

"THE DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS"

"And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2:7).

There is a difference between a hymn and a gospel song. The movement of a hymn is upward and expresses the joy of the heart toward God. The hymn carries the note of worship. It is different with a gospel song for its movement is outward, and through the song the singer is bearing his witness concerning what Jesus Christ means to him. One is reminded of the statement of the risen Saviour, "and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8), and this we can do through gospel songs.

Reflection upon our text will reveal that the return of our Lord is in view. It is a certainty that the world is racing on to the hour when the wrath of God will be manifested and He "will shake all nations." "The Desire of all nations" is none other than the Lord Jesus in His return into the world to overthrow the kingdoms of the world and to establish His own kingdom among men. No greater satisfaction can come to the human heart than to know that with the return of the Lord Jesus the world's problems will be solved and that which man is vainly struggling to perfect will be done instantly by our Lord.

In vain, people look to the world for satisfaction. Do you seek riches? If so, they will serve to intensify your discontent by increasing your longing for more. Do you court earthly honors? If so, you need to know that they are but empty bubbles that rapidly vanish and leave the seeker after them in cruel disappointment. Do you depend upon earthly wisdom? Even though it yields great pleasure to its possessor, yet each acquisition of knowledge opens to the student a larger field for exploration and awakens in him an insatiable thirst for the unknown. Men who are in the valley think if they were at the top of such a hill they should touch the heavens. Men that are in the depths of poverty or pain think, if they could get up to such a mountain, such a measure of riches, honors, and delights, they could reach happiness. Solomon got to the top of this hill and seeing so many scrambling and laboring so hard to reach it said: "Sirs, ye are all deceived in your expectations; I see the pains ye take to get up to this place, thinking that when you come hither, ye shall touch the heavens and reach happiness, but I am before you at the top of the hill. I have treasures and honors and pleasures in variety and abundance, and I find the hill full of quagmires instead of delights, and so far from giving me satisfaction that it causeth much vexation. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

How transitory and unsatisfying are all worldly pleasures and pursuits! Whoever depends upon them for real happiness will be sadly disappointed. Turn away from the earthly to the heavenly. Look to God for happiness and joy. The scriptural injunction is, "Delight thyself in the Lord."

There is a very personal and limited application to this text, as it touches the individual believer who finds complete satisfaction when the Lord Jesus comes into his heart. "Satisfaction" carries with it that for which the soul craves. There is the product of love, and implies peace of heart. By nature man loves himself and is self-satisfied. Born in nature's darkness, he loves darkness rather than light. He loves the world, lives for the world, delights in its pleasures, and becomes absorbed in its pursuits. He pats himself upon the back in the satisfaction which he has with himself.

A worldly, self-satisfied man may be religious and yet be ignorant of and alienated from God. The "god of this age" subtly "blinds the eyes of those that believe not" to their true condition. Knowing well his own doom, Satan seeks to hold men by a false and fascinating gilding of this present world which God has pronounced evil.

As Christians we are not to be satisfied with our spiritual attainments for we are called upon to "press toward the mark," nor are we to be satisfied with our knowledge, for there must be the longing to know the "deep things of God." Surely none of us can be satisfied with our spiritual growth, especially when we measure ourselves alongside the Lord Jesus Christ as He lived upon the earth and moved among men. Beside Him we are but spiritual pygmies. None of us can be satisfied with our spiritual experiences because we desire to be filled with all the fullness of God, and to enjoy more and more the blessed fruitage of the Spirit. We are not to be satisfied with ourselves, but we are to be perfectly satisfied with our Saviour, and it is this idea which I am trying to impress upon your minds just now. The Lord Jesus can and does satisfy completely. Dr. W. H. Griffith-Thomas said of our Lord: "He satisfied the past with forgiveness, the present with grace, and the future with glory." The Lord Jesus Christ satisfies completely and perfectly:

I. Our Desire To Know God.

The soul of every one of us needs God and it cannot be satisfied apart from Him. Just as the lungs need air, the flowers need the sunshine, the electric energy needs the wire, the branch needs the vine, and the baby needs the mother, so the soul needs God.

When Paul stood on Mars Hill he saw multitudes given over to idolatry. They were falling down before their dumb idols, grasping after God, and hoping to find satisfaction and all that goes with it. Looking around him, Paul saw an altar to "the unknown God" and using this as a starting point, he presented the truth of the living God and of the risen Christ. The hunger of the throng of people for satisfaction was met by the power and presence of God in the Person of His adorable Son Who lived and moved among men for thirty-three years.

The better I know Jesus Christ the more satisfied I am with God the Father. The reality of the Person of God is made plain in the glory of His own Son. The true way to know God is to become acquainted with Jesus Christ. What more could our Lord have done in seeking to help us know and understand God than Christ did in His earthly walk, in His death upon Calvary's cross, and in His glorious resurrection from the dead.

