

Of bells and pomegranates in God's service

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[0 : 00] I'm going to ask you to turn to the book of Exodus. And the 28th chapter, we will look particularly this evening at the 33rd and 34th verses.

Exodus chapter 28, verses 33 and 34. And to get the context, I'll read from verse 31 through to the end of 35.

Verse 31 in the 28th of Exodus reads, And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue, and there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof.

It shall have a binding of woven work round about the whole of it, as it were the whole of an haberdashery, that it be not rent.

And beneath, upon the hem of it, thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof, and bells of gold, between them round about, a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about.

[1 : 38] And it shall be upon Aaron to minister, and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the Lord, and when he cometh out, that he die not.

Most have been here this morning and will recall our reference to the woman with the issue and how she heard of Jesus and pressed through the crowd, ultimately to satisfy the exercise of God-given faith that she may touch Christ's clothes.

And especially in one part of the triple record, it says, the hem of his garment. If I can but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made perfectly whole.

Now, my friends, I feel that that record directs our thoughts to our high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom Aaron was a type.

But Aaron was clothed explicitly by the direction of heaven. He wasn't dressed as men decided he should be dressed.

[3 : 18] He was dressed as God directed that he must be dressed. And it's a wonderful thing, really, to look more deeply into the attire of the priesthood to appreciate how God directed explicitly certain things to fit certain places in the garments and in the jewelry, etc., of the priests that served him in the tabernacle.

Now, my concentration of thought this evening is particularly concerning the hem of the garment. I read in Matthew 14 purposely those last few verses, And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about and brought unto him all that were diseased and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

Now, shouldn't that excite in our hearts? A desire to reach forth in the hope, and according to the promised testimony of Scripture, that if we're favored to touch the hem of Christ's garment, our sin-sick state by nature will be perfectly remedied.

Hear the word again. And as many as touched were made perfectly whole. A good woman, she echoes the same sentiment, If I may touch, but the hem of his clothes, I shall be made whole.

And I'm saying to you in the spiritual context of my teaching this evening, if you and I, dear friends, are favored by precious faith to stretch forth our hands and touch even the hem of Christ's garment, we shall be fitted for heaven.

[5 : 41] There is virtue in the Son of God to save, and to save uttermost sinners to the uttermost. We, I was going to say, waste our time to a degree in certain aspects of Christian practice.

But, oh, my friends, we need that spiritual concern and exercise to come into personal contact with the Son of God, which is by the Spirit known, which is in the exercise of faith fulfilled.

And there is such a thing as being able to say, my sins, which are many, are all forgiven me. I remember a dear old saint, a minister in my youth or years, and I was very, very attached to him because the Lord used him in my experience with respect to deliverance in the gospel.

It was Mr. Urgrace, some of the friends here may remember him, an old miner, 47 years at the coal face in Lancashire, and Yorkshire rather, Osset, Yorkshire.

And he said this to me when he heard I was preaching. He said, Harold, dear lad, he said, never, never put your people down short of the assurance of salvation.

[7 : 15] My friends, we need the assurance of salvation. Oh, it must be a sad thing to die amidst multiplied questions.

Am I his? Or am I not? It's a great thing to come to lay our heads upon our dying pillow saying, my beloved is mine and I am his.

And you'll find then dying to be one of the easiest experiences you've ever had on this earth. Well now, let's come to the subject.

The hem of the garment and the directive of the Lord given concerning this is, And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, purple, scarlet round about the hem thereof and bells of gold between them round about.

A golden bell and a pomegranate. A golden bell and a pomegranate. One next to the other all round the hem of the garment of the priest.

[8 : 33] when he went into the holy place in representation of the children of Israel.

Now this is a very significant situation. A bell and a pomegranate. I'm going to give you the general line and then I'll try and break it down a little and apply it in an experimental fashion.

Now, you all know what a bell is, don't you? A sounding bell makes, we might say, a noise.

It strikes a note, doesn't it? And it's wonderful how it can be heard. I've been on holiday with our church in Wales and the meals at breakfast time were called together by the ringing of a handbell.

