Cæsar against Him. Hence the authority was still left in the hands of the Gentiles, to be used at this critical juncture in fulfilling God's purpose as to the crucifixion of Christ; so that Pilate, however presumptuously, yet in a certain sense could with truth say to Jesus, "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" (John 19:10.) In all this we see how this unhappy people were sunk in iniquity. They hated the Just One; they plotted His death; and, more than this, they delivered Him up to the Gentiles, the enemies of God, the oppressors of Israel, those from whose yoke the Lord came to save them. Had it been otherwise, Pilate could have had no power against Him; but as it was, that which had been originally given from above to the Gentiles was now to be used on the side of the enemy. In all this then we see a fearful aggravation of Israel's guilt—"the greater sin" of which they were guilty—greater than if they had themselves, without the aid of the Gentiles, put Him to death. Of this it is that Jesus here accuses the nation, or rather Caiaphas the high priest, their adviser and leader in the act of rejecting the Lord and casting Him into the hands of His murderers.

5.—LOVE TAKING THOUGHT FOR THE WEAK.

"PRAY ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." (Matt. 24:20.) As to this passage observe, that to take flight in the winter would be trying to the body; while to fly on the Sabbath day, being a breach of the Levitical law, would bring guilt and distress on the consciences of those whom the Lord had in view in this chapter; namely, the Jewish remnant during the great tribulation under the beast. (Rev. 13) How considerate therefore in Him! how did it show his love, the deep and tender sympathy of His heart, at such a distance of time to take thought in this twofold way for His suffering people; to counsel them in such explicit terms to pray that their persons, and at the same time their consciences, in those days of amazement and terror, might be sheltered from evil! How sweet, how encouraging may this be to us! Let the heart that quails at the prospect of suffering—let the sensitive conscience—take comfort. Here the Lord allows us to pray that that which we feel ourselves ill able to meet because of weak faith may be averted. True, we, as members of Christ and as indwelt by the Spirit of God, have in reality power to rise above suffering of every kind. Still, in a passage like this we see the condescension of love to the weak, the Lord's tender considerate care for the timid tempted disciple.

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