

Returning to Jerusalem, Part IV- Barzillai

Call to Worship: Psalm 29

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 17:24-29

2nd Scripture: 2 Samuel 19:31-39

Hymn #164- *Angels from the Realm of Glory*

Hymn #151- *O Come All Ye Faithful*

Hymn #149- *Joy to the World!*

Introduction:

Having defeated Absalom and his army, David is on his way back to Jerusalem. Along the way, the scriptures have provided us with some of the interactions, which David has had with individuals, who have come out to meet him. So far, we have considered David's interaction with Shimei the son of Gera, and Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of King Saul.

This morning, we come to the last of the three individual dialogs, which have been recorded for us, surrounding David's return to the Promised Land. And this particular interaction, involves no controversy, unlike the other two. Our text, brings us, once again, to consider the loyal and faithful heart, of a man named, Barzillai the Gileadite.

I. Barzillai's First Meeting with David

In order to better prepare us to grasp and benefit from, our present text, let me just give you a summary reminder, of what we have learned about Barzillai, several weeks ago.

Who is Barzillai the Gileadite? We first learn of Barzillai, when David and his large group of followers, were fleeing Jerusalem, because of Absalom's treasonous rebellion. You will recall, that when David, at the warning of Hushai, had crossed over the Jordan River, he headed up north, to a town called Mahanaim. And when David and his followers were there, exhausted, with minimal supplies and no place to rest their heads, there were three men, who had come out to assist them with all kinds of supplies and necessities (beds, basins, earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, parched seeds, honey and curds, sheep and cheese of the herd). And so, at a time, when it would have been very easy to ignore the needs of this large group of people, three men, one of whom was this man Barzillai, stepped up, and provided David with these many precious, life preserving resources. They took notice of the plight of the large

group; they refused to turn their backs to them, even though the cost of helping them would be great, and they had compassion on them and provided for them.

Now, fast forward to our present text, when David is returning to Jerusalem, following the defeat of Absalom and his army.

II. Barzillai's Present Interaction with David

In our text, we find that this dear man, Barzillai, actually made the forty mile trek, all the way down to where David would cross the Jordan, so as to escort David back to the Promised Land. And, he crossed the Jordan river with David, for that matter. This, he did, so as to show great honor and respect for the king. Now, what makes this sacrifice so profound, is not only the fact that Barzillai would have to make the trip back, all the way up to Gilead, and that, not on even and smooth ground; and that, not in favorable weather conditions (it would have probably been blistering hot!), but furthermore, he would have done all of this as a man, who was very aged. Notice, in verse 32a, we are told, "Now Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old." Remember, this was not an act of necessity. This was an act of honor, which David would not have expected, especially from such an aged man as Barzillai; and especially after all that Barzillai had already done, when David was in need, when he had first arrived at Mahanaim.

Also, we will see in a few moments, that Barzillai had no need of anything from David. Even though, he could have benefitted from the king, and that greatly (and the king offers), Barzillai does not accept anything. Barzillai is already a wealthy man, which again, speaks highly of his willingness to help David. In other words, brethren, all of this was done, with no strings attached. This was a sacrifice at the purest level, revealing a rare and precious nobility in the heart of Barzillai. And there are probably, hardly a handful that would mimic it.

Now, when David asks Barzillai to come with him to Jerusalem, ensuring him that the king would fully provide for him, listen again to Barzillai's response, given in verses 34-37:

"But Barzillai said to the king, 'How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am today eighty years old. Can I discern between the good and bad? Can your servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any longer the voice of singing men and singing women? Why then should your servant be a further burden to my lord the king? Your

servant will go a little way across the Jordan with the king. And why should the king repay me with such a reward? Please let your servant turn back again, that I may die in my own city, near the grave of my father and mother. But here is your servant Chimham; let him cross over with my lord the king, and do for him what seems good to you."

And so, basically, Barzillai responds to the king's request, in three ways:

- 1) It would be a waste to use the king's resources on someone like me. My senses are incapable of enjoying the benefits, which you would graciously provide. I would only be a burden to the king, especially as I continue to age. The gesture is well appreciated, but you don't need someone like me, using up resources, which I cannot even appreciate.
- 2) I desire to return to my own land, so that I can be buried with my parents, when I breathe my last breath.
- 3) I want to commit Chimham to you, in my stead. In anyway, that you would desire to utilize and help him, that would be great.

And so, David then receives Chimham, and offers to do for him, whatever Barzillai desires, for the sake of Barzillai. Note, in verse 38, David states, "Chimham will cross over with me, and I will do for him what seems good to you. Now whatever you request of me, I will do *for you*." Finally, when they all cross the Jordan, David kisses Barzillai and blesses him, and Barzillai returns to his own land (vs. 39). And Chimham goes on with David, to Gilgal.

