

THE TENT OF HIS GLORY

T H E T E N T
O F H I S G L O R Y

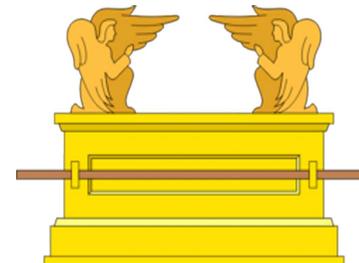
J O Y T H O M A S

CONTENTS

1

FORGETTING THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND

THIS ONE THING I DO, FORGETTING THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE BEHIND



“Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

“I press forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ.” (Philippians 3:13-14)

Reading through Chapter three of the book of Philippians one cannot fail to be overawed by the manner in which apostle Paul was caught up with the things of God. One sees him totally absorbed in apprehending that for which he was apprehended. Not only does one see a man who had a deep longing to attain the mark or goal that was set before him, but one also sees him constantly ‘stretching forth’ to know Him and the power of His resurrection. What a dynamic example for any Christian!

Beloved, this is the mentality the Lord would like us to have in these days. Be like the apostle Paul who was not content with the revelations he had but rather desired to possess more and more of the reality of the Lord in his life.

Today the Christian hierarchy no longer urge the adherents of their faith to reach forth unto those higher things which God has called them into. They preach that it is enough to be born again, that it is sufficient if they have trusted in Christ unto salvation. And, therefore, the majority of Christians are unable to taste of that which is God’s best.

There is a school of thought that declares that once we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we possess everything that He Himself had and that all we need to do is to claim those promises. They say, “You claim—you get it”. Another view is that when we accept Jesus into our lives we have all that we confess for He had completed all that was needed to be done. They say, “You confess it—you have it”. They encourage believers to ask for every worldly need and to believe that ‘God shall supply every need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus’. How different these views are compared to those of apostle Paul who having received so much yet declared that he had not already attained everything that God had to offer. And for this reason he always strived to attain more, to move on, and to go yet a little deeper into the things of God.

The goal before Apostle Paul was to grow into the fulness of Christ Jesus. He was not satisfied with rudiments of Christian life which are repentance, faith toward God, new life in Christ, baptisms of water and Holy Spirit, doctrines of resurrection and eternal judgment (Hebrews 6:1-2).

Beloved, spiritual maturity is not something that will fall into your lap during a revival meeting. True maturity involves manifesting the very life of our Lord, Jesus Christ. This is not something that can be obtained by confessing, believing or claiming. Rather we need to daily press on, in obedience and faith, to the high calling upon our lives—that our inner man may grow to the likeness and full stature of our Lord, Jesus Christ. There is no scope to fully ‘stretch forth’ or to reach out to this tremendous goal in Christ Jesus whilst we sit in a rocking chair. Indeed all our natural faculties, our senses, our energy and our whole beings need to be directed god ward, trusting and abiding in the Lord to fulfill His will in our lives. But let us not fall into error and attempt to use human psychology and the wisdom of man to attain what God has set before us in the heavenly or spiritual realm. Let us beware of the emphasis, in some quarters, to rely upon abilities and virtues to attain that which is spiritual. Let us not also fall into the trap of believing that we have already acquired our inheritance in the Lord and, therefore, no longer need to reach forth unto higher and deeper dimensions in Him.

The apostle Paul said, this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind. We too are urged to do that one thing that Paul did—to forget and lay aside the things of the past. That is why Paul adds in verse 17, “Brethren, be followers together of me”. We are called to put away all that was a part of our lives before we met the

Lord. We see this as one of God’s covenant principles. In order to receive God’s life (the Word, the Lord Jesus) we must also be prepared to walk according to His covenant principles and Well-established ways.

“Let us therefore, who desire to be perfect (mature) be thus minded and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal this unto you.” (Philippians 3:15)

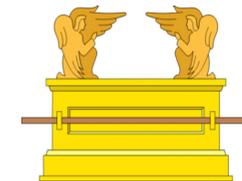
THE PRINCIPLE OF SEVERANCE

“And the high priest asked (Stephen), are these charges true? And he answered, Brethren and fathers listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our forefather Abraham when he was still in Mesopotamia before he (went to) live in Haran.. And He said to him, Leave your own country and your relatives and come into the land (region) that I will point out to you”. (Acts 7:1-3, Amplified)

God’s principles are eternal. How beautifully His Word shows, whether it be the first book or the last, God’s will, purpose and desire, In the



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above verses we read of one of the foundational principles proclaimed from the beginning that there is a separation required from several things, so that one could be joined with the things of God.

“Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” (Genesis 12:1). We know that after God had appeared unto Abram, he obeyed the Lord and left Ur of the Chaldees to go unto Canaan, the promised land of God’s choosing. Abram came out of Ur along with his father Terah, his nephew Lot, his wife Sarai and his entire livestock, possessions and household. However, Abram’s obedience was incomplete for we read that on the way they dwelt in Haran. And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran. his sons, and Sarai his daughter in law, his son Abram’s wife; and they wentforth with them from Ur of the Chaldees; to go into the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there. “And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in H aran”. (Genesis 11:31-32)

The Scriptures say that Terah took Abram and not that Abram took Terah probably because the Scriptures fall in line with the ancient custom of giving first place to the head of the family. But it was Abram and not Terah to whom God had appeared and it was Abram who was commanded of God to forsake his country and his kindred. So it was

Abram whose obedience was partial.

