

The Word of the Lord Was Rare In Those Days

By Kent Heaton

The Hebrew writer tells us that "God ... at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1). Reading the Old Testament we are amazed at the manner which God speaks to His people either in telling of an impending flood, the calling of Abram, Mount Sinai or through the prophets. Yet a time remarkable as it may seem is found in the days Eli, High Priest of Israel: "Now the boy Samuel ministered to the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation" (1Sam. 3:1). The sense of the text is the rarity of the word of God being revealed to man was "precious" (ASV; RV; KJV). What would cause the word of God to be rare? Why would the Lord withhold His revelation from His people? The conditions of the time may give a clue.

Fifteen Judges had ruled the nation of Israel for over three hundred years but the cycle of disobedience was a recurring theme for the people. It seems they could not hold fast to the word of God. When the story of Samuel's birth and early ministry to the Lord is told the conditions were at an all-time low. Eli as High Priest was ineffective and the behavior of his sons brought tremendous shame and disgrace upon God (1Sam. 2:12-17). The people had failed to drive out the inhabitants of the land (Judges 1) and they "did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baal's" (Judges 2:11). The polluted land had adulterated the people of God.

It was God's choice to withhold His revelation to man because they would do nothing with it if He had. Samuel will bring the word of the Lord back to the people but until that time Heaven was silent. This would not be the last time the word of the Lord will fall mute. "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord God, "that I will send a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the Lord, but shall not find it" (Amos 8:11-12).

The Hebrew writer continues in Hebrews 1:2 saying that God has spoken to us by His Son. Our revelation comes from Jesus Christ and everything we need to know has been revealed (2Peter 1:3). The mind of God has been retained within the pages of the Bible (and the Bible alone) which we can read and understand the mysteries of God (Eph. 3:1-11). Has the word of God become rare or precious to us today?

It was rare in the days of Samuel because God withheld His word; today it is rare among people because we have withheld His word from our hearts. Imagine how sad it will be when we talk with Moses about the fully revealed word of God and yet we do so little with it. How often do we spend time reading and meditating on the word? I saw recently the hymn writer Fanny Crosby had memorized much of the New Testament and a great portion of the Old Testament – and she was blind. Can you name the books of the Bible? There was a day not long ago when the words of God would echo in schools, courthouses, work places and homes. Many could quote various passages of scripture. Those days are gone and it may get even worse if we do not do something.

The word of the Lord is rare today. We are busy about many things but not the word of God. Would it be fitting that God take the word away from us and give it to a people who truly love the Lord and will do something with it? How rare is it to you?

Dying To Self

When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ, that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take in all in patient, loving silence, that is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any impunctuality, or any annoyance; when you stand face-to-face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility -- and endure it as Jesus endured, that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any climate, any society, any raiment, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendations, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances, that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart, that is dying to self.

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.'" (Matt. 16:24-25).

A Moments Wisdom

- Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live.
- Remember, you aren't the only one with cares or concerns. We all get tied up in ourselves and forget about others. They have problems too. Some people carry enormous loads.
- There are two things a person should never be angry at, what they can help, and what they cannot.
- Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.
- An ounce of practice is worth more than tons of preaching.
- Let no man pull you low enough to hate him.
- There are three things we can do with a humanly impossible situation: we can abjure it and run away; we can endure it and do nothing about it, or we can seek to cure it by taking responsibility.
- When you decide to do something of importance, start it at once.
- Stop complaining about having no time for yourself and get up an hour earlier. You have the option, why not exercise it?
- You seldom, if ever, get lucky sitting down.