

Articles and Sermons :: Memorial Service to the late Pastor William David Mullan

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Dr. Ian Paisley addressed the 3000 people who attended Pastor Mullan's Memorial Service in the Ulster Hall, Belfast. Over 1000 were turned away, unable to gain admittance.

I am here this afternoon because I can say very sincerely that I was Willie Mullan's friend, and he was my friend. Perhaps at times his friendship to me was a great embarrassment but he never denied it, he always said, "I am Ian Paisley's friend". And when you battle with the enemies of the Gospel and you raise a standard for truth and righteousness in an evil day, you come to appreciate your true and loyal friends. It could very well have been the case that if our beloved brother had passed over the river in a different manner there would have been many other people wanting to associate themselves in Memorial Services to him, but on the platform today you have men who were Willie's friends, and I am sure that today those are the men that our brother would want to pay their tributes and say what must be said.

I was reminding Jimmie Irvine of the first campaign that we had with our beloved Willie in the old Ravenhill Church. The first Monday night of that campaign our brother Pastor Irvine was in the right hand gallery. I remember calling him to open that campaign in prayer, and what a time we had when the windows of heaven were opened and bounteous showers of rich blessing fell, and many were the saved of the Lord.

Our brother Willie had a second campaign with us, when we were preaching here in this Ulster Hall during the building of the Martyrs Memorial Church. I saw this Hall equally as packed, on the Lord's Day evenings, as it is today, as he ministered and I remember the final meeting when I don't know how many souls - scores of them knelt in this very Hall. We had the holy water that night - (not the stuff that that Pope makes!) the tears of repentance as sinners sought and found the Lord.

Naturally, today, there is no one so sad at heart as I am. I want you to pray that the Lord will help me, and I trust that what we say shall not in any way be an elevation of Willie Mullan but shall be an elevation of Willie Mullan's Saviour, and the grace of God that made Willie Mullan and moulded him and blessed him for what he was for God and truth and righteousness.

When Michael rang our Church office and relayed to me the tragic news of our beloved Willie's passing, one passage of Scripture came very vividly before me. I want to read it this evening to you, and a phrase out of it I want to take for my text today. You will find it in 2 Samuel 1: 17: "And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son".

Let us stand for a wee word of prayer before the preaching.

Prayer:

O, God our Father, we thank Thee for a real sense of Thy Heavenly and Holy Presence with us in this Hall today. We thank Thee for the messages that have been spoken and the messages that have been brought in song. We thank Thee for the abiding presence of our Blessed Lord, our Saviour and our Friend. We pray for sinners, let them be convicted and saved by the free grace of God. We pray for backsliders, let them repent and return to their first love. We pray for Thy people, may we never be the same again, but may we this day give ourselves wholly to Thee, so that whatever remains of our lives may be on the altar for God and the answering baptism of fire upon our service and our offering.

To this end I take the promised Holy Ghost, the Blessed power of Pentecost to fill me to the uttermost, I take, thank God He undertakes for me.

The people of God said AMEN!

Great grief is never great at talking. Its eloquence is one of silence and its best and highest flight of oratory is one of speech.

echlessness. It expresses itself not in sentences but in sighs. Its greatest tribute which far exceeds even celestial language is the teardrop, the lump in the throat, the tender pressure of the hand or the strong and loving embrace.

Today it is my task, however, to lay the last official wreath of tribute on the casket of our beloved Willie. I trust you will be praying for me as I go about this sorrowful duty - a duty we all wish would not have been necessary as soon and suddenly and tragically in his life.

When I heard of my friend's passing, the first part of verse 26 of this chapter of 2 Samuel instantly came to mind and came to my lips, and as I stood in our Church office I said from the depths of my soul in brokenness, "I am distressed for thee brother Willie." "I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan" was what King David said. I would have you to know, however, that I have received great blessing to my soul as I have studied this historic lament. This is not the lamentation of a man who has lost faith, of a man who has lost hope or of a man who has lost courage. Rather, this lamentation throbs with hope, it throbs with faith and it throbs with courage. And if you study the Scripture you will find that symbolically David was on resurrection ground, because the news of the death of Jonathan came to him on the third day, (and the third day in Scripture is the day of resurrection).

I am glad today that as believers we can stand on resurrection ground, and we can view this matter from the ground of resurrection. That is the way we have got to view it. Some would view it through the eyes of men. Some would view it through the eyes of natural reasoning. Some would view it influenced by all the pernicious influence of rumour, but I am glad I can take my stand today and I can view this on the third day - on the ground of resurrection.