Notice that Abram began well for he was quick to obey. But half way to Canaan they saw green pastures, plenty of water and an abundance of fruit-bearing trees and they decided to settle down. They called the place Haran after Terah’s eldest son. And therein they dwelt and built themselves a city which they named Haran. And here they served other gods (Joshua 24:2). They set aside the command of God to go unto Canaan and they dwelt in idolatry, out of God’s will and purposes. We are not told how many years they lived in Haran but it was only when Terah died that Abram was able to resume his journey to Canaan. It was only when God brought tragedy and crisis into his life that Abram came to his senses and once again turned to God.

Even today there are many who are called out of Babylon (capital of Chaldees Empire)—the city of sin and unrighteousness. They manage to sever themselves from traditional religious systems that flourish in that Babylonian environment and come out of that city but the city does not come out of them, and they continue to labor hidden desires for that city life. It is true even today, that several come out with enthusiasm and begin a journey toward the promised land of righteousness, peace and joy but midway they come to a halt to built another city of Haran for themselves. Having, come out of the organized religious formula they

attempt to build yet another ritualistic mode incorporating the same old values and conforming to the same pattern of activities that they had once rejected and left. So, though they had come out of the city the desire to live in the city had not left them. The longing for the customary religious practices and their ardor towards worldly pleasures was still alive within them.. Yes, beloved, there are, even in these last days, many who desire to move on in God. They come out of their Ur of the Chaldees but they continue to desire to make and build a city of their own choice. And then God has to allow some painful experience or situation to jolt them out of their complacency and life of compromise Is it not sad that many well-meaning Christians stop mid-way and settle down ? It is only when they are confronted with some life-changing situation that they come to their senses and turn to the living God.

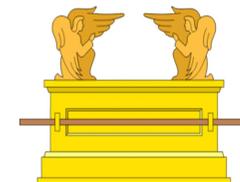
In our lives we are called to be sojourners and not squatters; to be pilgrims and not lodgers. We are called to be a people of the promised land of Canaan and to be strangers and SOjournerS upon this earth, as was Abraham, looking unto a heavenly city for our Citizenship (Hebrews 11:8-10). We are not to stop half way and build something in our own strength, but we are to continually move on in God, keeping our eyes upon the Lord, Jesus Christ. His glorious church is called to be a glorious bride who will stand with the glorious Bridegroom before the Father, not in some wretched, tattered clothes but in garments woven of fine

linen which is the righteousness of Christ Jesus. At no stage of our pilgrimage can we proclaim that we have “arrived” or that we have attained any proficiency. Whether we be pastors, preachers or prophets, the Word of God says that we are ‘to press forward’, because we have still not achieved our spiritual goal. Beloved, let us, therefore move on, together with the saints of God, toward the goal set before us. leaving behind all the old things, Past relationships, experience, ideas, habits and behaviour. Let us continually march forward with the Lord in the lead; and the Holy Spirit of God will show and teach us of the things we need to ‘eave behind in these days Let us reach out to the things that lie ahead of us.

When God told Abraham to leave his people and forsake his kindred He did not bring forth a strange and unfamiliar word that had never been spoken before. God was merely repeating and enunciating an eternal principle that was initiated for the first time



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in Genesis 2:24 but was recapitulated several times in the course of Israel's history. The principle has also been reiterated in the New Testament at several places. The promises seem strange to many believers only because they are unfamiliar of God with His voice and His word. The Scriptures say 'My sheep shall hear My voice' !! So let us go on.

“Therefore shall a man LEAVE his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)

And the New Testament states— “For this cause shall a man LEAVE his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh” (Ephesians 5:31).

Comparing these Scriptures we see that it has always been God's desire that man should, first of all, leave, forsake and abandon his father and mother in order to be truly united with his wife. The Lord Jesus says in Mark 10:7, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife:” We all know that there is a leaving behind and a forsaking in the natural realm.

But when we think of the spiritual realm what are we to leave behind? The apostle Paul says, “This is a great mystery but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:32). These are God's eternal principles. These

principles are, therefore, applied in our walk with God and also our married life. We cannot have the same kind of mind that governed our previous lifestyle. When one was unsaved, one had one's own mind, even as a man who was single had his own mind and plans for self. That old way of thinking must be cut off, our previous norms, ideas and principles of living must be put away. The Scriptures say that at one time we were children of disobedience. “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of the world, according to the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”

None can deny that at one time we were under the control of the prince of the power of the air, Satan. In times past we walked in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath' (Ephesians 2:3) like any other unconverted sinner. We had Satan as our father in one sense; we were his children for we obeyed him. So when the Scripture says, that we must leave our father it refers to our old, unregenerated ways wherein we had the nature of children of wrath and disobedience. In a way, the first Adam is also our father because we have inherited his carnal nature. Therefore, in a deeper, more meaningful way the principle that the Scriptures show forth is that every child of God must forsake, abandon and leave behind his old nature, behaviour, habits, ways and relationships that were at one time under the

control of Satan. John 8:44 says, “Ye are of your father the devil and the lusts of your father ye will do”.

