

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

For reply: Email: [truthfortoday@aol.com](mailto:truthfortoday@aol.com)

**Broadcast Date:** 7 June 2015

**No.** T0888

**Speaker:** Mr. Gordon Kell

## Four things little and wise: The spider - the hope of the believer: the Father's house

I used to teach a short series on the Tabernacle at a Bible College and became known as the "Tabernacle Man". Today, as we come to the last of the four creatures in Proverbs 30:24-28, namely the spider, I may get a new nickname - "Spiderman"!

To complicate things, "spider", has been translated more recently as "lizard", but for the purposes of this morning's talk I am going stay with the traditional translation and base my comments on the spider.

Our short section in Proverbs is about small creatures which are exceedingly wise, and the spider is the last to be mentioned. Here is our passage: *"There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise: The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer; The rock badgers are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the crags; The locusts have no king, yet they all advance in ranks; The spider skillfully grasps with its hands, and it is in kings' palaces"* (Proverbs 30:24-28).

In our series the ants' skill at preparation has been looked at as a reminder to prepare to meet God. The coney, or rock badger, has the ability to make a home in the rocks and this has been used as a reminder of finding refuge in Christ our rock. The way the locusts gather together has been used as an illustration of fellowship.

Today we are going to look at spiders being present in kings' palaces as a simple illustration of the hope of the believer - the Father's house.

I should say at the outset that spiders are not mentioned in the best light when they are referred to in two other passages in the Old Testament.

In Job 8:13-15 we read: *"So are the paths of all who forget God; and the hope of the hypocrite shall perish, whose confidence shall be cut off, and whose trust is a spider's web. He leans on his house, but it does not stand. He holds it fast, but it does not endure."*

And again in Isaiah 59:4-6: *"No one calls for justice, nor does any plead for truth. They trust in empty words and speak lies; they conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, and from that which is crushed a viper breaks out. Their webs will not become garments, Nor will they cover themselves with their works; Their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands."*

Over the years I have become careful over the way I interpret Scripture and cautious about taking typology too far. But what I am convinced of is the way sometimes very small references can be helpful in reminding us of spiritual blessings and helpful for us to understand these blessing more clearly. I like to think of Scripture as the great masterpiece of God which overwhelms us with His glory, grace and love. But the longer we look at this spiritual painting the more we appreciate the tiniest of brushstrokes which make up the brilliance of the work.

The scale of the Bible is immense and its depths profound. Sometimes God tells us much and at other times little. Sometimes He teaches us by simply telling us clearly what He has done and what He wants us to do. At other times, He teaches us through the visions, the parables, the examples from life and nature recorded in the Bible.

It is the natural world we are looking at this morning and we find some surprises. My secular work has to do with the natural environment and its conservation. One aspect of this work is the protection of migratory birds and their habitats. The interest of people in beautiful birds is widespread, but I also work in connection with other creatures. One of these is the lamprey, an extraordinary fish which is so ugly only its mother would love it!

The passage we are looking at this morning is not a list of celebrity animals. If we had been writing Proverbs 30:24-28 we might have included the lion or the tiger or the gazelle. But God through His Holy Spirit directs Agur to choose the ant, the rock badger, the locust and the spider, and none of which particularly attractive and some repugnant. Ants like all insects are not widely liked, the rock badger is an unclean animal to the Jews, the locust is a destroyer of crops

and the spider is a creature most would recoil from. Yet these unusual creatures have two things in common: they are small and exceedingly wise.

Smallness is fascinating. The earth, when compared to the vastness of the universe, is tiny. But when you compare the earth to other observed planets it is staggeringly more complex.

God teaches us through the smallness and weakness of things. In fact, He constantly affirms His love in these ways. The greatest example of this is Christ Himself. He brings about salvation by becoming small and through smallness God enters His creation as a tiny child (see Matthew 1:18-2:15, Luke 1:26-38, 2:1-20).

This theme can be traced throughout the Old Testament. For example, the Passover lamb was small; when Samuel was used to revive Israel in 1 Samuel 7:9 he took a suckling lamb; when David killed Goliath it was the small shepherd conquering the great giant (see 1 Samuel 17:1-58). God's interventions through those who appear small and weak are emphasised again and again by people like Noah, Joseph, Moses, Gideon, Samuel, David, Daniel and Esther. When Elisha raises the Shunammite's son in 2 Kings 4:34 he stretches himself upon the child. In other words, he made himself the size of the child. A wonderful reminder of how Christ used His power to make Himself small! In the book of Jonah God starts by using a great wind (Jonah 1:4) and a great fish (Jonah 1:17), but then prepares a tiny worm (Jonah 4:7) to teach the wayward prophet.

The Lord Jesus asks us to consider tiny plants, sparrows falling to the ground (like 12:6), hair falling from our heads (Luke 12:7). He asks us to learn from children. He teaches us to be humble. The word humble originates from the Latin "humilis" meaning "low" or "lowly" and "humus" meaning "ground".

So smallness is often the means by which God teaches us spiritual lessons.

But smallness has also to do with what is insignificant and powerless. How many times do people kill without thought an insect or a spider simply because they dislike them? My wife has her own spider protection scheme. If she finds one in the house, she gets an empty glass and uses it to trap the spider, then slowly slides a piece of card under the glass and transports the creature safely to the garden. So you see our family has a soft spot for these tiny creatures. Of course we might revise our capture strategy if faced with a tarantula - although Lincolnshire is not well known for this species!

