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Notes of a sermon preached at "Ebenezer" chapel, Richmond
by Mr. T.H. Hayler on 12th. December, 1950

Text: Song of Solomon 1.7 & 8

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents."

These are two very wonderful verses. The first is filled with manifestations of the gracious work of the Holy Ghost in a sinner's bosom, but not filled with all His work. A good part of it is here but not sufficient to make the possessor of all that is in that verse manifest comfortably in his or her conscience that it is well with them. This is an explanation of a sinner's condition who has had some sight of Christ but has not yet had any taste of His fulness. I hope the Holy Ghost will help me clearly to set this forth. The next verse is such a wonderful blessed promise that this sinner wanting the fulness of Christ shall receive it, showing her the way to it and, blessed be His dear name, making it manifest as in several parts of this beautiful Song, that she received that which was sufficient in her experience to satisfy her that it was well with her. The King brought her into His chambers, made it manifest that His banner over her was love. What a lot had taken place in this sinner's heart before she could utter the words that are in this seventh verse. She had some measure of love toward Him, she must have had some revelation of Him. Before that comes a sinner must be well dealt with by the Holy Ghost before he can even begin to desire to know the way of mercy. I have heard this verse put forth as some of the very first works of the Spirit in a quickened sinner's bosom. I cannot receive it. There is so much done by that good Spirit before the sinner is even inclined to want Christ and I want to speak just briefly of that so that you may, if the Spirit bless you with the witness, say I have come that road, I have not jumped into this great experience without those previous dealings of the Holy Ghost.

Look at the state we are in naturally; darkness covers the unregenerated sinner, gross darkness, alienation from God is with him from toe to top; his bosom reeks with it and he is indeed in a state where he merits nothing short of the awful wrath of His Maker. But a child of God, a member of that remnant according to the election of grace that God has determined shall show forth His praise, is in God's time laid hold of. If anyone here says that the beginning of real religion is pleasant, it is wrong. The beginning of the work of the Holy Ghost in a sinner's bosom is painful; it is unpleasant, it is necessarily so. The man is steeped in sin and iniquity, ignorant of God, and God is determined that that ignorance shall be broken. So that great God begins to make Himself known in that

ignorant rebellious sinner's heart as a God of infinite holiness. It is a solemn thing for you to be brought to believe that your Maker is holy and just and hates sin and is determined to deal with the sinner. That made me tremble, made me increasingly tremble for many months, and some of you can say the same. The beginning of our religion was not pleasant, could not be so; we were shown in some measure our state. That trumpet from Sinai, whose notes were blown into our unworthy hearts, brought an alarm. Very few people have alarmed souls about eternity. Some try to believe that there is no eternity. Ah, if God lays hold of you that will be utter foolishness to your spirit and there will be a beginning of alarm possessing a soul that can ensure by knowing, feeling in your very heart that you have to face a holy God, having some solemn, right sights in a tiny measure of your sin and your shame, hearing the very first word, and that with power, that He will by no means clear the guilty, believing that He has created a dreadful hell for the just punishment of a dreadful sinner. How can I be comfortable when the alarm increases, as the days, the weeks, perhaps months and in some cases, the years go on? O yes, real religion begins with the sound of an alarm in the sinner's bosom. That trumpet from Sinai does blow out with effect the solemn truths of God's hatred to sin and the sinner who hears the notes falls under it. This sinner here had had that feeling, she was acquainted with her blackness, her vileness, her baseness, but the previous verses make it clear also that she was acquainted with the way of mercy. She had heard of Jesus, His name had been made known to her. What He could accomplish for a poor sinner, she was made acquainted with and so are some of you. The name of Jesus is not a strange name, is it? You have been made to believe in Him, mysteriously made to believe in the great fact that He is equal with His Father and that Father, Son and Holy Ghost made an eternal covenant and in that covenant was this great matter that this blessed Jesus, the Father's only begotten Son was to come into this lower world, as He did, in our nature to lay down that nature for the redemption of sinners. Last night we read about that blessed Incarnation. O of what a wonderful birth! It really filled my heart again, I love it. It can be summed up in those two simple, but wonderful, lines:-

"Jesus, who lived above the sky,
Came down to be a Man and die"

I have seen the full Gospel in those two lines, felt it too, more than once. I did last evening. Well, this black spouse had seen Him, heard of Him by faith and was persuaded that there was treasured up in Him all her helpless soul could need, did need, and all a gracious God could give. Answer this question, my hearer - do you believe it? Is that great truth well laid by the Holy Ghost in your unworthy heart? It is a wonderful mercy where it is. Does it affect you? Is there a beauty in it to your soul? Do you in your poor way tell the Lord that you believe it, and that none but this glorious Person, this great and precious

Son of God in your nature, can do you any good?