In the recently published biography of our beloved brother there is a reference made to the David and Jonathan friendship that was between himself and me. And as I thought about what he said, the kindness and the love and the generosity of those remarks, I pondered the verse that sprung to mind when I heard about his passing.

King David, says of Jonathan, "I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan". Why was David distressed? First of all he could say "I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan because your princely life of usefulness is now no longer with us. Jonathan, that life that meant so much to me, that princely life, that honourable life, that useful life is now finished", and there was a void in the heart of King David, the void that was brought about through a lost companionship, the void that was brought about through a lost friendship, the void that was brought about through a lost fellowship and the void that was brought about through a lost partnership.

I turn back in the history of Jonathan and I notice five things concerning Jonathan. The first of them is in the first reference to Jonathan in the Word of God. How is Jonathan introduced in the Bible? (The law of the first mention is an important law in Biblical interpretation). Where does he first appear in the Scriptures? He first appears as the negotiator of the sharp rocks and as the expert handler of the sword. He brought to Israel, in a day when all Israel trembled, a great and a glorious deliverance, when with his armourbearer he drew his sword; he negotiated the passage along; he took on the hordes of the Philistines and they fell before him, and the dark day became a day of light, and the sorrowful day became a day of joy, and the day of defeat became a day of great and grand and glorious deliverance. The negotiator of the sharp rocks, the maker of the way, the handler of the sword.

Anyone who knew our beloved brother knew his expertise in the handling of God's Word. It was never my privilege to meet anyone who could handle the Word of God with such skill, and I have among my friends in the Fundamentalist world some of the best known and some of the most honoured of preachers, both in this country and in the United States of America, but I can say honestly to you today, here was a man who was an expert handler of the sword. It was a privilege, and a pleasure, and always a blessing to see him open the Book, and so often he had that characteristic, he used to turn it over and then he got at the job of really preaching. You know what Ulster needs? Ulster needs a race of such preachers. Away with the essay readers from our pulpits! Send us men who have not only mastered the Book but the Book has mastered them, and then we'll see revival, then we'll see something of the mighty power of the Lord of hosts.

A handler of the sword!

I am distressed for thee my brother Willie! You'll not be handling the Sword any longer. We will not have the privilege of listening to you as you take the Book and draw from it the rich provision and that wonderful finest of the wheat, which was the great word that our brother used to use 'the finest of the wheat'. "I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan".

Then Jonathan appears as the lover of God's anointed. One day young David appears on the scene, fresh from the battle

e, fresh from the conflict, fresh from the tussle with Goliath of Gath and his final downfall. And when Jonathan was introduced to David, "his soul", we read, "was knit in love with the Lord's anointed". We also read that the origination of that love was not in Jonathan's heart but it was stirred up in Jonathan's heart as he looked upon the shepherd lad, and we read on another occasion that the grief of David exceeded the grief of Jonathan because Jonathan's love was sparked off by the love of David.

Could I say to you today, one day down and out, a wino, a tramp, a reject, the Lord Jesus, King David's Greater Son, appeared beside our brother in that field in Newtownards. Something happened that day. Something happened. And from that day our brother could say, "I love Him because He first loved me". Where did Jesus Christ come from when He met Willie Mullan? Where does He come from when He meets poor lost sinners? "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Jesus comes from Calvary, from the slaughter of the great Goliath and the trampling down of the forces of sin and Satan and evil. He comes with nail-pierced hand, He travels in the greatness of His strength, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." And that day Willie Mullan fell in love with Jesus, and everybody knew that our brother never put anything before the Lord. Yes! That is why he offended people. He was never a party man. Everybody knew that. He used to say, when he was preaching, "It was not the President of the Baptist Union that died for me. It was not the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church that died for me. It was the Prince of Glory died for me". Friend, that was the very heart of his message, for that is the very heart of the Gospel.

You can have your Church. You can have your baptism, and you can have everything and have it as orthodox as you like, but let me tell you that if you haven't got Jesus Christ you are a lost soul, there is no hope for you. 'Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved'.

Tell me, friend, are you saved today? There are people who would say of this meeting, 'They have come to worship Willie Mullan'. It is a lie. We have come to worship Willie Mullan's Saviour. We have come to honour the grace of God that lifted that tramp, transformed him, gave him the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and gave him an eloquence and a talent and an ability to make him a pulpit master, a flaming evangelist, a soul-winner unparalleled for a long time in the history of our land. That is what we have come to do today. You know how it started? It started because the Lord loved him, the Prince of Glory died for him.

