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Isaiah's Song.... Isaiah 53, pt. 3

Robert Surgenor

Stanza Four (vss 53:7-9).

The Prophecy concerning the Servant

(1) "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

The Book of Numbers is termed by the Jews as the "Book of the Desert," for there they were tested and their failures recorded. This fourth stanza corresponds to Numbers, for in it we see the Lord being tried, but how different He was from Israel, for He never failed.

"He was oppressed." That is an interesting word. What does it imply? Well consider a man in debt and the collector is after him. There is no compassion and no mercy on the part of the collector, he wants his money! He treats his debtor unsparingly. "Pay me what thou owest!" he demands. When the Lord said, "This is My body which is given for you" (Lk. 22:19), that word "given" means "to give what is due," "to give over." The word also carries the thought of demanding a ransom. One form of the word is "taskmasters" used in Exodus 5:6, where heavy and unreasonable demands were laid on Israel when in Egypt.

Thus we see the severity of our Lord's sufferings from all quarters. Consider the oppression of His mock trial, the abuses and ignominy heaped upon Him, the false charges hurled in His face, the reproach and the utter shame! And, what was His reaction? Oh brethren, notice this, "Yet He opened not His mouth." Peter exclaims, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23). He did not complain OF God because of the sorrows He appointed, neither did He complain TO God for man's ill-treatment of Him. When He did open His mouth, it

was opened only to bless those that cursed Him, and to pray for His enemies and murderers.

As Calvary loomed near, we see the meek and patient Servant being led away with no resistance on His part. Amidst the clamor of the multitude He was perfectly composed. He possessed all power, yet we see a gentleness, as if He had no power. With perfect understanding that He was going to die, He was calm and gentle, as though ignorant of the design for which they were leading Him forth. Yet, He knew all things. Scripture states He was crucified through weakness (2 Cor. 13: 4), which means that in His human nature He manifested the appearance of weakness. He chose not to exert His power.

(2) "He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken."

The next part of this fourth stanza brings us to the end of His earthly sojourn. "He was taken from prison and from judgment." The word "prison" does not mean prison in the sense in which that word is now used. The same word is translated "oppression" in Psalm 107:39. It refers rather to restraint, and detention. Perhaps the words "confinement" or "violent oppression" would have been a better translation. The Lord was never confined in prison, but was rather secured by being bound and placed under guard (Jn. 18:24). The "judgment" would be the legal trial and judicial sentence. The Lord did not suffer merely from the excitement of a mob. Oh no, there was more to it than that. He suffered under a form of law, and the passing of a sentence. All was done in a methodical way. The judicial

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sentence was made in order to make the account of His sufferings more definite. Christ was to suffer under a form of law. The whole proceeding was oppressive and unrighteous.

Consider Israel's Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin. It was composed of 71 members. Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and elders presided. Israel's high priest presided over them. Everything was deliberately arranged to conserve the interests of the man on trial. There was to be, "mercy in judgment." Two witnesses were always necessary for condemnation, and those witnesses were to be examined separately. The evidence from them must agree, concerning the day, month, year, hour, and where the crime was committed. The person on trial was held innocent until the evidence was confirmed. Annas had no right to ask the Lord anything until evidence of witnesses had been found to agree. Any person whose honesty was under suspicion was barred by law from giving witness. Also debarred were the defendant's friends or his enemies. A man was constituted an enemy if, from hostility, he had not spoken to his neighbor for three days. The court could only meet in the "Hall of Hewn Stone" in the precincts of the Temple. The judges were to sit in a semi-circle, four cubits between each other to avoid whispering, and private discussions. Capital cases were only to be tried by judges who were priests, Levites, and Israelites eligible for marriage into priestly families. Their lineage had to be absolutely pure. Those who had no children and eunuchs could not act as judges in capital cases. The least number of judges allowed were 23. One who had pleaded against the defendant could change and plead for, but one who had pleaded for the defendant could not, under any circumstance, plead against in a capital case. Verdicts were to be given individually, the youngest first. Acquittal required a majority of only one. Condemnation required a majority of at least two. No capital trial was to end the same day, except in a verdict of acquittal. Thus a capital trial could never take place on the day before the Sabbath or on a great festival. No trial was to be held at night. It was illegal to ask a prisoner a question that by answering he would condemn himself, and then to condemn him on the strength of his own answers.

Within 12 hours, Jesus underwent a trial that fell into six parts. He was brought before Annas immediately after His arrest (Jn. 18:13-14). During the night He was taken to the house of Caiaphas, the actual high priest. He was examined (Jn. 19:24). This was not an official meeting of the Sanhedrin but a preliminary examination with a view to formulating a definite charge to bring before the Sanhedrin. Early in the morning the Sanhedrin met to carry out the official trial and to arrive at the official condemnation (Matt. 27:1). Due to Roman rule the following was required. A trial before Pilate. A trial before Herod. Herod

sent Jesus back to Pilate with no verdict. The completion of the trial was before Pilate and the final condemnation.

