

The Prophecy of Amos (4)

—R. Been Sr.

In the first chapter the prophet Amos announced successively the judgments over Syria, Philistea, Tyre, Edom, and Ammon. In the second, the prophet continues these judgment announcements, now over Moab, Judah (the two tribes), and the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, Israel.

Chapter 2

The judgment over Moab (vv. 1-3)

The reason given for Moab's coming under judgment teaches us a new principle. God does not only take into account the unrighteous deeds that these Gentile nations did to *His people*, but also the unrighteous acts done by them to *each other*. Filled with a hatred that vents itself even against the dead, *Moab had desecrated the tomb of the king of Edom by burning his bones into lime*. We don't know on which occasion this happened, but by this desecration Moab despised God-given authority. It does not matter how guilty the one in authority might have been himself.

Scripture tells us that the pious king Josiah once caused tombs to be opened to burn the bones they contained on the altar that earlier had been set up by King Jeroboam. That this would take place, the man of God from Judah had announced many years before. He even had mentioned the name of Josiah (1 Ki. 13:2). The Lord Himself had therefore predicted Josiah's deed. Otherwise, such actions are not fitting for a man. A sinful man has no authority to judge the dead, that is God's prerogative. It is different when such actions are taken upon the commandment of the Lord. Besides, Josiah's burning of bones was not to judge these dead, but to defile the altar.

There was also a great difference in the motives Josiah acted in obedience, all sympathy or antipathy towards the dead was foreign to him. Moab, on the other hand, acted out of revenge towards the dead. Moab could no longer hurt the living king of Edom who had invaded Moab, therefore it vented its hatred by means of the desecration of the tombs.

This even teaches an important, moral lesson regarding God's providential ways with the nations. That Edom had acted so terribly toward the people of God and toward Himself did not make any difference. Every infraction of the proper relationship in authority, even if it takes place after the death of the one in authority, will be punished by God. So it will also be at the judgment before the Great White Throne, although often such infraction will already have received retribution here on earth. Revolution consumes its children. The final judgment follows before the Great White Throne.

Moab will be judged in the midst of battle noise. The princes and judges will be slain together with its ruler. The prophet Ezekiel says that the judgment over Moab will be executed by "the children of the East" (Ezek. 25:10). Isaiah announces it as very near, within three years (Isa. 16:14). This prophecy must have been announced under the reign of Uzziah or Hezekiah. Later on, Moab was again destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar.

In the last days Moab will be present again (Jer. 48:47). A remnant of it will be restored. Edom, Moab, and Ammon will escape the onslaught of the King of the North, the prophetic Assyrian (Dan. 11:41). This, however, is only so that they may be subjected to a special judgment by the, then restored, nation of Israel. The prophet Zephaniah says that restored Israel will plunder Moab (Zeph. 2:9).

Moab is the last Gentile nation of which chapters 1 and 2 speak. The judgments over these nations are in general already fulfilled. Amos concerned himself specially with the moral character of the evil which brought the judgment very close indeed. He spoke little of the events of the last days. In other prophecies of Scripture, we find the judgments that will be executed over the same nations in the last days.

The Judgment over Judah (vv. 4-5)

God always keeps His promises, but so He carries out His threats, especially those against His own people. Toward other nations He is the defender of His people, He takes up the cause of His people. But the closer one's position is to Him, the

more severe His judgment. That which He bears with in other nations, He punishes in His own people. When it came to judgment, Judah and Israel were not excepted, but named among the various nations upon whom the judgment would fall.

The reason for the judgment over Judah is given as: *They had rejected the law of the Lord, His statutes they did not keep, they let themselves be led by the lies in which their fathers had already walked. In short, they had left their relationship with Jehovah.*

The Gentile nations would be punished for their behaviour toward Israel and Judah, but the Lord would punish His people for their behaviour toward Him. Judah had not honoured the words of God, had not kept His statutes. If Judah had done so, it would have never been deceived by the lie of idolatry. The discipline that God executes over His people on earth (for it is here not a question of *eternal* judgment) depends entirely upon the influence the Word of God has on His people. When that Word is neglected His people is on the same basis as the world. Keeping the Word meets with the Lord's approval; its neglect always brings judgment.

