

Christ's Twofold Estate

Lesson 8: A Lonely Death, Zech 13.7

Four Points in the Text

- I. The commission given to the sword, "Awake... Strike."
 - A. The term signifies to awake from sleep and to rise up with rejoicing and triumph. God's sword of justice, long lain aside, is awakened, commissioned, and promised its greatest and most satisfying victory ever.
- II. The person against whom the sword is commissioned.
 - A. "My shepherd." The shepherd here is none other than Christ, Jn 10.11. He is the shepherd of God's appointment, the shepherd of God's sheep, the shepherd entrusted with the care of God's sheep, Jn 17.6; 1Pet 2.25.
 - B. "The man who stands next to me." He is the Father's Fellow, the Father's delight and dearest Friend. None is so loved, none so well known, none so trusted.
- III. The dismal result of this deadly stroke upon the shepherd.
 - A. The disciples would be scattered. The hour of His greatest need will be the hour of His greatest loneliness.
 - B. The disciples forsook Him and fell away. But it wasn't the fall of a hypocrite. It was a fall from grace, but not a fall out of grace. A fall from which, by God's grace, they would recover.
- IV. The gracious mitigation of this sad dispersion, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones."
 - A. After the resurrection, the Lord went ahead of His disciples into Galilee, gathering them to Him again, so that not one of them was lost.

The Cause of Their Fall

- I. God permitted it by suspending the needed influences of His grace. When the Lord withdraws the everlasting arm of strength that upholds us, we fall, being unable to stand on our own, even for a moment, even in the face of a servant girl.
 - A. Our redemption required it. Christ must not receive the least comfort or relief from any creature, Isa 63.3.
- II. The efficacy of the temptation faced by the disciples was stronger than normal.
 - A. As they were weaker than normal, so the temptation was greater than anything they'd ever encountered, Lk 22.31, 53. It was a black day!
- III. The remaining corruptions in their hearts led to their scattering.
 - A. As their graces were weak, so their corruptions were strong. Their carnal fears grew powerfully within them and they fled for their lives.

The Result of Their Fall

- I. Though these sheep were scattered for a time, the Father kept His promise by turning His hand toward them to gather them and they never forsook Him again. Instead, they openly confessed Him before councils and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for His sake, Acts 5.41.

Lessons for Application

- I. Here is a lesson against self-confidence.
 - A. Every human excellency, without the support of divine preservation, is but a weight that will fall.
 - B. The constant supplies of the Holy Spirit are the food and fuel of all our graces. Without Him we *will* fall.

- C. We should take 1Cor 10.12 to heart. And when we're tempted to think that we're better than others, we should remember the disciples. None of us can stand against the enemy in his own strength, Eph 6.10-18.
- II. Here is a lesson in faithfulness.
 - A. Christ stood His ground when everyone forsook Him. Elijah thought himself to be alone and yet stood by the Lord God, 1Kgs 19. Paul was forsaken by all men, but was not discouraged, 2Tim 4.16-17. And so the lesson here is this: by God's grace, remain faithful and true to your profession.
 - B. If we can travel to heaven in the company of saints who are on the way with us, then let us rejoice. But if we find ourselves alone, let us not be discouraged, for if we profess Christ for company, then we will also leave Him for company, Ps 1.1-3.
- III. Here is a lesson in both humility and gratitude.
 - A. The disciples fell away. This should humble us: none of us is beyond backsliding.
 - B. And yet, let us be grateful, that every person committed to Christ by the Father will be preserved against final apostasy. Our salvation is established upon the immutable promises of God, the unfailing intercession of the Son, and the undying commitment of the Spirit, Jer 32.40; Rom 8.34-35.
- IV. Here is a lesson in charity with one another.
 - A. Our strength is entirely dependent upon the work of the Spirit within us. And this means two things: 1) we should utilize the means of grace for spiritual growth as often as we can; 2) we should be patient and charitable both towards ourselves and others. Any one day in our pilgrimage can provide testimony to how strong we are in God and how weak we are in ourselves. Therefore be gracious in your judgments of one another and be patient with the Lord's work in yourself.