

Prayer Meeting Address
given at
Old Baptist Chapel, Chippenham
by **Mr. G. D. Buss**
on **Wednesday evening, 11th February, 2015**

Text: *“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” Judges 14, part of verse 14*

I think, had we been the author of the holy Word of God, and were writing Hebrews 11 – that long catalogue of the worthies of faith – we might have been very much inclined to leave out the name of Samson. The Holy Ghost did not, but left his name as a permanent, indelible record of one of the worthies of God-given faith.

What Samson did when he was in the Spirit was very mighty, and, indeed, he was greatly used of God in his day. But what he was in between times was very sad, and left a blot upon his character even till the end of his days. Yet, how wonderful that the dear man died praying! It would be a mercy if you and I died praying, would it not? Samson died right, because he had the life of faith within. But, like you and I, he had many in between times. In such times, the mercy of God is needed, pardon is needed, forgiveness is needed and restoring grace is needed. I do not want to speak much about Samson this evening, but rather to just bring before you one or two thoughts about this riddle that he put before those assembled at his marriage.

This riddle could not be understood by those who heard it. It was only when Samson himself gave the explanation that it could be understood by them. Just a little while before, Samson had met a lion in the way. This was the first of his exploits under God’s hand. With supernatural, God-given strength he had rent the lion almost in two. He had slain it and left its carcass by the side of the road. A little while later, he goes back, and the carcass is empty of all the flesh. But, lo and behold, a swarm of bees had settled within it. Where there had been a mighty lion full of strength, now there was the sweetness of a

honeycomb. That was where Samson’s riddle came from. “Out of the eater came forth meat,” – that was the lion – “and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

This riddle, dear friends, is really only rightly understood by God’s people. Of course, there was a natural explanation that Samson could give. But, as his life unfolded, I believe he was not a stranger to the spiritual meaning of it. It is that spiritual meaning that I, very simply, want to bring before you this evening, because it may be a word in season to one of you here to whom the pathway is something of a riddle; a paradox, inexplicable. Perhaps there are matters that have come into your pathway which you cannot understand; things you have never looked for and never dreamt of. But there they are. We have just sung (and it takes some singing, doesn’t it?):

“And find that all things work for good,
Which Jesus kindly sends.”

J. Berridge

You say: ‘Kindly? Some of the things in my path do not seem to have much of that stamp upon them!’ Yet, if they are sanctified – and that is the point of our text this evening – if they are overruled for good by the great Head of the Church, then, yes, you will see the kindness of God in them. As the matter unfolds and comes to its God-given conclusion you will say: “He hath done all things well.” Not that you have; you make so many mistakes, and the pastor makes many more. It is: “*He* hath done all things well.”

I think I may have told you of the late Stanley Cooper, (of blessed memory) the deacon at Uffington. He was a farmer. One harvest time, there had been torrential rain for day after day and week after week. It had got to the end of August, and still he had not got anywhere near to getting his harvest in. His heart was rebelling. He was standing by a gatepost looking at a field of corn which he was hoping to gather in as soon as he could, and wondering whenever it would be, when the Lord dropped the words that you have just sung right into his heart:

“Live in a calm and cheerful mood,
And find that all things work for good,
Which Jesus kindly sends.”

J. Berridge

He told me that all rebellion went, all resentment went, all questionings went and he could leave it in the hands of his kind God. And, within two or three weeks, the harvest was all gathered in. The Lord was faithful to His Word. There is a practical example of our text. “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

Two things, then, come out of the “eater” and the “strong.” When we think of the “eater” and the “strong” we think of those things that come into our lives that seem to have destructive purposes; that even seem to have destroying potential, as a lion does. Yet, out of them, this wonder working God – this kind God who does “all things well,” – brings meat and brings sweetness. We read, right at the end of Hebrews 5 (that very precious chapter) those words about the difference between milk and meat. “For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” In the light of our text, I believe it may be understood in this way. Here is a verse that God’s people, as they *go on* in the way, learn to prove. When we are first called by grace, it is, generally speaking, a time of love. We are brought into the knowledge of a precious Christ. For a little season we are “dandled upon the knees,” as Isaiah describes it. We often had a visit from our Lord, the means of grace were very precious and the throne of grace very attractive. We fondly thought, in those early days, that that was how it was always going to be. But, the Lord says: ‘No. There is ‘stronger meat’ yet to come.’ The days of our ‘sincere milk’ have to pass, in that respect, and we come into deeper things. We have to learn what our text means. “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

It may be that you look back on your early days when it seemed, under the power of the Spirit, so easy to believe, easy to follow and easy to love. But now, it is such a battle, is it not? The things that have come into your life are so challenging. They bring you to a stand so many times. Friends, this is the strong meat. Out of it, meat will come. Out of it, sweetness will come, as God sanctifies it to you.

