

February 3, 1935 - Sunday Afternoon

Bethel Temple

Reading of scripture Math. 11:1-15

It is wonderful how the word of God continually brings us back to a standard. Christians get lukewarm and unbelieving and down in oppression but the word of God is always there. The standard is never low. God has lifted up his word as a standard for his people and that standard should always be before the hearts and eyes of the people. When we look at the history of the various churches, and in this we include the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, you will find that everyone of them began in a blazing fire and revival power. Hallelujah for the revival power! And thank the Lord that revival power is still among the people of God.

But little by little they have yielded to the world and those things that come by reason of church etiquette and formalities until today they have a form but they know nothing of the marvelous and wonderful power of the Almighty GOD to do things that men in themselves cannot do. So it is a wonderful thing to have a bible and a marvelous thing for you and me to hold that standard before our eyes continually. It shows us when we are departing from the Spirit and ministry of the truth of God in its most powerful form. I don't believe, myself, that people backslide because they want to. I don't believe people miss the way because they want to. There is always a pressure being brought to bear on the people of God. That is where the need of real spiritual discernment comes to you and me. That pressure is trying to put them down and what the world would call "in their place," and bring them to a place where they are of very little use to either God or man. It really doesn't do the world much good for you and I to go to church just because we love the fellowship of the saints and are linked up with God to understand divine things and for a time of refreshing, but you will notice in the bible that the church of God is his body in this world.

"I am the vine and ye are the branches." I am the root, the stem, the trunk. I am the vine and ye are the branches. It was a wonderful thing when Christ completed his ministry. While on earth He bore all the fruits of the Spirit. When John became discouraged because of the treatment he was receiving at the hands of Herod (and Oh, what a mighty day is coming when God judges the oppressed.) I don't believe He has ever reckoned with the world because of the death of John, the herald of Christ, and of the blessed Christ himself. I think that a reckoning day is still to come. What a day it is going to be. What a privilege God's people have of finding themselves in the presence and being of Jesus Christ. John, in his doubt and fear that he had made a mistake because he had born such a marvelous testimony concerning Jesus Christ (he had actually pointed his finger at him and said, "Behold the lamb of God"). John testified with no uncertain sound when he testified. It was the pressure and power of the Spirit of God on him. But when he got into prison it was a different matter. His very birth was a miracle of God and yet a man like that could get into the dumps and become discouraged. In the darkness of the prison cell he sent his disciples and said, Ask him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? And Jesus said, "Go and tell John what you hear and see and tell him that the blind receive their sight." It is a great thing, brethren, this gospel.

When I remember the marvelous record of our bible and think of the marvelous things God has done in showing us in that vast treasure house of God I marvel that any man can get discouraged and down cast and how any church can forget the glory and ministry of the power of God and go on without that fulness of being linked up with God. The bible does not speak very highly of the thing we know as man. It is true the Psalmist said, "What is man that thou art mindful of him." What is it about you or me that God would stop those

glorious cycles of praise in heaven and stop to take notice of you or me?

What is it that makes God vitally and mightily concerned about you? When he speaks of flesh he says, "all flesh is as the grass." That doesn't sound so good. I thought I was a man and could do things and had some standing in the community. No, brother, you don't amount to that. All flesh, when we are dealing with flesh, is as grass. In growing it comes up and goes. He speaks of the humanity of us as "a broken reed and smoking flax". Yes, when Christ came that was a condition of the world. Merely reeds in a marsh; like lamps whose wicks were smoldering. Thank God, when the Messiah comes He is not going to break the bruised reed. He is going to heal and strengthen and build up and take man and sin-cursed humanity that has been bruised and broken and wrecked by sin and dying and disease and death and strengthen it up. He is going to heal the bruising and breaking and if he finds men without any light or message of truth but just a smoke that dims the vision he is not going to quench it but will pour in oil and make men shine as lights in this world.

"Go and tell John the blind receive their sight and the lame walk." He is speaking concerning the physical man, not the spiritual. Here is God's standard; always was and always will be. God wants to do the kind of a ministry today that he did in Jesus, his only Begotten Son. That awful pressure that is coming from, God knows where, that is causing the people to be discouraged and loose heart and faith. But remember, here is the standard. God has always lifted it up, that marvelous revelation that comes concerning Jesus Christ. I very seldom read my bible without reading about Abraham and Isaac and I see him walking up the mountain and Isaac with the wood for the sacrifice on his back. And I see the knife in his hand ready to destroy that son when suddenly God says, "No, you have gone far enough." And I know what he means when he was offering Isaac. He was giving the world Jesus Christ. And also when God gave them the passover lamb. The thing has never changed. He let the knife fall on our Isaac. He let the blood flow from the body of Jesus that the whole world might be sprinkled and atonement made for them by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Now here he says, "Go and tell, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, and the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear and the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them, and then tell John "Blessed is that man who will never be offended", and I tell you those disciples went back and knocked on the door of the jail and said, "We want to see John", and John said, "What did ye see?" And they said "For you to remember this, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear and the very dead are raised up from their death beds and the poor, that despised class of people (Oh, brother, did you ever read of the conditions that obtained in the time of Christ?) If you have you don't wonder at the wrath of Christ at the Pharisees and scribes. Those who were supposed to be leaders were rank deep-dyed in the wool hypocrites that the sun ever shined upon and had no more use for the poor man. Just like today, if you want into some churches with overalls they would show you the door. They would put you out. Now he said, "Tell John the poor have the gospel preached," and I tell you, my brethren, that committee of disciples went back and said, "John, the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised and the poor have the gospel preached to them," and I will warrant you if you and I could have stood by, John would have said, "That is him," that is the one and those are the things he is to do when he came and I did not make a mistake.