Now that is as far, I believe, as this spouse had got in the text. She was brought to believe on the Son of God, brought to believe that He came into the world to save sinners, brought to feel that none but He could save such a desperate sinner, such a black wretch as she felt to be. Can you join her as far as that stage of her experience? Do you believe the Lord Jesus has brought you as far as that? If you do it is a wonderful mercy. O but, you say I want more, I know salvation is with Him, I am quite convinced that His blood cleanseth from all sin but I want Him to tell me that it has cleansed me, to assure my conscience of her part in His precious atonement. These companions, these flocks that knew what it was to feed with the Shepherd, to rest at noon with Him, they had had the seal. A hungry sinner cannot rest until Christ is formed in him the alone hope of glory. I think it is foolish of some of our ministers to tell poor, seeking souls that they can rest, have no need to worry about their case, have got love and have got some of the evidences of love, you love the brethren. But, says the grace-taught sinner, I want ever so much more than that, I want Him to come to me and to tell me that He loved me; His loving other people is very wonderful but that does not reach my case, I want Him to tell me that He laid down His life for me, that He was delivered for my offences, has risen again for my justification. So here she was wandering with the flock, keeping close to them, but she had not had enough witness, she had not had any assured witness yet that the Lord Jesus was hers. Why should I be in this state, I do want this rest, I do want to be able to say with them, Jesus loves me, has redeemed me and that I am indeed written on the palms of His hands. But, dear Jesus, You have not told me yet. I know some of you are there. If all the ministers in the world were to tell you that it is all right, with you, that you have enough grace in evidence in hungering and thirsting and seeing a beauty in Christ, you would say, Man, it is not enough, it is not enough, I want Him to deal with me, that I may say that I have heard from His own dear lips that He went into Gethsemane, went into Calvary for me. O it was enough for me that one evening on a sick bed ever so many years ago He came to me in my distress and said,

"See! from My head, My hands, My feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;"

for me! That was enough, darkness fled, the burden was gone and for quite a few days I lay in that sweet manifestation of redeeming love. I do not mind what anybody says, it is only that that can fill a poor, wounded sinner's heart with the peace of God that passes all understanding. That is the only answer to prayers like these that you put up to Him,

"Assure my conscience of her part
In the Redeemer's blood;
And bear thy witness with my heart,
That I am born of God."

O you are in a safe place poor sinner but, as I have already hinted, you will

want more, as I have expressed before you making your calling and your election sure in your conscience. It is a mercy to be in this condition of soul, to need the Holy Ghost to make it sure in your own case. I am afraid many take comfort which in the day of trial will prove to be no comfort. If the Lord suffers the devil for a while to keep you in that temptation then you will cry peace where there is no peace and that is solemn. In my judgment I think according to the Scripture to enter a church without some measure of good hope through grace, of part and lot in that great atonement, is very solemn, yet some people are taken into churches without that manifestation. The poor thing will say, I know I love the people of God, and perhaps that has not been tested. It is as well not to make that assurance until it has been tested. Have ever any of the people of God said something nasty about you, looked at you with a little scorn and has the love been just as warm after such a test as that? I say it is just as well to avoid making that assertion until it has been tested, tested in a storm. When I was engineering we used to test things. We had a tremendous hydraulic machine and if the steel did not stand the test it was thrust away, it was not fit to use. See how your religion stands a test, and if it is of grace it will stand it, it will stand every storm and live at last. But when it comes to this, the state of your soul for eternity, the only thing that can bring peace, perfect peace, in the conscience, that it is well with you before God, in my humble judgment, and according to the Scriptures, is application of atoning blood. That is what this bride wanted. she said to the Bridegroom, "Draw me". She did not say, 'I am satisfied that I am right because I love the brethren', it was contact with Christ she wanted, "Draw me, we will run after Thee", and He answered the prayer, "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me". She was kissed with the kisses of His mouth. What beautiful things He said about her, expressing His love to her. What beautiful things His Spirit helped her to say about Him. O that is union, that is what this dear bride wanted. Why should I wander about as I do? I do not get the touches that I want. O Lord Jesus, do remember me with the favour Thou bearest unto Thy people. What a favour she did ask for, "O visit me with Thy salvation". That is it. Fill me with the peace of God that passes all understanding. It is a wonderful mercy if the Holy Ghost has brought you as far as that along the road which leads to life. Do you believe you can honestly say that what I have so feebly expressed is the real feeling of your heart?

