

THE BROOK BESOR



Rev. Andrew A. Bonar

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Words for those who must tarry at home

By Andrew A. Bonar

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Publisher's Note: The Gospel Standard Trust issues this book with the hope that it might be spiritually profitable. Although we only issue books we feel set forth a Scriptural standard, there will be differences in opinion and interpretation, and the most gracious of men still have to say, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.' We trust our readers will prayerfully 'prove all things' and 'hold fast that which is good,' whilst bearing in meekness with any imperfections.

CONTENTS

Publisher's Foreword	7
Introduction	11
Chapter I <i>David's Six Hundred Men</i>	15
Chapter II <i>The Two Hundred who Tarried by the Stuff</i>	21
Chapter III <i>The Service of the Two Hundred and Its Experiences</i>	29
Chapter IV <i>The Rewards</i>	47
Chapter V <i>The Praises of the Lord</i>	59
Chapter VI <i>The Lord's Message, 'Fear Not'</i>	77
Appendix <i>Tribute To Andrew Bonar By A. M. Stuart</i>	97

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

Throughout Holy Scripture we find recorded a number of instances where the children of God are brought by the Lord's teaching and by experience to understand the truth of the word: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.' (Isaiah 55:8)

Some of the Lord's dear ones were given the promises of God but knew also the trying of them. Abraham, in complete obedience to Divine instruction, was made willing to offer up Isaac the son of promise. At the last moment he was prevented by God, who made himself known as 'Jehovah-Jireh' and brought Abraham and Isaac to worship him, and see something precious in 'Substitution.' This in fulfilment of the words previously spoken by Abraham to Isaac – '... My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering' (Genesis 22:8)

There were those of the Lord's people who were falsely imprisoned. Joseph for example, who, in the fear of the Lord and with a tender conscience, resisted temptation, and had to then endure prison having been falsely accused by Potiphar's wife. The Butler on his release from prison initially forgot him, and what then had

THE BROOK BESOR

become of the interpretation of the dream concerning Joseph? The mystery of Divine purposes and the trial of faith these things bring! We read 'Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.' (Psalm 105:19)

Others had to endure slander and betrayal. Jonathan's son Mephibosheth for instance, was betrayed by his servant Ziba, who then went on to speak slander against him to King David. (2 Samuel 16:1-4) Unable to go to David himself, due to disability, Mephibosheth had to wait until the Lord's time came and matters could be made good. (2 Samuel 19:24-30)

Many and various are the accounts of very difficult pathways and dispensations which the Lord chooses to bring his dear children into. We see, however, in all of these accounts the faithfulness of a Covenant God who will never leave nor forsake his people, and they were all brought through their pilgrimage journey and into glory at last.

Andrew Bonar's desire in writing this short book was to encourage and strengthen the hands of those who are called to tarry at home. The author takes up the account of the 'Two Hundred' of David's men who remained

PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

behind at the brook Besor while the others went into battle. This often-overlooked account provides a sweet source of encouragement and teaching to those who feel to be among the 'Two Hundred,' but not just for them. There is also much to profit those who are among the 'Four Hundred' who are able to go forth: '... they shall part alike.' (1 Samuel 30:24)

Our desire in republishing this book is that Almighty God will bring each reader to know and prove what is declared by the Apostle Paul 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.' (Romans 8:28)

We have corrected Scriptural references, and updated spelling and grammar in places. The occasional obsolete word has been changed for one with identical meaning. We have added references (where locatable) to all material Mr Bonar cites within the book. Otherwise, the book appears as Mr Bonar published it. Editorial footnotes are clearly marked. All other footnotes are Mr Bonar's own.

