

EXCERPTS FROM

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BIDEFORD

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THE SILENCE OF THE ETERNAL

Sir Robert Anderson wrote "a silent heaven is the greatest mystery of our existence."

At North Road on Sunday evenings over many months, we have been considering "The Attributes of God" - the glorious qualities and perfections of "The Almighty". As we have dwelt upon such awe-inspiring subjects as, "His Intrinsic Holiness," "His Perfect Knowledge", "His Divine Immutability", "His Almighty Power", no doubt many of us have secretly uttered the words of the martyred whom John saw under the altar in Rev.6 v.9. "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"

Often unregenerate men are heard to pose the question, "if there is a God, then why does He not intervene?" Because there is no visible intervention from heaven men decry belief in God, heap scorn upon His Word, and often blaspheme His Holy Name; yet to all this ridicule and bombast God remains silent.

This silence in no way means that God has vacated His throne or that He is indifferent to the happenings on this planet. Our God sits upon the throne of the universe and He is in absolute control of all things at all times, "for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth", (Rev.19 v.6), and He ever worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; but at this point in His eternal counsel He is not reigning publicly, or ruling openly, He rules through Providence and Providence is always mysterious because Divine Providence pertains to His secret will; hence, "His judgements are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11 v.33). Nevertheless, the finger of Almighty God is upon every happening "and what His soul desireth even that He doeth" (Job. 23 v.13) - "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15 v.19) and all things move with Divine precision to their appointed end.

God's last Word to this world was nearly 2000 years ago, when Christ, His own Son, the Eternal Word, came, cf. Hebrews 1 v.1-2, John 1 v.18. Said He, "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5 v.24).

This was the last word which came from heaven, it was a message of grace and salvation. God spoke to men in His Son. We have the full details of the message in the Bible. It tells us that eternal life is in Jesus Christ: a marvellous declaration of love and grace to undeserving sinners who will repent of their sins and believe this gospel.

Long ago Pharaoh, king of Egypt, said "who is the Lord that I should obey Him" (Ex. 5 v.2). Such words are still heard in our day, but did not the God of heaven accept the challenge of this proud monarch and demonstrate His power over him in devastating judgment? Read chapters 7 - 14 of the Book of Exodus. We might ask, will His voice ever be heard again? Will the silence ever be broken? Psalm 50 v.3 gives us the answer, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence; a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him". This is the BREAKING OF THE SILENCE. It refers to the time when the long-suffering of God is at an end, and Christ comes, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess. 1 v.8).

When God breaks this silence in heaven it will be to speak in wrath; He will then let loose His judgements "Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath" (Ps. 2 v.5).

When men call into question the love of God, or beg Him to intervene and to break His silence, little do they realize what that will mean. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5 v. 11) - "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke" (Job 36 v.18) - "Flee from the wrath to come" (Matt.3 v.7).

A silent heaven! Yes, but not a helpless or defeated God. A silent heaven! Indeed, silent because God is merciful. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" (2 Pet. 3 v.10).

W.H.M.

"The Lord is King! who then shall dare
Resist His will, distrust His care,
Or murmur at His wise decrees,
Or doubt His Royal promises.

The Lord is King! child of the dust
The Judge of all the earth is just
Holy and true are all His ways
Let every creature speak His praise"

JOSIAH CONDER

THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH - 7
By John Thackway, Devizes.

In the last article, it was noted that the whole of Sunday belongs to God Lev. 23:32. It is the Lord's day. This means, of course, that our responsibility on it does not consist of just public duties i.e. public worship etc. That would only occupy a few hours of the day. What of the rest? This is where our private and secret duties come in, and how it is that the whole day is kept holy. These duties represent things which we often complain we have insufficient time for during the week. But the Lord's day affords us a unique and God-given opportunity to be about them. The word translated T! keep my sabbaths n in Lev. 1Q:30 has the idea of keeping with great care and diligence, as a great treasure, of which we would wish to lose nothing. And if we view the Lord's day aright, we shall be like this regarding the rest of it. We shall want to devote as much as we can of it to those private and secret duties, n that nothing be lost." Among these, are the following:-

i.) Reading

For the Christian, the scriptures are his staple diet as far as this goes Job. 23:12; Jer.15:16; Matt.1:4; 1 Pet. 2:2. But other books, based on scripture and profitable, are not to be neglected 1 Tim.4:13; 2 Tim.4:13. The Lord in his goodness has raised up many of his servants to be mighty in pen and print, and we should not ignore such a heritage. Here is a secondary, but important means whereby we may "build ourselves up on our most holy faith" Jude 20. Have you sometimes wished you had time, or more time, to devote to this? The Lord's day can be just such a time. It is given of God, to be used for such an end as this.