Now let us look at the advice that was given to her. "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women"... Here is a sheep brought to a manifestation of the Lord's dealings towards her, not answering the question but just a sweet word to help her to carry out His glorious advice. "O thou fairest among women".

You will never say that of yourself, you will say, I am a poor, vile creature. I believe we shall say that, little or much, down to the end. It is what He says about her, "O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock". Now I would like to speak just a little as the Spirit might help me about the footsteps of the flock. I have heard that ridiculously described as going to chapel, getting in the company of His people. I am not saying but that is some part of it, but to leave it there is very solemn to me. The footsteps of the flock - I believe one is secret prayer, the throne of grace, and the more hungry and thirsty you are for the witness of the Spirit to your spirit that Calvary's blood was shed for you, the more often you will be at the throne of grace. I know that by a little, vital experience. Another footstep of the flock is to search the Scriptures under the sweet dealing of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing can inform you more about the way of salvation, about this blessed Saviour and of His attitude toward poor people who are longing for His salvation. That is another footstep of the flock of slaughter. They are attracted to His Word, made to cleave to it; and as from time to time they get the entrance of it, "The entrance of Thy Word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple" as He is pleased to make it unto them meat and drink so they get closer to this longed for experience, being with the flock in their feeding, with the Shepherd. What a restless creature a poor, longing, needy sinner is. Why if he gets two minutes comfort he will get two days exercises and trial, if they venture to speak to a friend Satan will come along and say, 'You have said too much. He will charge you with presumption, he will, I know it. In the teaching of this place there is such a thing as resting in the Lord, resting by Spirit-wrought assurance of interest in His rich redeeming blood that you are accepted in the Beloved. It is wonderful to me, I have been thinking a lot of it this afternoon, and I might tell you this, that I have been thinking most of the afternoon about this text and have been wicked enough to wish something else would come, but it just would not.

"He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied" and what do the sheep feed on? They eat His flesh, they drink His blood, they drink into a Holy Ghost wrought confidence that it is well with them because of what He has done for them. "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock". I think that speaks of the gathering in of His people. "Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." Now I believe that this little house is a shepherd's tent and a tent that God, in His mercy has raised up and in which tent His dear children, from time to time have been fed by the under-shepherds, the poor minister, equipped by the Holy Ghost, favoured to set before you the bread and water of Life, to speak to you of the efficacy of the atonement, to speak to you as he may know it by experience, not what he has taken out of somebody else's book. That will

not do; but what he knows experimentally of the Shepherd's dealings with him, that he will faithfully and fervently and very tenderly speak to you of. In my early hearing I believe I hung on the minister's lips. You do not feel sleepy you know when the Lord has wounded you and brings you to judgment. You are all alive and if he said anything that the Lord had brought me just a little into how glad I was. I believe I said I know that little bit, then when he sailed away into experiences I did not know, then I kept saying, 'Lord make me to know it'. This was my prayer and I felt it, "Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation". There will be a feeding sometimes. You know what it is to be fed sometimes in the Shepherd's tents. When things that God has not yet blessed you to realise are spoken of by the under-shepherd your heart will say, Thou knowest I am hungering and thirsting for this, Lord. Then if he is a shepherd that has handled and felt these things he will tell you that you are bound to have it in due time. He will satisfy the longing soul. If you get a day with a few of these things in it you will go home with hope so strengthened to believe that the time of love will come, you will hope on, beg on, wait on. "Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents". I believe this reference here just describes those inmost, fervent desires that the Holy Ghost creates in the bosom. Kids - a kid is something that is not very old, something fresh, something new that has come into your experience. What a wonderful, new, fresh, precious thing it is for longings after Jesus to come into a poor, guilty sinner's experience, seeing a beauty in Jesus. Yes, it is a new thing.

"Those feeble desires, those wishes so weak,
'Tis Jesus inspires, and bids you still seek"

and He will satisfy them. "That I may know Him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto His death." Why you have longed more for Jesus at times in your feelings than you have longed for anybody and anything in this world. People in this condition do not perceive that they do so with all their heart. "Give me Christ or else I die."

I must leave it and I hope I have not confused any of you poor, tried seekers. I have tried to wrestle with the Lord to help me to speak just what He pleases and nothing else. "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock. If He favours you to do that, He will feed you personally out of His fulness with witness enough that He loves you with an everlasting love and that one day He will take you to be where He is. Amen.

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