And you know, the ringing of that handbell could be heard almost through the whole place as the call to breakfast reached our ears.

[9 : 45] A bell is a wonderful instrument for sounding aloud, if I may put it like that. Well now, that's one aspect and the other thing is the pomegranate.

You surely have seen at some time in your life a pomegranate. If you've ever moved the skin, the close covering round the fruit, you'll find that right underneath the skin are seeds, multitudes of seeds packed in as tight as could be under the outside of what appears to be almost a leathern covering.

I'm going to speak to you this evening about the signification of those two things. Sound and fruitfulness.

sound and fruitfulness. A pomegranate is a wonderful illustration of multiplied fruitfulness.

Most fruits have got a few seeds somewhere in the center of them that give promise of continuance as they may fall and be set in the ground.

[11 : 11] But when we come to a pomegranate it's absolutely packed with the promise of succession. A bell and a pomegranate a bell and a pomegranate round the hem of the garment.

And you know the hem of the garment indicates to us nearness to the ground. not not actually to be rubbing along the ground but just to be lifted up.

A measure from the ground surface that preserves a certain amount of cleanliness in the movement of the person wearing the ephod if you like.

And as that man moves about in the fulfillment of his office as the priest his bells ring and together with the bells there's a continual reminder of the fruitfulness of the pomegranate.

Now those that I read of in Matthew 14 and those that record the recordings of the good woman who was troubled with the issue for 12 years they were brought to appreciate the signification set forth that the the hem is not on the earth it's near to the earth but there's a separation and the fact of the narrow separation that exists between the hem of the garment and the ground itself allows as it were the bells to function and also indicates the great value of fruitfulness now let me just put it to you like this initially

[13 : 27] I'm going first of all to introduce our Lord Jesus Christ he was the one in the flesh that was obviously showing forth the principles to which I refer and as he went about doing good it wasn't in a silent way was it Christ's public life as exercised in those three years of the 33 was very very noisy in a sense as we have the records of the wonderful miracles that he wrought wonderful exercise of compassion and pity that he showed forth he was in all ways fruitful bringing forth fruit to the glory of his father and also there were the bells ringing that the people round about could hear and realize in some good measure many of them that he was more than another man he was the god man sent forth of the father to bring grace and peace and forgiveness to the human race here below a bell and a pomegranate a bell and a pomegranate and Jesus as it were is the perfect illustration of the principle and the priests as they fulfilled their office in the function of the

Old Testament ritual they were types of Jesus Christ and the people that could hear realize the benefit of having one authorized by God himself to enter into the holy place but when he went into the holy place it was not silence the bells rang as he did his work the bells rang there was as it were a call to attention from the multitude that such and one was doing God's service in the serving of mankind and then also look at the fruitfulness of the work of Christ oh he was the pomegranate indeed was he not as he went about doing good continually exercising his sovereign prerogative to give sight to the blind to give hearing to the deaf to give lepers cleansing to give palsied people strength to rise again from their bedded position and condition you see my friends

Christ the history of Christ is typified by the fruitfulness contained in the creation if you like of this particular fruit the pomegranate that is so made as to illustrate the wonderful work an exercise of the Lord Jesus Christ in practical ways necessary to mankind now a bell and a pomegranate a bell and a pomegranate you know there is a sense in which the Christian church identifies with this teaching let me look first of all at the ministry of the gospel ministers are anointed of God to go forth and declare the whole counsel of

God warning every man teaching every man that we may present every man perfect in the sight of the Lord you know it's a great responsibility but it is our prerogative under God to show the way of salvation to as it were sound the bell that this is how sinners are saved there's no alternative everything alternatively would not rise to the type that the bell is to sound as the servants of God go about declaring the word of the Lord as the Lord gives them to preach a bell and a pomegranate and a pomegranate how needful it is to attend in ministering not just to the sounding forth of the doctrine of Christ in that way that well wash and be clean all you want to do is as it were believe in