Timothy J. Parish

INTRODUCTION

‘The grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant.’ It has been so from the first, and he has shown its overflowing fulness in the intense and never-ceasing interest taken in each of his own, whatever be their circumstances in life. What is true of the Church, is true of each individual member of it. He ‘loved the Church and gave himself for it.’ (Ephesians 5:25) He ‘loved me, and gave himself for me.’ (Galatians 2:20) What is here written is for the lonely ones of God’s people – the sick, the weak, the obscure. In the arrangements of the Old Testament, and in Jehovah’s words to Israel, very much is said to draw attention to ‘the stranger,’ who must always have felt lonely; and in our Lord’s history, how continually is he found turning aside to ‘the sick.’ So that we need not wonder if we find something in the types, also, that speaks the same deep interest in those of God’s family who may often think themselves overlooked, and who often think themselves useless in the Church.

Accordingly, an incident in the life of David brings this before us. David’s name means ‘Beloved,’ and he is in many ways a type of the Saviour. Besides other more obvious points, we might show this typical character attaching to him and to his actions, in such cases as the

THE BROOK BESOR

gathering in the Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:2), the propitiatory present of Abigail (1 Samuel 25:18-25), Mephibosheth invited to the King's table (2 Samuel 9), and perhaps even in the episode of the Egyptian slave deserted by his master (1 Samuel 30:11-15). But our thoughts are to be turned at present to another scene, fully related in 1 Samuel 30:9-25, which seems beyond doubt to claim a place among the things of which the Holy Ghost, by the pen of Paul, has said, 'For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' (Romans 15:4) It was written in order that we in our day, applying this incident of the Old Testament to our own case, might have our expectations raised, expectations of help and blessing and favour, and so go on patiently till we at last reach all that is laid up for us in the Blessed Hope. Just as the Holy Ghost says again by Paul to the Corinthians, '... and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world¹ are come' (1 Corinthians 10:11) – no doubt to

¹ The last of those periods allotted to the present order of things (Charles Hodge's comment on this verse in his *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1857)). Editor: Hodge takes the 'ends of the world' to mean the last epoch of history – the gospel age in which we live now, and which will end with Christ's return.

INTRODUCTION

counsel and guide those of old times, but as really for the instruction of us who live in the last period of God's dispensations of grace.

As already stated, what these pages present is to be directed very specially to the lonely ones of God's people; to those who must 'tarry at home;' and to all who oftentimes mourn that they are not able to do work for God in the way others do. They will also meet the case of those who are conscious of not possessing much ability, their powers of mind not being such as fit them for public work, or work beyond their own little circle, though they long to carry blessing to the whole world!

We must remember the holy sovereignty of him who is God and Saviour, while we seek to speak words of cheer to those on whom the restraining hand of the Lord seems to lie heavily. 'Omnipotency and sovereignty,' says an old writer, 'thus differ. Omnipotency looks simply at what the Lord can do; but sovereignty to what he freely wills to do or not do, according to his holy and gracious pleasure.' What a preacher of the faith he could have made the delivered demoniac to be, and how the man longed to be like one of his Apostles, ever at his side; but the Lord saw it best to arrange otherwise, giving him this other sphere, '...Go home to thy friends, and tell them

THE BROOK BESOR

what great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.' (Mark 5:19) In the little family of disciples three were privileged above the rest, on special occasions; and yet one of these favoured three died by the sword of Herod before he had well begun his ministry. His ways are not always our ways.

CHAPTER I

DAVID'S SIX HUNDRED MEN

In our country's history, in recent days, who has not read of the famous 'Six hundred' at Balaclava?² But here are six hundred more famous in heaven than they; for their spiritual history has in it many features that may interest and help the church of God in every age. Four hundred of these men gathered round David in the Cave of Adullam, as related in 1 Samuel 22:1-2. That cave was like some of the places of retreat and defence in the African Transvaal³ – one of which is 2000 feet long and more than 400 broad – penetrating far back, so that any number of men may lodge there.

Here came persons who were in distress, or straits, persons who had debts which they could not pay, and persons who were 'bitter of soul,' finding nothing to satisfy them. They were fit to form a type of the sinners that leave all and come to Christ. You were forced by

² Editor: This reference to the Six hundred at Balaclava relates to the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' when Lord Cardigan famously led six hundred men into the 'unknown' in the fight against the Russian during the Crimean War of 1853-1856.

