

Reflections on the message by Jim Smith, 21st February 2010

“A Giving God, a Responsive People”

Romans 8: 28-32 (New King James Version)

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. ³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

The Book of James says that our lives are but a mist. The Book of Peter says that we are travellers passing through. We see that the Christian life is a journey. This scripture is a mountain top. Chapter 8 begins by saying that there is now no condemnation, and goes upward from there. At the end of this chapter Paul can survey everything in the Christian journey, even its end, but he can say that we are more than conquerors – nothing can separate us from the love of God.

This message develops the theme of giving in three parts. (1) Our God is a great giver. (2) Elijah gave his best in serving God. (3) We need to get the point where we want to give Jesus more.

Though some things in this scripture are difficult to comprehend, we need to look beyond the controversy to a God whose love is incomprehensible. Ours is a great God. It all adds up! In this passage we read how God gives, then He gives again, and He gives once more. He was giving before the world began. He gave His son. He gives His Holy Spirit when we come to Him. Having called us, He justifies us and gives us life eternal. He will also glorify us. God has freely given us ALL things in Christ. What an abundance of his giving!

*Here is love, vast as the ocean,
Lovingkindness as the flood,
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
Shed for us His precious blood.
Who His love will not remember?
Who can cease to sing His praise?
He can never be forgotten,
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.*

*On the mount of crucifixion,
Fountains opened deep and wide;
Through the floodgates of God's mercy
Flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
Poured incessant from above,
And Heav'n's peace and perfect justice
Kissed a guilty world in love.*

*Let me all Thy love accepting,
Love Thee, ever all my days;
Let me seek Thy kingdom only
And my life be to Thy praise;
Thou alone shalt be my glory,
Nothing in the world I see.
Thou hast cleansed and sanctified me,
Thou Thyself hast set me free.*

*In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
By Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
And Thy grace my need is meeting,*

*As I trust in Thee, my Lord.
Of Thy fullness Thou art pouring
Thy great love and power on me,
Without measure, full and boundless,
Drawing out my heart to Thee.*

(Words by William Rees, translated from the Welsh by William Edwards)

There has to be an accepting to have the benefits of what God is giving. Jesus said to his disciples, "Receive the holy spirit" (John 20:22).

God gives freely. God loved Israel not because of what they were but he chose to love them. He saves those who are meek and lowly of heart. He has made the way open for salvation. God gives liberally. He does not hold back. He gives to all. Out of his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. His love goes on. He gives constantly and faithfully. God provided for Elijah daily. At first the ravens fed him, then God sent him to a poor widow, but her flour and oil didn't dwindle. For Israel, God provided day after day in the wilderness. God gives with love as his only motive. We can't add to God by our giving. He doesn't give to get. He gives just because He loves you. God wouldn't stop giving whatever happens. God gives willingly. He gives the Holy Spirit those who ask Him. He loves to give.

"I wish I had given him more!". This is a line in a hymn.

*By and by when I look on His face,
Beautiful face, thorn shadowed face;
By and by when I look on His face,
I'll wish I had given Him more.
More, so much more,
More of my life than I e'er gave before
By and by when I look on His face,
I'll wish I had given Him more.*

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Oscar Schindler's heart was moved towards the Jews. After starting out to make lots of money, he used his money to rescue Jews from Auschwitz. He was given a ring inscribed, "Whoever says one life saves the world entire". But Schindler said, "I wish I could have done more."

Who am I and what could I give?

James 5:17-18. (Amplified Bible).

¹⁷*Elijah was a human being with a nature such as we have [with feelings, affections, and a constitution like ours]; and he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, and no rain fell on the earth for three years and six months. [1 Kings 17:1.]* ¹⁸*And [then] he prayed again and the heavens supplied rain and the land produced its crops [as usual]. [1 Kings 18:42-45.]*

Elijah was a stern, rough man, but reliable, a rock of a man, a man of faith (1 Kings chapters 17-19). But James says he was a human being like us. Elijah was merely a man, with the nature, with feelings and affections, and constitution of a man. Elijah was merely a man, but one who stood for God. His nature tended to pull him down and weaken his resolve. He stood before Ahab and said that there would be no rain except at his own word. He had conviction and authority. He laughed at the priests of Baal some three years later on Mount Carmel. He prayed for rain, and said he heard the abundance of rain coming. But at the vital moment, he faced a woman. Something in Elijah seemed to crumble. He prayed a prayer that God didn't answer. He told God he didn't want to live any more.

Our leaders are merely men and women. They need the Holy Spirit to make them strong and the encouragement of the people. We need to honour and pray for our leaders. And for us there will be opposition and discouragement.

Then Elijah hid in a cave and felt abandoned. He thought that he alone stood up for God. Elijah was a man of feelings and could be led astray in a different direction. Perhaps he didn't like confrontation, though he had a love for justice and righteousness that led him to confront people. As often as not

hurts become resentments and so a distance develops between people. There are times to confront the situation and see that it is put right.

This was a time apostasy and oppression, a time of faint hearts. But Elijah had a burning message. It burned within his bones; it was something he had to do. There should be a calling of the Holy Spirit to draw us constantly after Jesus Christ.

Elijah entered the palace of the king with a burning message, clothed and filled with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is a person who can be grieved. He wants to overpower you and fill you. God gives the Holy Spirit that we should be holy, filled with the Spirit of God.

Elijah was stimulated by faith. He gave his best. He failed at times, but his heart was a heart after God. Every ounce was given to the glory of God. Give to God your best for He has given all to you.

Jim showed an excerpt from the film "Facing the Giants" (2006). This excerpt can be seen on:-

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XAdpFcJ3BUJ> .

Can we say this to God? "My desire is to do my best. I give myself more completely to give You more and more."