

~Other Speakers G-L: Allan Halton:

Our Lord has accomplished something very special when He sees us beginning to consider His own interests first in all we go through, and in all we seek from Him. When this becomes our first consideration—when in every problem, every situation, every need, every petition, our foremost concern is our Lord's own interests—we have come into something very beautiful in His sight.

This is not to say that our problems and needs are not God's own interests. They are. He cares for us deeply. But His primary goal in all the things we are going through is that we have fellowship with Him in the midst of it all—that we come to know Him, and be conformed to the image of His Son.

It was the Father's interests that were His own interests.

Take the story of the widow of Zarephath in the time of her great need. When she met Elijah she was out with her son gathering sticks for the fire so she could bake her last bit of flour, and then die, she told him. Don't be afraid, yes, do that, Elijah responded. "But make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and thy son" (1 Ki. 17.13). Kind of selfish of him, wasn't it, taking a poor widow's last meal? But this was a man who stood before God. God's interests had become his own, God's hunger His own. And he wanted this woman to know that regardless how desperate her need was, she would come out the loser if she too did not make God's need her own—her priority.

But when she did this, behold how wonderfully God met her need!

The same with you and me. God is not being selfish when in the midst of our great anguish and deep need He says, "Feed Me first." It is our own great advantage He has in mind—that is, bringing us to the place where His advantage has become our own.

Yes, we seek Him for His help in all our dire circumstances and deep needs. But getting Him to answer our need is not the first in importance. First comes fellowship with Him, and getting knowing Him and His own heart's longing. First comes worshipping Him—which means giving Him our all on the altar of burnt sacrifice to satisfy His own great longing for you and me.

Otherwise God may become to us no more than a dispenser of help for our troubles, one who answers our prayers... but we still haven't come to know Him, to walk with Him, and become like Him.

We may have a deep wound that some circumstance has brought into our life. But to have been wounded with the wound of longing for God... this is a precious gift that can only be healed in finding Him in the midst of what we are going through. It causes our first prayer in all things to be, Lord, I want to, I must... know You in this thing! This is my first and great desire above and beyond Your answering my prayers and meeting my needs. I must know You! Bring me through the secret door in this situation, which, going through, I discover myself face to face with You in my great distress, and come to know You in a deeper way. And in this way I become a kind of firstfruits that satisfies Your own deep hunger... for fellowship with one who is just like You. For, the firstfruits are always Your own to enjoy first—and then when Your own hunger is satisfied others enjoy the bounty.

So... are you and I in the midst of a trial that is very difficult for us? Let us be crying out like Job, then. He cried out in the midst of his great trial, "Oh, that I knew where I might find HIM" (Job 23.3). We must find GOD in our trial—as Job did. So often our prayer is, "Deliver me from the trial, Lord!" Job cried that too in his anguish. But God answered Him in a way that was higher than Job could comprehend at the moment. God's objective was that Job come to know Him—actually see Him.

He has the same thing in mind for you and me. That is His objective in what we are going through—that we find Him. God Himself, that is. The implication is becoming one with Him... as Elijah was. "Make me a little cake first," he had said. It was God's request, really.

...And look how God answered Job after He had first brought him to know Him—know him oh so wonderfully—like never before.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is full of tender pity, and compassionate" (James 5.11).

FEED GOD FIRST

I think of David in the midst of all his trials and afflictions—how he swore unto the LORD that his first priority would be to make a habitation for his God (Ps. 132.1-5). See how God responded? Once He has that habitation for Himself He says, “I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.”

God is not unmindful of our needs and great longings. Far from it. But our God is a God of great love, and great wisdom. His love for us is, oh, so deep. When what we long for seems so far away, is nowhere in sight, there is something near He is working to help us discover—something very special He has in mind for us to find right there in the midst of our trial and unanswered prayer—Himself. This is His own great longing. And this is why we find ourselves in this kind of trial—and needing to endure, like Job, and be patient. Our God loves us deeply, and wants the very best for us. The very best. He wants us to find Him in our trial. Once this happens, and patience has had its perfect work, like the widow of Zarephath we will find our desires and prayers answered far more fully than we were ever able to formulate.