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” You can think of many examples of this from the Word of God. We could spend a long while (if God gave the grace and the time) to bring those instances out of the holy Word of God. Let us go to the prime instance of all. Think of the things that brought our dear Saviour to the cross. Think of it! Think of all the deep sorrows He laboured under and the agonies He entered into. Think of all the terrible things that were done to Him and thrown at Him. Think of the hiding of His Father’s face as He hung in agony between two thieves, suffering, bleeding and dying. Could any good come out of it? The disciples could not see it. They thought everything seemed to end for them at the Cross. But, oh! The meat, the drink and the sweetness that has come from Calvary! It would never have been so had Christ not hung, suffered, bled and died there, and risen again for sinners. Friends, even in that respect, our text is so sweet. “Out of the eater” – yes, out of the death of Christ has come the food for the Church. “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” Out of the death of Christ comes the sweetness of pardoning mercy. “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me.” All that could never have been had not the Eater come. The strong cries, tears that our dear Saviour passed through, and the supplications He put up! And, if that is the way He walked, in some little measure, friends – just in some little measure – you and I are called to walk in the same path; called to the fellowship of the dear Son of God. Called, we trust, to eternal fellowship hereafter in glory above. But, here below, for a season, called to “the fellowship of His sufferings.” It is then you come into these things that, in and of themselves, are destroying unless God intervenes.

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” We will refer to godly Joseph, as we often do. What destroying things that had passed through! Bitter hatred from his own family! Misunderstanding, even from his godly father! The murderous intent of his brethren! Only the providence of God prevented him from being murdered. Sold as a slave, humiliated on the slave market and sold to Potiphar. Although, for a season, things seemed to go well in Potiphar’s house, yet the destroyer came. Joseph’s reputation was marred; he was thrown into prison as a suspected adulterer. We know he was innocent, but, nonetheless, there it was. He languishes in prison with other transgressors. Like the dear Saviour, “He was numbered with the transgressors.” “All these things.” Perhaps the most destroying of them all (had not God sanctified it), was the silence that God held concerning his case. He could not understand it. He could not interpret it. For two full years the butler forgot him. But, he was *not forgotten of God*. “O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of Me.” God had *not* forgotten. In the end, when God put His hand to it in one remarkable day, Joseph goes from the dungeon to a throne. That is what God does when He takes His people home to glory. He takes them from the dungeon of this wretched body to the heavenly mansion above. A blessed day in anticipation for God’s dear people!

But, you see the wonderful things that came forth from Joseph’s path. He said: “God did send me before you to preserve life.” Out of this “eater” came forth much meat for his family, and out of the “strong” came forth much sweetness as Jacob’s family were preserved in the time of famine. We know that many other things came later on, but at this time our text was wonderfully fulfilled. Sanctification – God overruling, undertaking and making “All things work together for good to them that love God,” as Romans 8 tells us. If you go to a pharmacist’s, you will see many medicines on the shelves. Those medicines are made up of various chemicals which, taken on their own would be fatal. But, with the skill God has given to man to put them together to provide medicines to help us in our time here below, they become profitable. Well, dear friends, your troubles, in their absolute sense, are like those chemicals in their raw state, as it were. But, when

the heavenly Pharmacist (I use that word carefully) mingles together all the afflictions, sorrows, disappointments and discouragements; all those fiery trials and deep waters, out of it comes precious food for God's people. You have only to go to Isaiah 30 and read these words: "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." That is, you will understand what the Lord is about and why it had to be. Then you will come into that place: "And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." When these destroying things come we are apt to turn one way or another. But – "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left."

You go into the New Testament; John 11. Who could have thought that the bitter sorrow of Lazarus' death and our Lord's delay could have brought any blessing? Yet, the Lord said it would. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." And, if God has said that regarding your trouble, dear friends, a day will come when you will look on, as Manoah and his wife did. You will say: "The LORD hath done great things for us." "The angel did wondrously." Some of you here tonight can remember being on a hospital bed and knowing the Lord's blessing. Some of you have had times of bereavement. The Lord did not leave you, did He? Some of you have walked in bitter discouragements – doors shut that you wanted opened, but you proved, nonetheless, the Lord was in it all. When the matter came to its blessed conclusion, you had to say: 'God's thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are our ways His ways. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God's ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts than our thoughts.' Oh, bless God for this word! "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

There is a parallel word in the Book of the Proverbs. "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is

sweet.” Naturally speaking, if you were full, and saw a honeycomb, you would not want it; you would not need it and you would not feel you could take it. But, if you were hungry, and perhaps had not eaten for three or four days and you found something bitter – quite palatable, though bitter – you would be thankful for it, wouldn’t you? Well, dear friends, the Lord will not have a full soul loathing the honeycomb, will He? He will have a hungry soul. The hungry soul will prove that those bitter things – those afflictions, those disappointments and those discouragements that are sanctified by God become sweet. “The full soul” – without an appetite for spiritual things; full of himself – “loatheth an honeycomb.” But to the emptied soul – the one who has no righteousness left of his own; no good work to plead – “the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” That is, when God makes it so. “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.”

May this be a word to one of you this evening hour who, perhaps, has found it hard to say: “It is well.” Dear friend, if this is written over your trouble or trial, it *shall* be well. It already *is* well, in God’s account. You will come to that moment when you too will say, ‘Yes. My Jesus hath done all things well.’ So, we thank God for Samson’s riddle – strange man that he was. He was God’s servant. He is God’s prophet to us this evening. “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” May God bless His holy Word to us.

Amen