On taking too much forgranted

Mary and Joseph, probably with a number of friends and relatives, supposing the Lord Jesus to be with them in the company, went a whole day's journey before discovering that He had been left behind. Their problem was that they assumed what they wanted to believe was, in fact, the case. They took too much forgranted. A simple check at the start of the journey back home would have saved them from a frightening experience and uncertainty as well as two days of unnecessary travel.

Theirs was a very pardonable fault and one that we ourselves are in great danger of falling into. We often suppose things and some of them may not be true. We would be wise to check before going any farther. Our failure to do so could have more serious consequences than those suffered by Mary and Joseph. It could lead straight to a tragedy.

1. There is the danger that we take the Lord Jesus forgranted. We "suppose" that because we hold to Biblical faith, we are Biblical believers. But this does not necessarily follow! The devil is probably a better theologian than any of us, but he is still the devil.

Many assume salvation is possible without repentance, but pardon without any penitence is a delusion and simple honesty requires that we state that this is the lie it truly is. To be forgiven a sin must be forsaken. This is Biblical and it is also common logic!

2. We are also in danger of assuming the value of a religious lifestyle without righteousness of heart, mind and action. The media seems to communicate that faith in any religion brings people courage and peace of mind in our increasingly troubled world. We must resist this attempt at brainwashing. The purpose of the redeeming work by the Lord Jesus on the Cross was to make it possible for us who are bad to become good – deeply, radically and finally.

3. God does this for us by translating us out of the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. To believe that such translated people must still dwell in darkness is a terrible reflection on the redeeming power of the blood of the Lord Jesus and the wisdom of God.

In spite of all that James said to the contrary, we are still likely to take forgranted that faith without any "works" does somehow have a mystic value after all. But ***"faith works by love"***. Paul says, ***"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love"***. (Gal. 5:6) Where works of love are absent, we can only conclude that faith is also absent. In too many places 'faith in faith' has displaced 'faith in God'!

In our western world, it appears in many places that a whole generation of believers think it is possible to "accept" the Lord Jesus without forsaking the "world". But the Holy Spirit tells us in James 4:4, ***"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God"***.
In 1 Jn. 2:15 we read, ***"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*** This needs no comment, only obedience!

We may also assume we can experience being justified but without any need to be transformed. Justification and regeneration are not the same. They may be thought to be different in theology, but they are never experienced apart. When God declares us to be righteous He sets about **making** us righteous. We should expect a saved person to be someone who is being transformed. If we fail in this, then our churches will be full of sub-standard, weak believers.

From time to time, God sends a revival among us and we return to the belief that real faith invariably produces holiness of heart and righteousness of life. Again we may make the great mistake of assuming that we can do spiritual work without spiritual power. I have heard it said that we once had to win men and women to faith in the Lord Jesus and at that time it was necessary to have the gift of the Holy Spirit, but now there are satellites with Christian programmes on them and this makes it possible to win people to the Lord Jesus without any anointing/help from the Lord Jesus. There is madness in such an idea!

Long ago David Brainerd compared a person trying to do spiritual work without the power of the Holy Spirit, to a workman without any fingers attempting to do manual labour! This doesn't overstate the facts! The Holy Spirit is not a luxury we can do without. The Holy Spirit is an imperative necessity. Only the eternal Holy Spirit can do eternal deeds.

There is another factor that we tend to take for granted – that it is possible to live for Christ, without having first died with Christ. The victorious believer knows two lives. The first life was his life in Adam which was motivated by a sinful, carnal mind – a mind that can never please God in any way. It can never be converted. It can only die. (Rom. 8:5-8)

The second life of the believer is his new life in Christ. (Rom. 6:1-14) To live a Christian life with only the life of Adam is wholly impossible. Yet many, many believers assume they can do this and go on year after year in defeat. Even worse, they accept this half dead condition as normal!

So for our souls' sake and for the sake of the ministry God has given us, let us guard against taking too much granted.

"Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God." Rom. 8:14