

The sons of the prophets

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] We might read in the second book of Kings, in chapter 6. 2 Kings, chapter 6.

Verse 1, And the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell before thee is too straight for us. Let us go, we pray thee, to the Jordan, and take thence every man of Eden, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he said, Go. And one said, Consent, I pray thee, to go with thy servants. And he said, I will go. And he went with them. And they came to the Jordan, and cut down the trees. And it came to pass, as one was filling a beam, that the iron fell into the water. And he cried, and said, Alas, master. And it was borrowed. And the man of God said, Where did it fall? And he showed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in the river, and made the iron to swim. And he said, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it. [00:01:09] And then a verse in Hebrew, we needn't turn to it, we read it this afternoon, Hebrews 13, and verse 13. Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

Just with some hesitating as I speak before you, but feel constrained to speak briefly on something which came before me towards the end of our reading.

The comment of our brother, no doubt, and I trust many of us could concur with the thought, that having been for many years amongst meetings such as these, how could we ever seek to follow a wider path?

Yet I wonder, whether we could all have a thought such as this. Sadly, look around us, surely it's not so, that all can say, could we ever go anywhere else?

[00:02:09] I trust the brethren will forgive me if I take these thoughts out of context somewhat. Verse 1 of this chapter refers to the sons of the prophets.

A century and a half ago, men, godly men who read the word of God, separated from the systems of men.

Those systems which we have suggested are the modern day equivalent of the camp of Judaism. And they separated with deep exercise.

And they separated, no doubt, amidst much reproach.

We could say that those men, and women too, are the prophets spoken in this chapter.

And yet today, of course, they are all with the Lord. What remains today are the sons, and of course the daughters, of these prophets. [00:03:10] And their thoughts are laid before us in this verse. The place where we dwell, before thee, is too straight for us. Sadly, this is the thought of many.

The way is too narrow, it's too difficult, and there's a desire to go elsewhere.

You see, they did not have the exercise of their fathers. Theirs was not an exercise brought out from deep study of the scripture. Theirs was not an exercise brought out on their knees before God.

I'm grateful, I thank God, that I was brought up in a Christian home. And I wouldn't take away from the very great privilege that such an upbringing is. Yet I wonder, as I look at my own life, how many of us have simply come into circumstances, [00:04:08] and have not taken it upon themselves. How wonderful it is, in one sense, where little ones are able to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I'm sure it is a word to parents to continue to be a right example and to train their young ones up in right ways.

But I, thinking of myself, can, to my shame, say how little I really understood of the principles of scripture. And sadly, many of us, I'm sure, can think of those, perhaps in their own families, who have not gone on in the place where they first went.

I knew of a brother, I heard of a brother whose children and family were walking with those, known as brethren, monsters.

[00:05:02] And they would question him as to certain practices. Why do we do this? Why do we not do the other? And his reply was, I don't know, we've always done it.

And dear friends, it's not good enough to say, I don't know, we've always done it. It's not sufficient to simply go on with what our parents have gone on with. Of course, there are godly traditions, and the chances are there are, indeed there ought to be, scriptural warrants for all that we do and all that we don't do. But it's not sufficient to simply shrug our shoulders and say, I don't know, we've always done it. Dear friends, let us take upon ourselves these things. Let us have a clear understanding of the principles of gathering and those things which affect our lives.

The axe, the axe head, the iron fell into the water.

[00:06:01] How easily things are allowed to slip. Think of those things which we have not had an exercise about. Things that are fairly well known to some of us, often applied to those with money. Easy come and easy go.

And I'm afraid to our shame that can be applied to many of us. Things that we have taken on easily, how readily we give them up.

Such as this iron.

Those that have not taken these things upon themselves.

Their crime is alas, master, and it was borrowed. Refer to the verse in Hebrews, let us go forth to him without the camp.

It's striking that we go forth to a person, the person, our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. And I often say in speaking of the principles of gathering that it's the verse in Matthew, where two or three are gathered in his name, there am I in the midst of them. In my name, there am I in the midst of them. [00:07:03] And how rightly we often use that phrase. How rightly indeed we dismiss others in suggesting that they are not thus gathered.

Well, we often refer to the fundamentals of, fundamental principles of gathering.

We normally try to summarize and say that there are of course things which are fundamental to the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, I have to assure you so. And yet, other things are perhaps more tenuous. We allow liberty of conscience in various matters. But, you see these are the things which are being given up.

We are brought up with certain practices, certain traditions, godly they are.

