

Sunday School Address - Questions - Where are thou? (Quality: Good)

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Preacher: Dawson, Peter (1925-2014)

[0 : 00] it is now with pleasure I ask now my friend Mr Peter Dawson to address you Mr Dawson thank you Mr Chairman scholars and friends it is a privilege to stand here as I wrote to your pastor I thought it to be something which I ought to do and yet in my nature I was afraid of doing but as the Lord may be pleased to help me I will try to speak to you the older children will remember that when I have addressed the Sunday school I've had the privilege many times in past years that usually my address was centered around something which would bring it to memory in ordinary life so that we would look at something and then perhaps by the looking at something we would remember the things that had been spoken in a little measure I want to do so this afternoon but what I want to do is to talk to you about questions now I had children I have grandchildren and I find that most children and grandchildren go through a stage where they ask questions and perhaps the words that parents and teachers hear most often is the word why or where or what or with a question mark after it and we have questions don't we for several reasons be very brief on this but we must understand what questions are we ask questions to obtain information that's quite simple isn't it you ask because you want to know it is something which yes all of us have done and shall we put it like this all of us do and then you are asked questions not because the people that ask you questions want to know the answer but they want to know if you know the answer now when your teachers ask you questions whether in day school or Sunday school we know very well that the teachers know they know the answer but they ask you to see if you know the answer and that is the second sort of question and then the third sort of question becomes a little more difficult it is when the question is asked not that you shall say what the answer to it is but you shall begin to think and question in your own heart and mind what you could answer to it we all get questions like this and the questions I want to put to you this afternoon are three questions that God asked well he asked two questions of one but three people of whom God asked a question and in one case two questions and we want to think of those questions but in the manner of which I have spoke to you last to think could we answer the questions if they had been asked of us now there is one thing we need to think about just before we begin although I am addressing in the more particular sense of the scholars these questions were asked in every case of those who were adults in one case an elderly man another case a fairly young woman and in one case it is difficult to put an age on the person but we have to say that at least he was adult so we think of God asking questions doesn't it seem to us that one of whom we can say that he is nice long word called omniscient who knoweth all things does not need to ask any questions and so quite evidently when God questions it is so that we should question ourselves and we need to think as to if these questions had been asked of us what would we answer now the first question some of you may be able to tell me

I won't demand that you do but I think it is the second question that is given to us in the word of God the second question in the word of God the first question that we see that came from God to Adam can anybody tell me what that question was what did God say to Adam when Adam had sinned and Adam had hid himself as I said I won't demand an answer I know just how I used to feel when I was your age when I was asked a question which I could answer quite well immediately I dried up inside and I still have something of the same feeling nowadays and so I do understand now this first question I want to talk to you about is one that the Lord spake to Adam and he said where art thou where art thou the first question that was asked was oh much more one that we ought to think about but we shan't on this occasion but we need to think about it because it was a question that was asked wrongly it was when the devil said to Eve the serpent hath God said but then after that this question was asked now if I was to say to you where are you you would be able to say quite simply wouldn't you that you're sitting in chapel because it's an anniversary service and it is something which perhaps for the moment seems to be perfectly proper and ordinary and hardly requires a question or an answer we can think about it very simply but we need to think about it a little more than this where are we where are we this is to look within and this is for Adam to look within now you all know what Adam's answer was to this question he said

I hid myself didn't he I hid myself it was rather a peculiar answer to a direct question did you notice that when we sung our first hymn I was rather thankful that we did because in my notes I've got the verse written before me and it was something that gave me a little hope that yes the thoughts that I've been given were not altogether from my own heart but when we sang in our first hymn we had a thought given to us in the third verse if I could find some cave unknown where human feet had never trod yet there I would not be alone on every side there would be God and I began to think about this question and I thought of what David said and when he wrote what David wrote perhaps said it and wrote it in both senses of the word about 3,000 years later when he wrote that lovely psalm the 139th psalm and he said whither shall I go from thy spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence if I ascend up into heaven thou art there if I make my bed in hell literally in death behold thou art there and he was perfectly aware in his spirit that there was nowhere that he could hide from God and so if we were to answer that question with the in the spirit in which the question is asked what would we be able to answer would there be in our thoughts something like this

I hid myself or would by the help of God we be able to say that we like David felt to be although David felt it to be something that was both solemn and yet sacred in the presence of God now when we come into the Lord's house either on a time like this or on the Lord's day it is good and we stop to think where art thou and then we think of the promises that God has given to his people young as well as old but where they gather together to worship him there he will be and now can we answer the question again I said where are you you said you were sitting in chapel I said it for you you're sitting in chapel but now think of it like this we are in the presence of God how do we know firstly because he is everywhere secondly because he has promised that where his people gather he will gather and then we need to ask for something else we don't need to have

[10 : 45] Adam's feeling to try to hide we want that grace given that will give to us an awareness of the presence of God that we might know that he is near Adam heard his voice as the Lord called to him and many of us I think could say that when we have been in the house of God in the place of worship we too by the means that he is pleased to use have heard his voice so when we ask this question when we come into the Lord's house where are we remember the answer in the presence of God the second question I want to bring to you was a question that was asked of a lady called