II. Our Hungry Hearts.

Christ saw the hungry multitudes and had compassion upon them for they had followed Him for three days and had gone without food. He fed them with bread and then with truth. When He fed them with heavenly manna on that occasion their spiritual hunger was satisfied.

It was not the complaining and murmuring of the children of Israel in the wilderness that brought the manna of God's provision, but it was their need. He would have supplied them even if they had not grumbled. Those who were wise among them afterwards became aware that they had murmured in vain. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). If we could only realize even in a measure the fullness which God has in store for

His children, I am sure there would be much less murmuring among us. What manna was to the people of God, and what the loaves and fishes were to the crowd which the Lord Jesus fed, so is the Son of God to us. To the child of God the Lord Jesus is wonderfully real and precious.

III. Our Longing For Assurance.

Every Christian craves assurance in his soul. Some mistakenly think that because they have not had the same experiences to which others refer that they are not saved. They lack assurance because they are looking at the experiences of others rather than depending upon the Word of God. When you discover in God's Word that He has promised to keep you and never cast you out, a new day will dawn for you. The great burden of fear will roll away and perfect peace takes its place. We can depend upon the Lord Jesus Who said, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28). With a promise like that, what right has any child of God to worry about his salvation and his hope of heaven? The case of every believer is in the Lord's hands and He will never fail.

IV. Our Yearning For Victory.

Many gave thought that, if they could only get rid of their ugly tempers, nasty dispositions, jealous spirits, and habitual objections, life would take on a different hue for them. There are so many vicious habits which are eating into the best interests of our lives and demonstrate that we are being defeated daily, and that living is a burden. No Christian need live under such depressing clouds nor suffer daily defeat. Victory through the living Christ is assured to each one who desires it.

Moment by moment our Lord satisfies. In Him there is the promise of complete victory over those carnal experiences which make us miserable and rob us of the joy of the Lord in our hearts. Our Lord is indispensable to victory in life, and any effort to live independently of Him is futile. Although He has saved us from the penalty of sin, we need Him to save us from the power of sin, and this He has promised to do. Self-reliance is the curse of every Christian life. Christ-reliance is that which has been ordained of God for our blessing. God's Word tells us, "But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:17). "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ" (II Corinthians 2:14). "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9). In the light of these verses, we can rejoice in our Saviour and find complete satisfaction.

To be satisfied with the Lord Jesus Himself is the secret of victory in the life, and of power in service. God the Father is completely satisfied with His beloved Son. God's goal for us is that we shall be perfectly satisfied with our Saviour and Lord, with what He is to us and with what He is doing for us. Our attention is to be focused on our Lord, in and through Whom we shall find complete satisfaction.

V. Our Understanding Of The Future.

David wrote, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15). Satisfied means

sufficiently filled, filled full, filled up in every part. David believed that a time would come when he would find complete satisfaction and be entirely content. With him that was something of which he was sure. Of the certainty of his awakening from the sleep of death, David did not have any doubt whatsoever.

The Christian, too, has a beautiful outlook. Irrespective of the trials and troubles of this life he is steadily moving on to the consummation of God's eternal purposes for him. Resurrection is the divinely appointed goal for every redeemed child of God.

Rossini, a man of rare genius, had the best the world could give, and yet was unsatisfied, and possessed an empty heart. He did not have any fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and lived without the blessed hope. His is but an empty name today, unknown except by a very few. Isaac Watts had little of this world's honors, yet he rejoiced and sang the praises of the Lord Jesus, being an heir of immortality, and his songs have brought tremendous joy to millions of souls.

Consider the difference in the attitude of these two men toward life. After Rossini had rendered William Tell the five hundredth time, a company of musicians came under his window in Paris and serenaded him. They placed upon his brow a golden crown of laurel leaves. Amid all the applause and enthusiasm, Rossini turned to a friend and said, "I would give all this brilliant scene for a few days of youth and love." Contrast the melancholy feeling of Rossini, who had everything this world could give him, with the joyful experience of Isaac Watts, whose sorrows were great when he wrote:

"The hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets;
Or walk the golden streets.

"Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We're marching thro' Immanuel's ground,
We're marching thro' Immanuel's ground,
To fairer worlds on high,
To fairer worlds on high."

If Christ does not return during my lifetime, I shall leave this world through the gateway of death. But someday I shall awake from the sleep of death. When I awake, I shall be rested, refreshed, and reinvigorated. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." In what sense can we hope to be like Him? In immortality, in glorified bodies, in holiness, in blessed fellowship, in knowledge, and in unbroken peace. What a great hope this is.

This hope that we, who are the children of God, shall in every respect be made wholly like our Saviour is real. It is not a faint desire, a mere wish, or a doubtful surmise. It is a sure and certain hope. We shall be like Him in character, sympathy, and aims. There will not be anything left to wish for or to strive to attain. And this blessedness will be eternal.