The judgment over Israel (vv. 6-16)

A separate judgment is announced over Israel, the ten tribes. As observed before, the ten tribes are the special subject of Amos' prophecy. This is evident from the fact that the cause of Israel's punishment is described in much greater detail than that of Judah. The judgment over Israel is just as certain to come as that over the Gentile nations. The nation was characterized by low greed, of which the righteous, the poor, the lowly, the meek became the victims. This was all in spite of the fact that God has a special care for such people who often find themselves to be as lambs among wolves. The Lord Jesus declares such people blessed, for they shall inherit the earth on which man's wickedness denied them a place.

In Judah's case it was a despising of the words of the Lord, but in Israel there was no fear of God. They sold a righteous person for money. Later Judas did the same when he delivered the Righteous One into the hand of the enemies for thirty pieces of silver. They sold the poor, in exchange for a pair of shoes. They craved that "the dust of the earth would be on the head of the lowly," which means that they would like to see them in mourning. They twisted the way of the meek, by falsely accusing them of not walking according to their profession; so that they might discourage them from walking to the honour of the Lord. In our days such accusations are heard too, but they only reveal the hatred of the accuser against Christ, whose example the believers want to follow. Besides, there was in Israel a terrible moral degradation. The prophet says that a man and his father had intercourse with the same maid to profane the name of the Lord.

The advantages that these Israelites got from taking the clothing of the poor in pledge and oppressing their neighbours were great. The pawnbrokers lived well, drank wine in their idols temples. In this condition of greediness for money and goods, of depraved morals, of despising the righteous, they were to be found beside every altar except the altar of the only true God. They had a religion that was a real caricature of the true one. All centered around money and possessions. Don't we often see such conditions in the Christian world of our days?

Such circumstances within a nation to whom, and for whom, the Lord had done so much were a painful contradiction. For a nation that now revealed itself to be so depraved, the Lord had in earlier days destroyed the Canaanites from the land, even though they were high as the cedars and strong as oaks.

They had not been able to stand before Israel, both fruit and root of these "trees" were destroyed. The Canaanites had become like dried tree trunks that had been cast in the fire. Their land the Lord had given to Israel. Therefore He had brought Israel out of Egypt, leading it for forty years through the wilderness. With such words the Lord reminded Israel that they had only obtained possession of the land of Canaan as a result of His work of salvation in them and for them.

For believers of the Assembly "to be led out of Egypt" means to be saved by Christ Jesus. It speaks of the deliverance from the power of the world and of Satan. "*To be led for forty years through the wilderness*" means for them the guidance, the discipline of God, without which they would never reach the final destination, heaven. Doubtless, the redemption in itself is sufficient to bring the believer eternal blessing. The murderer on the cross who turned to the Lord in his last hours did not know a wilderness journey. But most believers know the "forty years in the wilderness" very well, and it serves to cleanse and sanctify them practically.

That is how the Lord wants to see them. The Lord Jesus delivered Himself up for the Assembly, that He might sanctify her and cleanse her. To what purpose? So that He might then put her before Himself sanctified in a practical way and cleansed (Eph. 5:25-26). Humanly speaking, it must have been a great disappointment for God to see such a degenerated and corrupted Israel in the land after He had given it such great care. And so it is with Christendom.

Despite the corrupt manifestation of Israel, the Lord still continued His dealings with the nation. Of their sons, He raised up prophets, and of their young men Nazarites. Israel itself could testify that He had done so. The prophets were the carriers and announcers of the Lord's words. Their purpose had been to lead the people back to God, to point to the judgments, but also to the mercies of God. The Nazarites among the people were, through their sanctified life and consecration to the Lord, a sermon of keeping oneself from the defilement of the world and the lusts of the flesh.

But Israel had neither wanted the one nor the other. They had forced the Nazarites to drink wine, which was forbidden to the Nazarite. The drunkards of Ephraim couldn't bear the testimony of the Nazarites; it condemned them and therefore they had removed them from their midst by forcing the Nazarites to do as they did themselves. They had told the prophets to be silent. Out of enmity against the words of the prophets — actually the words of God — they had seduced these servants of the Lord, persecuted them, and by times killed them.

So, the total absence of the fear of God became the cause of the heavy judgment over Israel. That judgment is compared to a wagon load of sheaves in harvest time. When it rolls, it causes the ground to shake under its heavy load, that crushes all that comes under its wheels. So Israel would be crushed under the heavy judgment that would come over it. The earthquake in Amos' days was a foreboding of this, a sign.