The rules broken by the Jews were; no two witnesses agreed; He was presumed guilty from the beginning; He was subject to physical violence; He was condemned for His answers; they met at night before the Passover; They met in Caiaphas' house, not in the Hall of Stone; A unanimously unfavorable verdict was illegal. Someone had to take the accused part; no night elapsed between the first conviction and the final verdict; The court acted not as a council for the defense, but as a council for the prosecution, and in conserving the rights of the prisoner, they systematically destroyed them. Oh the hypocrisy and evilness of it all!

"*He was cut off,*" indicating a violent death. Daniel uses the same words. "*And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself*" (Dan. 9:26). The thought is of a person experiencing a violent death in the midst of his days. Our Lord was on earth less than 34 years. It was for the transgressions of Isaiah's people that He was stricken. The word "stricken" indicates a severe blow. It is the same word as used in verse 4. The stroke of God fell upon Messiah.

Considering all that has been said, the question arises, "*Who shall declare His generation?*" Some have thought that this means, "Who shall give His death any thought?" Or, "Who will declare His manner of life?" Luther thought it to mean, "Who will declare the length of His life?" However, to fit with verse 10, it seems more in context to say, "Who can express His posterity, the number of His descendants?" The Messiah was to have a posterity so numerous that no one would be able to number or declare it. Even though He was to be cut off, His race would continue, it would never be extinct. Who can number His children, those redeemed by His blood? My friend, in a future day, what will you see in heaven? Why you will see a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; crying with a loud voice, saying, "*Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb*" (Rev. 7:9-10). Now isn't that tremendous? How unearthly! How divine! How wonderful! Cut off? Yes! But look at the eternal results? And just think, you and I are included in that great plan of eternal redemption. How could you ever be gloomy with these thoughts hidden securely in your redeemed heart? NEVER!

(3) "*And he made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.*"

They appointed His grave with the wicked. The question is, who gave, or appointed Him? Who gave His body over to be buried with the wicked? The Newberry Bible indicates that the person was God. Others say it was “my people.” However it seems that the leaders of the nation so hated Him that they sought to heap the highest indignity upon Him by denying Him an honorable burial, and consigning His body to the same ignominious grave with the violators of the laws of God and man. It was said of wicked King Ahab that the dogs should lick his blood; and of Jezebel that the dogs should eat her (1 Ki. 21:19, 23). In their eyes Jesus was no better. Josephus the historian, wrote, “He that blasphemeth God, let him be stoned; and let him hang on a tree all that day, and then let him be buried in an ignominious and obscure manner.” What blindness! What a shame!

However, God stepped in and moved a rich man from Arimathaea named Joseph. Through beseeching Pilate in a most courteous and wise manner, the body was given to him for a decent burial. The nation would have turned His body over to a criminal’s grave, but God buried His sacred body in a rich man’s tomb. It is very interesting to note that the word “rich” in the text is in the singular, not the plural. It should read, “They would have given over his body to a wicked man’s grave, but He was buried by the rich man in His death.” The word “death” is in the Hebrew text, “deaths,” indicating the vast comprehensiveness of His death. The Hebrew plural also indicates excellence, and I can say “AMEN!” to that. There was never a death like His. It was a cruel death, but praise God, it also was vicarious! “*Christ died for our sins*” (1 Cor 15:3).

“*He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.*” There was no harsh or injurious conduct seen in Him to provoke them to treat Him as they did. There was no guile in His mouth. His words were never deceitful. He never deceived anyone, yet they accused Him of being deceptive. His words were always sincere, pure, and scriptural. Where would you find a man on this earth, no matter how noble he might be, that could be said of him, there was no guile found in his mouth? Only One could make that claim – Jesus, our Savior and Lord (1 Pet. 2:22). So in “no violence,” we see outward action, and in “no guile,” we see inward thought and attitude. He was intrinsically pure.

(to be concluded)

**As divine justice was honored by the
condemnation and cross of Christ, the Head,
so is the same justice honored by the
salvation of the members.**

R. C. Chapman

Headship: Christ and Man (Absolute)

J. Campbell

Before we elaborate on this aspect of headship, some facts may be stated, which will be of assistance in our exposition.

1. Headship is an Ordinance of God.
2. Headship requires two parties.
3. Headship requires two parties to be in agreement.
4. Headship, if accepted, brings harmony and joy.
5. Headship, if unacknowledged, destroys important relationships.
6. Headship, if unacknowledged, produces conflicts.
7. Headship, if unacknowledged, retards spiritual progress.

Paul's first statement in 11:3 indicates the Corinthians were ignorant of the truth of Headship. “*I would have you know*” How often he had to expose their lack of knowledge.” “*I would not have you ignorant, brethren,*” they, who prided themselves on their boasted gift. I suggest that Christ is the head of every man, because:—

Christ created man. He is his head Creatorially.

Christ died for every man. He is his head Redemptively.

Christ will judge every man. He is his head Judicially.

We see, then, Christ has a claim Creatorially, Redemptively and Judicially. He is the head of every man irrespective of Race, Color, Creed or Generation. The Scholarly with the illiterate, the illustrious with the obscure. There are no exceptions or exemptions here.