There are various things which were put right in the last century. Things which distinguish companies of believers. And yet these are the very things which are given up. [00:08:01] Almost, as I took off my hat, that the first sign of trouble, these things are given up. Dear friends, if we really had an understanding of the things of godly order, would our meetings be so depleted? Would there be those who have been amongst us for many years, who are now following a wider path? It's a question that we should take to our own hearts. I'm ashamed to have to admit that there are those connected with us locally who have been amongst so called brethren all their lives. And in the last few years have decided for one reason or another to go into various systems where things are different.

One wonders how much they learnt.

How much was really taken to their hearts? How much did they understand? It's a word to us. Are we ministering on these things in a simple way so that they can be understood? [00:09:01] Do we assume a certain level of understanding in our meetings? Are we training our young people in things which may not be fundamental in terms of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, but are nevertheless those things which distinguish us? Think of the person of the Lord Jesus. Would you say that his headship was fundamental to his person? Surely you would.

If we think of the Lord's headship, his head of the assembly, surely we attach importance to the instructions in Corinthians. Thinking of the distinction in the public meetings of brothers and sisters. Refer also to head coverings, things such as these. These things are friends of those which amongst other believers are not always obeyed. They are those things for which we are reprov'd and reproach'd.

And if we have not taken them upon ourselves, if we do not have a firm understanding of the reasons for these practices, [00:10:07] well, very shortly our cry will be, Alas Master, it was borrowed.

If we do not have a firm grasp of these things, to be aware they might seem to many, they surely impinge on the rights of the Lord Jesus Christ in his assembly. And there are those that feel free at the first sign of trouble. There's no such place as a perfect local assembly. I'm sure you're aware Spurgeon has said, if you find the perfect church, don't go there, you'll spoil it. It surely applies to all companies of the Lord's people. There's no such thing as a company that is not disciplined on other problems. Well, at the first sign of problems, many are apt to look elsewhere.

Surely their thoughts are not as expressed this afternoon as they might be. I do trust that all here would say that we have enjoyed the blessings that there is amongst the Lord's people.

[00:11:10] We may clear our own minds as to the things that distinguish, so that we can indeed say, surely we would not desire to be elsewhere. I trust that it is so.

But if there are any to whom the thought might be, Alas Master, it was borrowed. At the end of our passage, there's an optimistic thought. The Prophet comes in, causes the lion to scream, and he says, Take it up to thee, and he put out his hand and took it. Well, the Lord is always able to restore matters, whatever the departure from truth and practice. And it's a matter of responsibility also. We've been thinking much of the privilege, and the privileges which we enjoy. And the two things go hand in hand. For every privilege, there's a responsibility. And as I go around the post offices in this land, particularly the small ones, I see a little sticker. [00:12:06] It says, Use it or lose it, or use us or lose us. Something of the thought of that. And surely that's the thought. The privileges which are ours are there to be taken up. If we neglect the privileges which are ours, then we shall surely lose them. They become nothing to us. They remain nothing to us. And then, it's made easy for us to follow a wider path where these privileges are not available and not enjoyed. ...is concerned.

It's a matter for all.

Think of the privilege of coming to God in prayer. Are we all at the prayer meeting, if we're able? Are we all enjoying the privilege?

Are we all taking up the responsibility? I thank God that he has brought me to a town with a small meeting.

[00:13:07] Responsibility not sought has been given to me.

And it's only with the Lord's help that things are able to continue. I thank God that it's made the privilege all that more wonderful. How marvelous it is, these privileges which we have. A word was said as to the singing of hymns and prayer in worship. And I would like to say a little word to particularly the young.

I count myself as one of them.

And it's true to say that it's very easy, particularly in large gatherings, to feel inadequate.

Let us not despise the simple prayer of a young believer.

Let us not expect a young believer to pray as if he'd been in communion with the Lord for 60 or more years.

[00:14:01] Thank God for those that have been in a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ for many, many years. The words that they are able to express, surely, rise as a sweet savour to God.

But let us not despise words of simplicity. God looks upon the heart. Surely it is the affections of the heart and the thoughts of the mind that are important. The simplest prayer, if it's made in a very real way, if it's the result of deep affection for the Lord, surely that is more acceptable to God than the

mere recitation of even the most wonderful hymn in a cold and unfeeling way. Well, I've nothing more to say with Brethren. Let's have this exercise that we might take up these things which are so despised, even amongst those that claim to be believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. We know what they are.

Do we really understand the scriptural principles behind them? [00:15:01] Are we able to cling on to them, make them our own, just as the very earliest Brethren did? Or are we the first sign of dissent to cry, Alas, Master, for it was borrowed?