No one would be able to escape this judgment. The quick-footed would not be able to outrun it, the strong would not be able to use their power, the hero would not come out alive. The archer would not be able to stand, fleeing would be impossible, not even on horseback. In those days of judgment even the courageous one would flee away naked, but even he would not escape. Such was the unavoidable sentence over the ten tribes that was executed less than one hundred years later.

To be cont'd

This is Our Lord!

—*B. Eysink*

"And when they saw Him, they did homage to Him" (Mt. 28:17).

This verse can be divided into two parts:

- a. The disciples saw the Lord Jesus;
- b. They worshipped Him.

That sums up the reason for this article.

Let us read the following verses of Matthew 14:22-33 slowly and attentively:

"And immediately He compelled the disciples to go on board ship, and to go on before Him to the other side, until He should have dismissed the crowds. And having dismissed the crowds, He went up into the mountain apart to pray. And when even was come, He was alone there, but the ship was already in the middle of the sea tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. But in the fourth watch of the night He went off to them, walking on the sea. And the disciples, seeing Him walking on the sea, were troubled, saying, It is an apparition. And they cried out through fear. But Jesus immediately spoke to them, saying, Take courage; it is I: be not afraid. And Peter answering Him said, Lord, if it be Thou, command me to come to Thee upon the waters. And He said, Come. And Peter, having descended from the ship, walked upon the waters to go to Jesus. But seeing the wind strong he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught hold of him, and says to him, O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt? And when they had gone up into the ship, the wind fell. But those in the ship came and did homage to Him, saying, Truly Thou art God's Son."

The One who compels

The Lord Jesus is One who compels His disciples (v. 22). That can only be done by one who has the right to command others. For this, the others must recognize his authority over them. The disciples do this and follow His instructions. They acknowledge Him as their Lord. Can the Lord Jesus also compel you and me to do what He shows us to do from His Word? The danger for me and you is that, though we do perhaps read the Word, we remain indifferent under it. That's how it

often is, isn't it? Don't we have to confess to the Lord that we often don't take Him into account? Today, let us make a new start by acknowledging and confessing Him as Lord.

The One who prays

Next the Lord Jesus is the One who prays alone on the mountain (v. 23). How beautiful to see that the Lord speaks with His Father. Is it not an encouragement for you and me to know that the Lord Jesus still prays for you and me today? (Rom. 8:34). Daily we are the subject of the conversation between the Son and the Father. Isn't He the compassionate and faithful High Priest, who has made atonement and who can come to help those who are being tempted? Isn't He the great High Priest who has compassion with our weaknesses?

The One who comes

He is the Lord who comes (v. 25). Several times we read of the Lord's coming to His disciples. Sometimes He finds them in fear, at other times He finds them asleep (Mt. 14:27; 17:7; 26:40). In Mark 16:14 the Lord comes and finds them: "In unbelief and hardness of heart." How would the Lord Jesus find me if He came now, at this very moment?

The Almighty One

He walks on the sea. "Nonsense," says the unbeliever. "Symbolic," says the modernist. But we, believers, may say, "He is the Almighty God, who has all things in His hand. He is the One who commands winds and waves" (Lk. 8:25). Isn't it encouraging to know that we are united with Him?

The One who is not recognized

It is an apparition, a ghost! The disciples don't recognize the Lord. How sad for the Lord to notice that His disciples don't recognize Him. Are we better? We aren't, are we? Isn't it often so, that we have a better eye for problems, circumstances, brothers, sisters, thereby losing sight of the Lord, so that we no longer see Him even when He shows Himself to us? Yes, there are problems, and circumstances too, brothers and sisters with wrongs and failures, plenty of them (besides our own wrongs and failures). Shouldn't we try to solve those problems with the Lord's help by first restoring our view of the Lord Jesus? Let us first bring all these problems, circumstances, brothers, and sisters which cause us such great difficulties, to Him. Let us do this before the Lord returns!

The One who speaks

In verse 27 He is the One who speaks to His disciples. Today He wants to speak to you and me through His Word. Are we listening? He is the One of whom the Father testifies in Matthew 17:5, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I have found My delight, hear Him."

The One who encourages

"Be of good courage!" Even in difficult circumstances, the Lord will encourage us through His Word. How? He presents Himself, "It is I." All these encouragements — and there are innumerable many in the Word — we may call ours. The One who doesn't change "It is I," or "I am." That is how the Lord was called in the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14). How encouraging to read, "Jesus Christ is the Same, yesterday, today, and to the ages [to come]," and, "I will not leave thee, neither will I forsake thee" (Heb. 13:8,5). We may build upon Him, even when all things around us change.