Hagar now Hagar was Abraham's second wife and you have read the history it's a sad history and the time came when Sarah her mistress was so difficult with her that Hagar ran away she was both a servant and a secondary wife it was a very unhappy position to be in and when she ran away she did so simply because she just couldn't stand the situation any longer and then the angel of the Lord came to where she was and he asked her a double question Hagar whence comest thou and whither goest thou where have you come from and where are you going now she only partly answered the question she said that she had fled from her mistress

Sarah and that was as far as she went she didn't answer the question any far other than that then the angel of the Lord the messenger of the Lord told her to go back and he promised that there would be the care of God given to her and what she gained out of it was something that was really wonderful because she was brought into the understanding that the God of her master Abraham was her God and she came to a sudden and I think we can read the words as a joyful conclusion thou God seest me now because these two questions had been asked and then the direction had been given now leave Hagar and take the two questions whence comest thou and whither goest thou last night as I drove home from

Rye I began to think about this and I thought of a book I read I've read more than once but I haven't read it very recently a book perhaps you all know it was written by a man called John Bunyan and he spoke of a man called a pilgrim whose name was Christian and several times he was asked the same questions where have you come from and where are you going and he said I flee from the city of destruction and I go to Mount Zion and if we look in the word of God and if we look into the epistle to the Hebrews and we find in that lovely chapter in which Paul speaks of those who had gone in times past and he said these all died in faith not having received the promises having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims in the earth for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country and truly if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out they might have had opportunity to have returned but now they desire a better country that is an heavenly now my friends how do we look at that can we begin to say with Bunyan's pilgrim

I have fled from the city of destruction and I seek yes he was using figurative language Mount Zion he wanted that place where God dwelleth that place that was prepared for him now do we begin to look at our spiritual journey in such a way as this or it might seem that the spiritual journey has not travelled very far yet but has it begun every journey has a beginning and an ending even when you travel by road you have to start from somewhere to get to somewhere and you know when you're on the way because you're in the right road this is something that we can begin to think of in this question we may not know quite at your ages what it is to have left the city of destruction but do we know if our faces are toward the heavenly country it is something which we learn a little more of as we grow older and as we grow older we find more and more the necessity of the help that we need to be kept on this road and how do we know that we are travelling as

[17:15] Bunyan's pilgrim travelled along the Christian way along the way which is from the city of destruction even to Mount Zion now we need a very simple answer to this don't we rather difficult portion of the word of God for you to read and understand but just a little part out of it it is when we put our feet in the footsteps of the flock song of Solomon in the footsteps of the flock when we are able to be to go with the Lord's people it is then we can have that hope that the Lord is leading us in that way which is to himself in the footsteps of the flock now let's put that simply you want to travel that journey you feel the need to travel that journey then keep with the people that are travelling that journey those you can see those you can understand

I can remember when I was rather older than most of you sitting in these three seats that I listened to two good men talking one day and I thought I shall want to stay where these two men are because I know they've got that which I feel to need and if they were able to find it if I stay with them perhaps the Lord will help me to find it so when you think of this rather difficult question whence comest thou whither goest thou it is as if we were looking at a map and it has a start and a finish and then think of the road that is in between and be with those people that are on that road one more illustration do you remember Abraham's servant that went to find a wife for Isaac think of a prayer that the thing that he said yes it was an acknowledgement

I think it was a thanksgiving I being in the way the Lord met me and brought me to the house of my master's brethren may each one of you find that blessing thirdly briefly the last question that I'm going to bring to you was spoken to a very elderly man and he was a prophet and he had been wonderfully used of God and in God's use of him he had brought many people to realise that Israel's God was the only God and then he became frightened Jezebel a queen sent to Elijah a message and she said after that he had on Mount Carmel slain the prophets of Baal the Lord so do to me if I make not thy life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow and we read in the word of

God he went for his life and he went a long way I mustn't stop to work out how far it was now but he went and hid although he had been so wonderfully upheld of God he went and hid from this queen and then the Lord followed him and he said this is the question what doest thou here Elijah Elijah answered it obliquely he did not answer what he was doing there he said what he had been doing before he came there and the Lord drew him and brought him back to do the things that he was sent to do so that from doing that which he had done in fear he was brought again to do those things which were according to the will of God and now if we had to answer that question what would we be able to say about it we have thought of some of the words of the

Lord Jesus if the Lord Jesus had answered our last two questions he would have said I came from God and I go to God if the Lord Jesus had answered the question that was asked to Elijah he would have said I delight to do thy will oh my God if it had been a sermon and there had been a time to work it out I would have brought rather more of that in but now what do we know about what doest thou hear don't know what it is to do to want to do to aspire to do that which is the will of God now lastly I must be very brief about it do not think for a moment that when God asked these questions that in any case in either case it was in a sense of severity now you notice that for

[22 : 51] Adam it was to bring Adam to know what he had done and to bring him on the path which was to be the path of his future life to know that he could not hide from God for Hagar it was for return and for a conscious realisation that God was with her even in her difficult circumstances for Elijah it was to bring him again into that which was according to the will of God and in every case when the Lord speaks to his people he speaks to them because there is a love in his heart toward them and it is in the expression of that love that he makes known his will to them so when we hear the voice of God if it has to be in correction it is in love if it has to be in guidance it is in love and when it brings us into conformity to his will it is an expression of his love to us may the

Lord help you whenever you have this thought of a question come into your mind at times to think of these questions and then to think where you are