

A SUMMONS TO BATTLE NO. 895

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, OCTOBER 10, 1869
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“The time when kings go forth to battle.”
2 Samuel 11:1*

THERE seems to have been in the olden times, among the petty sovereigns of the East, regular seasons for warfare. Perhaps they marched forth in the spring, when the grass would afford food for their horses, or possibly in the autumn, when the troops could forage upon the standing crops. These sovereigns of small territories were little better than the captains of hordes of robbers and their revenues were rather derived from plunder than from legitimate taxation.

We may thank God that we live in a happier era, for the miseries of nations were then beyond imagination. Desolating as war now is, its evils are comparatively little compared with those days of perpetual plunder.

There are times when kings go forth to battle now. They will be at their accursed trade when they think that their people will tolerate another oppressive tax or when their credit is good enough for their bankers to make them another advance. Alas, the blood which has been poured forth to gratify the ambition of princes!

Yet it is ever cause for thankfulness that the times when kings go forth to battle are not left altogether to their whim and caprice. There is One who reigns in the highest heavens who suffers not this plague to break forth among the sons of men, except in His wisdom He ordains that good shall come of it. The Lord holds back the dogs of war with a leash and looses them not except when His superior wisdom sees it should be so.

But I am not about to talk of kings. Very few of them are good enough to talk of on a Sunday and the most of them are scarcely worth talking of at any time. I must transfer the text to some other and more practical use.

There is a time in our hearts when the inner warfare rages with unusual violence. At certain seasons our corruptions break forth with extreme violence, and if for a while they appear to have formed a truce with us or to have lost their power, we suddenly find them full of vigor, fierce, and terrible—and difficult will be the struggle for us, by prayer and holy watchfulness, to keep ourselves from becoming slaves to our inward enemies. May we have increased grace given us in these trying seasons.

I believe you have, most of you, found that there are seasons when kings go forth to battle in the matter of your doubts and fears. Depressions come upon you, you scarcely know why. They come without apparent cause and they depart almost as unexpectedly. As John Bunyan says of the Slough of Despond, that at certain seasons it pours forth its mire most horribly, so I have found it with regard to despondence, and feebleness of faith. At certain times these tyrants make havoc in our souls.

So is it with Satan. He does not always tempt. Though always “going about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” he does not always roar, neither does he every moment leap upon his prey. He is always ready to destroy, but does not always find the opportunity for attack.

Yet are there times when he finds our flesh in a fit condition for his temptation, like dry tinder for his sparks, when he finds our souls at a distance from God, our faith at a low ebb, and our piety declining. And then will this grand enemy of our souls go forth to battle like a mighty Nimrod, seeking to lead us captive and utterly to destroy our faith.

You know these times of war, my brethren, for you have passed through them. If they are not upon you just now, thank God, and accept the rest which His love affords you, but keep your sword out of its scabbard, for the fight may begin again at any hour. If you are passing through the conflict at this moment, be not afraid nor discouraged—it has been the lot of all God’s people to fight their way to heaven and it must be yours. Think not that you shall be overcome, but rather cry with the prophet, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.”

Neither, however, are any of these things the topic upon which I am to speak this morning. I thought of using the text in reference to *Christian activities*. There are times when Christians, all of whom are kings unto God, should go forth to battle in a special and peculiar sense. So we will take the text and accommodate it to that end this morning, and may God send us now a soul-stirring word.

I. THE TIME FOR THE KINGS TO GO FORTH TO BATTLE IS COME.

The special time for Christian activities is now. In some sense, nay, in the highest sense, believers ought to be always active. There should never be an idle day, or a wasted hour, or even a barren moment to a servant of God. We are bound as soon as we receive the new birth to let that spiritual life develop itself in zeal for our Lord Jesus Christ, who has redeemed us by His blood. And never till we lay aside this body are we to cease from service or imagine that we have a furlough from the camp of our King.

Yet no man can always work with the same intense activity. I do not believe that God intended that any man should do so—rest is a necessity of feebleness. Look at nature. How active it is in the spring! How the buds leap into verdure! Observe how active all things are in summer! but nature begins to relax somewhat of its vigor as autumn bronzes the leaves of the forest, while in winter vegetation sleeps, and the sap, instead of circulating rapidly through the tree, retires into the center and slumbers for awhile.

