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Fulness

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Psalm 24; Gen. 25:24-34.

We shall turn to Psalm 24. We have already seen some of the lessons in this word of the Lord. The word that is standing right out is *fulness*, and there you are confronted with something that is too big for man to grasp. It reaches beyond all human conception of things, it speaks of resources that can never be exhausted, it speaks of something that can never run dry. And when we come to the New Testament we find that fulness is associated with Jesus Christ.

In these past days when we have been studying Colossians we have seen this fulness: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell". If there is any barrenness it is not because the Lord is bankrupt. We learned that the fulness of Christ has resulted in creation because all fulness dwells in Him; He could breathe upon disorder and bring a world into being - the fulness of the earth is the Lord. "The whole earth is full of His glory" (Isa. 6:3), or "The fulness of the earth is His glory". And in this psalm you have fulness and glory brought together: "Who is the King of glory", "Open the gates and the King of Glory shall come in". Perhaps the reason for our barrenness is because we have not realised that the King of glory must be there; the Lord of hosts is His name. Then you notice this, that right in between the fulness and the King of glory, there is a man. That man has reached the place where the King of Glory has come in and the fulness. The place the man has risen to is the place of ascension. Perhaps we have not learned to come to the right place for the fulness. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord or who shall stand in His holy place?" In the holy place there was the candlestick all made of gold in which there was the oil causing the light to shine and then there was the table of show-bread, signifying sufficiency. And there was the altar of incense rising up and filling the holy place, and it is when we come into the experience of standing in the holy place that

the fulness comes in. When we get there then the King of Glory shall be manifest and the fulness realised.

There are four facts given about the man who has come into the holy place.

(1) He is a man with clean hands - what he does is clean. "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags". "He that touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days" (Num. 19:11) - the dead thing may be beautiful perhaps to our hearts, but the touch of a dead thing is unclean.

(2) He is a man with a pure heart - his affairs are right; he is a man who lives in a right way; he has a proper devotion. He loves the right One - he is there because of his devotion to the Person, not because of his works or what he has done. In Rev. 2:4 the Lord says: "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

(3) His life is straight - his soul is not stooping to falsehood (the soul is the person). He has not turned aside from the perpendicular; he is straight up and down; his life is not a lie.

(4) "Nor sworn deceitfully" - he is open to God and hides nothing. That is the man who will stand in the hill of God; he is the man who will bring the fulness and the glory in.

If that were all, we could not stand at all, but in Psalm 24:6 we read "This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek thy face, even Jacob". This man who shall ascend to the holy hill, well, he is a generation and a Jacob generation, not an Abraham nor an Isaac generation, but a Jacob generation. He is the man who is going to receive the blessing. Were Jacob's hands clean? Was Jacob's heart pure? Was Jacob's soul straight? Was Jacob's life open? "Even Jacob..." and because that is in the Word we can rejoice, even we. If there is one man in the Scriptures who has failure, deceit, falsehood and craftiness wrapped up in his being, that man is Jacob, and yet "This is the generation of them that seek Him." So when we go to the psalm we say, "How did Jacob come to this place and if Jacob did it, how can we get into this?" It creates the desire that we might come into the holy place, because the bringing of the fulness in and the Man of Glory are bound up with that.

There is one word that stands out for Jacob and God can do anything with us if this is true of us also: "This is the generation of them that seek Him." Behind all that black history there was a desire, a longing, a reaching out after, a seeking of the face of God. He is a man who is bent on getting into close quarters with God. There are many of God's people today who have not any of these bad things which are characteristic of Jacob; but there was one thing that Jacob had that they lack. Jacob was never indifferent to God. Many of God's people have no striving after God. If God is before their face, well and good, but if something else is before them, well, they are content with that.

One thing that God loved about Jacob was that he was a 'right' man. In fact in Genesis 25:27 the word "plain" (KJV) is hardly right; in the margin it says he was a perfect man. This man who was stooping to these things, he was a right man behind all that; his heart was right and, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect (or sincere) toward Him". Some of us have not got to the place where Jacob was; there is no desire for face to face contact with God Almighty. This word "seek" is the same word as in Luke 23:52 - begged or longed for, and in Acts 16:10 "endeavoured". His endeavour was toward God; his heart was after God and God can do something with people like that, although they may be as deceitful as Jacob and as crooked as Jacob. Jacob knew perfectly well that if his love for God was to be realised, he must have the birthright.

Speaking naturally Esau got it by being a few seconds earlier. Morally speaking, everything was against Jacob having the birthright. There were three things wrapped up in the birthright.

(1) It belonged to the firstborn and secured for the firstborn a double portion "Then it shall be when he makes his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he has: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his" (Deut.21:16-17).

Now, here is Elijah and Elisha, and Elijah is just about to be caught up to heaven and Elijah says: "What do you want Elisha", and Elisha says: "Give me a double portion of thy spirit". And Elijah says: "You have asked a hard thing". In Hebrews 12 we read "You are come unto Mount Sion (that is a great place) to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly (that is a great company) and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven (that is all the double portion)... and to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant". A double portion of that spirit, and so this birthright had something that was translated.

The only means whereby we can stand in the holy place is something of a holy nature, there was oil in the candlesticks, and we will never see His face if we are moving out on any other plain. Elisha had to get to Gilgal - the place of the knife; and from there to Bethel - the House of God; and then to Jordan - the place of burial; then to Jericho - where there was conflict. And then he could say: "Elijah, give me the double portion." And unless we are prepared for the Holy Spirit to make it real, we will never have it; if we want the double portion we will have to take our hands off things. Are we prepared to let the Holy Spirit take charge? Do we believe in the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit? You only have the double portion by seeing the One who has ascended.

(2) The one who had the double portion had the right to come into the headship. That takes us to Ephesians 1. There is a company of the Lord's people and Paul says: "After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power... which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right own right hand in the heavenly places... and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that fills all in all" (Eph. 1:15-23). That is headship and the possessing of the headship meant a coming into that. It means the lifting up out of the places of death, far above all; fulness and glory are related to that. But that is going to cost something because there can be no fulness if the body is broken and the church scattered. Christians must come into one place into the Head.

(3) Jacob wanted the birthright because the one who had the birthright came into the priesthood. "We have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God". He is sitting there doing a mighty priestly work at the throne. The high priest could behold the glory of the Lord and see the outshining of His matchless splendor. It means we take our place right inside the holy place. Yes, the birthright secured priesthood. "He ever lives to make intercession". "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him". And if ever a man was in the uttermost it was Jacob. And yet he wanted the birthright so that he could be a priest to deal with people to the uttermost. But God says that you are not going to get the birthright by making pottage. The word 'supplanter' means 'take by the heel'; it is a satanic way "thou shalt bruise his heel". Flesh cannot come into the birthright or the securing of it. Therefore, Jacob, you have got to get rid of it.

Are we striving after God, and because of that we want the birthright that will satisfy all we desire? Well, you cannot get the birthright by pandering to the flesh; you have got to let the flesh die. Am I prepared to die as a means to obtaining the birthright? "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ, the firstborn from among the dead; Christ risen, ascended; Christ, the high priest. This Christ is living inside because I am crucified; the old Jacob has been dealt with and now it is the double portion that is inside me. "When I ascend on high I will send you the Holy Spirit and He will guide you." The Man who died on Calvary dealt with the old Jacob. The man who shall stand in the holy place, he shall receive the blessing. It is the priestly man inside him that means the bringing in of the King of Glory.

Are we out for the double portion - the headship, the priesthood? They are there for us, but we must be prepared to get them not as Jacob by providing something for our flesh, but by taking the cross.