The One who invites

Peter asks the Lord to command him to come to Him over the water. The Lord says, "Come!" The Lord knows Peter, He knows his enthusiasm, and He knows it good for him to walk that way, for so he will learn something. Isn't that how it goes with you and me? We walk a path which we know to be good; the Lord affirmed this path when we were exercised about

it before Him. Then, suddenly, there are problems. Right then He invites me and you, "Come to Me, all who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28).

The One who hears, answers prayers, and saves

Peter prays and the Lord hears and answers. The Lord is so near. He reaches out and takes him in His hand. That is how close the Lord is to you and me in such difficult moments. He is with you and me; it is a special favour to know this and to experience it. Are we also with Him on prayer-meeting nights? He loves to meet us there, to hear us give thanks and pray. Isn't it very necessary to be there where He is according to His promise and to pray? It isn't that glorious among us that prayer is no longer needed, is it?

The One who is worshipped

The disciples worship the Lord Jesus after they have these experiences with the Lord, after they have seen who He is and what He wants to be for them. Let us hope that it may be so in our lives, that, the more we come to know Him, the more we worship Him for who He is.

God's Son

Those in the ship came to the conclusion that He is the Son of God because they had seen what He had done. A little later there were again a few people who said, "Truly, this Man was Son of God!" (Mt. 27:54). It was that Son who honoured His Father (Jn. 8:49-50), who served His Father (Mal. 3:17), but who was not spared, but was delivered for me and for you. Does this not make a deep impression on our souls and cause us to say with Moses, "O Lord, who is like Thee?"

Propitiation and Reconciliation (2)

—John van Dijk

In our last issue we considered the difficult word "propitiation," and how it, though it is available to all, has only its value over the sins of those who believe. Now we like to look at reconciliation.

Reconciliation

This word too is often misunderstood, and by times rather wrong things have been said in connection with it. Hopefully we can help some of our readers to a better understanding of this valuable term in Scripture. Again we will begin by looking at the New Testament verses containing the Greek word signifying "reconciliation."

Katallasso, this is one of three verbs translated with "to reconcile." It is found twice in Romans 5:10, and 3 times in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20. Once it is found in 1 Corinthians 7:11 for the reconciliation of a woman to her husband.

Apokatallasso, this is a stronger verb. It occurs in Ephesians 2:16 and twice in Colossians 1:20-21 (-22 in NIV & NASB).

Diallasso, this verb only occurs in Matthew 5:24 speaking of the reconciliation of two adversaries. It is never used of our reconciliation to God.

Katallage, this is the noun translated by "reconciliation." It occurs twice together with the verb *katallasso* in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. It occurs twice in Romans, once in chapter 5:11 where the KJV renders it incorrectly "atonement," and once in chapter 11:15.

For completeness it may be good to remind the reader that we already observed that the word "reconciliation," used by the KJV in Hebrews 2:17, should have been rendered "propitiation."

Apart from the confusion brought about by improper translation, which the above has cleared up, there are also some confused ideas about reconciliation. Two of these I like to address. The first one is the notion that man had to be reconciled *with* God. The second is that since the world has been reconciled, the sinner's only sin is that of unbelief.

Perhaps some readers wondered about the first of these two problems. They will ask, "Does the Bible not teach that man is to be reconciled with God?" No, the Bible does not teach that. If you carefully read the verses speaking of reconciliation, you will notice that the Bible tells us that man needs to be reconciled *to* God, not *with* God. Small difference? Not really. When two are reconciled *with* each other, both have to move from their original position to a new one where the two can find common ground. This idea is expressed in Matthew 5:24 in connection with two adversaries, and as we noted, the Bible uses a different word for it in the Greek.

When it is a question of man's reconciliation *to* God, then God is the one who has no need of changing. Remember that I said that I did not quite like the word "disposition", but that I could not think of one word that would closer approximate what I wanted to say. I did not like it because it gave the impression that a change was needed with God. That is not the case. God has always been favourably disposed to the sinner, He was only prevented from showing it in its fullness until Christ, the Lamb of God, had become the propitiation for our sins. The sinner is at enmity with God. The sinner needs changing. Since God has been propitiated, and there is adequate payment made for all who come with confession, the sinner may come to a God who proclaims: Be reconciled to Me! As soon as there is a change in the sinner's heart, he finds the truth of: "But while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion" (Luk. 15:20). The Father has been looking out, straining, so to say, His eye, to see if the son is coming home.