ii.) Prayer

It is assumed that time is always found for this, as the apostle says: "Pray without ceasing" 1 Thess. 5:17. But the sabbath can be a day when our souls can mount upward more readily and sweetly than at other times. If the whole of the Lord's day is kept aright, it will prove most conducive to this holy practice. The preached word, the worship we have offered and prayer we have heard, the good things we have read, the people we have been with - and the sense of God, Christ, and heaven as a result - will be great helps to us. They will be the means the Spirit will use to help our infirmities and lead us in our praying

Rom. 8:26; Jude 20. Let us then, as each Lord's day arrives, determine that throughout it we shall enjoy communion with the father, and his Son Jesus Christ.

iii.) Meditation

This is little thought of and much neglected among believers these days. The pace of modern-day living has lured us away from this discipline. But the Lord's day is an opportunity for its recovery. As with prayer, so with meditation, we shall find ourselves in most congenial circumstances. John Willison sets this out most helpfully: "This duty is proper every day, much more on the sabbath, which is set wholly apart for divine employments. It is the character of the blessed man, that "he meditates in God's law day and night" Psa. 1:2 ... Be not scared at the difficulty of it; for though at first this duty seem hard, and corrupt nature show aversion to it, yet press your heart to it, and afterwards you shall find it pleasant. Though it be difficult to climb this mount of meditation, yet, when once we get up, we will be ready to say with Peter, on the mount of transfiguration, 'It is good for us to be here', David found it so, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet' Psa.104:31. The more we meditate on God, the sweeter we will find him. Yea, so sweet did he find this duty, that he spent whole days in it, Psa. 119:97; and, as if the day had been too little, he borrowed a part of the night too. Psa. 63:6."

iv) Spiritual conversation

"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" Mal.3:16. We are not told whether this took place on the sabbath or not, but it certainly belongs there. In our conversation with each other on the Lord's day we should have an eye particularly to the things of the Lord. We should strive to speak "that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" Eph.4:2). We often fail here miserably. Our conversation is too much taken up with mundane, earthly matters. Among those things which God forbids on his day is: "speaking thine own words" Isa. 58:13. cf Matt. 12:36. Let us therefore, as much as possible, steer our speaking heavenward and keep it holy. We should not be legalistic about this, and imagine that any other topic of conversation is taboo. But if we are concerned for our souls, and the souls of others, we shall

want to order our speech accordingly for the Lord's day. We can do this by taking up some matter which we have perhaps heard in the sermon, ask questions of the Pastor and one another, share some spiritual blessing lately received etc. Let this be natural, but never forced. It was on the Lord's day that the two disciples on the Emmaus road "talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near and went with them" Lk.24:14-15. and we all know the sequel to that happy event. May this, in principle, be our experience and enjoyment too.

v.) A time with the family

The Lord's day affords a unique opportunity also for family life and religion. So often, during the week this is interfered with by one thing or another. But on the sabbath it can thrive apace. It is wisdom therefore, to take full advantage of this. Ensure, for instance, that family worship is especially meaningful and precious; let husband and wife pray and hold godly conversation together; encourage the children with their "Sunday books" etc.; go for walks together and admire our Father's handiwork. Thus the Lord's day will be kept by the family, and the family will reap the benefit.

If all of the above are implemented, a lot of questions and dilemmas regarding the Lord's day would be solved. For there would simply be no time to even consider the rights or wrongs of letter writing, buying things, newspapers, radio, television, and the like. These would not have so much as a look in. We would be so taken up with higher things that we should have to say "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down; why should the work cease, whilst I leave it and come down to you?" Neh.6:3.

An emphasis that is maintained throughout the bible regarding the sabbath, is that of joy. We should be able to call the sabbath "a delight" Isa.58:13. It is "the day which the Lord hath made, let us be glad and rejoice in it" Psa.118:24. On that first Lord's day, upon which our Lord rose from the dead, "the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" Jn.20:20. There should be nothing gloomy or forbidding about it for us. It should be the happiest day of the whole week. And if our hearts are right, it will be.

