

Coach House Church BEACONS

DEVOTED

28TH SEPTEMBER 2020

This lady, Anna, is only mentioned once in the Gospels, in these three verses. It is clear from this passage that she was entirely devoted to God. We are told that she was 84 years old and that she had only been married for seven years from her youth and then her husband had died; she had been a widow for 77 years by this time. (Though in some readings she was widowed for 84 years, meaning she might have been over 100 years old by this time.)

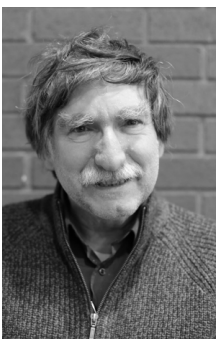
She reminds me of two elderly ladies that I knew in my first church fellowship back in the 1970s. They were of the First World War generation. One of them, Mrs C, was a quiet lady, who once shared with me that she had only been married for two weeks, during that tragic period, because her husband had been killed on the Western Front. She had remained a widow from that time on, but she was devoted to the Lord, and she was always faithful in her attendance at the fellowship. The other was Miss O, she was a spinster of that generation and she had a lively enthusiasm for the Lord! Both these dear ladies are with the Lord now, as is Anna! To be honest, when I first read this brief account of Anna years ago, I thought that life for her must have awfully dull! All she did was live in the Temple and fast and pray. But I think all her heart was captivated by God. We're not told if she had any family – maybe she didn't. We're told that she was a prophetess. This means that she would have been a spokeswoman for God. Maybe people who were seeking God came to her for advice and wisdom from God. She would have known God's heart and mind on so many things. This comes as result of spending time with God. The more you get to know Him the more He take you into His confidence. She was certainly aware of whom the young baby boy was who had been brought to the Temple – a knowledge shared by the elderly devoted saint, Simeon. And she shared this knowledge with other godly people.

She had used her life to draw near to God, and God had drawn near to her. James advises us to do this in his letter (James 4:8). We also see this in 2 Chronicles 15, where people are encouraged to seek the Lord, and when they do, they find Him. Jesus echoed this in the Sermon on the Mount.

I think it takes discipline and determination to seek God. I don't think it comes naturally to us. Like Adam, we're more inclined to evade Him than to seek Him. And then there's the pull of things in this life that do their best to absorb our attention. This world is very much in our faces and seeking God is something we must deliberately decide to do. We must make a determined effort to seek Him. Anna had been seeking God and His salvation all her life, and like Simeon, she probably hadn't known that the Messiah had been born until He was brought to the Temple; at which point the Holy Spirit would have told her. Imagine the excitement she would have felt! The Lord has shared this with her and Simeon because they feared God, and the secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him (Psalm 25:14). I think the only people who knew of Messiah's birth up to that point were Elizabeth and Zachariah and the shepherds near to Bethlehem; though according to Luke the shepherds told others, but they may not have been believed. (The Magi turned up about two years later and this is when Herod found out too.) So, keeping close to God means that He is likely to share things with you. We're told that Anna fasted. I must admit this isn't something I've done a lot of, though I have done it. There were times at work when I would skip lunch and use the time to pray. It was important in biblical times: I can't see it being less important now.

This is a subject - prayer and fasting - that needs to be revisited I believe. But for Anna it helped her with seeking God. I think it must be to do with self-denial. Anna is an example to us of earnestly seeking God, of fellowshiping and walking with Him. Our lives are most likely very much more involved than hers was, but we need to make the effort to pursue our walk with God in our different circumstance, and to be seriously committed to Him just as Anna was.

Amen



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