God ever is the unchangeable One. Even when it comes to such matters as propitiation and reconciliation. The Bible proclaims time and again that He is the Changeless One (Mal. 3:6; Jam. 1:17). There is so little change with God, that even when Satan interfered in God's creation, God did not deviate from His counsel wherein He had chosen us in the Beloved before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Then God brought in the Lamb of God foreknown before the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:19-20), and, in the fullness of time, He sent forth His Son (Gal. 4:4), and made Him sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). Where is there any change in this? With God there is found nothing but stable unchangeability, so that whom He has foreknown, He has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). Thank God, He is the Changeless One, for if the Perfect One changes, there is nothing to be expected but imperfection. What an impossible thought!

Don't think I am shadowboxing. Sad to say, I know that some popular radio speakers in North America are confused about these matters. In the midst of otherwise good teaching, they teach such fallacies. Never listen, never read — not even these pages — without your Bible open. Satan might slip things into your mind that will hinder your spiritual growth; he can do this even through generally faithful teachers. He certainly would like to use me; none are beyond his reach. But, thanks be to God, as long as one remains dependent upon God and does not rely on his own strength, God keeps him. May the Lord keep you and me.

Now we need to look at the second problem connected with reconciliation. Such Scriptural statements as: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19), and that "the casting away of them [Israel] be the world's reconciliation" (Rom. 11:15), cause some to conclude that the whole world is reconciled to God. And true enough, if the first of these verses had said, "God is in Christ reconciling the world..." it could be seen as an ongoing and therefore not yet completed action. It is however put in the past tense. The second verse can be understood both as an ongoing action or a past action, time simply is not included there. We have therefore to deal mainly with the first verse. On the basis of this verse some reason wrongfully as follows: The word reconciliation means that the barrier between God and man has been taken away. Therefore, the only thing that keeps anyone from eternal life is the refusal to accept the salvation that God offers. That is why the only sin that causes man to go to hell is his unbelief.

Now there are two reasons why I maintain that the whole world is not reconciled. The first is this. If it were reconciled, why is there a need to proclaim in the world "Be reconciled to God"? It is clear that many individuals are simply not reconciled, and the many individuals together make up "the world."

The second reason destroys the notion that the only sin causing man to go to hell is his refusal to believe. In Revelation 20:13 we read that "the dead were judged each according to their works." This verse is crucial. It is the death blow to the claim that Christ died for the sins of the whole world. If that were so, then God would be unrighteous in judging the dead according to their works, as this verse tells us that God will do. Their works are all sins, as we know, for all that is not of faith is sin (Rom. 14:23). God would then be judging the same sins twice, *or* the penalty born by Christ for those sins was not sufficient. Either thought is horribly false!

But what of John 1:29 which says that Christ is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"? Notice that the word *sin* is in the singular. He removes the principle of sin that now rules this world. In the Millennium Christ will severely curtail that, and in the eternal condition it will entirely be done away on the basis of the work of Christ, the Lamb of God. This verse (just as 1 Jn. 2:2, as we saw in the previous issue) says nothing about the removal of sins from individual sinners.

Thus it is clear from Scripture that every unbeliever still stands before God in his own sins. Do you believe that when a murderer comes to God that there is no need for him to acknowledge that he is a sinner? If he has to do so (and he does), then I ask, Is one who has not yet come with repentance nevertheless reconciled? I wrote *a murderer* only because such an extreme example shows the error we make when we say that the world is reconciled more glaringly. The same holds just as true for the refined lady. All must come with repentance and confession before they are reconciled. As long as anyone fails to repent, he stands in his own sins before God. Sins are only forgiven and done away upon confession, and only then is a sinner reconciled to God.

But now we are left with the question how to understand the reconciliation of the world, and how we can say that the Lord died for all, and yet claim that He only carried the sins of those who believe. Let me use an example out of daily life. We live in a time of government subsidies. In Canada some years ago, the government made funds available to all who improved the insulation of their house. Calculations were made, funds were budgeted, the proclamation was made that all who undertook to improve their insulation could get a rebate by filling out some forms and presenting proof. The claim was made: The government pays X dollars for everyone. The truth was that not everyone made use of the offer. Others thought they did, but failed to fill out the proper documents, and others again never read their newspaper and did not know about it. In the end, only certain people benefitted from the program, only some received funds. Yet, in principle the government paid for everyone. So Christ died for all, but that does not mean that all avail themselves of the benefit. As long as they don't, they are not reconciled.

