

Expository Thoughts On Luke - Luke 1:13-17

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

We have, in these verses, the words of the angel who appeared to Zachariah. They are words full of deep spiritual instruction.

We learn here, for one thing, that prayers are not necessarily rejected because the answer is long delayed. Zachariah, no doubt, had often prayed for the blessing of children, and, to all appearance, had prayed in vain. At his advanced time of life, he had probably long ceased to mention the subject before God, and had given up all hope of being a father. Yet the very first words of the angel show plainly that the bygone prayers of Zachariah had not been forgotten--"Your prayer is heard--your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son."

We shall do well to remember this fact, whenever we kneel down to pray. We must beware of hastily concluding that our supplications are useless, and specially in the matter of intercessory prayer in behalf of others. It is not for us to prescribe either the time or the way in which our requests are to be answered. He who knows best the time for people to be born, knows also the time for them to be born again. Let us rather "continue in prayer," "watch unto prayer," "pray always, and not faint." "Delay of answer," says an old divine, "must not discourage our faith. It may be, God has long granted, before we shall know of His grant."

We learn, in the second place, that no children cause such true joy, as those who have the grace of God. It was a child about to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to whose father it was said, "You shall have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth."

Grace is the principal portion that we should desire for our children. It is a thousand times better for them than beauty, riches, honors, rank, or high connections. Until they have grace we never know what they may do. They may make us weary of our life, and bring down our grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. When they are converted, and not until then, they are provided for, both for time and eternity. "A wise son makes a glad father." (Prov. 10:1.) Whatever we seek for our sons and daughters, let us first seek that they may have a place in the covenant, and a name in the book of life.

We learn, in the third place, the nature of true greatness. The angel describes it, when he tells Zachariah that his son "shall be great in the sight of the Lord."

The measure of greatness which is common among men is utterly false and deceptive. Princes and potentates, conquerors and leaders of armies, statesmen and philosophers, artists and authors--these are

the kind of men whom the world calls "great." Such greatness is not recognized among the angels of God. Those who do great things for God, they reckon great. Those who do little for God, they reckon little. They measure and value every man according to the position in which he is likely to stand at the last day.

Let us not be ashamed to make the angels of God our example in this matter. Let us seek for ourselves and our children that true greatness which will be owned and recognized in another world. It is a greatness which is within the reach of all--of the poor as well as the rich--of the servant as well as of the master. It does not depend on power or patronage, on money or on friends. It is the free gift of God to all who seek it at the Lord Jesus Christ\

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