

THE GOD OF THE SEEING EYE

"Thou God seest me." Genesis 16:13.

Before we can really understand the significance of these four words, "Thou God seest me," we must know something about the poor afflicted woman who uttered them, whose name was Hagar. Her interesting biography is printed with the vivid colors of eastern romance. Yet, it is not pleasant reading because it brings out the darkest side of ancient domestic life.

Hagar was the bonds slave or personal property of Sarah, the wife of Abraham. Abraham had been promised a son, but there was no visible evidence of this promise being fulfilled as Sarah was restrained by Jehovah from child-bearing. Desirous that her husband should no longer be debarred from the realization of that promise through her apparently permanent sterility, Sarah made the proposal to Abraham that he have a child or children by Hagar. Abraham made the mistake of following Sarah's suggestion.

Hagar's prospective motherhood caused her to adopt a superior air towards Sarah. Perhaps she was anticipating replacing Sarah on the throne of Abraham's love.

When Hagar was about to bear Abraham a son, Sarah became increasingly jealous and bitter. Sarah finally made it so unpleasant for Hagar that she had to flee from Abraham's camp and take refuge in the wilderness. Near the edge of the wilderness, just before she cut herself off from the land of her adoption, Hagar sat down to rest by a fountain of water. Doubtless she was pale from grief and the tears of bitter sorrow ran down her cheeks. She felt sorry for herself and probably for her folly also. She had left a comfortable home and knew not which way to turn. There wasn't anyone with whom she could converse, which made matters far worse, for, when anything is wrong with us, we like to have someone with whom to talk, preferably a good friend.

While all alone without any advice, help or hope, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared unto Hagar. She had wandered out into this wilderness of her own accord. Her face was turned towards the world and the fleshpots of Egypt where she wrongly hoped to find respite from the burden that oppressed her. When the angel of the Lord addressed her by name, it was revealed that the Lord knew her personally and all of the facts of her life. So He does with us.

The angel gently asked Hagar from whence she came and where she was wanting to go. Hagar answered the first of these two questions openly and frankly, but she did not answer the second. Apparently without any fear she proceeded to tell her story. Then, addressing her in kind, tender and affectionate terms, the angel said unto her, "Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands." That was about the last thing she had thought of doing, but the angel assured her that it was the only thing for her to do. Sarah was still her mistress.

This call for submission was the first step towards blessing in Hagar's life. The same is true today. If we have made mistakes which have led us into sin, the primary condition of restoration is complete submission to the will of God, whatever that may involve.

Then, there was the divine assurance of definite blessing. God's call for submission was accompanied by the promise of blessing to her child. He never makes a demand without giving us a promise. God told her that she should have a son and that his name should be Ishmael, meaning "God is here." Thus, every time she mentioned his name, she would be reminded of God's promise. There was no promise that Hagar's son would be a blessing in the world. The angel said that he would be "a wild man." His descendants, the Arabs, have never been tamed.

Under the inspiration of the discovery of the divine presence with her, Hagar exclaimed, "El-roi!" which is translated, "Thou God seest me." Hagar found, as each of us must find, that He is "The God Of The Seeing Eye." The living God, Who saw her, had compassion on her, followed her with His watchful eye when she left the home of her mistress, when she wandered in the wilderness weeping and when she sat down fatigued at the side of the fountain, comforted her and instructed her. Just think how merciful God is!

I. The Eyes Of Penetration.

"Thou God seest me." The word which the Greeks applied to God implied that He was a God who could see. They called Him Theos, and they derived that word from the root Theisthai, which means to see, because they regarded God as being the all-seeing One. When we say "God," we refer to the One Who sees everything.

God sees you as distinctly as if you were the only person in all the world. Nothing about you or your circumstances is hidden from Him. Others may not see you; some may even forget you; but God's eyes are always on you. God does not lose sight of you in any group relationship, but He sees you personally. His eyes are piercing. He can see you through the thickest walls. He looks into the deepest and darkest dungeons. Nothing is ever shut out of His sight. He even sees what is in the heart. He sees you continuously--in the darkest shades of night, in the brightness of the day, in the night of sorrow and in the day of trouble. Whether at night or during the day, waking or sleeping, alone or in company, there is not a moment when He does not see us. He sees what we are and what we do. Nothing escapes His observation. Everything lies open to Him. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." He sees us individually, completely and constantly. Wherever we are, we are in His presence; whatever we think, it is in His presence; whatever we do, He sees us. He reads all our thoughts, knows all our emotions, purposes and aims. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good," (Proverbs 15:3).

To Hagar it was evident that God not only finds us, however isolated we may be, but that He reads our secret souls unerringly. She felt that she was understood. Here was one Who, though unseen Himself, saw her with a penetration that went straight to the depths of her being. He saw that with her it was a case of being "more sinned against than sinning." He saw the humiliation that burned in her spirit, the fear that clutched at her heart. He saw it all. That is the kind of God He is.