Yet who shall say that the months of winter are wasted? Nay, but during the winter months the vegetable world is gathering needed strength for another spring, and summer, and autumn. So it is with Christian men at times. They have their winters, when the sap is driven to the center, when the spiritual life exercises itself rather about its own self than about anything outward, when the man’s care is rather about whether he himself is saved, whether his own spirit is in a flourishing state, than about the souls of others. Well, if the God of nature has so decreed it, so it must be.

As with individuals, so with churches. I do not believe that any church can always maintain the very highest pitch of earnestness, so that every sermon shall run through the congregation like fire along the prairie. I cannot believe that any company of persons could bear the full force of a revival year after year, for surely the body would flag, however willing the spirit might be.

Hence there will be alternating seasons, and every experienced and observing Christian must have noticed these times of rest, as it were, to the church, intermingled with her times when the singing of birds has come and the fig tree puts forth her green figs.

I believe that just now we have come to a season suitable for special effort. Every Christian should go forth to battle when there is best hope of success. We should select wisely, as the kings did, the most suitable seasons for warfare.

And first, this is a suitable season, because the people *can be gathered for religious exercises*. All through the summer months, bright for the world, it is usually dark for the church. In the country towns the multitude engaged in agricultural occupations cannot be expected to come out to weeknight services. And prayer meetings, Bible classes, and the like, generally flag, while the long days demand longer labor.

I do not say it is right that these meetings should flag so much as they do, but the fact remains that during the summer season there generally is a flagging of religious interest in the villages and towns. And even amongst ourselves it is to some extent the same. During the long days, the man who has to earn his bread with the sweat of his brow must work, and it is only when the evenings begin to draw in, and the winter months come, that the happier seasons in the church arrive, and the winter becomes our summer, as the summer had been our winter.

Right on from this period of the year, the church should shake herself and say, “Now our harvest time comes. Now is the period for kings to go forth to battle. God has given us the opportunity now and we must avail ourselves of it, lest ere another harvest time is past and another spiritual summer time is ended, many may be where they can never be saved.”

It must be a good time for holy activity just now, also, dear friends, because in addition to the possibilities of the seasons, it is certain that there is a willingness to hear the Gospel. This house, as often as we enter it, gives us decided proof that the old Gospel of Jesus Christ has not lost its power. I have heard, and I have read, and I also have believed the criticism, that the preacher who occupies this pulpit wields but slender eloquence and possesses few of the graces of oratory.

The power which holds these vast crowds together year after year, is the same power that held them years ago—the simple Gospel plainly spoken from an earnest heart. The people are not tired of the Gospel. The people of London are not sick of the old preaching of the cross. If your ministers would lay aside their oratory—a plague upon it all—and if they would come back to speak in simple terms of the Christ that died, and tell men plainly the way of salvation, there is no reason why other houses should not be filled as well as this—for there is a hunger for the bread of life, and if men could but hear the simple earnest Gospel, they would press to the place to receive it.

When once there is a willingness to hear, and we have the mark and sign of it here today, should not every Christian say within himself, “If men be willing to hear it, they shall not miss it because I am unwilling to tell it. If they are ready to receive, I will be ready to dispense. I will not cease to testify of the way of salvation to those who are anxious to listen to it”? I beseech you, therefore, because evidently there is a readiness in the fish to be taken in the net, to not be slack to cast the net by day and by night.

Moreover, the time for kings to go forth to battle will always be *when the king's troops are fit for battle*. I mean, the time for spiritual work is when the worker is especially fit for it. When is that? Should it not be when he has been fed with spiritual meat? Should it not be when, through that spiritual meat, his faith has grown, and his love has increased?

If any Christian finds himself in a holy and a happy condition, if he sits under a ministry that is edifying to his own soul, should not that be above all others a time when he should say, “To what purpose is this strength? For what reason has God given me this spiritual meat to sustain my strength? For what, indeed? Ought I to keep it for myself, to lay it by, or to spend it on my pride? No, it cannot be so. It must be given me that I may lay it out in my Master's use and for the salvation of perishing men.”