Jesus Christ and that is Christianity in the full application of it my friends they're the fruits of the spirit they're those things which salvation brought into our hearts by the grace and goodness and free mercy of God gives to us as it were a necessity of fulfilling our ordained position the Lord says in his word very plainly with respect to the identity of the church of God those whom God is sanctifying and ultimately will justify to the eternal security of their immortal by their fruit she shall know them they're not a people no they're typified by the pomegranate they live near the world but they're not of the world there is a distinction you may say well it's only it's a very small distinction yes but it's a very powerful distinction they're not of the world even as he is not of the world you know we are to show forth in our ministry the practical necessity of the fear of

[20 : 53] God in the application of our lives to the things we are to attend to those responsibilities we are to carry and those duties we must sustain we are the servants of God and my friends ye are in that sense the servants of God to put into practice the application of the principle you're not your own but you're bought with a price there is something different between a Christian and a non-Christian and if there is not you might question the reality of those who profess to be Christians for I repeat it's by their fruit she shall know them do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles you know Christians a different person from a non-Christian and it's sad if that distinction is not identifiable by the fact that our lives are consistent with the nature of the pomegranate the fear of the

Lord is a preservative from evils within and evils without in so far as God by his spirit leads us and teaches us and keeps our hearts tender in his holy fear a bell and a pomegranate yes Jesus Christ is the perfect example he went about doing good he never gave license to anybody justly to criticize anything he said or did he was holy he was harmless he was undefiled he was separate from sinners christ was in the world but not of the world my friends we are in our humble measure and I emphasize that word humble particularly we in our humble position are called to walk in the ways of the

Lord you know to use modern expressions we have role models don't we spoken of in regard to people who seek to emulate a sportsman or an actor or one of these people that are in the world and promoting the cause of the world we are our role model is Jesus Christ he's our pure example he should raise in our hearts a question when circumstances arise what would the Lord have done in this situation what is right in the sight of God with respect to my reaction to such a provocation fruits fruits fruits and a

Christian's life is a pomegranate in that sense it's the fruits of a sanctified heart and life are Christ like I'm not going to suggest that there's anybody that can come up to the standard but the grace of God in our hearts inclines to the standard of holiness purity honesty clean living doesn't it well now in the border of the garden the dear woman didn't have to stretch very high I was going to say to get above the earth to touch the one who was sufficient to deliver her absolutely from that plague my friends some would say well the standard of

Christianity is so high that it's beyond reasonable attainment by the grace of God it's attainable by the grace of God it's attainable and it's a wonderful thing if God so seals upon our hearts a sense of the sufficiency of divine grace that when we examine ourselves and see we're falling short we should be in trouble and should be seeking a restoration of that grace that enables us to walk in the fear of the Lord and do those things which are pleasurable in his sight when I was a boy we had a wonderful body of deacons at Coventry and those men and their fruitfulness and their sounding of bells that we could recognize they were godly people they were godly people and to me

[26 : 57] I often reflect over the years and think back upon the living testimony of the saints with whom I was favored in my earlier days to be a member of the same church because they were living examples of they weren't perfect people oh no no I don't rise to suggest to you that they attained to such a height of purity and sinlessness that you could never fault them but there was a burden in their spirit to be right with God there was a burden in their spirit to be walking in the ways of God they not only read their bible as a historical book they read it as a preceptive directive of how they should conduct themselves how they should live how they should walk how they should react a bell and a pomegranate a bell and a pomegranate you know the bell sounds you say marvel not my the Lord says marvel not my brethren if the world hate you it hated me and the world will hear if your bell is sounding if you're doing those things which please the

Lord there'll be sometimes when the world show their attitude to Christ and to all godliness marvel not my brethren if the world hates you and it's hateful to be hated isn't it hateful but my friends there is such a thing as suffering for Christ's sake there is something something in taking up your cross and following the master there is such a thing as speaking to the world as additional to the church that we have the fear of God there are things which we can't do there are things which we won't do if we were free as it were to join hands and go in the broad way well we couldn't be constrained to follow because of the principle that God has given to us in our own hearts a bell and a pomegranate it seems to me to be manifest in the priesthood of Christ he fulfilled his responsibilities to his father and to his church he sounded forth clearly things that were right as opposed to things that were wrong never did he deviate for any reason at all