Therein the eyes of the Lord exceed our dull vision as an x-ray exceeds a flashlight bulb in penetration. When dear old Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint a king to take Saul's place, he looked with favor on a big brawny son called Eliab. Yet, the Spirit of God restrained him from putting the anointing oil on this handsome young fellow. You are putting too much store by this rugged body and excellent features, God seemed to say. Then came this illuminating word to the prophet: "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (I Samuel 16:7). Man has sight, but God has insight.

II. The Eyes Of Preservation.

That each one of us is the subject of God's personal observation, love and care is a most comforting, encouraging and challenging fact. His eyes not only look within us, but they watch over us. Here we pass from the idea of their penetration to the thought of their pity and provision. The emphasis shifts from that of searching to that of supervision.

For a splendid illustration of this truth in the life of Hagar, one turns to the twenty-first chapter of Genesis. Her baby boy has become quite a lad by this time. The strife in the family, instead of being better, is worse. When the storm breaks, it sends Hagar and Ishmael out as fugitives in the desert, their only provisions being some bread and a goatskin canteen of water that Abraham had given them.

When the bread was consumed and the water was gone, their plight grew terrifying indeed. A desert can look innocent and intriguing from the window of an air-conditioned Pullman car, but it is terrible to man or beast wandering foodless and waterless across its seemingly endless sands. However, for this mother and her son the time of marching had passed. They were too exhausted for that. Ishmael in particular was marked for death. Over there by a leafless shrub lay her lad; while here, a few steps away, sat Hagar in a half-delirium of weakness and grief. She shuddered as she heard him give a low moan.

Then suddenly came that same voice which had called to her before when she felt bereft and broken in the wilderness! Her plight was bad then. Now it was desperate. The voice said unto her, "What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is." "Where he is!" Out here in this barren and blistering desert? Yes, "Where he is," wherever that may be. We call such places "God-forsaken," but, if God is keeping watch over this anguished mother and this famished lad, then there are no "God-forsaken" places.

But listen! The voice goes on, "Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation." So he is not going to die. Somehow he is going to pull through. God has a work for him. As we read on, it says, "And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink." He was thus delivered in the desert. Instead of it conquering him, he conquered it. It is a parable of the life of faith: under the watchful eyes of our faithful God we can turn the place of our trouble into the place of our triumph.

Do we know what it is to live and act on the conviction that in all the wide world there are no places which are strange to or impossible with God? Or do we spend so much time bemoaning our so-called "fate" and blaming others for contributing to that fate, that we do not have time to look unto "The God of the Seeing Eye"? That was Hagar's temptation. It was easy for her to linger bitterly over the thought that Sarah had wronged her. It was easy for her to brood over the way that Abraham had let her down.

Living under the eyes of God does not mean, as some suppose, that we shall always escape the bitterness of life. What it means, ultimately, is simply this: that my surrendered life is in the good hands of God, and in His keeping I am secure whether in life or in death. In His keeping I am safe whether in prosperity or in penury.

III. The Eyes Of Anticipation.

God's eyes see ahead of us. We have learned that they are eyes of penetration and eyes of preservation. We are now confronted with the reassuring truth that they are eyes of anticipation.

In Hagar's case, "God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water." It is not said that God opened a well for her, although He could have done so. It does tell us that the touch of God's kindness was on her eyes, enabling her to see the well that had been there all the while. The reach of Abraham's foresight in her behalf had been a canteen of water, which was soon emptied; but the reach of God's foresight was a bountiful well of water. In her hour of agony Hagar discovered that God had been there ahead of her. The well of unexpected supply and refreshment was waiting for her. It only needed eyes to see it and the purpose to make use of its resources.

A gifted newspaper man, who signed his name simply as "A London Journalist," wrote the book, "The God Who Matters." In it he told about a professional diver who, despite the influence of a godly mother and countless sermons he had heard in church, had remained away from Christ. He knew many passages of scripture from memory, and had been moved often by the great gospel hymns. Yet, through it all he had refused to accept Christ and be saved. Then one day he was sent down for a deep-sea dive. There, on the bottom, he noticed a piece of paper stuck to something. He picked it up. It was a gospel tract and on it, in prominent letters, were the words, "Thou God Seest Me." That totally unusual and unexpected experience proved to be the point of his turning to Christ.

As he expressed it, "When God sent the gospel down to the bottom of the sea for me, I could not resist any longer." The "God of the Seeing Eye" had been there ahead of him-- even on the bottom of the sea.

Remember, God sees ahead. When you arrive, where He already is, look for His hidden source of supplies. You will prove in your life what Mary Slessor of Africa said she proved in hers, "I should never have been able to do anything but for this, He always went in front."