Then there are some who have difficulty understanding the character of reconciliation because the Lord Jesus paid about 2000 years ago and there are people who come only today. True enough, but let me ask: Did the Lord not pay for all your past sins though you were born long after He died? He did, right? Something a bit more difficult: Did He pay for the sins you did today? Yes! Even more amazing: Did He pay for your future sins? Yes, He did, thank God! But how did He know what to pay for, for He paid 2000 years ago? Is not the answer in this, that in all things He knows the end from the beginning? Did He not know that you — I write to Christians — whom He foreknew before the foundation of the world would come to Him? What then is this supposed difficulty about His knowing which sins needed to be paid for? So we see that each one who comes with confession today will be reconciled to God.

Now some might with human wisdom start to argue that then the offer of salvation for all can not be true if Christ paid only for the sins of those who come with confession. This problem resides only in our finite minds that are boggled by the great capabilities of our God for whom time does not exist. There is in all this no greater difficulty than the one arising from the truth of predestination taught in Ephesians 1 and elsewhere. These things are true, though unfathomable by human logic. In these matters finite man's thoughts grapple with the plans of the infinite God. Let us be careful to let every word of God stand and not run away with human logic and deductions. God's word goes out to all, Be reconciled to God. All may come. All who do will receive forgiveness and find that Christ, by paying for their sins, has laid the foundation for their reconciliation to God.

We conclude then that indeed the work on the basis of which God reconciles each sinner that comes to Him — or to put it differently, the world — was completed about 2000 years ago. Therefore 2 Corinthians 5 reads: "God *was* in Christ reconciling the world." There is no further work to be done from God's side. The sacrifice has been made once for all. Now it is up to the sinner through his act of repentance to come so that he may be reconciled to God. We who have come, go out to proclaim this good news to *all* who want to hear.

The End

To Behold Thy Beauty

—W. E. E. Wichgers

"Everyone that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jn. 3:3). A believer has a blessed hope. He is not expecting death but the Lord Jesus who has promised to return and to take all who are His to Himself into His glory. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and what we shall be it has not yet been manifested" (1 Jn. 3:2).

Even now we may call ourselves children of God, heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ. What an array of blessings and... it is not yet shown what we shall be. This manifestation awaits the revelation of Jesus Christ, our Lord. When He is revealed, then we will be revealed with Him in glory, and we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is in His complete beauty and glory! To see Him, we must be like Him, we must have the same glorified body He has, otherwise we could not bear the sight, it would simply destroy us.

A tremendous expectation

We will be like Him! A wonderful expectation, a blessed certainty! What else could we wish for? To awake with his likeness, is eternal joy, eternal happiness, full satisfaction for the heart. How great to leave earth with all its sorrows and besetting problems. To lay off forever this body with its weaknesses and to be like Him, our glorified Lord! Who could grasp the fullness of such blessing? Who could worthily describe it?

Purification is needed

But what does the apostle say? "Everyone that has this hope in Him purifies himself, even as He is pure." This hope in Him has an effect on everyone who has this hope. And, praise be to God, He Himself is the immovable basis for it. Let us observe that it does not say: "Everyone who knows this hope," but "everyone that has this hope in *Him*." Oh, how many know this hope, but have more or less forgotten it. It does no longer live in their hearts. The hope in Him has a separating, purifying effect. That's unchangeable. Who truly hopes to be soon —who knows how soon? — like Him, who waits for that with a yearning desire, will long to be even now as much as possible like Him. Such a person purifies himself even as He is pure.

Christ the yardstick

Christ Himself is the yardstick, the plumb line, the perfect example. Everyone who has this hope in Him seeks to become like Him, to show forth His image in this world. Such a one will behold His glory with unveiled face and will be changed according to the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). A believer who does this, doesn't do it of course to become a child of God, for this he is already. The apostle Paul writes to the believers in Ephesus, "Be imitators of God, as beloved children and walk in love, even as the Christ loved us, and delivered Himself up for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph. 5:1-2). As those who have been born of God, as those who have a complete redemption through the blood of Christ, we are admonished not to grieve the Holy Spirit whereby we have been sealed to the day of redemption.