Tininess before God is not something we should overlook. David has a sense of this when he writes prophetically of the Messiah in Psalm 22:6: *"But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people."*

In Ephesians 2:11-13, Paul writes, *"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."*

In this passage he reminds his readers of the distance which existed between them and God, but through Christ they were *"brought near"* (Ephesians 2:13)

This theme of distance and nearness is addressed in the three stories told by the Lord Jesus in Luke 15. The first two stories explain how the shepherd (Luke 15:1-7), a picture of the Lord Jesus, and the woman (Luke 15:8-10), an illustration of the Holy Spirit's work, recover the lost sheep and the lost coin (Luke 15:11-32). The final story is of the lost son. In this story it is the son who makes the journey home and discovers his father was waiting for his return, and when he was still a great way off runs to receive him (Luke 15:20).

This final story is an illustration of the love of God the Father and describes not only the way in which God through the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit searches for us, but also the creation of a desire to return to God in spite of our lost condition. The prodigal was in a desperate state and a long way from the Father's house, but he takes the journey home.

We can see parallels in the illustration of the spider. This tiny creature, repugnant to the vast majority of people, has nothing to commend it to a place in a king's palace. Most people, including my wife, would find it a place outside our home. This is the implication of the first part of our passage in Proverbs. 30:24-28 The creatures are small and have very unattractive features.

The second point is that they are "exceedingly" wise. By coincidence we were reading Psalm 14 at home a few weeks ago. It starts with the words, *"The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"* (Psalm 14:1)

The opposite of foolishness is wisdom and the second aspect of our passage in Proverbs is that each of the creatures is *"exceedingly wise"*. It is interesting that the writer does not write simply that the creatures were wise, but **exceedingly** wise. The exceeding wisdom of the spider was displayed in that it *"skilfully grasps with its hands"*, which enabled it to live in kings' palaces. Here the writer is referring to the spider's web-making ability.

When we think of our relationship with God, we understand this is based on who God is and what He has done. Linked to this is our grasp by faith of God's complete salvation. This salvation has three well-known aspects: God saves us from the penalty of sin, the power of sin and the presence of sin. This relates to the past, the present and the future. It can also be related to the three themes of Christianity: love, faith and hope. The love of Christ in giving Himself for us, our present faith in our risen, ascended and glorified Saviour, and our hope in Christ's return and ultimately dwelling in the Father's house.

Spiders produce silk from their spinneret glands. The tensile strength of spider silk is greater than the same weight of steel and has much greater elasticity. To create a web a spider will produce a fine adhesive thread which is allowed to drift on a breeze to become attached to the place around which the spider wants to build its web. From this single connecting thread it gradually forms its web.

You can see the similarities to faith in this natural process. Faith reaches out to God and, once the connection is made, the faith continues to grow and develop. Think of the woman in Mark 5:21-43, who was diseased for 12 years (Mark 5:25). She approaches Jesus and simply touches His cloak (Mark 5:27). That simple act of faith led not only to her healing but the subsequent development of her faith in Christ. Think of the desperate father in Mark 9:24, crying out, *"Lord I believe; help my unbelief."* Think of blind Bartimaeus calling out, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me"* (see Mark 10:47). To the onlooker these were insignificant, small people, but people who were exceedingly wise in faith. They cast, as it were, that simple thread of faith in Christ and it released the compassion and love God.

As with the spider's web, faith also weaves a beautiful connection with God and His people. Interestingly, spiders will occasionally spin webs together. Such a web was reported in 2007 at Lake Tawakoni State Park in Texas and measured 180 metres across - a vivid illustration of our fellowship of faith.

But the final point being made by Agur in Proverbs 30:28 is that the spider is found in kings' palaces.

Faith has an end in view. We won't need faith in heaven - and, of course, hope is fulfilled. This hope is explained by Jesus in John 14:1-3: *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also."*

Jesus adds to this in John 17:24: *"Father, I desire that they also whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me; for you loved me before the foundation of the world."*

In his great chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13, Paul draws the great themes of love, faith and hope together. In 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 he writes: *Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Then in 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 he writes about the hope which love will fulfil: *"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

Finally, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 to the end, Paul describes the circumstances of the coming fulfilment of the Christian hope when all the redeemed are brought by the Lord Jesus into the Father's house (as promised in John 14:1-3): *"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."*

A spider can simply walk, or use its silk, to reach otherwise inaccessible places and can even travel, sometimes miles, by "ballooning", using a strand of spider silk to catch a breeze. But what impressed Agur was that spiders were found

in kings' palaces (Proverbs 30:28). This tiny and un-liked creature used its gift to live where others could only dream of living.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:8, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."*

By this remarkable gift of faith we are enabled, not only to trust Christ for salvation and be empowered to live for Him day by day, but to have the certain hope of one day with all the saints to be taken into the Father's house by Jesus Christ.

This hope is not simply a future prospect but a present reality. John, who writes about the Father house in John 14, also wrote in his first epistle: *"Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure"* (1 John 3:2-3)

The Christian's hope has a present effect in our lives and enables us to live closer to the Saviour.

The next time you see a spider, reflect on the distance out of which God's love has brought you, the living faith He has established in your heart and the eternal hope you possess.

*"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."* (Psalm 23:6)

---

**Please Note:**

We encourage you to use this transcript for your personal or group Bible studies. This material should not, however, be used in any publications without the express permission from Truth for Today, whose contact details can be found on page 1. Large Print copies of this document are also available upon request.