The third thing I discovered about Jonathan was, he was a pleader for his friend. He knew what it was to intercede.

Some of you knew brother Willie as a preacher, an evangelist, and what a preacher he was and what an evangelist he was. Some of you knew him in his Bible class as he got out the Word and took the Book and examined its ramifications and parsed its language and explained its truths, but not many of you had the privilege of knowing him as a pleader. I had that great privilege. For many years every week our brother and myself knelt down together and we prayed, we shared our longings, our aspirations. We shared those problems of the ministry that nobody knows but the preacher himself, because the preacher walks an isolated path, a lonely path, a path where his congregation never can go with him, where he has to go it alone. And I have wonderful memories of days when our tears mingled together and we pleaded for this little Province that God in His great mercy would stay the hand of the aggressor, and in some way give us a great deliverance, and thank God, God answers prayer and God has answered those cries!

I am distressed for thee my brother Willie! I will not be able to kneel with you again. We will not be pleading together for this little corner of Ireland that we love with all our heart, and soul and mind.

Then Jonathan was seen as a watchman for his companion. The story of the shooting of the arrows, providing David with the necessary intelligence of what Saul had in mind for him.

Let me say to you today, this Province is poorer because a watchman has been removed from the watchtower. For there was one thing about Willie Mullan, he was fearless. He feared neither the face of man, woman or devil, but with great strength of purpose he was prepared to lift up his voice, to cry aloud and to spare not. He was a watchman upon the tower, providing intelligence for his companions and warding off the onslaughts of the devil's wolves among the choicest sheep of God's flock.

Another thing about Jonathan you will find, he was the encourager of the exile. He went to David when David was exiled, rejected, hunted, and we read 'He strengthened him in the Lord'. He brought that sweet, blessed, healing, comforting word, just the word that was needed at the right time in the right place.

We all know how our brother could comfort the saints of God. He used to say to me, "I am looking for a wee word of com

fort for the saints on the Lord's Day morning. Ian, the wee woman that is trying to make ends meet and she is fighting a hard battle to raise her family and keep them respectable and keep them on the straight and narrow". He said, "That we e woman would need a comforting word, I am looking for it. And the man that is out in the street - the breadwinner of the home, fighting life's battle with all the temptations of this evil age, and the young people, Ian, who have temptations that you and I know nothing about, for they are of a different generation, they are growing up in a different environment, I need a word of comfort. I want to comfort, I want to mend the saints and not to rend them". And many a time we listened to our brother and we knew the balm of Gilead. We knew the touch of the nail-pierced hand. Standing somewhere in the shadows of his preaching we found the Man of Calvary, and we got the solace and the healing that we needed.

'I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan because your princely and honoured useful life is gone'.

I am distressed for thee my brother Willie because your honoured, useful life is no longer with us.

Secondly, could I remind you that David is saying something more here. He is saying, 'I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan because of the untimeliness of your death. Jonathan there never was a time when we more needed you in the affairs of Israel'. Study the Book and you will find that Israel needed the stabilising influence of Jonathan in this hour of crisis. The Lord had appointed David. David was God's choice. Jonathan knew it. He abdicated his position. He said, "David I'll join you to make you the ruler of the whole land". We know what happened after Jonathan's death. We know how his son was taken and wrongfully crowned, and we know as a result there was bloodshed and anarchy and rebellion, and the kingdom passed down into the darkness. David knew it. He knew that if Jonathan had lived there would have been blessing. He knew that if Jonathan had lived there would not have been all the bitterness and all the hardship and all the turmoil of the coming months and years. 'I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan, your death is an untimely one'.

How much we could still have done with the voice of our brother in our Province! How much we could still have done with the voice of our brother on our Conference platforms! How much we could still have done with our brother's evangelistic gifts in summoning men and women to repentance, and throwing out the Gospel net that it might be filled with fishes great and small! We must say, and I must say today, I am distressed for thee my brother Willie because of the untimeliness of your death.

There was something else, David was distressed for brother Jonathan because of the circumstances of his death. The circumstances of his death!

We don't believe in running away from these circumstances. We believe, as believers with God's Word in our hands, we have got to face it. You see, David got the picture, Jonathan in the battle. The archers are against him. Their barbed darts had torn Jonathan's flesh, and there he is fallen in the high places of Gilboa. The weapons of war have perished from his hands. The uncircumcised approaching to finish him off, and according to the Scriptures he was the first of the Royal line of Saul that fell that day in that tremendous struggle. And David pictured it, the agony of his friend, the dark circumstances that surrounded his death; the pain of the arrows; the cruel cutting of the sword and he said, in his anguish, "I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan".

