

" A SWARM OF BEES AND HONEY"

"Behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion." Judges 14:8.

Samson, having fallen in love with a Philistine woman, persuaded his father and mother to go with him to Timnath to get her for him. On the way, he turned aside and sauntered into the vineyard, when suddenly a lion with terrific roar sprang at him. Overshadowed by divine providence, Samson seized the uprearing monster by the jaws, and with iron grip he twisted and wrenched them apart, leaving the young lion dead by the roadside. It was by the Spirit of God that he won such a great victory. The Scriptures tell us, "The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid," even though he had nothing in his hand.

Having accomplished the object of the visit to Timnath, they returned home. After a time, according to arrangement, the wedding took place. Samson and his parents traveled over the same route which they had before. When they came near to the jungle where Samson had encountered the young lion, the memory of that incident drew him aside to the spot where it had occurred. This he did, doubtless, with great thanksgiving. When he approached the place, he saw the bones or carcass of the lion, as clean and white as ivory, for the jackals, eagles, vultures, etc., had stripped off the skin and flesh. While standing and looking at it, he saw a busy scene, a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass. There were the bones, and honey in the hollow of that skeleton. What a strange hive in which to make honey! You might think it strange that bees, which are the cleanest of all the insects, should select such a place as that in which to make honey. But, it is not strange at all. In that hot climate, and where there are so many other insects, in a few days all marks of death and pollution have gone from the carcass, and the skeleton is as clean as the boxes in which bees in our day gather the wealth of gardens and meadows and orchards.

Visualize Samson on his way to see his sweetheart, not thinking of any danger, but his very life was endangered. A young lion suddenly roared at him, but he should have been grateful for that roar. There are some sins that destroy without roaring. Delilah was a greater danger to Samson than that young lion, but he did not realize it. The gleaming of the teeth, the lashing of the tail and the roaring gave Samson time and chance. It was the roar that enabled him to protect himself. That roaring gave him sufficient warning, so he flung himself upon the lion, and rent him as he would have done a kid. We can be grateful for the roar of certain temptations. We know their mission and intent, just as certainly as Samson knew the intent of that lion, with its flaming eyes and gleaming teeth, all crouched and ready for the spring. What are we to do with such temptations? We must not run from them, but face them, grip them, and slay them before the Lord. If we are to be victorious, we must be under the control of the Spirit of God. Without Him, we shall be bowled over. There are many temptations, but one in particular proves to be a young lion to every Christian, and it is referred to in the Bible as "the sin which doth so easily beset us."

It was a singular circumstance that a man unarmed should have slain a lion in the prime of its vigor; and yet more strange that a swarm of bees should have taken possession of the dried carcass, and have filled it with their honey. The killing of that lion, and the finding of that honey make up a remarkable story. Another surprising thing, Samson took the honey without being stung. It seems to me that the Israelitish hero with a slain lion in the background, standing out in the open road with his hands laden with masses of honeycomb and dripping with honey, which he holds out to his parents, makes a fine picture, worthy of the greatest artist. And what a type we have here of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, the conqueror of death and hell. He has destroyed the lion that roared upon us and upon Him. He has shouted "victory" over all our foes. Can't you see our triumphant Lord laden with sweetness, holding it forth to all Christians, and inviting them to share in His joy.

Samson may well serve as the symbol of every Christian in the world. The Christian has

been helped by divine grace in his spiritual conflicts, and he has known "the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith." He has thus been made more than a conqueror through him that loved us, and now he stands in the midst of his fellowmen inviting them to trust Christ. With the honey in his hands, which he continues still to feast upon, he displays the heavenly sweetness to all that are round about him, saying, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." Samson handing out the honey serves as a perpetual reminder of what a Christian should be, namely, a conqueror and a comforter, slaying lions and distributing honey. The faithful servant of God wrestles with the powers of evil; but with far greater delight he speaks to his friends and companions, saying, "Eat ye that which is good, and let your souls delight themselves in sweetness."

To become a Christian is to enter upon a pilgrimage, and the road is often rough. The hills are steep, the valleys are dark and giants block the way, but the victory is possible through Christ. No cross means no crown, and no sweat means no sweetness, and no conflict means no conquest. As followers of Christ, we must expect to meet with strong temptations, severe trials, stern conflicts and fierce persecutions. Helped by the Spirit of God, our victory over Satan will be glorious.