But this will seem strange to those who are carnal, and for whom the commandments of God are "grievous". They are like the people of old who complained, "when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat...?" and "Behold, what a weariness is it" Amos 8:5; Mal. 1: 13. From this, we can easily discern our spiritual condition. According as we find the Lord's day to us, that is the state of our souls. In the words of J.C.Ryle: "I want everyone to regard Sunday as the brightest, cheerfullest day of all the seven; and I tell everyone who finds such a Sunday as I advocate, a wearisome day, that there is something sadly wrong in the state of his heart I tell him plainly that if he cannot enjoy a 'Holy' Sunday the fault is not in the day, but in his own soul." And Robert Murray M'Cheyne: "How many may know from this that they will never be in heaven. A straw on the surface can tell which way the stream is flowing. Do you abhor a holy sabbath? Is it a kind of hell to you to be with those who are strict in keeping the Lord's day? The writer of these lines once felt as you do. You are restless and uneasy. You say, 'Behold, what a weariness is it', 'When will the sabbath be gone, that we may sell corn?' Ah soon, very soon, and you will be in hell. Hell is the only place for you. Heaven is one long, never-ending, holy sabbath day. There are no sabbaths in hell." May we all have grace to call the sabbath a delight, and show that the grace of God is in us of a truth, and thus "make our calling and election sure" 2 Pet. 1:10. It is appreciated that for some who read these pages, the duties set forth cannot be practised consistently or comprehensively. I refer to those who find themselves in homes and families which are not wholly Christian. Children of unbelieving parents, wives of unbelieving husbands etc. For such, genuine obstacles and difficulties are in the way. Although the heart longs for a sabbath pleasing to God, the domestic situation to some extent prevents this. The Lord is very understanding toward such. Their situation is viewed in a different light to those who are placed in wholly congenial circumstances. It behoves friends in less-than-ideal situations to seek wisdom to do what they can Jas. 1:5; Mk. 14:8. There are limits - but there are possibilities. And if the soul is faithful here, the Master's "Well done" will still be received at the last.

This series is now completed. We are most grateful to Mr.Thackway for these instructive articles which have been greatly appreciated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS and INFORMATION

Owing to extensive repair work on Bideford Quay with the resultant lack of parking space the authorities have requested that we postpone our "Drive in Church" services for a few weeks. In this we gladly co-operate. We now hope to commence on Sunday 8th July.

Our Annual Bible Convention will take place on Saturday 21st July and our speaker at both the afternoon and evening meetings will be the Hon. Roland Lamb M.A. who will also be preaching on the Sunday following, 22nd July.

Another important engagement on our calendar is the annual meeting arranged with the Trinitarian Bible Society who will be represented by Mr.K.Dix, Deputation Secretary of the Society. This meeting is being held on Saturday August 25th at 6.30 p.m. This will be of particular interest to all who love the Holy Scriptures.

In addition to our usual ministry, the following special meetings and visiting preachers have been arranged for the current quarter:

Sunday	8 th July	Mr C. Harris	Aspley Guise
Saturday	21 st July	Hon. R. Lamb	St. Albans
	(Bible Convention - 3.30pm and 6.30pm.	Tea - 5pm)	
Sunday	22 nd July	Hon. R. Lamb	St. Albans
Thursday	26 th July	Mr F. Stanbury	Bow
Sunday	29 th July	Mr K. Matrunola	Portsmouth
Sunday	19 th Aug.	Mr R. Abbott	Smeatharpe
Saturday	25 th Aug.	Mr K. Dix	Bedford
	(Annual Meeting - Trinitarian Bible Society - 6.30pm		
Sunday	26 th Aug.	Mr K. Dix	Bedford
Sunday	2 nd Sept.	Mr H. Roberts	Penzance
Sunday	9 th Sept.	Mr M. Watts	Salisbury
Sunday	16 th Sept.	Mr J. Thackway	Devizes

Book Room and Cassette Tape Ministry

A matter which has been brought to our notice lately has been the "New" translations of the Holy Scriptures, and which are now on sale in bookshops all over the world.

It would appear that generally speaking Christians are not well informed on this subject.

The Trinitarian Bible Society have a number of pamphlets relative to the current situation and have kindly sent us some for distribution. These are available free in the Book Room. They are very well printed and without going into technicalities give a very clear picture and can be easily understood. Some of the titles are, "The Divine Original" - "If the Foundations be destroyed" - "Plain reasons why we keep to the Authorised Version" - "The New International Version" - "What is wrong with Modern versions of the Holy Scriptures" etc.

Although we are small in number a lively interest continues to be shown in the Book section and there is a growing demand for cassette recordings of the expositions which are at presently before us. These refer to the subjects of "The Life of David" - "The Attributes of God" and "The prayers of the Apostle Paul".

L.W.GEE.

Had my Saviour been God only, I might perhaps have trusted Him but I never could have come near Him without fear. Had my Saviour been man only. I might have loved Him, but I never could have felt sure that He was able to take away my sins. But blessed be the Lord, my Saviour is God as well as man, and man as well as God. God, and so able to deliver me; Man, and so able to feel with me. Almighty power and deepest sympathy are met together in one glorious person, Jesus Christ, my Lord.

J. C. Ryle