Our dear brother Willie during the past weeks had been passing through a period of deep physical sickness, and the most intense of mental strain. Physically he had had a stroke, and other alarming complications which signalled the imminent breakup of his physical frame. Running parallel with that physical condition there was the severest mental strain resulting from an accumulation of circumstances directly flowing from his responsibilities and work and zealous service for the Lord. Many of us are apt to forget the dark sowing in his body of earlier years. Many of us are apt to forget the toll that must have been taken on our brother's physical frame in those very formative years when the body was really being formed into its constitution. And he never never spared himself. He came many a time from a sick bed to the pulpit. Many a time against the orders of his medical advisors, he came to plead for souls. I remember one time he preached in the prison, and his doctor said, "You mustn't go", and he said, "But, doctor, it's an opportunity that will never return, and perhaps among those men up in the Crumlin Road I can sow this seed that will be for their salvation. I must go and do my task", and he did it as we know, unflinchingly and consistently. But these combined strains caused his mind to reel, and indeed to some close friends he confided in tears that no one knew how sick he really was. He had a conversation with Mr. T. B. F. Thompson of Garvagh about hospitalization. But with this strain our brother had a dread - a dread of bodily attack. Hence, he kept a loaded shotgun beside his bed, and evidently on the occasion of his death he had it in his study.

I was greatly struck by the parallel between the death of our brother and the death of one of the great eminent saints of Scotland in the last century. Hugh Miller was one of the founding fathers of the Free Church of Scotland, the friend of the

great Thomas Chalmers, the closest associate of Robert Murray McCheyne, of Thomas Guthrie and of the Bonner brothers. That dear man, like our dear brother Willie, came under the pressures that went for his mind, that broke up his constitution and died in the same way as our brother died.

'I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan'.

Perhaps we will only know something of what our brother passed through when we are reminded of that Psalm that he was constantly reading in the last days of life on earth. It is the Psalm 69. What a Psalm it is. "Save me, O, God, for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire where there is no standing".

Out in the little study our brother came to a place where there was no standing. And let me say today, let no man here dare to lift a voice of criticism. You never were there. Pray God you never will be! Ask God to save you from such a terrible breakdown mentally and physically as our brother had. He was standing in those deep waters. "The floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying. My throat is dried. Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head". And you know, my friend, that hatred did not die when our brother died. The Chairman of this meeting actually received a written threat because he was going to take part in this meeting today. I want to tell you, our brother's testimony - Willie Mullan's testimony against all the powers of darkness was a tremendous testimony. You have only to listen to his tape on the Scarlet Woman of Revelation 17 and you will know the type of ministry he exercised. No wonder the powers of darkness hated this man and will continue to hate him.

Let me say, today, as his friend, for a friend is born for adversity, let me say, today, I deplore those that profess the name of Christ who would repeat any unfounded accusation against the man whom they never dared to face in time, and now when he cannot speak for himself would mention it. I will speak up for my friend today, and, thank God, many more will speak up for him today.

Our brother Willie was down in those deep waters, 'The mire'. There is a verse there: "Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink. Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters. Let not the waterflood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. Thou hast known my reproach and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before me. Reproach hath broken my heart; I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some to take pity, and there was none; and for comforters but I found none". The darkness!

'I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan' said David, because of the circumstances of his death. But he was distressed because of the use made of his death in the ranks of the Philistines and amongst the thousands of Israel. David knew that the enemies of God would rejoice. Therefore David said (have you noted his words?) he said, "Tell it not in Gath. Publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph". I know, brother Jonathan, that the enemies of God will take your death and they will turn it into a place of triumph and rejoice in your fall, rejoice in your slaying, rejoice in your exit from the world.

Those of us who move around our Province have heard the daughters of the Philistines rejoicing. We have heard it in the streets of Askelon. We have heard it told in Gath. "Is this your God? Is this your Gospel? Is this the salvation that you preach?" Let me say, Yes sir, it is! Let me say today, we have no apology to make for our Saviour, for the Bible, for the Truth of the Gospel. All I can say is this to the men of the world. There will be a day when truth shall be fully known, a day when in the last great assize of God we will understand the inexplicable, and we will get the explanations for those things that baffle us now.

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter".

I cannot understand it, nor am I attempting to understand it, for that is not my job. But this I do say from the depths of my inward soul today that it is part of the 'All things', and I tell you that they work together for good, and if but one soul arrested by the Holy Ghost is brought to Christ through our brother's tragic passing, that, my friend, will be more than enough, more than enough to understand that all things work together for good.

