

True Intimacy

F. A. Hughes.

MAR/APR 1981

The last verse of the book of Judges reveals a condition of complete breakdown in Israel — one could say even a state of anarchy, the will of man prevailing and God's place in the nation universally disowned. He had blessed them greatly, brought them into the land, raised up deliverers, proved them, only to bring into manifestation their utter departure from Him. The result was famine. Instead of turning to God in repentance the world as seen in Moab became the attraction. How sadly this condition of things persists in our times! Elimelech, whose name means "God is King," is completely unfaithful to the blessing which such a name would contain (Ruth 1: 2). The favour and blessing of God has long been towards the land in which our lot is cast — but God's rights have been drastically forgotten and the features of man's world, which lies in the lap of the evil one, has dominated the minds of men of every rank, spiritual famine resulting with no apparent resources for moral recovery.

The beautiful little book of Ruth, however, shows that God has infinite resources of grace available even to those as Ruth the *Moabitess*, having no claim whatever upon His blessing for His people (Nehemiah 13: 1). It is not the purpose of this paper to enter into the details of Ruth's experiences, except to call attention to the last word of the book — DAVID. The name "David" is to appear in the Scriptures some hundreds of times, but this is its first appearance and indicates God's resource — His beloved! God reaches His end in Christ — "My beloved Son in whom I am well please." Everything connected with His eternal glory, and the meeting of every need for men is found in that blessed One — David's Son and David's Lord.

Having typically reached His end objectively in Christ, God now proceeds in the following book (1 Samuel) to establish the preciousness of His beloved in the hearts of men. The prayer of Hannah (1 Samuel 2) is a full ascription of praise to God. She exults in His salvation, His holiness, His strength, His glory, His knowledge, and much more, ending with the name of the One in whom all God's resources are found — His anointed, His Christ (the same word). Her affections are in full alignment with those of God Himself — all is established in God's beloved. Is this why the mother of six (1 Samuel 2: 21) says "Even the barren beareth *seven*"? We avoid speculations, sufficient to see that barrenness and its consequent sorrow gives place to the *perfection of joy*.

The immediate fruit of Hannah's exercise is Samuel. He was born at a time when the priesthood itself was marked on the one hand by weakness and on the other hand by lust and corruption. But again God's resource is seen. Place had been given for the "Ark of God" and Samuel found his rest there — he lay in the temple of Jehovah where the Ark of God was, with the blessed result that he grew and prospered and had the unspeakable privilege of God speaking directly to him. This precious intimacy with God made a lasting impression upon him in his subsequent service — not one word that he spoke was allowed to drop to the ground — all was fruitful for God (ch. 3: 19).

In 2 Samuel 8 David is prospered by God even to the complete establishing of the kingdom as far as the Euphrates, and in 2 Samuel 9 he is seen "Shewing the kindness of God" to Mephibosheth of the house of his former enemy Saul. Were these actions of recovery and of love the fruit of his exercises in chapter 7, where we read "And King David went in and sat (tarried) before Jehovah"? The following verses are full of the deepest interest. He mentions *seven* distinctive names of God — including the unchangeable name of God — "The SAME" (v. 28). He magnifies thus the blessed God, attributing all glory and power and blessing to Him, and regarding himself but the humble participant of God's

goodness and mercy and wisdom. It is perhaps of interest that "Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micah" — "who is like God?"

In Luke 7 we read "Mary . . . having sat down at the feet of Jesus was *listening* to His word" (v. 39). How precious such a posture and what exercises are aroused in our affections as we contemplate her desires! In John 12 those "beautiful feet" engage her attention again as she pours upon them that unique "pure nard," the whole house being filled with the fragrance of the ointment. Mark tells us in 14 that Mary's action of devoted affection to Christ would be spoken of wherever the glad tidings were preached, for a memorial of her.

Beloved brethren, one readily acknowledges the simplicity of the word, but the desire in writing it is simple too — and yet intensely exercising.

(1) In our service to the Lord do the words we speak proceed from our nearness to Christ — finding our rest "by the Ark of God"? Thus, and thus only, will they abide and effect that which is for the glory of God.

(2) Does the experience of God's support and the expressing to others "His kindness" lead us to sit in His presence that an increased sense of His glory and majesty may fill our vision?

(3) Does our service rendered to Him in a scene where He is misunderstood and unappreciated, leave an abiding savour of response to His enjoyed preciousness and love?

What resources are available to us as we constantly seek to be near Himself — finding complete rest in His holy presence. A word of prophetic character which does not fail to abide for His glory. A deeper impression upon our spirits as we in restfulness contemplate the greatness and glory of God Himself, and a word which carries an abiding savour of the precious Christ.

How great the privilege of such service in the midst of a world which has no room for Christ, and embraces the atmosphere of a lukewarm christendom.