

Bailey
10/13/64
AM

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10/17/64
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Made Strong for Life's Battle

Scripture Lesson: - 1 Kings 20: 13-23.

Text: - 1 Kings 20: 22. "And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest."

Introduction: - Israel had just been at war with Syria, and had come off victorious. Naturally they were feeling very happy and triumphant and were congratulating themselves on their success. Then it was that God sent his prophet to the king of Israel with this sobering message. This was a call to wisdom. The king was reminded that life was before him, and that life was a struggle, and that because he had won this victory, he was not to take it for granted that he could live carelessly as though he had no enemies. A still greater struggle was ahead of him, and unless he strengthened himself by careful preparation, he was sure to meet defeat.

I.

This is the message which God sends to every man & woman today. It should come to the Christian with great emphasis. Perhaps you have had a great spiritual victory. God has been blessing you in a marvelous way. Through his grace you have been able to overcome all temptations and you are congratulating yourself upon the triumphs of your recent Christian life. Old temptations that used to grip you with great power are now losing their grip. Old appetites and passions that were formerly your master are coming under your feet, and it is right that you should thank God for it and rejoice. Nevertheless I come to you in the midst of your congratulation and say unto you, "Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest", for on a day when you are not looking for it, at a time when you are least expecting it, the enemy, Satan, the Devil, will come against you and unless you have made yourself strong for life's battle, you will be overcome.

Let us look at an old testament character as an ex-

ample. God had given David many victories. He had rescued him from the lion and the bear. He gave him strength to slay Goliath. He had given his deliverance from the envy and hatred of Saul. In times almost without number, he had intervened in David's behalf. He had given him great spiritual insight which is revealed in the book of Psalms; psalms written in the wilderness and in mountain caves and on desolate crags in the hills, still are high in the religious poetry of today. But it was after all that after David had congratulated himself a thousand times on the victories which God had given him, that Satan came against him with a new temptation, a temptation unexpected and insidious, which led him into a sin so terrible that he came near losing his soul.

After Peter had had many victories and marks of the signal love of Jesus; after he had been on the Mount of Transfiguration and had been permitted to look on the inner glory of the Son of God; after he had been chosen to go into the garden of Gethsemane and witness the supreme agony of the atoning love; after he had sworn that though all men should forsake Jesus he would remain faithful; it was after all of this that Peter assaulted unexpectedly by Satan, was overcome and denied his Lord.

So, my dear friend, it behooves every one of us to be very humble. There will be no place in the whole journey of life where any one of us will be justified in being self-complacent or proud, or where we may imagine that we are able to walk for a single day, or for a single hour, without the grace of God. Has God blessed you? Then thank God and take courage; but strengthen yourself and look carefully to your steps. Until you are safe in heaven you may be sure that Satan will not cease to war against your soul.

II.

But if the sincere Christian needs to be exhorted to constant watchfulness lest he fall into temptation and his strength be overcome, how much more appropriate is this message to those who have been living without God and without hope in the world.

Do you know what a sinner can do to strengthen himself so he may be sure of victory in the struggles of life which are before him. There is but one way for a sinner to intrench himself in the strength of God. No man is ever safe who has left God out of his life, and no man is ever in danger who has God in his life. The promise is plain that, "if we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We cannot fight God; we cannot make compromises with God; there is just one way, we can surrender unconditionally at the mercy seat. We have God's promise that if we surrender, and ask him, in the name of Jesus Christ who died on the cross as an atonement for our sins, He will have mercy upon us and forgive us, giving to us a full and complete pardon. Not only so, He will give us the witness in our own hearts that we are forgiven, and we may live in the sweet consciousness that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The strongest saint in the world is not stronger than the weakest new convert who relies with perfect humility and confidence on the atonement of Jesus.

III.

Some of you may be pursued by the devil who marshals your old temptations and whispers in your ear that it is only a temporary thing to be free of the temptations which do beset you in times past. He is telling you that some day when you are off your guard the old appetite, the old passion, the old lust will come back and that you will fall under the heels of the sin that in the past so cruelly best you. I want to assure you, that no matter how weak you have been, how shamefully your sins have triumphed over you, so long as you prayerfully, reverently, but confidently trust God and rest in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ for your salvation, you will be stronger than all the hosts of evil that can come against you. God never turned over a poor sinner saved by grace to be torn by the hungry wolves of his past sins. Trust in God. Trust Jesus Christ. Obey him and nothing can harm you.

Conclusion:- Jesus Christ will never fail one who will trust in Him. He is both the God of the hills and the valleys. He will be with you on the high, breezy hills of prosperity, and he will go down with you into the deep, dark valleys. He will not leave you, but his rod and his staff will be your comfort and bring you to eternal peace.