I do always those things which please my father he says oh how wonderful is the life of the saviour when you think of the antagonisms the awful hatred and opposition that he received from professor as well as profane as he lived out his life in the will of God here below now ultimately the value they put upon him was thirty pieces of silver and sold him to the death of the cross a bell and a pomegranate a bell and a pomegranate the lord by his grace brings his people into the experience of kingship and priesthood he gives them power to overcome their adversaries as kings have power to exercise and the lord by his grace and under the influences of spirit doesn't allow his people to succumb to contrary pressures from whatever evil quarter those pressures may arise we have the fight of faith we have the warfare of christianity to exercise and in so doing we sound forth the bell and we make manifest the fruitfulness of the indwelling of the spirit in our hearts now the lord jesus christ he never was guilty of contaminating anybody with a wrong spirit never showed anybody the slightest deviation from the right path i've often said we were true disciples of the lord jesus christ by his grace our lives would be pure but we can entirely put our confidence in that which the lord says and that which the lord does and we have as i've already inferred through the scriptures the truth as it is in jesus proclaimed old testament new testament the gospels the epistles the prophecies of old testament scripture all have their influence in maintaining the church in a wise and gracious profession of the name of the lord now

what does the lord say he says follow me follow me let the bell sound let the fruitfulness of the principle of discipleship be in evidence don't attempt in any way to deviate to minimize as it were the potential troubles into which you run by a consistency of life and testimony before the world and do not cause any grief or sorrow within the professing church because of the inconsistencies of your life with the profession of the lord which you make let the bell and the pomegranate sound forth bring forth those fruits unto godliness which commend us as men and women and children of the lord that we're not of this world we're strangers and foreigners here below we're citizens of a better country where the lord is we expect and hope to be forever and ever in the eternal hereafter my friends how sad if our testimony as before the world indicates that we're more at home with the world than we are with the lord's people more at home following the way of the lord than following the teaching and example of the lord himself i put this before you this evening as a heart searching consideration none of us can say with regard to those that incline the sick and afflicted in matthew 14 that those that directed as it were those in sickness and suffering to christ for comfort for christ for healing laboratory pour the rich are the ■■■ and some rich people and many poor people for it is the poor

generally speaking that have the gospel preached to them. A bell and a pomegranate.

[38 : 30] It sounds, it's not silence. A good profession in the steps of Jesus Christ and as priests unto God sanctified by the Spirit of God made real Christians it sounds you can't maintain that profession in silence it will find its expression you'll come into circumstances where you're bound to take a stand on the side of principle so did not I because of the fear of the Lord how shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God and when you come against it you'll know which way you've got to take if grace reigns in your heart you'll have to carry the cross and leave the issues in the hands of the Lord himself and I'll tell you this those that suffer those that suffer for the principles of godliness never finally lose the Lord's favour is toward those that fear him the Lord's power is exercised that those that suffer shall ultimately obtain the victory now

Abel and the Pomegranate have you got the principle have you got the necessity of seeing in Jesus Christ the perfect example he went about doing he ministered ministered in so many in various ways to the relief of people in trouble in trial and all he did was consistent with the will of his father and for the glory of the Lord then my friends how sweetly it is written never man spake like this man you've got a pure standard you've got an absolutely clear testimony of that which is right to be done keep your eye on the Lord seek to be a follower of Jesus Christ let not as it were the oppositions of the world deter you in pursuing that time honoured path according to

God's grace he will give grace and glory no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly I hope that which sprung out of the woman with the issue as a principle of Christianity I hope I've been enabled to make plain the recurring necessity generation by generation in real Christianity of as it were sounding forth publicly oh you can't fear God and live in a corner time will come when you've got to come out and make known your heart's direction and the time will come when then that honour me I will honour the Lord will acknowledge your profession of his name with his blessing and that measure of prosperity in your soul which will make amends more than amends for any sacrifice that you have suffered may the Lord bless these few scattered remarks for his name's sake

Amen