Brethren, is it not so this day with many of you? Have you not heard the Gospel with pleasure? Have you not rejoiced in your assured interest in the Gospel? Are you not, at this present moment, in the enjoyment of holy confidence? Is not your heart glad within you at the very sound of Jesus' name? Oh! now, if never before, surely now you should take your place in the ranks of the Lord of Hosts and go forth to the fight.

They were wont of old to excuse from the fight the young, the sick, the faint, and worn—but they would not excuse the valiant men and such as were strong in Israel. Neither can I excuse my brethren and sisters to whom God has been especially gracious, but rather would I sound the trumpet in Zion, and say, “It is to you, to you that the summons has come. Awake, arise, put on your strength, and go forth like kings to the battle.”

Another season of especial work should be, when *discerning Christian men feel the motions of the Spirit of God calling them to unusual service*. “When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then thou shalt bestir thyself,” said God to David, and then David did bestir himself and the Philistines were smitten.

Do you not, some of you, hear the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry trees? I think I have heard it. There have come to my soul lately whispers in the midst of pain and weariness which seemed to say, “Awake! O man of God, bestir yourself. Your fellow men are perishing. The land is covered with thick darkness. Awake, reveal the light that is given you. Cease not to shine and burn according as the fire within your heart dictates to you!”

Have no such angel-whispers come to you? I shall hail it as a sacred omen, if Sunday school teachers here have been disturbed with thoughts about those who are in their classes still unconverted. If young men here have felt impulses within their spirits to break loose from worldly ties and dedicate themselves to the Master's honor.

I shall count it to be one of the auspices of the coming victory, if there are among us matrons or maidens, fathers, or youths of younger years, who shall have felt in their spirits a divine throb of pity for the dying multitude, and an earnest compassion for the thousands who are going down into the pit. Surely there are some of us here who can bear witness and say, "Our state of heart has been to us a premonition that it is time for kings to go forth to battle." The time to favor Zion, the set time has come. Let her awake and arise, for God will go before her, and give her the victory.

One other mark of the time for kings to go forth to battle is surely *when the Lord Himself works*. We are workers together with God. When we lift our hand to smite sin in His name, the arm omnipotent smites too. If we require anything to guide us as to periods of especial labor, surely it should be when the Spirit of God puts forth especial force.

Now there are in this house, at this very moment, hearts in which the Spirit of God has been working lately. We are not left without conversions. We have not as many as I desire, but we have some. There are those convicted of sin among us, seeking rest and finding none. There are others who have but lately come to the foot of our dear Lord's cross, and looked up and viewed the flowing of His precious blood, and have rested their hearts' salvation alone in Him.

God is working—shall we not work? The presence of good men with us is encouraging, but oh, the presence of the GOD of good men should much more stimulate us. Mahomet, in one of his first famous battles, stimulated his soldiers to the fight by declaring that he could hear the neighing of the horses of the angels as they rode to the conflict to win the victory for the faithful.

We speak not so, but surely the horses of fire and the chariots of fire are round about the faithful servant of God, and faith's discerning eyes can see the God of providence moving heaven and earth to help His church, if His church will but arise from the dust and put on her beautiful garments, and resolve to conquer in her Master's name. I speak it and I believe I speak no other than the truth—a joyful and yet solemn truth—the time for kings to go forth to battle is come.

Sure I am, that the time for this church particularly has come, for of this I can judge with certainty—the time for effort and success has fully arrived. And as for the church universal, surely there is no better period for her to set herself to seek a revival than just now, when there is a lull in political excitement, when one great step in progress has been taken, has been so well-taken that all uproar concerning it has ceased, and the world waits longingly for better days to come.

Now is the time, surely, for every saint of God to get him to the top of his Carmel, and like Elijah, with his head between his knees, to cry mightily, and look towards the sea until he shall see the cloud, though it be but as a man's hand, expecting that in answer to mighty prayer the clouds shall yet pour forth their water and the earth shall be deluged with a shower of grace.

II. Since the time for battle is come, the second point shall be, **IT BEHOOVES EVERY SOLDIER NOW TO GO TO THE WARS.**

Every professed Christian, every believer, every saved sinner, I say, it behooves all to fight the Lord's battles, and I press the point with such considerations as these.

