

Not I, but Christ

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It is remarkable and yet plainly evident from Scripture, that God the Almighty, who fills both heaven and earth, should take delight in that which is *small*. He magnifies His Word above all His Name (Psalm 138: 2), yet the very first chapter of Genesis is full of the *smallest* letter in the Hebrew language, a letter smaller than the comma in English. Some of the greatest and most precious truths in the New Testament are expressed in monosyllables. "I am the way, the truth and the life;" "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men;" "Thy faith has saved thee; go in peace;" "The truth shall set you free;" "For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world;" "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" — and many, many more! The eternal greatness of God's heart of love is expressed likewise — "For God so loved . . . that He gave."

In contrast to man's vaunted, and yet often futile efforts, God shows us in the remarkable passage of Isaiah 11 how *He* accomplishes *His* purposes, and removes every trace of the power of evil in a "little child." The word in the original could be translated "little finger" — and before this tiny symbol the whole power and ferocity represented in the previous verses is completely defeated, the whole earth filled with God's glory, the people blessed and a resting place of glory secured. A weaned Isaac was the occasion of "a great feast;" a weaned Samuel became a mighty prophet none of whose words dropped to the ground. Benjamin (the son of the right hand) is referred to as "little Benjamin" (Psalm 68: 27), yet in Deuteronomy 33 he is spoken of as "the beloved of the Lord." In 1 Samuel 9 Saul refers to himself as belonging to the smallest tribe, and his family the least amongst them. In 1 Samuel 10 he "hid himself." As such he was anointed king and honoured of all. In 1 Samuel 15 he had lost the sense of smallness and hence came into rejection by God who "resisteth the proud." By contrast Saul the erstwhile proud "Pharisee of the Pharisees" is Paul (little) and in his own eyes is "less than the least of all saints." It is with this change of name he meets the attack of Elymas, the "child of the devil;" and it is as "less than the least of all saints" that the preaching of "the unsearchable riches of the Christ," and the making known of "the mystery . . . hid in God" is committed. It is as accepting the place of "a little child" that one is morally fitted to enter the region where the will of God — His kingdom — prevails (Matthew 18; Mark 10). A "little maid of *Israel*" carries the dual thought of smallness and of dignity. Her message is marked by affection and assurance and is honoured by God. She herself goes out of sight; in the reference to Naaman in the gospels the effect of her testimony only is mentioned.

The ark was one of the smallest articles in the tabernacle construction, but how gloriously precious it was, and how wonderful that which it contained! And so our thoughts move on happily to the Person of our beloved Lord. Some nine times in Matthew's gospel the Lord Jesus, He who is "over all . . . God blessed for ever" is referred to as the "young (little) child." Recently I read that "diminutives in Scripture are for the *heart*, not for the *head*." Adoringly we bow in worship as we contemplate the wonder of the incarnation, beyond the scope of our human mind, but having an appeal to our affections which fills our hearts and lives with responsive praise to the One "Who being in the form of God . . . humbled Himself" thus. In the Revelation we have over twenty references to the Lord Jesus as the Lamb, and in each case a diminutive is used — "a *little* Lamb." In Revelation 12 the full title of Satan in all its power and wickedness is given — "the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan . . . he was cast out . . . and his angels with him" (v.9). Salvation, "the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ" is brought in, all in the power of the blood of

the "little Lamb."

Yes, the power of evil, the self-exaltation of man, is all completely negated by the One who "made Himself of no reputation." Have we really appreciated and have we assimilated this beautiful feature of smallness? Does it affect our lives and our service as it should? Do we regard ourselves and those whom we may be privileged to serve, in the endearing way in which the blessed Lord speaks of them to Peter in John 21 — "My lambs" (another diminutive)! The only time the word is used except in Revelation as already seen. Achan sought a "goodly Babylonish garment" — descriptive of the greatness of man's world which under the hand of God is hastening to judgement. A system which also has penetrated Christendom to the point of corruption! Hannah made Samuel a "little coat" and brought it to him, not once, but "from year to year." How morally great he became — but may we think that the sense of his own smallness remains? Could we comfortably wear the coat which Paul (little) left at Troas with Carpus (fruitful)? True leadership still demands the spirit and features of "a little child."

Like Thee in faith, in meekness, love,

In every beautiful grace.