Beloved, when we come out of our father’s house and leave or forsake them we must not bring the old things with us. Some people leave their fathers’ house but they carry some items of furniture, utensils and household goods with them! When we leave or forsake the father’s house we must never carry any of the household things that belong to the father. We must shed and leave behind everything - our old friends, our previous habits, our past secrets, our life-style of old and our earlier behaviour. These must be left behind so that we may inherit and acquire the new things of the Spirit.

There are many things of the past which cling to us and do not leave us easily. There are old habits and old manners of speech that sometimes tenaciously hold on to our new nature, refusing to let us go. At times, some old relatives and friends cling to us like parasites and leeches that refuse to leave us to our own new ways even after persistently neglecting and snubbing them. God wants to change us and we must not allow anything to come in the way. Some of us are yet to leave several old acts of our lives.

Occasionally God will bring situations in our life to separate us from the things that cling to us parasitically, so that we may progress on in His ways. Lot, Abraham’s nephew, had come out of Babylonia with him; Lot had accompanied

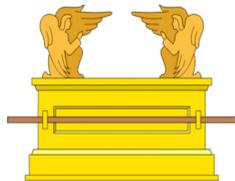
Abraham and Sarah to Egypt and he had journeyed with him back to Canaan. He was Abraham’s constant companion but he didn’t have the vision that Abraham had and therefore he was an obstacle in Abraham’s progress. God was looking for a chance to separate Lot and Abraham and He did so by blessing Lot. Today’s Christianity only looks to blessings but little do they realise that often God blesses those that hamper our progress in Him so that there may come about a parting of ways. In Genesis 13 verses 7 to 12 we read that quarrels arose between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot. In verse 10 we see that Lot beheld the attractive plains of Jordan and settled there. There are many like Lot who have come out of Babylon but who have not forsaken their fathers and mothers. They clap their hands and praise the Lord in unknown tongues but they have not forsaken their old ways in reality. Lot could have told Abraham, his uncle, to go the way he wanted to go and thereafter chosen the other way for himself. But he was an ambitious young man who was looking for that which seems well-watered and good. Such as him do not really look for God in their lives. We see here that God had a definite purpose for Abraham. He wanted to lead Abraham into ~ higher life in Him. “And the Lord said unto Abraham after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes “ (Genesis 13:10). When God brings a deeper separation into our lives there is a fresh ministering of our souls from God. Then only we are able to see some beautiful things that God desires to reveal unto us. Thus said the Lord, “... lift up now thine eyes...” We need to look

up to the Lord at such times.

But what about the mother? We are to also leave the mother. We read about her in the book of Revelation. The religious system of man was the mother of every child of God, It is true that we grew in the care of such a father-



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mother system that initiated us into the false rituals of organised religion. As babes water was sprinkled upon our foreheads to show that we were baptized into Christ; as young people we were 'confirmed' and allowed to partake of the Lord's table after the bishop had laid hands on us and after we had memorised a few key verses; we were tied to the harlot mothers apron strings and were her favorites. But when the new life and blood of Christ is given to us we are called to forsake our mother and forget those things which are behind. Many of us have been raised in such unscriptural backgrounds; and some even now have not been able to rid themselves of the mother's influence. But, beloved, we cannot be a part of God's glorious Purpose

Without totally severing ourselves from the father and the mother. Did not our Lord say. "Leave your father and your mother" ? For many this is a strange word. But if we want to be a part of the bridal company, who are to join with the heavenly Bridegroom, then such a 'departing from the old' is essential for it is written that we are to be those "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually" (Hebrews 7:3).

This is the call of the church—to abide with Him continually. And if we are to live with Him we too must not have any father or mother. God is calling His church and His people to forsake their father and leave their mother. We are to leave that which the world offers to us; we are to set aside that which the powers of darkness offer us; we are to forsake that which the mind of man offers to us and we are to cast away and come out of that which the organised traditional church system offers us.

The principle is the same throughout the ages for it is the covenant principle of the Lord, who covenanted with Abraham and who also covenants with us. We are to leave the things of old. God is calling His people to move on "unto a land that I will show thee" (Genesis 12:1). Our covenant life is the life of a priest like unto the Son. Beware of carrying anything from the father's house; be careful that the mother does not influence you. Abandon the council of Satan and

move on in the ways of God. Leave the carnal and sinful nature and clothe yourself with His garments. Forget thine own people and the past things which are yet binding your present lives.

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear forget also thine own people. and thy father’s house, so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty : for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.” (Psalm 45:10,11) Beloved, God is looking for people who will leave all things for the glory of serving Him. We need to be a different people. We cannot reach out and apprehend the things that God has kept for us until we leave behind the things of the past.

2

LEAVE ... THAT YE MAY CLEAVE

THE PRINCIPLE OF SEVERANCE AND PERMANENCE

