

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Four things little and wise: The ant - Prepare to meet thy God

In this series of lessons from things 'little' and 'wise' in Scripture, we will use Proverbs 30:24-28 as a springboard. These verses state: *"There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer; the conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks; the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands; the spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces."*

1. The ant will teach us how we must prepare to meet God;
2. The conies will show us how we can take refuge in Christ, the Rock of Ages;
3. The locusts will reveal how we, as Christians, should act in unity; and finally
4. The spider will look on to our heavenly dwelling place.

Today we begin with the ant. Here is a short description of ants in rhyming form:

*See the ants a-labouring
Underneath the sun.
See them seeking out their food.
Hunting it as one.*

*See them pass the message on
Of blessing once it's found.
See them suck the sweetness in
And to their home then bound.*

*See their work, poor sluggard;
Note their industry.
Preparing for the future
Survival theirs shall be.*

*See them milk the greenfly
And carry grain as well.
See them gather insects
To take them where they dwell.
See the cells of storage
Where their food is kept.
See the lanes, their highways,
Straight and cleanly swept.*

*See their work, poor sluggard;
Note their industry.
Preparing for the future
Survival theirs shall be.*

*See their form so sturdy,
Their legs with speed instilled.
See their double stomachs
With fluid often filled.
See their long antennae
Built for touch and smell
See them care for larvae
And their eggs as well.*

*See their work, poor sluggard;
Note their industry.
Preparing for the future
Survival theirs shall be.*

Just as the ant prepares so earnestly for its future survival, so we ought to prepare to meet God. In Amos 4 the LORD pronounces judgment upon Israel because the people had turned away from Him and His ways. His judgment was poured out on them in order to make them repent and return to Him. Hence, in Amos 4:12-13 He says: *"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is his name."* It is similar for us. Because we have forsaken God, He condemns us to an eternal punishment unless we take the steps necessary to return to Him and His ways.

So, in this talk, we will look at the following in more detail:

1. Who is this God?
2. Why do we have to prepare to meet Him?
3. What steps must we take to return to Him?
4. When can we be assured that we come under His blessing rather than His judgment?

1. Who is God?

Hebrews 11:6 states: *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."*

When we think of God, we refer to the Perfect Being. Of course, in order for a being to be perfect then he must be self-existent and live eternally. Therefore, he must have life in himself. He must also have a form that cannot be harmed, yet allows him to be all powerful and unchanging. Finally, to be the perfect being, he must be all-knowing and be perfect in honesty and emotions. Alongside this argument, there are several reasons for believing in the existence of God. They include:

- a. The order found in creation (even in its fallen state);
- b. The truth of the Bible;
- c. The survival of the Jew (God's chosen people Israel);
- d. The fulfilled prophecies of Scripture;
- e. The wonder of the life of Christ, and
- f. The changed lives of people who believe in Him.

a. The order in creation

The order in creation comes first. The Bible begins with the simple statement: *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1). For God to be able to create in the beginning, He Himself had to exist already. Furthermore, in Romans 1:20 we read: *"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse..."*

The master workman is known by his work. The order, beauty, harmony and excellent design of the visible universe all show the eternal power and nature of the Creator. His wisdom is seen in how it all fits together and works together.

A story is sometimes told of the Christian and scientist, Isaac Newton. He had a working model of the solar system and an atheistic visitor saw it and, excited by its accuracy, asked Newton who made it. Newton apparently replied, "Nobody!" The atheist was suitably convicted. The atheist believes there is no god, but cannot prove this as fact.

Linked to this creation, we find the goodness of God in His provision for the people.. In Acts 14:17 we read: *"Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."*

The structure of our bodies shows that we are fearfully and wonderfully made; but add to that intelligence, will, emotions, imagination and other attributes and we see a reflection of some of the characteristics of God. Once, when preaching, the Apostle Paul stated: *"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think*

that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device" (Acts 17:28-29). It follows that if we are the "offspring" of God then we will have similar characteristics.

Then consider that we are spirit, soul and body and we have an indication of three yet one. Our own being is an illustration of the tri-unity of God.

b. The truth of the Bible

The truth of the Bible is emphasised in its own pages. It is called *"the word of truth"* in a number of places. In other words, it can be believed. It is totally reliable. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 we read: *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."*

The apostles recognised the Bible as being the very word of God. In fact, Paul described his preaching in this way in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5: *"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."*

c. The survival of God's chosen people, Israel

The survival of God's chosen people, Israel, is both a proof of the existence of God and the truth of the Bible. In the latter, we can find hundreds of predictions concerning Israel, many of which have been fulfilled already and, yet, there are many still to be fulfilled in a coming day. In Deuteronomy 7:6-8 we find that Israel was loved by God and made His chosen people. Unfortunately, they failed Him and were punished as a result. For example, the LORD scattered them among the nations as He promised in Deuteronomy 4:26-27. In those lands they were to be persecuted. Jeremiah 29:18 says: *"And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them."*

However, Israel could not be wiped from the face of the earth completely because God had promised to recover and bless them. This may be seen from Jeremiah 16:14-15 where He says He will bring them back to the Promised Land. In that day, when the Messiah reigns, Jerusalem will be the metropolis of the earth.

d. The fulfilled prophecies of Scripture

The fulfilled prophecies of Scripture bear witness to the living God. We have seen a few fulfilled scriptures in the previous section; but there are so many more! For example, the following refer to Christ:

- Isaiah 7:14 tells us Christ would be born of a virgin;
- Micah 5:2 tells us He would be born in Bethlehem;
- Psalm 69 speaks of His suffering and rejection;
- Psalm 41 speaks of His betrayal;
- Zechariah 11 speaks of the price of that betrayal and what the money would be used to buy;
- Psalm 22 predicts His crucifixion;
- Isaiah 53 gives a complete outline of His sufferings and glory;
- Psalm 16 tells of His resurrection;
- Daniel 9 speaks of the time of His death;
- Psalm 110 speaks of His exaltation.