I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan, not only because of what the Devil's crowd will do with it but what God's people will do with it. And could I say now very strongly and very dogmatically, that a man is completely innocent until there is proof of his guilt. No charges have been made. No evidence has been brought, and yet today there are Christians who have brought in a verdict, and I say, to their own Master they will stand or fall, but I will not be a party to any such thing. And when a voice is needed to be raised in this hour, please God I and my brethren will immediately raise our voice. We shall say, 'The Judge of all the earth always does what is right', and we know there is an explanation, and we know t

hat that explanation will be to the honour and the glory of God.

Remember the best man at his best is only a man at the best. Many people attended our brother's services, enjoyed his ministry, rejoiced in his prosperity, but how many of God's people hung onto the horns of the altar for him as he was passing through these trials? Have we not all learned a lesson that God's men are fallible, that God's men are imperfect; that God's men are like Elias - they are subject to like passions as we are; that God's men need God's help, and they need the prayers of God's people.

Maybe if you go home dear and you pray more for the preacher than you ever prayed, and more for the minister than you ever prayed, then our brother's passing will not be in vain.

'I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan because of the use made of your death in the ranks of the Philistines and among the thousands of Israel'.

I want to say something as I close. He wasn't at all distressed for brother Jonathan's eternity. There was not a word of distress about that, and I am not distressed today about where my brother is. His body is in the shroud, it is in the casket. It is laid in his home town of Newtownards. We will always remember Boxing Day 1980 when we stood there and God gave His presence and God gave His help in a time of need. But Willie Mullan is not there. As he said he would be living more than ever he lived before. I want to say today, our brother is before the Throne. Don't think, friend, don't dare to think, don't even consider the utter folly that some people suggest to us in these circumstances that a few pellets from a shot gun could extinguish eternal life in a man's soul. The day that Willie Mullan was saved in the field in Newtownards he became a member of Christ. "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" Nothing! Nothing! Nothing! And the circumstances in that little study on the hill could not separate our brother from the love of Christ which was in him, imparted by the Holy Ghost. He was saved gloriously. He was saved wonderfully. Thank God he was saved eternally. "I give unto my sheep eternal life." That is the life that Hell cannot extinguish and Eternity cannot exhaust. "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my Father's hand".

There was an old saint of God dying, and there was one of these preachers, foolish preachers who believe in the loss of the soul of a believer, and he came to the dear woman and he said, "Are you sure you are saved?" She said, "Yes, I am saved, and I am safe. I am the Lord's hand". The man said, "But you might slip through His fingers". The old woman looked up with that radiance of faith and assurance, and said, "Silly man, I am one of the fingers". Yes, of course! "Not a bone of him shall be broken". And, thank God, when the body of Willie Mullan rises in the first resurrection, bless God there will not be a mark on it. It will be like Christ's most glorious body, and, thank God, the work that His goodness began, the arm of His strength He'll complete. His promise is yea and amen and never was forfeited yet!

That is our hope today. We are not magnifying our brother, but we are magnifying the grace of God in him that made him. Yes, he had the glory in an earthen vessel, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of us. Many of us have been learning that lesson that the excellency of the power is only in a frail earthen vessel.

Dear Willie, beloved brother, able expositor of the Word, dynamic preacher of the Glorious Gospel of free and sovereign grace, faithful pastor of the Lord's flock, we bid thee not good-bye, we are just saying good-night. In fact to speak the truth it is you that is saying good-night to us, for it is we that are in the darkness and you are in the brightness of the Father's House. No longer will we walk beside you in the Gospel furrow. No longer shall your hands grip the handles of that plough. That grip has been loosed forever. No longer will we join you in the pulpit or conference platform, to hear from your lips wonderful things from the Wonderful Book about our Wonderful Lord. No longer will we Companion with you along the pilgrim walk and share in fellowship our common burdens, our common trials, our common perplexities, our common problems. You are gone from us but your Blessed Saviour, our Wonderful Lord, your closest Friend, He abides with us always. Best of all He is EMMANUEL - GOD with us. We magnify not thee but the grace of God that was in thee. Well earned rest is now yours. The past completed, the battles are over. The fight is fought. We are confident that in Eternity our present perplexities over your passing will all be fully and wonderfully explained to us. Dear Willie, good-night until the day breaks and the shadows all flee away. We praise God for you, thank God, some day we will praise God with you, in that Light and that is fairer than day!

May God bless His Word, for Jesus'sake!