Perhaps someone says in his heart, "How can I ever live up to such a high and perfect example, how can I ever become like the Lord Jesus while I am here on earth?"

Could God give an imperfect example?

Let me ask you the following questions: "Would you want God to give you an imperfect example? Would you want a lower standard, a less accurate plumb line?" It is obviously not a question of what you can or cannot achieve. No! When you have this hope in Him, then you purify yourself even as He is pure. At this very instant, and in the next one, and each moment again, continually, you discover something in yourself that isn't good, that doesn't agree with His purity and holiness. Then put it away, judge it without further ado, and then... behold Him, the Blessing of the Father. He whose glory you may admire with unveiled face, He is given to you as your joy, your food, your eternal happiness. This way you may look like Him.

In this manner others will see it. It is no doubt a serious path, a path of continual self-judgment and continual self-examination in the infallible light of God's presence. But it is also a blessed path. The one who walks that path longs yearningly for the moment that he may lay down this body to become completely like Him. The Lord Jesus has finished this path and has ascended on high, crowned with glory and honour.

The time is at hand

There is another verse that is, specially in our days, very important. We read it at the end of the Book of Revelation: "The time is near. Let him that does unrighteously do unrighteously still; and let the filthy make himself filthy still; and let him that is righteous practice righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still. Behold, I come quickly, and My reward with Me, to render to every one as his work shall be" (Rev. 22:10-12). "He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20).

Even at the very next moment this often repeated promise may be fulfilled. Everywhere the Spirit of God is awakening the holy desire in the hearts of the believers for the coming of the Bridegroom. The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come!

A living longing for the Lord Jesus

Are you able to look up and express wholeheartedly your desire, in that one word: Come? The Holy Spirit longs to arouse that cry in the heart of the bride. And where this blessed hope is known and fed, where it is living in the heart, there also lives the longing for our beloved Lord. And when He says, "Yea, I come quickly," the answer rings, "Amen; come, Lord Jesus."

The Greatest Treasure

Dearest Jesus, my great Treasure,
Valued more than I can tell,
Rest on earth I find in measure
As I trust Thy ways here well.
All has lost its glow and shine, Lord,
riches, honour, power, and praise.
Satisfied, I say, "Thou'rt mine, Lord,
How I long to see Thy face!"

When I enter in Thy presence,
And Thy beauty fills my sight,
When my heart in full reliance
Has been conquered through Thy might,
Then all things of earth do vanish
Seeing such a treasure great;
All appears then vain and rubbish,
What the world accounts ornate.

Lord, it is an endless story,
What my soul has found in Thee.
Faithful Jesus, what a glory
Knowing: Thou art Friend to me!
With my burdens, with my sorrow,
With my failures, loads, and pain,
Childlike, I may come each morrow,
Find in Thee my peace again.

H. C. Voorhoeve (Translated from the Dutch)

Outline for Bible Study (58)

117. The Young Man at Nain. The Sinful Woman at the House of Simon the Pharisee. — Luke 7:11-17,36-50

Outline

1. The funeral procession Lk. 7:11-12
2. The true Comforter Lk. 7:13-17
3. The woman at Simon the Pharisee Lk. 7:36-39
4. The parable of the two debtors Lk. 7:40-43
5. Forgiveness and love Lk. 7:44-50

Explanation

1. Nain, meaning "lovely," was situated between Tabor and Hermon, in the Valley of Jezreel. The body, covered with a cloth, was carried on a bier to the burying place outside the city. The mother was a widow, and now her only son, her only support, was taken away.

2. The Lord understood her sorrow and need. He showed her His compassion. In His providential care, the Lord's met the funeral procession and demonstrated His omnipotence, revealing Himself as the Conqueror of death.

3. Anointing, feet washing, and a kiss were the Jewish way of honouring guests. The lack of these things shows that Simon did invite the Lord out of pride rather than love. The woman, who was known as a sinner, came — conscious of her guilt — into the Lord's presence. This had a great impact on her soul. Yet, she also had faith in the Lord's love and grace. In her distress she looked for forgiveness; she didn't speak, but her tears said it all.

4. The parable of the two debtors teaches that all need forgiveness, and that one's love increases with the magnitude of the sins that have been forgiven. Therefore, the Lord said to Simon, "Her many sins are forgiven; for she loved much". The Lord forgave her only on the basis of her faith in Him. Her love for Him proved how great her burden had been to her.