The word for “MAN” in 1 Cor. 11, has 17 mentions. Twice it should read, “anyone,” vs 16 and 34. In one occasion, v 28, it is ‘anthropos’, one of the human race, and in the 14 other mentions, it is ‘aner’, an adult male. We are left in no doubt as to its meaning. Some, (such as the ESV), to evade the implications of Headship, would translate the word as husband; such a distortion leaves the text in confusion.

Christ is his head Creatorially, John 1:3. All things were “*made by Him,*” a positive statement; “*Without Him was not any thing made which was made,*” a negative statement; amplifying the former.

Christ is his head Redemptively. He died for every man, whether man comes into the good and blessing of his atoning death or not. God's offer of salvation is, “*Unto all,*” but only “*upon all*” who believe.

Christ is his head Judicially. “*God hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man,*” i.e., Christ. “*Every knee should bow. . . every tongue*

should confess that He is Lord!" (Phil. 2:10-11).

In these relationships, the second partner is not consulted for his or her approval; the principle is stated as being inflexible, not one for discussion, argument or compromise. It is already laid down autocratically in this section to the Corinthians.

On reading the epistle, how would the Corinthians understand such statements, in the light of local conditions? Was the headship of Christ being violated in the company, likewise the headship of man with the woman. And was the headship of God with Christ fully appreciated?

Let us examine the headship of Christ with every man first, as this is the order in which it comes. Does the principle reflect unfavorably on their sectarian utterances in ch. 1:12, where everyone of them were saying, *"I am of Paul, I am of Cephas, I am of Christ"*? The first two were clear evidence of the headship of Christ being denied. To say, amidst such confusion, *"I am of Christ,"* seems commendable, until we read, in verse 13, *"Is Christ divided?"* and the question is so framed in Greek as to demand an affirmative answer. Here is division in the body; ch. 12:12. *"So also is the Christ."* So that to say, in conditions of division, *"I am of Christ,"* likewise merits stern rebuke, *"Is Christ divided?"*

I judge this was questioning Christ's headship with men—saved though they be—as also the case of the brother in ch. 5 who had unlawful intercourse with his step-mother; likewise, the law-seeking brother in ch. 6 violates the headship of Christ.

Next, the headship of the man with the woman. In this very chapter, she is seen as dishonoring her head (the man) v 5 and 13, by her uncovered head in prayer or prophesying; whether at home or in church is not distinguished here.

The headship of God with Christ is introduced to add authority to the first two headships, for it is suggested, that if Christ accepted the headship of God, and He did, it is expected that men will accept Christ's, and the woman the man's.

Paul understood what he was writing about. He had paid the price in acknowledging headship. He was persecuted by his own nation, and by false brethren who would add Law to Grace. This is more than courage. It is conviction!. His, *"What wilt Thou have me to do?"* binds him forever to Christ and his link in headship.

Christ's headship with men, creatorially, redemptively and judicially places them under tremendous responsibility, when that headship is seen as operating at man's birth, throughout his life, and into eternity; all embracing, never a moment when he can claim to be exempt from its import.

We can now move in our consideration to other aspects:

Headship—Christ and the Church (Absolute)

When we note that Christ is the Head of the Church, we speak of it in its Body aspect, not its local setting. There are those in the Body who do not meet with the local Church. The local church in any locality, can be, and usually is less than the Body. On occasions it can be more than the Body, if some gather with them who are not saved. All the saved ones in any locality should gather with fellow believers in testimony to and for Christ. At one point in time, this was true, Acts 2.44. The next time this takes place, will be when the saved dead and the saved living meet in the air, at the Lord's second Coming. Between these two events, Christ exercises, and we are expected to recognize, His Headship in the Church.

He is Head of the Church because He—

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| 1. Loved the Church | Eph. 5:25 |
| 2. Gave Himself for the Church | 5:25 |
| 3. Set her apart for sanctification | 5:26 |
| 4. He will present her to Himself | 5:27 |

He is *"Head over all (things) to the Church"* Eph. 1:22, the same thought as in 1 Chron. 29:11, where the Lord is seen as *"exalted as Head above all."*

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| He is Head over every member | Male and Female |
| He is Head over every servant | Prominent or Obscure |
| He is Head over every deacon | who ministers |
| He is Head over every overseer | who guides |

He is Head in every exercise: Reception, Feeding, Guiding. Disciplining, Charging, supporting, comforting, correcting or excommunicating.

He is Head at every Meeting: Remembrance, Prayer, Ministry and Gospel. The local church is an organism of believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, who meet regularly. They are not an organization. They own no earthly head. They are guided by the Scriptures as to doctrine, and led out by shepherds who are set among them by the Holy Spirit. They claim affinity with all believers similarly gathered. We have already noted that Christ is the Head of every man. Christ is the head of every so-gathered company. He is the Head of every believer in the Body, whether meeting regularly or not with the local Church. Christ is the Head of all who, at any time, constitute the Body on earth. As gathered to His Name, we acknowledge His Headship.