³ Editor: A pre-1994 province of South Africa.

THE BROOK BESOR

distress to inquire about Christ? You found out your enormous debt to God, and heard the summons to the judgment seat? You had no rest, no satisfaction in all that man could offer? You heard of 'the Beloved' and that with him is rest, safety, heaven begun.

When any of these men of Judah came to Adullam, they were at once reported to the Captain, David. No question was asked as to their former life, in order to furnish a qualification for admittance. The testing question was simple and easily answered. Each must agree to take David for '... leader and commander to the people.' (Isaiah 55:4) Are you willing to let him rule over you? Are you willing to let him mould your character? If that question be answered 'Yes,' then the man enters the Adullam cave, and is enrolled among the followers of David. And then begins a change; the psalms sung on the harp of the sweet singer of Israel not only engage and attract and delight but breathe holy truth through the soul. And then, too, the holy life of the Captain, and his words of grace, have wondrous power. The men gathered there are so disciplined and conformed to the law that of them it is testified, 'But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them,

DAVID'S SIX HUNDRED MEN

when we were in the fields: They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.' (1 Samuel 25:15-16).

Besides, think of their safety in that cave, with all the thickness of the rock between them and the storm, and between them and foes without – a type of a sinner's safety when he flees to Christ. But more still; we have here a shadowing forth of the influence of a believed Gospel both on the present life of the man who receives Christ, and his future prospects. 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.' (Titus 2:11-12) But it teaches us also (like David's men anticipating the day when they should see David on the throne) to be 'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' (Titus 2:13-14)

Such seems to be the teaching of the Adullam gathering. And we must add, that from time to time that company

THE BROOK BESOR

received additions, so that soon we find two hundred more have joined them. David's company, during the days of his preparation for the kingdom, while the time of ascending the throne had not come, amounted generally to about six hundred men. We find this noticed in 1 Samuel 25:13 and 27:2, and other places.⁴ It was like Christ's 'little flock,' not large in number, but all of them called, and chosen, and faithful. And fervent love to their Captain was a marked characteristic of everyone. They hesitated not to say of him, 'Thou art worth ten thousand of us.' (2 Samuel 28:3) And who is there of all whose eyes the Holy Spirit has opened that does not say and sing in his heart – 'If I were over head and ears in the believed, apprehended, and seen love of the Son of God, it were the fulfilling of my desires for the only happiness I would be at! He is my morning and evening song, the top and root of my joys, the heart and flower and yolk of all my

⁴ An ingenious and interesting suggestion has been made that 'King David's spears and shields' that were in the temple of the Lord, '...spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's, which were in the house of God' (2 Chronicles 23:9), were no other than the weapons of that famous band, deposited there as testimonials of former days of warfare and victory – like Goliath's sword laid up behind the Ephod in the Holy Place. Was Ittai's company of 'six hundred' formed on the model of David's? (2 Samuel 15:18)

DAVID'S SIX HUNDRED MEN

soul's delights! Oh, that I had love to fill a thousand worlds, that I might empty my soul of it all upon Christ! And no wonder, when we remember what he is to us, and what he has done, and how all our guiltiness, when it falls into the sea of his mercy, is but like a drop of blood falling into the great ocean. Oh, there is yet an unfound world of his love.⁵

⁵ A minister in Scotland, Mr James Durham, was one day very depressed in spirit, as he approached his end. His colleague came in and asked how he was. 'Very low; there is but one promise in all the Scriptures that I dare look to; "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." May I venture my salvation upon it?' 'Yes, surely,' was the reply; 'if you had a thousand souls you might venture them on that word.' (See: James Durham (2001) *Christ Crucified: Seventy-two Sermons on the Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah*. Naphtali Press: Dallas, TX, USA. p. xxxv.) And may we not say that the Saviour's words contain yet more than this? They declare that our David not only will not refuse any coming one, but also that he will never part with him when he has received him. He will in no wise do as Abraham did to Ishmael; he will never part with a son of his and send him away to wander.