And so we could go on.

e. The wonder of the life of Christ

The wonder of the life of Christ is a proof that God exists. His life was totally different to any other person because:

- His birth was remarkable;
- His righteousness was perfect;
- His miracles were phenomenal;
- His teaching was authoritative;
- His goodness, kindness and compassion were without equal;
- His influence is enduring; and
- He possessed power over nature, disease, death and demons.

f. The changed lives of people who believe in Him

The changed lives of people who believe in Him are also an indication of the existence and power of God. Those who had once sought self-satisfaction, self-gratification and self-exaltation suddenly wish to please God and glorify His name instead. Those who once had enjoyed the pleasures of sin have repented and now hate that sin (even though they may still fall into it occasionally).

Consider, John Newton who was deeply involved in the slave trade. After He had repented of his sins and trusted in Christ, he became a clergyman. He is the author who penned the words:

*“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.”*

Hudson Taylor is another example of God working on a soul. He had the privilege of growing up in a Christian family and came under the influence of the Bible at an early age. However, during his teenage years, he strayed until being convicted by God in the reading of a gospel tract. From then on his life was devoted to the Lord and he became a missionary to China.

2. Why do we have to prepare to meet Him?

It is God in whom we live and move and have our being. He created us to have fellowship with Himself. He ever desires our blessing. However, Adam, the head of the human race, disobeyed Him (see Genesis 3:1-7). Because Adam loved Eve more than he loved God, he disobeyed. The scripture says: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; ... so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12). Being born of Adam’s race, we have inherited Adam’s sinful nature. This is proved by the fact that we commit sins. In fact, we can’t stop ourselves from sinning. Sin has become our master and the wages this master pays are what we deserve, namely, death (see Romans 6:23).

The holy God has to judge sin. This judgment includes death at the end of this life and an everlasting death after it. The latter is called the Second Death in Revelation 21:8 which reads: *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”* This is a separation from God for evermore. It is also called “Hell” which is a place of torment where the soul and resurrected body live in a state of ruin (Matthew 10:28).

3. What steps must we take to return to Him?

God loves you. He does not will the death of a sinner. He wants to save you from this judgment. John 3:16-17 prove this love: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”* God loves you so much that He sent His only-begotten Son into this world to die on your account. The Apostle Paul wrote: *“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief”* (1 Timothy 1:15).

The perfect Son of God was the only person who could deal with the question of our sin. There was no sin in Him therefore death could not touch Him. But, in His love for us, He voluntarily gave up His life. Of His life, Jesus Himself said, *“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father”* (John 10:18). He suffered the death we deserved in order that we could be freed from God’s judgment. The Bible says: *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). In other words, Christ died so that God could make us righteous in His sight.

It was not only God’s punishment for sin that was poured upon Christ at the cross, it was also the judgment for our individual sins. 1 Peter 2:24 states: *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness...”* Furthermore, if Christ was delivered up to death for our offences, He was raised again for our justification (see Romans 4:25). His resurrection showed that His work of salvation was finished to the satisfaction of the heart of God.

If God in His grace has provided Christ as a sacrifice for sin, then what steps must we take in order to take advantage of this blessing? The Apostle Paul had the answer to this. Acts 20:21 says, *“he testified both to the Jews, and also to*

the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Those are the two steps to salvation.

- i. We are to repent. This means we must have a complete change of mind and heart. We are to turn from going our own way and doing our own thing to going God's way and behaving as He wants us to.
- ii. We have to put our full trust in the person of Christ and depend on the work that He has done at the cross. If I were drowning at sea and a lifesaver approached me, I would have to trust in his ability to save me. I would have to place myself in His hands. So it is with our soul's salvation. We simply place ourselves in the hands of the Lord Jesus who is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God through Him.

If you are not yet saved, turn to God in prayer, acknowledging your sinfulness. Tell Him that you truly believe His Son died for your sins at the cross and commit your life into His hands.

Once you genuinely trust in the Son of God then you pass from death into life. By the power of God the Father, you are transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). You are ready to meet God with confidence on a regular basis!

4. You may ask when can I be assured that I come under His blessing rather than His judgment?

The simple answer is as soon as you believe! The Apostle John wrote: "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye **have eternal life**...*" (1 John 5:13). Ephesians 1:13 reveals that God's Spirit seals us as His own after we've believed, while, John 10:28-29 shows us that we are eternally secure in the hand of Christ and the hand of His Father.

We finish with some words of the hymn writer H D'Arcy Champney (1854-1942):

*"Safe in Christ, the weakest child
Stands in all God's favour.
All in Christ are reconciled
Through that only Saviour.
Safe in Christ! Safe in Christ!
He's their glory ever.
None can pluck them from His hand.
They shall perish never."*

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