

INTRODUCTION.

Merlin was an old man about to die. All his life he had been following the gleam with its accompanying music. He had found the gleam on the mountains and in the valleys and on the faces of people around him.

In his dark neurosis, ~~say~~, when he felt himself persecuted and oppressed by deep despondency, and the light of rational thought retreated, he heard the voice of his Master whispering "Follow the Gleam."

And he followed it through his fantasies, and over the farmland, and again saw the gleam on the rough and ruddy faces of the farmers.

Then, with a melody stronger and statelier, he followed his magical musical gleam into the city and ~~into the~~ castle of King Arthur, where the gleam rested on the forehead of the blameless King.

Then came the despondency and restlessness and darkness upon Camelot, and his beloved king disappeared, and the gleam grew weak and drifted out into the wintry forest, and into the valley of the shadow of death.

And the gleam again picked up its accompanying melody moved into the valley and transformed it as it clothed the dark valley with its radiance.

Now the gleam was shining brightly, and it was forever wedded to the melody, and went out singing to the world.

Merlin, though old and weary, and unable to keep up, tried to follow it. He saw something strange and unusual happen as the gleam passed over the cemeteries and they mysteriously began to grow beautiful blossoms of flowers, gleaming with immortality.

Merlin followed as far as he could with his slow pace and weakened condition. He went to the limit of his ability. Now he was ready to die rejoicing, for through the power of his Master who taught him since childhood, he was granted the vision of the mysterious gleam on the horizon.

What was Merlin's gleam? Tennyson does not tell us. Like any great poet he left room for our imagination to work.. But the gleam was certainly not just an ordinary or natural gleam of light. He says, "Not of the sunlight, Not of the Moonlight, Not of the starlight!"

It is clearly some supernatural light of faith and inspiration. As Merlin dies he calls for the present younger generation to go down to the port and launch their ships and follow the gleam before it vanishes over the horizon: "After it, follow it: Follow the Gleam."

There is something in the story of Merlin and the Gleam which excites people and arouses their instinctive hero worship. There is something of the same spirit in the 11th chapter of Hebrews where we find the roll call of heroes of the faith.

By faith Moses saw the invisible God.
How can anyone see something that is invisible?
With a microscope or with a telescope we can see things
that are invisible to the naked eye.
With the aid of certain equipment we can see things in
the dark which we couldn't see with the unaided eye.
I remember being with a navy and army riverine force on
the Mekong River ^{one night} in early 1968. Some men were talking
about some boats on the river which I couldn't see at all.
Then they gave me what was called a "starscope", and
by looking through it the faint light of the stars in the
night sky was greatly magnified so that I could see the
movement of scores of little boats which were completely
hidden from the unaided human eye.

Why, then, should it be thought an incredible thing
that God can take the faith of a human being
and supplement it with his almighty power
and enable us to see the invisible God?

By his faith Moses could see the God who was invisible
to the eyes of unbelieving Egyptians.
And by faith we can see the God who is invisible to the
eyes of unbelievers today. We do not see Him with our
physical eyes, but we see him by the eyes of faith.
We see him in our heart and soul.
We are like the little boy who was flying his kite so
high that it was completely out of sight.
An older boy came to him and asked,
"How do you know there is a kite up there?"
To this the little kite flyer responded,
"Because I feel the tug of it on my string."
And so we know there is a God because we feel his tug
in our heart.

But this is only as we follow the gleam of faith,
~~which~~ is "Not of the sunlight; Not of the moonlight;
and Not of the starlight." This is by the light of God-
given grace that we are enabled to believe in and see Him.

It may not be easy to do, but the time comes to each
of us when we must make the "leap of faith."
It is like the trapeze artist swinging on one bar to the
utmost distance that it will take him.
Then he leaps and reaches hopefully for another bar.
~~such~~ breathless suspense of "mid-air placelessness"
is the anxiety of faith.

When watching such an act we naturally hold our breath
until the transition has been made.

WAC meets Chapel - 21 Jan. 78.

FOLLOWING THE GLEAM

What is it to follow the gleam of Faith? Heb. 11:1

I. A Vision of the Invisible God. 23-27

1. A striking contrast to most we see today.

Many in our century boast of believing only what they can see and touch.

Proud of their progress,
intoxicated with the triumphs of science,
they see only these.

2. God is invisible.

Job 23:8,9, "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there and backward, but I cannot perceive him:
On the left hand, where he doth work,
but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand,
that I cannot see him:

But he knoweth the way that I take."

