

What is Man That Thou Art Mindful of Him?

~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:

Psa. viii. 3-4: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"

The starry heavens have always called forth wonder and amazement from thoughtful minds. Every imaginative and reflecting soul is moved and thrilled by the sight of the splendor of the hosts of Heaven. David was no exception. When he lay on the Judean plains watching and guarding his sheep, he was moved by the sublimity of the night. He was led to exclaim. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"

About five thousand stars are visible to the eye. It seemed wonderful to the Psalmist that the exalted Being who fills the heavens and whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain should waste a thought on such a creature as man. How much more wonderful would it have seemed to him if he had known some of the facts revealed by modern science. What if he had been told that this world, about which he knew so little; was twenty-five thousand miles around, and that it was whirling at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, and was shooting through space at the rate of nineteen miles a second, in comparison with which the swiftest cannon-ball is like motionless rest! What if he had been told that the sun was more than ninety million miles away, and was fourteen hundred times larger than our world! Suppose then that David had looked through a modern telescope that brings five million, five hundred thousand stars within the field of vision; and had been told that some of those stars were shining with five thousand times the magnitude and splendor of our sun, and are so far distant that light, traveling with the inconceivable speed of one hundred and ninety two thousand miles a second, is fourteen thousand years in reaching this little speck of a world. If David had known all these revelations of modern science, how much more would have been his amazement at the fact that God still condescends to notice man. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou are mindful of him? and the son of man that thou visitest him?"

I. Notice it is a fact that God is mindful of man very much so. Yea, He is more mindful of him that of all the glorious stars and suns that shine in all the firmament of God.

He has no concern for the stars, but He has the deepest concern over the fate of man. He never wept over burning suns, but He has wept over sinning and suffering man. He never expended any sympathy on the constellations, but the sorrows of men have awakened his deepest solicitude. He never visited a distant star to avert its fate, or alter its doom; but He did visit this far distant little planet to redeem man from destruction and visit him with the light and glory of a great salvation. He has proved to a certainty that He bestows more care and anxious love upon the humblest little babe in the poor man's cabin than upon all the material universe.

"Thou madest him a little lower than the angels," but we may add, "Only a little." We have faculties in kind like theirs. We are hastening on to be their companions and to stand as peers among them. Yea, "know ye not that we shall judge angels?" There is a matchless career before us, a destiny bewilderingly glorious, a growth that will lift us in time above the stature and proportions of any angels now before the throne of God.

This is the stupendous truth at the bottom of the Holiness Movement. Man is too godlike in his origin, too glorious in his destiny, to waste himself in a career of sin. If he were only an animal, he might live as a beast lives on the low plain of animal indulgence. If he were a thinking machine merely clothed with flesh and blood, his fate would be a matter of no concern. But he is a child of God, made in the image of God, with a glorious destiny made possible to him, and crowned with glory and honor! What honor? The honor of the Son of God assuming his likeness. The additional honor also of the fact that Jesus, having picked up the poor, ruined, cast-aways of Satan, saves them, sanctifies them, and is then "not ashamed to call them brethren."

Surely so great a being as that ought to respect himself enough, and have sufficient regard for self-interest and the vast possibilities before him, to refrain from sin. Sin blights, sin destroys, sin damns. One sin hurled the angels out of Heaven! One sin shut our first parents out of Eden. One sin, unrepented of, and unforsaken, will shut any of us out of Heaven.

Holiness teachers, then, are on the right track. They hold up the heinousness of sin, and the glory and beauty of holiness; the measureless growth of a child of God, and his illimitable possibilities in eternal development; and they cry out to all with inspired emphasis, "Like as he which calleth you is holy, so be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living; because it is written ye shall be holy; for I am holy."

II. We have seen that God has shown a marvelous and very peculiar interest in man. We have not adequately pointed out the reasons why. This we will now proceed to do.

1. Man is a criminal rebel against the government of God. It is surprising, when one stops to think of it, how a great crime fastens upon the criminal the interest and attention of mankind. There was recently a poor, mean criminal by the name of Tracey in a western prison, who was practically unknown to men. But he escaped and defied arrest, and, in fighting for his liberty, held at bay and evaded his pursuers for a month, killing in the meantime thirteen men. These foul and revolting crimes fastened upon him the attention of the whole nation, and he received more notice from the daily press than would be given to a hundred thousand quiet, law-abiding men.