Christ expresses His headship in many ways. He has elected us, the Church, for future glory, and has brought us to faith in Himself. He instructs us from His Holy Word, protects us from the evil one, provides for us and one day will come for us. By His death on the Cross, He demonstrates His unflinching love, which withholds no good thing from us, and is presently preparing us for an eternity with, and like Him!

He is also Head of all principalities and powers, and is become the Head of the Corner. (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Peter 2:7).

Headship—Man and Creation (Delegated)

The Triune Godhead, at creation, placed mankind, by royal decree, over the creatures He made in the sea, in the air, and over the cattle and creeping things. Dominion carries the thought of suppression and treading down. Two words in Gen. 9:2 describe a change in the attitude of the animal creation to mankind. These words are Fear—“mora”, meaning reverence, and Dread—“chath”, Terror. God brought them to Adam to have them named. There is no evidence of fear or dread in Gen. 2 nor until after the flood.

Only when man is allowed animal flesh without blood, is this fear instilled into fish, fowl, and cattle. Man is now a hunter of them. It would seem, that before the flood, the animals required no domestication. So Adam would have the animals to help in his husbandry; their strength to assist in plowing, their milk to augment his diet, but not their meat. Noah was the first man allowed this. James tells us that every kind of beasts, birds, serpents and sea creatures have been tamed of mankind. Here is headship explained in a good sense. Baalam’s female ass, speaking with man’s voice, protested at being beaten. Both illustrate man’s sovereignty over the animal world.

God speaks, and the whale vomits Jonah. God speaks, and ravens feed Elijah. Christ spoke, and a fish gathered the tribute money from the sea. Man has his dominion from God, Who controls all flesh for His glory.

Headship—Man and the Woman (Absolute)

In the various grades and gradations of headship, that obtaining between man and woman has caused much thought, and evidenced much rebellion, bringing with it disruption in the domestic, matrimonial, parental, industrial and spiritual realms. The spirit of hostility to a Divine ordinance from the female side, is readily detected from the Scriptures. 1 Cor. 11:3 is a statement without restriction or escape. The man is the head of the woman. First, let us examine what headship is not. It does not invest the man with superiority over the woman, nor does it place the woman in a position of inferiority. As her head, God would hold the man accountable before Him for the womenfolk God had placed in those spheres of life associated with him. Thus woman is under headship, wherever she dwells. The man is responsible for the woman in this relationship. This teaching stands opposed to the current demands of the Women’s Liberation Movement.

Headship—Husband and Wife (Selective)

There are some outstanding differences between Headship and Lordship. We do well to note the main feature wherein they differ.

Headship is more extensive. It operates in the Heavens and the earth. Every person is subject to Christ, whether acknowledged or not.

Lordship is expressed by redeemed beings, who have acknowledged Christ as Lord in their lives. They are in subjection to Christ. (Lordship is the practical outworking of Headship).

When we examine the Headship of the Husband with the Wife as taught in Eph. 5, we are confined to the Matrimonial realm. The subjection of the wife is:—

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|---------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Practical | Wives <i>submit</i> yourselves | v. 22 |
| 2. Personal | Wives submit <i>yourselves</i> | v. 22 |
| 3. Ideal | as unto the <i>Lord</i> | v. 22 |
| 4. Comparable | Even as <i>Christ</i> | v. 23 |
| 5. Beneficial | <i>Savior</i> of the Body | v. 23 |
| 6. Total | In <i>everything</i> | v. 24 |
| 7. Doctrinal | Church <i>subject</i> to Christ | v. 24 |

Her subjection is Practical. In submitting to her husband, she is not being asked to do the impossible.

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|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| It is Personal | <i>Yourselves</i> , your own husband |
| It is Ideal | <i>As unto the Lord</i> . Highest Standard |
| It is Comparable | <i>Even as Christ</i> , the Great Exemplar |
| It is Beneficial | The <i>Savior of the Body</i>
Spiritual and Physical |
| It is Total | <i>In everything</i> , not some things |
| It is Doctrinal | The <i>husband</i> the head.
God’s Pronouncement. |

In conclusion, there are two other spheres where Christ is the Head.

He is Head of all principality and power. Colossians 2:10.
He is Head of the Corner. 1 Peter 2:7.

Where the simplicity of a spiritual community began to give way to the complexity of a human organization, the resistance of the church to certain ills was lowered to a point where eventual catastrophe was unavoidable. This we shall see as we pursue our subject. God organized the church for catastrophe; man organized the church into catastrophe.

From “The Torch of Testimony,”
by John Kennedy, India

Assembly Functions, pt. 3

Brian Currie, Belfast

Godliness in the Assembly

Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy *“in order that thou mayest know how one ought to conduct oneself in God’s house, which is the assembly of the living God the pillar and base of the truth”* (1 Tim. 3:15 JND). Thus the express purpose of the letter is to tell us how to behave ourselves in the assembly.