All believers belong to Christ—you are His goods and chattel, you are His bond-servants, you bear in your bodies His brand, the marks of the Lord Christ, for, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." Now, no believer here will start back from that. You sang just now—

"For I am His, and He is mine,"

and it is your highest glory that that is the truth.

Now, beloved, by this fact that you belong to Christ, I charge you start not back. You have but one talent, you reply—but you belong to Christ whether you have one talent or ten. You are very busy in the world, you say, but you belong to Christ, and I beseech you lend not yourselves to a wicked world.

You tell me that you have not the moral courage to perform Christian service—but you belong to Christ and anything that prevents your serving Him will become a sin, and therefore you must strive against it, till in some form or other you have rendered help in the great crusade, now that the Lord's anointed go forth to battle.

You all belong to Christ. More than that, I will add, *all of you believers love Christ*. Your belonging to Him has worked in you a true affection for Him. Shall I put the question to you, that you may have the pleasure of answering it to your own hearts? "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" You are a believer in Jesus, and you profess to be saved by Him—do you love Him?

Oh, were this the time, surely you would rise in one glorious company, you faithful ones, and say, "Love Him? Ay, indeed, He knows our hearts. He knows all things, and He knows we love Him." Prove your love then. He gives you a fair field for it. You cannot better prove your love to your King than by fighting your King's battles and spreading abroad the savor of His name.

Moreover, *God has appointed each one of you to a service*. You are not all set to preach, nor all to any one form of labor. The hand is not set to do the duty of the foot, nor the foot to accomplish the service of the eye, yet the foot is as necessary as the eye, and the eye as the hand. Now, what is your service?

Rest assured nobody can do it but yourself. It will therefore be left undone if you do not attend to it. As in a body, if any one member ceases its functions, the body becomes imperfect and the whole of it suffers. So if any one child of God in this church shall cease from the particular duty allotted to him, no one else can do it and the church must suffer damage.

It is not for me to point out in every case what your niche may be, but the God who made you what you are, appointed at the same time for you your place and your service, which I repeat, none can occupy or discharge but yourself. Arise then, my Brother, my Sister, whoever you may be, and ask yourself, "What is there for me to do?" and ask of your Master, "Lord, what would You have me do?"

Moreover, let me remind you that *there is strength promised for each of you*. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." You must not excuse yourself from the battle because you are weak, for the Lord strengthens the feeble. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they who wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength."

It is not in the strength you have that you can serve Him, but in the strength which He will give you as you need it. Here, take the bread, and take the fish, and feed the thousands. Say not, "It is not enough." He shall multiply both the bread and the fish in the breaking and the consuming, and there shall be enough and some to spare.

Hear then, you who profess to be in Christ, you all love Him, you have all a work to do, to all God will give the needed grace, and therefore I charge you by your fealty to your King, by your allegiance to your Lord, every one of you shake yourself from the dust of idleness and resolve to go forth, "to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty."

Shall I say, brethren, that there is work for all of us to do which lies very close to hand? The preacher will never be without his. God will take care to furnish all His servants with sufficiency of work. You teachers in the Sabbath school, hold to your calling. It is a noble one. You are greatly honored in being permitted to take so distinguished a post of service as that of training young children for Christ.

If you can do neither of these and cannot speak for Christ at all, if you meet with any book, or tract, or sermon that has been useful to your own soul—scatter it. I remember to have read in Cotton Mather's book upon plans of usefulness, that he remarks that sometimes at the expense of a shilling, under God's blessing, a soul has been converted.

Such books as Alleyne's *Alarm*, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, and Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, have wrought wonders in years gone by. And at this hour you may have for a penny or less, truths so set forth as to ensure the reader's attention. Mr. Cecil says he had to be very grateful to God for his mother, not so much because she pressed him to read good books, as that she took care to put good books where he was likely to take them up. O you who love Jesus, attend to this. Place the truth in the way of him who knows it not. Lose no opportunity of so doing.

Talk for Christ personally, if you can, to individuals. Your Master, sitting at the well talking to the Samaritan woman, was doing no small service to the truth. He preached to all Samaria through that woman. So may you preach to half a town through one individual. O that not one of us here may be idle!