And Jesus said, "What went ye out to see, a reed?" Yes, that is all man is. A reed and not much after all. "What went ye out to see? a man in fine raiment?" You don't find those out in the desert praying. They are clothed in purple and dwell in palaces. "But what went ye out to see? A prophet?"



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"Yea, more than a prophet. Behold, I send my messenger which shall prepare thy way before thee." Here was a prophet that they prophesied as carefully of as of Jesus Christ. And one day a committee went to see John and said, "John who are you?" Who am I? If you would go today and ask some preachers that, they would give you a look that would shrivel you up. You, a christian and don't know who I am! "But John, who are you?" And they said, "Are you Elijah?" Here we have somewhat of a bible conundrum. Jesus said, if you will receive it, this is Elijah. "Are you the prophet come back again?" And he said, "No". Well, who are you? He didn't say, "I am the man who was prophesied of in Israel." He didn't say, "I am that man, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth." He said, "I am the voice". The identity of John in a human sense had been lost in God. I don't wonder of the power and the strength and the glory of his message. He had no identity in a human sense. "Who are you?" "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

Isn't it a wonderful thing when christians can loose their own identity. That is one reason why John didn't have to have a thorn in the flesh. Paul came, a well educated man who sat at the feet of Gamaliel, noted as the greatest Hebrew teacher in the world. None could teach him anything concerning the Mosaic ritual law and order. God gave him the most apt pupil that Gamaliel ever had. That is God's way of doing things. And yet there was that about Paul, saved and baptised by the Holy Ghost and fire and endued with gifts such as no man ever received, yet it was necessary for Paul to have a stabbing thorn bringing him into humility and often times despondency with the Lord, but with John it was different. He didn't tell them anything about himself, who his father or mother were, and, brethren, it is a marvelous thing to have a spirit like that.

And so Jesus said, "More than a prophet for this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face which shall prepare thy way before thee, and verily I say unto you, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist; notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." What does that man mean? It means, my brethren, that you and I today stand in a better place than the place of John the Baptist. John came and filled his course and when you study this intricate bible revelation it is so holy when you get the story by the Holy Ghost. There is no puzzle to it but it is a marvelous thing to get it clear who Elijah was. John the Baptist used him as a clothing and ministered the heralding of the only begotten Son. But the Spirit of Elijah is not done with. He is coming again and this world is going to see Elijah the prophet. I wonder if we would know him. He is not coming to preach a general gospel but Elijah is coming again and Christ is coming again and in the mean time God has lifted up a standard for you and me to follow in the course of the gospel and happy is that man and woman who find themselves interested in that standard. I don't think all men and women will become workers of miracles and outstanding workers of Christ. I think some are ordained for that ministry but every believer and child of God shall have a part in their prayer life for praying that this ministry should be poured out on the church. How forgetful christians are to pray that God will pour out this work on the church.

Sometimes folks say, "Why am I not healed." Rachel went to Jacob and said, "Why can't I have a son?" Jacob was vexed and said, "Don't ask me. You go to God." Sometimes folk say to me, "I have prayed and prayed. Why am I not healed?" I say, "Ask God." How much have you prayed that the ministry should be on the church. You think the preacher should be able to pray the prayer of faith to make you well. Men can't pray this ministry on themselves.

1935

It is not God's will they should. The Spirit of the Lord reveals the fact that the church is the body of Christ and the minister is only the mouth piece. The church has to have a hunger to pray the ministry of Christ down on the church. If we can pray it down folk will be healed. Thousands of people are being healed today. We have hundreds of letters, in our Radio files, to prove that hundreds and hundreds of people are being cured of incurable diseases.

Go and tell John." Go and tell the world that God is just the same. That the power of Christ is just the same and, brother, in your telling don't forget this, that every minister needs definite prayer on this line. Not that I might be anything for if too much power comes on one man he is going to get some thorn that is not going to be so pleasant for him. Just as those men went back to John Christ is talking to you. Go and tell your friends and neighbors that the power of God is just the same. "The blind receive their sight, the lame are walking, the dead are raised, the deaf hear, the lepers are cleansed, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Thank God, it doesn't cost a thing. You can't buy it with gold or silver. It is for you and me. It is in times of depression when money is scarce. I am telling you that God is just the same this afternoon. There is power to make the blind see this afternoon and to make the deaf hear. Hallelujah! I said to you the other day that I have been standing by death beds and graves. I was swamped and my own wife hung in the balance for eight days and all we could do was to hang on to God and last night she was able to eat her supper and enjoy it. Thank the Lord it is wonderful. God is just the same. Tell your friends. He can settle every difficulty for you. He is not only a healer. He is a saviour. He will blast that sin out of your makeup and make life holy and righteous and peaceful and blessed if you just go and tell Him and, brother and sister, you will sow the seeds of a revival and you will be the means of saving a soul.

Finally, Jesus said that peculiar saying, "Since the days of John the Baptist the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence." The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. You can get so determined, brother or sister, before God that something has to break. It is up to you to take what you want from God. The branches get their life from the vine and if you and I are linked up with Christ you can ask what you will. But you have to be linked up; no fake or humbugery. You can become a branch by being born again and filled with God and having faith and believing in the word and the Holy Ghost will come down on you so that the Kingdom of Heaven will suffer violence. Don't be afraid to camp at the door and knock if it is midnight. You will get what your soul cries out for. Christ said, "Men ought always to pray." And he will rise and give you just what you need. Christ is just the same. The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent taketh it by force. That doesn't mean the Devil can break into heaven whenever he wants. It means you and I can camp at the door of God and He will give you the desires of your heart. Let us pray. (Alter call)

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