With this in mind it is instructive to note the recurrence throughout the epistle of the word “godliness.” In fact, out of the 23 occurrences of the word in the N.T. 13 of them are in the pastoral epistles with nine of these in 1 Timothy—viz. 2:2; 3:1; 4:7;8; 5:4 (Piety); 6:3,5, 6,11. The word translated “godliness” in these verses literally means “well revered” and denotes piety or devout-ness, obviously towards God, while the word in 2:10 which is slightly different but closely related emphasizes that God is the One who is revered. In 1 Timothy therefore we can see that godliness is expected from those who meet in assembly capacity. We shall briefly trace the references in the epistle.

Godliness and its Acceptability (2:2-3)

In chapter two the apostle deals “first of all” with an exhortation that *“supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men,”* especially with respect to those who rule over nations. This is the only point of contact a Christian ought to have with politics and yet this contact will have more effect than any other. The purpose of this prayer is not in order that our preferred brand of politics may prosper, nor is it to pray judgment upon our political opponents, but the reason given is, *“that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”* That is, through our prayers God would grant a system of government which would permit us to live a tranquil and quiet life in all piety and gravity. This godly manner of living is acceptable before the face of God our Savior, which means that He accepts such gladly, with a welcome. We must not think that God grants such conditions so that we can lie back and take our ease. The reason for having tranquil conditions is given in verses 4-7, — that the gospel may prosper and not be hindered (cp 2 Thess. 3:1-2).

Godliness and its Modesty (2:9-10)

In v. 8 the apostle states his desire for “the men”—note the definite article, i.e. the men are to pray publicly and they are given the three-fold instruction: “Holy hands”—Godward, “without wrath”—manward, “without doubting”—self-ward.

The phrase “in like manner” (v. 9) cannot refer to public

prayer since both in this chapter at v. 11 and in 1 Cor. 14:34 the woman is enjoined to be silent in the public gatherings. Instead, the phrase refers to his words “I desire therefore,” i.e., v. 8 in his desire for the men, v. 9 for the women.

The teaching of v. 9-10 has a special relevance to the day in which we live when Christian women can become ensnared with the ‘woman’s lib’ spirit which prevails on every hand. With unisex hair styles and fashions it is imperative that our sisters realize the ornamentation that *“in the sight of God is of great price”* (1 Pet. 3:3,4).

Their apparel, principally their arrangement of dress, although their whole deportment is included, is to be modest, well-arranged or becoming. This could not be the description of many of the fashions of the day. The wearing of trousers, whether track suits, those supposedly made for women or otherwise will not be countenanced by a spiritual sister. Nor will her wardrobe contain anything revealing or immodest, whether such is to be worn at a meeting, at home or even on the beach. The world with its moral corruption does not set the fashion for the saint who seeks to please the Lord.

“With shamefacedness”—the only other occurrence of this word is in Heb. 12:28 where it is translated “reverence.” It blends the ideas of modesty and humility having regard to the feelings of others. “Would always restrain a good man from an unworthy act” (Trench) “A moral repugnance of what is base and unseemly” (Vine).

“Sobriety”—soundness of mind or sound judgement and shows that the apostle expected the sister not to be light or frivolous but to exercise self control over her passions and desires, here especially in relation to her deportment.

Many there are who object to what they term negative ministry, usually because it comes too close to them, but here Paul uses a familiar ploy to emphasize the point by giving first a negative instruction and then a positive.

The negative is first *“not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls or costly array.”* It is obvious that the sister was expected to have hair long enough to be broided (cp 1 Cor. 11:15) but the apostle is showing that all ostentation is unbecoming a Christian. It appears strange that these words and those in 1 Pet. 3:3-4, which are so clear and need little explanation, are so flagrantly disobeyed. The same apostle gives the test of spirituality in 1 Cor. 14:37 as obedience. Thus a spiritual sister will not be found wearing powder or paint on her face, or gold chains, pearls, earrings, etc.; these are all designed to attract attention, and are not the marks of a “meek and quiet spirit.” (1 Peter 3:4).

Next we are given the opposite of this *“but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”* This is the adornment of the godly sister such as Dorcas (Acts 9:36). *“Her price is far above rubies”* (Proverbs 31:10). Such women are the backbone of many assembly testimonies.

(concluded)

Millions call themselves by His name, it is true, and pay some token respect to Him, but a simple test will show how little He is really honored among them. Let the average man be put to the proof on the question of who or what is above, and his true position will be exposed. Let him be forced into making a choice between God and money, God and men, between God and personal ambition, God and self, God and human love, and God will take second place every time. Those other things will be exalted above. However the man may protest, the proof is in the choices he makes day after day throughout his life.

-A.W. Tozer

What is His Name? Jehovah-rapha

Joel Portman

Wilderness Trials of the Way

Exodus 15:22-27 records the beginning of Israel’s journey from Egypt to the land of God’s promise. Having rejoiced over the victory that God had wrought for them at the Red Sea, they now face the trials and difficulties of the way. Typically, this teaches us that a believer, recently delivered from the bondage of sin and Satan, will soon find out if his song of confidence in God (15:16-17) will continue, even though the conditions of his life have changed and trials have come. And they will come into the life of every believer!