I Tim. 1:17, "The King eternal, Immortal, invisible,
the only wise God."

John 1:18, "No man hath seen God at any time;
the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him."

3. But we can see God by soul-sight, or by faith,
as he is revealed in the Incarnate Son.4. The vision of the invisible God is the true inspiration
of all the great events of human life.5. The vision of the invisible God is the
hope of our generation.

I. Enduring the Oppressive obstacles.

1. The inclinations of our depraved sinful nature.

2. The opposition of Egypt

A. Stands for a mere fleshly or animal existence

B. Stands for a state of bondage - spiritual slavery.

3. The Prince of darkness.

Transient

III. Forsaking the pleasures of sin

1. What are sinful pleasures?

- A. Whatever God had forbidden in His word
- B. Whatever cannot be reconciled to the general principles of God's Word.
- C. Whatever weakens our spirituality, dulls our conscience, dissipates our thoughts or abilities, so that we lose interest in the things of God.

2. Some sins do offer some pleasures.

- A. But these pleasures do not really satisfy.
- B. And they are short-lived, "For a season", transient
- C. They leave a sting behind.

D. They are very expensive in the price extorted.

 The sinner is old before his time;

his physical power is gone;

His intellect has lost its freshness;

His will has become powerless;

His conscience becomes seared

3. These sinful pleasures must be forsaken

A. For the glory of God

B. By the power and grace of God

C. Decisively and completely

IV. A Correct Estimation of Proper Values, v. 26

1. He saw that all this glitter and glamor of earthly treasures were but for "a season."

2. Through the eye of faith Moses saw

fields more fair and fruitful than the

fertile valley of the Nile;

The River of Life far surpassing the

sacred stream of Egypt;

riches of Heaven infinitely transcending

the treasures of Egypt;

and a glorious palace whose splendor outdazzled that

of the magnificent City of the Sun.

3. The worst that Christ has to offer is preferable to the best the world has to offer.

Choice Based on Principle Rather than Expediency

1. The principle of faith

A. In Jehovah

C. In Christ

2. He recognized the claims of the future as well as the present.

3. His choice revealed great self-denial

4. The motive of such a choice is "The Recompense of Reward"

A. The reward of grace is certain, complete, eternal

B. The pleasures of righteousness are not for a season, but for ever.

C. The recompense of salvation is bestowed on a principle of grace.

D. The recompense of condemnation is bestowed on a principle of justice.

CONCLUSION:

And so we have seen that for one to follow the gleam of faith is to see the great vision of the invisible God, to endure the oppressive obstacles, to turn back from the false pleasures of disobedience. And it certainly involves a correct estimation of true and proper values, and upon that true valuation to make an eternal choice which is based on principle rather than on expediency.

The great heroes of faith in the Bible discovered and followed as best they could the gleam of faith and inspiration.

We who live on this side of Calvary and the Resurrection and Pentecost have not merely a gleam which is but dimly revealed as it was to Men of God in the Old Testament.

We have the blazing sun of God's clear revelation. Whereas they had but a flickering candle,

we have a brilliant thermonuclear light of infinite candlepower.

In fact, we dare not look directly into that blinding light without the protection and medium of Jesus Christ, and in humble submission before Him the Son of God and the Sun of our souls Our Savior Dear. Only through Him can one really see God and not die.

FOLLOWING THE GLEAM

Heb. 11:27, "Seeing Him who is invisible"

The 11th chapter of Hebrews is a Hall of Fame for
the Heroes of Faith.

Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote a well known poem entitled "Merlin and the Gleam". Merlin was the great magician in the legends of King Arthur, but it is really more or less autobiographical.

He begins to doubt:
"A demon vexed me,
The light retreated."

Then he came in contact with King "Arthur the Blameless" and "out of the darkness

Silent and slowly
The Gleam, that had waned
to a wintry glimmer"

slowly brightened
and inspired his faith as he lies dying
"at the land's last limit."

But we ask, "What is it?"
"What is this gleam?"

"Is it something material and visible to our phys. eye
Tennyson's answer is, "No.

"It is a spiritual gleam."
"Not of the sunlight,
Not of the moonlight,
Not of the starlight!
O young Mariner,
Down to the Haven,
Call your companions,
Launch your vessel
And crowd your canvass,
and, ere it vanishes
Over the margin,
After it, follow it,
Follow the Gleam."