III. Concluding Thoughts and Applications

Brethren, having looked at, a general overview of the text, let us now use our remaining time, considering a few relevant thoughts and applications:

1) Consider again, the rare and profound loyalty, embedded in the heart of Barzillai. Is it not the case, that the natural man; is it not the case, brethren, that our flesh, would often measure how much return, we might personally gain, when making any investment in others? Sadly, the words, "What's in it for me," are paramount in our culture, aren't they? Giving and getting are twin brothers to the natural man, but when the opportunity to give exists, without the opportunity of receiving in return (even if it is something immaterial, like "praise"), few there are, who would step forward. Notice again, with Barzillai, he gave not only of his resources, but also of his time,

and not only of his time, but also of his energy, and that, when many would have said, "Look, you are well advanced in age. There really is no pressing need for you to travel with the king... unless, there be some reward to come with the sacrifice. But this man was driven by something, which pushed him beyond such thinking, wasn't he?"

What drives an individual, to so value the life of another, that he would go so far as to express his love, in this kind of a seemingly unnecessary way? What would drive someone to embrace inconvenience in all of the dimensions of life (time, energy, resources), on behalf of another? Well, I don't know much more about Barzillai, so I could only make a presumption about him, based upon the fruit. And I want to suggest that whatever was operative in him, was similarly operative in Mary (the sister of Martha and Lazarus), who, willingly broke open a bottle of expensive perfume, only to pour it out on Jesus's body, so as to prepare him for his upcoming burial. The disciples, led by Judas Iscariot, saw this as a waste, since that perfume could have been sold for a large sum, which could have been used for the poor. But, our Lord Jesus Christ, rebuked them, saying that they would always have the poor with them, and this act of devotion and love toward Him was exemplary and precious in the sight of God, as it confirmed a priceless love, loyalty and commitment toward Christ, by Mary. Mary's true and sincere devotion, would serve every succeeding generation, as a robust, theological textbook, opening up the nature of the redeemed heart that is rightly grateful toward, and in love with, its Creator! Such devotion and loyalty and love was in Barzillai. And to that end, the act, rather than being unnecessary, was actually precious and priceless, in the sight of God, though not in the sight of sinful men.

Brethren, what is the drive of the sacrifices that you make? Deep down, is it the "What's in it for me," voice, that is driving the ship? Or, is it true and sincere devotion to Christ, who created you, and who loved you, and gave Himself for you? Consider your level of commitment to Christ and His church. What drives that ship? Is it, "Well, that doesn't do much for me" or "I don't have to do that" or "I feel this way or that way, if I do this"...etc? Or, is it, "What can I do to exhaust the candle of this, already fading life, by giving everything I have to the cause of Christ, His kingdom, and the edification of His church? In light of so glorious a Gospel; in the face of so majestic, awesome and glorious a God, how can I lay down my life; how can I

perform my reasonable service with the Apostle Paul, by offering up these members (in total), as a living and productive sacrifice unto my Lord and my God?! Let Barzillai and Mary be role models to this end, and most of all, of course, fix your eyes on Christ, the Author and Finisher of your faith, who exemplified such loyalty and devotion to the Father, and love for you, par excellence!

2) See in Barzillai, a glorious picture of Christ, when he requests that David transfer the good due to Barzillai, over to Chinham's account. We don't know much of anything about Chinham, do we? But, what we do know is that he reaped the benefits of Barzillai's loyalty and devotion, didn't he? And therefore, for Barzillai's sake, David did whatever Barzillai desired, for Chinham.

And brethren, is that not what Christ does for us? We are as Chinham; indeed, less than Chinham, as far as the illustration goes, because there is no indication that Chinham had offended David in any way. But we; we are a great offense to our God, aren't we? And when the Father should reward Christ for His perfect loyalty, devotion and obedience to God, what does Christ do? What does He say? "Father, I desire that these, whom You have given Me, would receive that blessing. Indeed, I will bear their sin and absorb the full weight of Your wrath, that they might fully obtain My merited blessing!" [Read John 17]

And the Father gladly receives us, on behalf of His Son, and He gives us all that is entitled to the Son, in accordance with the Son's plea. What a marvelous and glorious Savior, brethren! Let the love of Christ blow your mind, unto never ending, heartfelt love and obedience to Him!

3) To the unsaved, behold in Barzillai, a rich man, with a proper view of his riches. He knew that they were temporary and he used them for the good cause of helping others. He was not haughty or full of pride, but rather, he was rich in good works. And he knew that his riches could not come with him. Behold, a rich man, willing to face the reality of his impending death, rather than burying his conscience in his riches, ignoring the reality of a coming death and judgment. Are you ready to die? Do you remind yourself, constantly, that all of this is to be left behind? [The parable of the Pearl of Great Price].

AMEN!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25