That these trials are necessary is evident from the fact that God led Israel by this journey, first of all to find out that a wilderness had no water to refresh and sustain them, and then to learn that what water it offered was bitter and undrinkable. Moses demanded that Israel be liberated to go “three days’ journey into the desert” to worship, (Ex. 5:3), but how could they worship under these conditions? Yes, but it is exactly under these conditions when believers learn that He alone can be worshiped as all-sufficient to meet His people’s needs in every circumstance. Notice Job’s response to God in Job 1:20. Any new believer who thinks that he will sail home to heaven on a “flowery bed of ease” will soon find out that God’s purposes are otherwise. We quickly learn that this world is indeed a “wilderness wide”

where there is nothing to sustain or strengthen the child of God, neither is it any longer sweet or agreeable to his taste. Hebrews 12 teaches us that chastening is a proof of sonship (12:7) and is a part of God’s program to develop His sons (12:5, 10-11). Moses told Israel that they were to *“remember all the way by which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no,”* (Deut. 8:2). This is exactly what we see in Ex. 15:26, as God called for their diligent obedience to His commandments, promising them His blessing in return.

After their experience in the wilderness of Shur, where there was no water, they have now arrived at Marah. Likely their stored resources were exhausted and they naturally expected to replenish their supply at this source. In Winston Churchill’s book, *The River Wars*, a history of England and Egypt’s war against Arabian tribes in the Sudan, it is clear that the need to secure an adequate supply of water in that environment was essential. We can understand how the natural reaction to finding only bitter water would fill the people’s hearts with consternation. Such a trial with its disappointment brought out the response of the natural mind that was expressed in their murmuring against Moses (and God). This was only the first of many occasions when trials of the way produced resentment and murmuring among them. Often it only takes a small trial in life, some disappointment, or events that irk us and rob us of our joy, to cause a believer to question the God’s faithfulness and to undermine one’s confidence in Him. We quickly learn that sometimes our professed faith is weak and shallow, and as we read in Deut. 8:2, it humbles us and proves (tests) us to learn that. Such a test has value, since it makes us realize how weak we are, even as it reinforces our realization of the need to depend entirely on a faithful and loving God.

Bitter Waters of Marah

Marah means “bitter” and more than the bitter waters, there was bitterness in their hearts that the bitter trial revealed. Naomi experienced bitterness in her soul because of departure and death in the family (Ruth 1), but this “Marah” wasn’t because of their departure; it was the directive will of God to bring them there. He had a lesson to teach them that could only be learned in this experience, so this was an important stop along the pathway. Hannah experienced “bitterness of soul” (1 Sam. 1:10) because of her deep longing for a son and disappointment in her barrenness. Job complained of the “bitterness” of his soul due to the extreme suffering and deprivation that he was enduring (Job 7:11, 10:1). Modecai cried with a “bitter cry” when he heard the edict of the king that determined the destruction of his people (Est. 4:1). So we learn that bitterness of spirit and soul is often a part of the pathway of discipline along which

the Lord leads His people.

Peter reminds the saints in his first epistle of the bitter trials and testings of faith (1 Pet. 1:6-7). James does the same (James 1:2). Those who Peter addresses were experiencing trials from man's opposition and from the conditions of slavery to their masters (2:18-20) that they possibly never expected. He encourages them not to be taken by surprise when these things occur (1 Pet. 4:12), as if they were something strange. He repeatedly strengthens them by reminding them of the privilege they have to partake of those sufferings pertaining to Christ, the proof that they belonged to Him and that such suffering under adversity was acceptable (grace) with God (2:20), being a part of their calling as believers (2:21). So that our attitude in such adversity should not be to complain or criticize the Lord for allowing this event or condition, but rather to seek that we might prove His ability to sustain and supply in such experiences.

Healing of the Waters

The people complained to Moses. However, Moses cried unto Jehovah to learn the answer of what He would provide for His people. This resulted in a further revelation of Jehovah's sufficiency to supply the needs of His people. His self-revelations of this nature seem to always come in response to some crisis or new experience that His people face. The Lord showed him a tree. "Show" is from a word meaning "to point, direct" that came to mean "to teach" and is the verbal form of "torah," or law. God's Word directs saints to the divinely-provided answer to their needs! We simply need to look to it to learn what God desires to teach us.

It's interesting that the tree was there, long before the need arose for its healing powers! It was a living tree with healing qualities divinely supplied to meet that need. It reminds us typically, that we have One who has passed through this bitter world before us, and He has the ability to remove the bitterness of all experiences and make them sweet, as He is brought in. That tree, cut down and cast into the water, made those bitter waters sweet to drink. It seems that this is what Peter is doing in his epistle. He reminds the saints that what they were enduring was for the sake of Christ, and He it was who endured the afflictions of His life and knew the bitterness of man's opposition. He was alone, enduring reproach, abuse, hatred, and man's despising. He drank bitter water in His life and experienced man's constant antagonism in His faithful pathway for God long before they did. Peter brings that "tree" into the trials, as he speaks of Him who was reviled, yet never reviled (1 Pet. 2:23), who suffered and has left us an example (2:21). Even in such extreme experiences that would normally draw forth the murmuring and bitterness of the heart of the sufferer, He

never did so, never retaliated as man would normally do. He is the One who suffered for sins (3:18), suffered in the flesh (4:1), and many other times, Peter encourages them by reminding them of Him who suffered far more than they would. The sufferings in which they would partake (4:13), were not those which He suffered for our sins, but rather those that He suffered in His life and from the hand of men for His righteousness and faithfulness to God.