The life of the believer has its sweets, and they are of the choicest, for what is sweeter than honey? What is more joyful than the joy of a saint? What can equal the happiness of a believer in Christ? In our knowledge of pardoned sin, full acceptance in the beloved, the love of Christ and the perfect will of God, there is such joy as none can measure or describe. We have such a living swarm of bees to make honey for us in the precious promises of God that there is more delight in store for us than any of us can possibly realize. There is infinitely more about Christ for us to comprehend than we have ever realized. How blessed it is to receive of His fulness, to be sweetened with His sweetness, and yet to know that infinite goodness still remains.

In all the catalogue of human joys none can match a sense of pardoned sin. Full forgiveness! Free forgiveness! Eternal forgiveness! To know that the Lord has blotted out your sin is a knowledge which is rich with unutterable bliss. When you have conquered a sinful desire, you have obtained a victory which fills your heart with joy unspeakable, and you are devoutly grateful to have been helped by the Holy Spirit to master your own spirit. Out of the brass of our trials we make the trumpets of our triumph. As soon as we have tasted the honey of forgiven sin and experienced the bliss which God has laid up for His people in Christ Jesus, we understand it to be both our duty and our privilege to communicate the good news to as many others as possible. We long to see others trust the Lord Jesus Christ and live spiritual lives.

Let me now be very personal and practical in suggesting some things that each of us ought to be. Among them are the following:

1. Be Christian.

2. Be Straight.

When loaded with honey a bee goes straight home. That accounts for the expression, "straight as a bee line."

3. Be punctual.

A bee always comes and goes on time. It never loiters. Some people are always late.

4. Be clean.

Bees are careful to remove all dirt. Be clean in speech, thought and living.

5. Be enthusiastic.

Enthusiasm, which means bubbling over with life, is your asset and liability. Be enthusiastic for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let others know about Him.

6. Be cheerful.

7. Be sympathetic.

Bees carry the sick on their backs into the sunshine. Sympathy is two hearts tugging at one load.

8. Be optimistic.

An optimist sees an opportunity in every difficulty, whereas a pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. Look on the bright side of things.

9. Be obedient.

Bees obey the law of their queen. They are attached to her, love her and are loyal to her. They could not get along and make honey unless they were obedient to her. Disobedience causes confusion in the home, the school and elsewhere.

10. Be industrious.

A bee is always busy doing something useful and worthwhile. They are wonderful workers.

11. Be kind.

There is no need to tell you what it means to be kind. You know that. But not every one knows how much of the world's happiness depends on being kind, even in little things. A lot of sorrow comes from unkindness; unkind words, unkind deeds. And the trouble is that we are often unkind when we do not really mean to be so. Thoughtlessly we say and do unkind things, but they hurt just as much as though we said and did them purposely.

On the other hand, much good has been done by kind words and thoughtful deeds.

12. Be ethical.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

13. Be friendly.

Constantius said, "My treasures are my friends." "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly." If you want friends, be complimentary.

14. Be charitable.

Your attitude is very important. It will have much to do with your happiness, as well as being a major factor in determining the esteem in which others hold you. You will attract or drive away from you. Look for the best instead of the worst. "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again."

15. Be diligent.

In every hive there are several different kinds of bees. If you were to watch closely at the entrance to the hive, you would see some large, fine-looking bees rushing in and out and make considerable noise. You might think they were gathering a great store of honey and doing most of the work that is being done. But it is all humbug. They are drones. They never do any work. They only get around in the way, and eat the honey that the others gather. Drones are not of any use. A whole swarm of drones could not keep itself alive, for they never work. But the busy bees, the diligent bees, feed themselves, their queen and the drones, and often store up a considerable amount of honey for human beings besides.

There are many human drones, who want to get along without any work. Some are lazy and prefer to live in idleness while others do all the work for them. Of all people who have reason to be ashamed of themselves those have most reason who do not do any work. The man who does not earn his own living is not worthy of being called a man. To work is noble. To be idle is a disgrace.

When the disciples were quarrelling as to who would be the greatest, Christ said to them, "Whoever will be greatest, let him be servant of all." By this He meant, He is greatest who does the most work for the Lord and others.

16. Be watchful.

Christ said, "I say unto all, Watch."

(1) Watch your words -- what you say.

Your words can be pleasant and helpful, or they can cut, burn and blister. Many are wrecked because of what they say.

(2) Watch your actions -- what you do.

Guard against temptation and avoid regrets in the future.

(3) Watch your thoughts.

Good and evil begin here.

(4) Watch your companions.

Keep company with the right sort.

(5) Watch your habits.

Habit is a cable that is woven daily and is hard to break. Cultivate good habits.