

## Resources Available in Days of Departure

Lev. 10: 12-15; 1 Kings 18: 17-21; 1 Kings 19: 18; 2 Kings 4: 1-7.

F. A. Hughes.

MAR. 1961

I wish to speak of resources that are available in days of ruin, and to show that, as these resources are appreciated and appropriated, the service of God may be enriched.

In the first Scripture we see, typically, resources which are available in priestly service; in the second Scripture resources available in relation to the rights of Christ as Lord; and in the third the resources which are available in the Holy Spirit.

There are two precious things which we need to have enshrined in our affections, particularly in days of ruin; they are, an appreciation of divine love, and an appreciation, too, of the completeness of the victory of Christ. These two things stand out in relation to the resources available to the saints in days of ruin. Through the victory of Christ divine love is available in the darkest days, and its resources are illimitable. Hence Jude in his epistle, in which he refers to a scene of universal ungodliness (v. 15) encourages the saints to "keep yourselves in the love of God," (v. 21). In that holy circle of divine love are found all the resources which we need in our day. In John 13: 23-25, we find the apostle when in the presence of the spirit of betrayal and of the activities of Satan, who had entered into the heart of Judas, pillowing his head upon the breast of divine love.

In Judges 5, ruin had come in and the condition of God's people was so low that it is written "The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel;" everything was static. Everything appears to have been brought to a standstill by the power of the enemy; there was no response Godward. But we read in verse 7, "Until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel." Deborah lived under the palm tree (ch. 4: 5); she had the sense of victory in her soul; and as having this sense of victory she marshalled the forces of God's people and the enemy was completely routed. The knowledge in intimacy of divine love, and a blessed sense of the victory of Christ in our souls are resources available to us in our day.

In Leviticus 10 we see that conditions of outward ruin had come in in relation to the service of God, affecting even the priesthood. Nadab and Abihu had dared to bring in that which was not according to the mind of God. I suppose, beloved brethren, nothing has brought in ruin amongst the saints more than the introduction of man's mind into the things of God. Nadab seems to be the leader. His name means "liberality." Have we not seen in our day the introduction into the service of God things which are contrary to His mind as expressed in His word? It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that the intrusion of man's ideas and innovations into the service of God is an offence to His nature.

In verse 12 we read that the word was, "Unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that *were left*". It is this thought of what *is left*, what *remains*, that one would emphasize. The name "Eleazar" means "helped of God," and the name "Ithamar" speaks of "the land of palms," and as we let go our own thoughts and rely only upon divine help, we shall know something of the sphere of victory even in days of failure and weakness. Breakdown we must, alas, take account of, owning our own part in it, but rejoicing in the measure of recovery in relation to that *which is left*. We read of "*sons that were left*," so that the service of God can proceed in dignity; then in verse 12, "the meat offering that remaineth." The wave breast and the heave shoulder out of the sacrifices of peace offerings, all are there still. How blessed that there is still a sphere of fellowship in which we can enjoy together precious thoughts of the

excellence of Christ, all to be liberated by the Spirit's power in the service of the blessed God.

Then in verse 15 we read of the "statute" and the commandment of the Lord. God has not surrendered His rights even in a day of outward declension and breakdown. Conditions at Corinth were marked by failure and pretension, but Paul sounds a clarion note "if any man think himself to be . . . spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," (1 Corinthians 14: 37). As thus enjoying, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the preciousness of divine resources in Christ, let us seek also to be found obedient to the commandment of the LORD. There can be no power in the service of God unless our hearts are filled with a sense of the preciousness of Christ and our wills under the control of Him as Lord.

In 1 Kings 18 we have the awful spectacle of 850 false prophets eating at Jezebel's table. What a challenge to the rights of God in the very place where those rights should have been honoured and upheld! Would not these followers of Baal as found in the palace suggest features which are antagonistic to the rights of Christ as Lord in the very sphere which professes His name? The epistles and the addresses to the churches in the Revelation shew plainly the intrusion of that which is abhorrent to Christ in the place which should have been marked by fidelity to Himself.

Is there not a note of triumph in the word of the Lord, "Yet I *have left* Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him," (verse 18). It was not only that they had refused Baal's authority, but they held back their affections from going out after him. Beloved brethren, we need to be preserved in *our* affections from all that is contrary to the name of the Lord. To *us* there is "One Lord, Jesus Christ," (1 Corinthians 8: 6, N.T.). We would surely desire that our affections should be marked by undivided, unstinted loyalty to Christ. Thank God there were seven thousand left who were loyal in that day, and thank God there are those in our day who are loyal to Christ. We want to be amongst them. We do not want to be like Obadiah in this chapter, speaking of what he had done, and at the same time found supporting Ahab. Let us not speak of what *we have done*, and at the same time be found linked with that which is contrary to the name of the Lord. But let us stand fixed in our affections in relation to that which God in His sovereignty has preserved. There is that which is left even in a day of ruin, that which is marked by fidelity to our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be amongst it in reality of heart.

Lastly, in 2 Kings 4, we have an indication of the vast resources which are available to us in the Holy Spirit. A scene of death and of bondage through poverty is envisaged, features which, alas! are sadly in evidence in our day.

The Lord says of Sardis, "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead;" and of Laodicea he says, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor," (Rev. 3: 1 and 17). In her condition of death and poverty the woman in Kings is asked, "What hast thou in the house" And she said, Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil." Potentially everything depended upon that pot of oil, yet evidently it was of little value in her eyes.

There was one thing necessary if the gain of that oil was to be enjoyed — *empty vessels*. As long as an empty vessel was available the supply of the oil continued.

Is not this a salutary word for us today? We well know that the oil is a type of the Holy Spirit, and the power for overcoming in both the deadness of Sardis and the poverty of Laodicea lay in hearing the voice of the Spirit, (Rev. 3: 13-22). What wonderful resources we have in the Holy Spirit! As coming under the "law of the Spirit of life" we are set free "from the law of sin and death." As the Spirit of promise He is the "earnest of our inheritance." By Him we have access to the Father — the living Source of all blessing.

A volume would be necessary to write of all the wonderful resources which are available to the saints in the Holy Spirit of God; and as "empty vessels," emptied of all the pride and pretension which is so evident around us, and by which we can be so quickly marked, we may know in living conditions the liberty and power which He would lead us into.

Let us be exercised to give the Holy Spirit of God His rightful place, unquenched, ungrieved and unhindered. Thus shall we know in a day marked by departure and breakdown, the spiritual power and the spiritual wealth which belong to the Spirit's day.