5. The Saviour told her three things:

- a. "Thy sins are forgiven";
- b. "Thy faith has saved thee";
- c. "Go in peace" (Ps. 32:1-2).

Lesson

The Lord knows and understands our trials, needs and sorrows and He loves to help us. Motherly love is great, but His love is greater (Isa. 49:15).

Elijah and Elisha had raised the dead through prayer, the Lord did it by His Word.

Everyone who turns in repentant faith to the Lord Jesus receives the same assurance this sinful woman received: forgiveness, salvation, peace.

117. The man who had been sick for 38 years. The storm at sea. The demoniac. — John 5:1-16; Mt. 8:23-34; 14:34-36; Mk. 4:35-5:20; 6:53-56; Lk. 8:22-39

Outline

1. The healing of the sick man Jn. 5:1-9
2. The offended Jews Jn. 5:10-16
3. Jesus' vindication Jn. 5:17-47
4. Jesus stilled the storm Mk. 5:35-41
5. The man possessed by demons Mk. 6:1-5
6. His deliverance Mk. 6:6-20

Explanation

1. At the pool of Bethesda, meaning "House of mercy," angels ministered to men (Heb. 1:13-14). The man's sickness was a picture of sin (v. 14). Just like a sinner, he could not obtain the blessings because he lacked power. The Lord, come in grace, did not demand, as the law did, but gave forgiveness and health. To every repentant sinner He gives forgiveness, eternal life, and the Spirit of Sonship.

2. The man had full confidence in the Saviour, and in obedience to Him, he took up his couch and walked. His healing and subsequent carrying of the couch on the Sabbath offended the Jews.

3. When Jesus told the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," the Jews' hatred increased. Jesus' calling God His Father signified that He is equal with God. Besides, the Lord paid no attention to their appeal to the law (Jn. 5:17,19). There is both a spiritual and a physical raising of the dead. The words "and now is" relate to the raising up of the spiritually dead (v. 25). These words are lacking in the raising up of the physical dead (v. 28), for that is still future.

4. This is the only time we explicitly read that the Lord, who is truly Man, slept. Storm nor waves awakened Him, only the disciples' pleading did. First the Lord *rebuked* the wind, and the wind fell, and there was a great calm; He could do so, for He is truly the Son of God. Then He *said* to them: "How is it that ye have no faith?" Did not His command to go over guarantee that they would reach the other side? In fear, the disciples worshipped Him.

5. The demoniac was possessed by many demons who tortured him and made him violent. Ropes and chains were ineffective restraints, for Satan is stronger than man. The demon-possessed man came running out of the tombs, but seeing Jesus, he did Him homage. Recognizing the Lord's omnipotence, the demons asked not to be tormented before the judgment day and to be allowed to enter into the swine. Granting their request, the Lord freed the man through His word. Then the demons drove the swine, which Israelites were not allowed to keep in the first place, to destruction (Lev. 11:7).

6. The presence of the Lord was less tolerable to the Gadarenes than that of Satan; they asked Him to leave. Many still prefer the bondage of Satan to the easy yoke of the Lord.

Lesson

The sick man is a picture of the sinner; he was without strength and helpless. True, whoever keeps the law will live (Lk. 10:25-28), but through sin, no one has power to keep it (Rom. 8:3; 7:18).

The Son will do greater works: He will raise the dead and judge mankind (vv. 21-22).

Four witnesses testify that Jesus is the Son of God: John the Baptist, His own works, the Father, and the Holy Scriptures.

We may encounter stormy trials in life, even when we obey the Lord. Through faith we know that the Lord is always with us He loves us, has compassion, and is omnipotent.

The Gadarene is a picture of man under the power of Satan: unreliable, unintelligent, and suicidal. Driven from one sin to another, not only a slave to sin, but also a slave of Satan (Eph. 2:1-2).

After Jesus had made him free, He became a picture of the believer (Jn. 8:36). He was:

- a. resting in Him, sitting quietly at His feet, and listening to His word (Col. 1:12-13; 1 Pet. 2:2);
- b. clothed, as we are with the robe of righteousness (Isa. 61:10);
- c. sensible, no longer harming others (Rom 12:18; 13:9-10), or himself by destroying body and soul through sin (Rom. 6:21-22; 12:1);
- d. desirous to be with the Lord, and to be a testimony to his neighbors (Phil. 1:22-23).

To be cont'd