That tree was growing by the bitter water, associated with its bitterness and knowing it experimentally. Our Lord experienced much more from the world's reproach and hatred than a believer will, so that one can bring those experiences into a bitter event of life to sweeten those waters and change them in ourselves. The fact that it seems to have been a living tree suggests that it is the fresh realization of what He endured that is effective for us. A dry remembrance of such afflictions of our blessed Lord would be of little encouragement, but the things of Christ should always be fresh and vibrant in the hearts of God's people.

The tree cut down makes us think of Him, who was cut off in the midst of His days. This was the ultimate result of a perfect life that constantly expressed His dependence on God and willing acceptance of His circumstances in this pathway of life. The ultimate aspect of our Savior's suffering was when He tasted the bitter cup of the judgment of our sins (Mt. 26:39, John 18:11). Peter seems to remind his readers of that cup when he writes, "*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God . . .*" (1 Pet. 3:18). That tree cast into the water changed it from bitter to sweet. However, the Lord had a greater purpose than simply sweetening the water. He revealed Himself as the Lord who heals. While one could say that the water was healed, the Lord made it clear that His purpose was to heal the people (15:26). His purpose was to change them, more than just to change the water. There are many occasions when the bitter events of our lives are not changed or healed, but our attitudes and responses to them are what need to be changed. Hebrews 12:3-22 teaches us that one can despise (make light of) the trial (v. 5), faint under the trial (v. 5), endure the trial (v. 7), or much better, be exercised by the trial (v. 11). To make light of it is not to see God's hand in it; to faint is to fail to recognize God's heart; to endure indicates failure to realize God's purpose, but to be exercised is to understand God's mind.

Healing of the People

The word "rapha" or "ropheca" is a common word in the Old Testament for "healing" of body and of soul. We find it used for national healing (Isa. 6:10, 53:5, Jer. 6:14, and numerous other references), healing of water (2 Kings

2:21-22), as well as for physical healing. More than the waters needed healing; it was the heart-condition of the people, and the Lord desired that more. He had brought them to this place to test their faith in Him to supply and now He would strengthen that faith so that they would trust Him in every event of the journey. Alas, they, like us, forgot His capability to do so, and repeatedly failed to consciously depend on Him regardless of conditions.

We read that the Lord made for them a statute and an ordinance that was intended to establish a principle for them to apply and to act on in life. There are principles that are designed to regulate and direct the lives of God's people, and He is looking for diligent obedience to His voice and a positive response to His Word. His promise to them was that this would result in their healing and preservation from all the diseases that were directed toward the Egyptians. The pathway of faith and obedience to the Lord will preserve a saint from the evil results that come upon the men of the world who are not saved. This is not preservation from physical illnesses (though it was for Israel), but from the spiritual and moral results that cause a sad impact on the lives of any people.

There is no question, and we believe undoubtedly, that the Lord is also the One who provides physical healing for His people, even today. The gift of healing that is listed in 1 Cor. 12 clearly seems to have passed, but God's ability and sufficiency as the healer of His people remains, and because of this, we do not hesitate to pray to our merciful God on behalf of others when they are suffering or needing healing. He is able to raise the sick, but we also see from the examples of Paul's physical problems and those of his fellow-workers (Phil. 2:26-27, 2 Tim. 4:20), that He does not always heal. Some of God's choicest saints have been those who have experienced life-long physical trials, and even have rejoiced in them (2 Cor. 12:7-10) as they also experienced the grace of God in the trial.

God's purpose in this event was to reveal Himself as the only One who could heal His people, and that healing is primarily in His work to change them, and this is a work that is more important than changing the water. For a believer, the trials of life with their discouragements and doubt-producing conditions must continue to be faced, but by bringing the suffering Christ into the experience, we are changed in our reactions to those events, and we can see and accept them in a different way.

It is encouraging to see that this trying encounter with the bitter water of Marah was followed by God mercifully bringing them to Elim, with its twelve wells of good water and seventy palm trees. Isn't our God abundantly kind to His people! The pathway of a believer is not one

unmitigated and unchanging grind of trials and adversities, but it is blended with times of refreshment and merciful supply from the One who guides His own through this present wilderness scene with all its changing conditions of life. Both extremes are a part of His purpose for His beloved people.

**I often say my prayers,
But do I really pray?
Or do the wishes of my heart
Dictate the words I say?
Far better to kneel down,
To gods of wood and stone,
Than offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.**

A Grandfather's Faith

F. Butcher.

"By faith Jacob, when he was a-dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff" (Heb. 11:21).

Only one act of faith out of Jacob's long, eventful life of 147 years has been selected by the Holy Spirit, as an example of what faith does. Doubtless through faith Jacob had gained many victories, but this one act was divinely chosen for special mention. This would surely indicate that this incident is peculiarly instructive and interesting.

