

MEN WHO WERE KNOWN IN HEAVEN

A condensed version of a sermon by Sam Ennis delivered at the Ferndale Bible Chapel on Sunday 1 February 2009.

Rather like the Reader's Digest condensed versions of great novels, the summaries of the sermons of Sam Ennis, which appear on this website, do not come close to capturing the effectiveness of the live versions. If you have found your interest stimulated and are not a regular attender at the Ferndale Bible Chapel (FBC) in Ferndale (Corner York & Dover Streets, Ferndale, Randburg), why not join us at a Sunday evening meeting (17:55) and listen to the Word of God brought alive by our variety of great speakers? You would be most welcome.

INTRODUCTION

The bible is full of people who knew God and were known by Him. People who loved His ways. People who wanted to walk according to His standards. People who were known in Heaven.

Sometimes they are overlooked and are not always recognised on earth, even by those whom we might have expected should have been able to identify them as allies for God.

KEY VERSE

Fleeing for his life, Elijah laments that he is alone amongst the Israelites who has remained faithful to the Lord. But the Lord says to him that there are:

".....seven thousand in Israel – all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." (1 Kings 19 : 18b).

LESSON FOR THE LEARNING : NO. 1

Somehow, Elijah, great prophet though he was, did not seem to know that, amongst the Israelites were many who had resisted the lure that others had felt towards the worship of Baal. **Who were these people?** They were children of God, the believing remnant, who had remained true to God; and God knew every one of them.

MEDITATE ON THIS

Sam was reminded of an American preacher he had heard, preaching about another one of those who were known in Heaven : Daniel.

This preacher had spoken on Daniel 5 and the banquet of King Belshazzar, where the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had removed from the temple in Jerusalem were used and where, in the middle of the debauchery of the occasion, suddenly the fingers of a human hand were seen to be inscribing prophetic words on the wall of the palace.

All the king's wise men could not tell what the writing meant but the queen mother remembered Daniel, whom, she told the king, had the spirit of "the holy gods" in him and

would be able to interpret the words. So David was brought before the king and he interpreted the words inscribed on the wall.

Why was Daniel brought in, the American preacher had asked. The reason that contains a lesson not to be missed is that : Daniel had not been there. He knew his place and it wasn't among that lot.

Do we always know our place, Sam asked. Do we always know the company we're keeping? Or do we allow our standards to falter sometimes? Do you allow yourself to consort with those you should not be among?

LESSON FOR THE LEARNING : NO. 2

Where were these men of God to be found to whom the Lord referred Elijah?

It seems they were scattered across Israel. Nobody had any fixed idea, except the Lord, as to where they might be and where they might gather. Only God seems to have known that. God knew where every one of them was. He had them numbered and was able to rely on them to lift Elijah from the pit of distress in which the Lord found him ready to commit suicide.

MEDITATE ON THIS

Has there ever been a time in your life when you thought that God was not aware of where you were and what your needs and problems and distresses were?

These are times that come to most of us. But know this : no matter how far down you might be, no matter how badly things have gone for you, God knows where you are, He knows what you are up against, He knows every single thing about you.

"Can a mother forget her nursing child?" (Isaiah). Yes, she may. Yet God says : I will not forget thee.

In the words of the hymnodist quoted by Sam :

"Sweet is the promise, 'I will not forget thee';
Nothing can molest or turn my soul away;
E'en though the night be dark within the valley,
Just beyond is shining an eternal day.

Trusting the promise 'I will not forget thee',
Onward will I go with songs of joy and praise;
Though earth despise me, though my friends forsake me,
Jesus will be near me, gladdening my days.

I will not forget thee or leave thee,
In my hands I'll hold thee, in my arms I'll fold thee;
I will not forget thee or leave thee -
I am Thy Redeemer, I will care for thee."

LESSON FOR THE LEARNING : NO. 3

The third question asked of the passage by Sam was: **What stand had these seven thousand taken?**

Well, they had taken a stand for God. In the midst of a nation that was in spiritual ruin, these seven thousand men had taken a stand for God. They had turned away from all those other things that the Israelites were worshipping at that time, foremost amongst which was Baal, the great fertility god of the Canaanites. These same Israelites who had been sternly warned against any activity of that nature had turned from God and were worshipping Baal. 'Baal' means 'husband' or 'possessor' or 'master'. So they were serving a new master, a new possessor, a new husband. But these seven thousand were not doing that.

It is not always easy to take a stand for God, as Elijah did on Mount Carmel, when he was confronted by eight hundred and fifty men, Israelites who had become priests of foreign gods. We need to pray, with Sam, that we will be fortified and strengthened and given real encouragement in our spirit to act as Elijah did and as these seven thousand men had done, when the time is upon us to take a stand for God.

LESSON FOR THE LEARNING : NO. 4

The final question asked of the passage by Sam was : **why had Elijah not joined these seven thousand?** Or, conversely, **why had they not joined Elijah?**

If they had done so and declared themselves in support of him, what a great encouragement this would have been to Elijah. If they had made their stand with him on that great day on Mount Carmel, what a victory this would have been. But men don't always do that. In John 12 : 42 - 43 we find one explanation for this. The verses read as follows:

"42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in Him (Jesus). But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue ; 43 For they loved praise from men more than praise from God".

That is a description of men who lived in the time of Jesus, men who had been influenced by His teaching and men who had inclined their hearts towards Him but because of the situation in which they found themselves and the fact that they held spiritual leadership in the affairs of the nation, they ignored the tendency of their hearts - because they loved the praise of men more than they loved the praise of God.

Do you always make it known whose standard it is that you lift?

What we do notice is that, when God tells Elijah about the seven thousand, this is seemingly the first time he hears of them. They may have not made their stand clear to Elijah but, even so, God does not find fault with them. It is so that, if Elijah had gone looking for them, he would have found fellowship with them. Possibly this is what God expects should have happened.

Dr Schofield has provided a useful definition of the local church : "The local church is an assembly of professed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, living for the most part in one

locality, *who meet together* (Sam's emphasis) for baptism, the Lord's Supper, worship, praise, prayer, fellowship, testimony, ministry of the Word, discipline and furtherance of the gospel".

Fellowship with the saints is integral to our growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. If we neglect meeting together, we miss out on important aspects of our spiritual growth.

Elijah would not have become discouraged if he had sought fellowship with the saints. He would not have thrown away his ministry, as he did, in a sense.

MEDITATE ON THIS

The story is told of the man who stopped going to meetings. He had a disappointment and was cast down. One cold day his pastor visited him and as he sat with him beside the fire, he said nothing, but took out a coal from the fire and laid it on the hearth. There it sat outside the fire, where it slowly but surely eventually stopped burning.

CONCLUSION

We should rather want to be known as having kept the fire burning in us for the Lord, like the seven thousand known in heaven.