The assassins of Lincoln, Garfield and McKinley were obscure enough before the commission of their crimes, but their dastardly deeds fastened upon them the attention of mankind and lifted them to an immortality of infamy.

A thousand ships can ply the peaceful traffic of the sea in quiet and obscurity, but let one of them lift the black flag of piracy and begin to wage war upon commerce, and at once this criminal ship elicits the attention of civilization. The description of this ship, her length, and shape, and color, and speed, and the number of her crew, become the common knowledge of mankind; and the navies of the nations will join their efforts to run her down.

Now, man is the rebel and the criminal of the moral universe. He has joined forces with Satan and the fallen angels in infernal assault upon the government and empire of God. As such, God and the moral universe bestow on him their attention, and concern themselves about his fate.

2. Man is sick. Well people receive comparatively little attention. The well children need but little notice. It is the inmate of the sick chamber that awakens anxiety and watchfulness, and about the invalid's couch or chair circles and swings the life of the home, and perhaps of the whole neighborhood. Now man is the sick member of the family of God. The angels of the skies, blessed with the perfect health of Heaven, bend above him and are all ministering spirits ready to serve. The Father's heart is touched with sympathy, and the Physician of Nazareth stands by in readiness to heal.

3. Man is lost. With what quiet uneventfulness the home life moves along in a blessed monotony for weeks and months and years. But let little Mary toddle off into the forest, wander among the crags and chasms of the mountain side, and at once what a sudden end of peace! What a consternation in the home and neighborhood! How are all peaceful employments abandoned while men and boys turn out and hunt night and day for the lost.

Is there nothing like this in the spiritual realm? What brought Jesus on His long missionary journey from the skies? Was it not to seek and to save the lost? The thirty-three years journey over the inhospitable plains of a Christ-rejecting, heaven-despising, holiness-hating world, through dark Gethsemane and over the ragged steep of Calvary, what was it all but a journey after the lost? And God and Heaven are still engaged in the diligent search after lost, fallen, sick and sinful men.

4. But man is also a sentient being, capable of joy or suffering, and that eternally. How wonderful does this fact lift our lives into great significance. Let any millionaire waste his millions in riotous and senseless prodigality, and no law will stop him -- no hand be lifted to stay his folly. But let that same man turn around and go to torturing the meanest and most worthless cur that ever wakened slumber by barking at his shadow in the light of the moon, and at once he will be arrested for cruelty to animals. The dog has more significance in the eyes of the law than all his millions, because it can suffer.

Man, measured by such a standard, is of how great a significance! How much enjoyment is possible to him during the lapse of ages? Not an angel in Heaven could compute and answer the query. How much could he suffer in the cycles of a lost eternity? The mind reels in contemplation of the awful problem.

Let us illustrate it. All the vast waters of the Atlantic Ocean could be passed through an aperture not larger than a straw of wheat. Nothing is needed but an infinity of time to accomplish the surprising result. President Finney used to say that one lost soul during the sweep of eternity could suffer, and doubtless would suffer, more than all the universe has suffered up to the present time. Nothing but constant suffering and the eternal duration of a lost soul are needed to reach the appalling result. God, who made man capable of such an infinitude of joy or suffering, appreciates his importance. The whole physical universe dwindles into insignificance compared with

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one single soul capable of joy or suffering, and that forever.

5, Man is capable of endless development, either in god likeness or the opposite. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." None of us can ever dimly conjecture what eternal growth can make of any of us. Sir Isaac Newton was born so feeble a little babe, only a couple of spans long, that for days he hovered between two worlds, a mere flutter of life. But in forty years he was calculating the speed of that light to which his baby eyes so tardily opened, and was weighing planets and stars in the scales of his mighty intellect! If a child can make such growth in less than half a century, what will an eternity of development do for the least of us?

Each lost sinner will some day be a more bloated and horrible monster of iniquity than Satan is now. And every redeemed saint finally saved will some day outshine in radiance, and be taller of stature, nobler in growth of godlikeness, than the mightiest archangel now blazing in glory before the throne of God.

Such reflections as these answer partially, at least, the question, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" They lead us to stand in awe before the possible destiny of man.

Sin is too dangerous to fool with in view of the awful peril involved. Holiness is too inviting to be neglected in view of the reward -- the infinite prize to be won. We reiterate once more the ringing words of God, "Like as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of living. Ye shall be holy, for I am holy."