The incident is recorded in Genesis 48. Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, were born during the seven years of plenty in Egypt: they had an Egyptian mother, and an Egyptian grandfather who was a priest of the sun. The probability is that they would prattle away in Egyptian and be clad in the fashion of Egypt. What would be more natural than that they should develop into educated and respected citizens of that country, to play an important role as leaders in its politics. Naturally, as a proud fond mother, their mother would desire that for them. And their grandfather, Potipherah, would have thoughts that one of them might follow in his steps, and become a great ecclesiastical dignitary—one for the state and one for the church! This is what would naturally be expected.

But by God's wonderful grace all that is completely overturned. They became decided Israelites; heads of two important tribes of that nation that God had chosen from

among all the peoples of the earth. When they were still very small boys, probably five or seven years of age, something very remarkable happened which turned the current of their lives into an upward and heavenward channel: another grandfather came upon the scene, an old man of 130 years, limping and leaning upon his staff, dressed as a simple shepherd of Canaan. No doubt they would look askance at him; they could not talk his language nor he theirs. There would seem to be no affinity at all between them.

Jacob would soon find out who they were, the sons of his beloved Joseph; and consequently his own grandchildren and the grandchildren of his loved and unforgotten Rachel. He knew the promises of God to his father, and to himself, he knew the meaning of Joseph's dreams of supremacy. He knew that they were God's chosen people: and that the promised land was theirs. Did he not know that the promised Seed of the woman, that was to bruise the serpent's head, was to be of his descendants? He believed God. Faith believes God, and acts upon this belief. So when the question arose, To which people were Manasseh and Ephraim to belong, to the Egyptians, or to the Israelites? He took his stand upon the promises of God and acted in faith. A mixture of both was an impossibility, for every shepherd was an abomination to the Egyptians; a great gulf yawned between these two peoples which no policy of expediency could ever fill, or bridge over.

By faith the victory was gained, and Manasseh and Ephraim became true and decided Israelites. Evidently the matter lay very near Jacob's heart, for there was no hesitancy on his part. He did not say as some rather worldly grandparents, or parents, in these days are inclined to say, "Ah, well, we have given them a good Egyptian education, and distinguished careers lie before them, and you cannot expect them to be like their countrified cousins from the uplands of Canaan, and after all we would like to see them get on in the world." There was nothing of that. There was no pandering to the world in this case. In that chamber of death, when Joseph brings them to their grandfather, he speaks out decidedly, "*Now thy two sons Ephraim and Manasseh are mine; as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine.*" Not for a moment will he allow that they belong to Potiphara, or to Egypt. God had promised, and he claims them for God.

They were both now over twenty years of age and doubtless God had been dealing with them bringing them to a decision as to which people they would claim; the prospects in Egypt were brilliant, while the outlook in Canaan was gray, save as faith saw beyond; would they have chosen Canaan had Jacob encouraged them to go in for the riches and honors of Egypt? Had their choice been different they might have

pleaded some prior Egyptian engagement when Joseph spoke of going to visit his dying father. It may have cost them as inward struggle to be seen on their way to Jacob: they may have heard a mocking laugh behind them, but God was moving with them that the promise given to Jacob might be realized. Jacob, in the triumph of faith, with his crossed hands upon their heads said: "*God ___ bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth,*" (Gen. 48:14-16).

Surely they were fully recompensed for coming, thus launched in the living stream of Israel, nevermore to claim kinship with the Egyptians, nor to seek their portion there. They were to be planted in Canaan as the scions of that fruitful bow by a well—Joseph. And the election of grace put Ephraim before Manasseh for so are the ways of God.

Yes, by faith Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph. Do modern grandparents and parents fight the fight of faith for their offspring? Or do they rather seek to get for them a so-called good education in the world's wisdom where faith is undermined, and encourage them to go in for a successful career in the world? Jacob having pronounced his blessing, and knowing that these two young men were the chosen of God, worships. A feeling of intense gratitude ascends in praise from his old heart which had been so battered in the turmoil of life. His cup was full, and he rejoices with his whole being in God: and Scripture significantly adds, "*leaning upon the top of his staff,*" indicating that he still clung to the old sign of pilgrimage. He would not lay aside his pilgrim character, nor its token. According to the flesh he was in Egypt: but his heart was in Canaan, so he clung to his staff, even on his deathbed. Had any one suggested that it might just as well stand in the corner doubtless he would have gripped it more firmly as signifying that he would never acknowledge that he was at home in Egypt: and if he could not get away to his own promised land he would at least have the token of pilgrimage still in his hand. That too was faith. True worshippers always lean upon their staff, showing that they are not of this world. Jacob's faith takes hold upon the promise of God for the lads, and upon the lads for God, and his people. Worship follows most appropriately: and the pilgrim character is maintained to the latest breath.

WIS 1923

"Humility is not the habit of thinking nothing of yourself, but the art of appraising yourself at your proper value, and keeping within your limits."

W. Lincoln