If you cannot do anything else, you can pray, and what strength the church of God gets from its praying men and women! Many bedridden saints are all the nearer to heaven in their weakness, and by their supplications they act like conductors to the skies, bringing down the divine lightning from God that shall split the hearts of the ungodly. Oh, if you cannot do anything else, succor us by your intercessions.

I hope that there are no idlers in this church, but if there are, I charge them to cease from sloth. Better for you to occupy the meanest place of service than to be an idle Christian. I walked, a few days ago, by rows of houses all empty and all shut up, and I could not help thinking if the landlords would charge the smallest rent and put in the very poorest tenants, it would be better than to let them stand empty.

For the boys had made all the windows targets for their skill in stone throwing. The thieves had taken care to remove every piece of lead and movable metal they could get at, and most of the lower rooms had evidently been playrooms for children and dogs, and the unsightly carcasses was giving the neighborhood a bad name from which it was not likely soon to recover. Better to have had the worst of tenants than to leave the houses to become ruins.

Some Christians had better take to the meanest occupation than let their souls stand in such a disreputable state as they do, like empty, unoccupied, useless, decaying, dilapidated houses. You cannot be idle without being as much a sufferer yourself as any man beside. Even the sick, the sorrowing, the mournful, the sad, I would fain summon to the battle. If they do not achieve much for the cause, it will help themselves.

One of the readiest ways to arise from the depths of agony is activity. Let a woman who has lost a beloved husband say, "I will henceforth do nothing but mourn for my departed lord"—let her seclude herself from society, and stand apart from all activities of life, her grief will eat as does a canker and her life will be bitter to her.

But let her see to her household, let her come forth and attend to the necessary business of life, and her heart will receive comfort. I recollect the story of a mother who, when her little boy was playing in the room, was shedding many bitter tears for her widowhood. Her little boy, who seemed to know right well the source of the mother's grief, came up to her and putting his arms around her neck said, "You have got me, mother," and you cannot tell how it comforted her heart as she thought, "Yes, and I have a solemn charge in you to train you up to know your father's God and to follow to the heaven where you father is at rest."

The necessary care which she rendered to her little son helped to wipe away the tears which else might long have worn a furrow down her cheeks. There is nothing healthier for the sick, there is nothing more encouraging for the desponding, there is nothing more strengthening for the weak, there is nothing more soul-enriching for the poor in spirit, than for every Christian among us to gird himself to do something for his Lord and Master.

Oh! you do not know what you can do. There are immortal and immeasurable capacities within you. If you will but try, God will help you. If you use your little ability, you shall have more. The one talent shall become two, the two four, and the four shall multiply. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

I charge you, therefore, my beloved flock, let not a single one of you stay back at this time, when every king should go forth to the battle.

III. Beloved comrades in the holy war, THERE ARE GREAT MOTIVES TO EXCITE US TO FIGHT EARNESTLY FOR CHRIST.

The motives gather round five points. The first is *our King*. Who would not fight for such a King, Immanuel God with us? By the wounds and by the thorn-crown, by the bleeding heart, by the incessant intercession on His glory throne, let us lift up our hands now and declare that we will not cease to fight for Him.

As of old, when sometimes a king asked a pledge of fealty from his assembled knights, they drew their swords, and waved them in the air, and took a solemn oath to defend his throne—so now today let each believer say within his soul, “I must, I will contend for such a King as Christ my Lord.”

Remember next *the banner* under which we fight—the banner of the truth, of the atoning blood. Let me remind you, men and brethren, how your fathers held that banner firmly, though they stained it with their gore. Remember how many have borne it amidst the smoke of their own burning at the stakes of Smithfield!

Through a long line of bold forefathers, the banner of the truth has been handed down to you. From the Anabaptists, and the Covenanters, and the Puritans, and men of whom the world was not worthy, its folds have passed down to your protecting care. Oh, by the fact that it shall wave one day over all the defeated hosts of hell, that Christ shall plant it on the battlements of the arch-enemy’s proudest castles, rally now for God, and for the right, and for the truth, for the doctrines of His Word, for the imperishable Gospel that abides forever and ever. Who will be craven now and shrink back from this conflict?

Remember, next, another word—the *captives* whom it is your hope by the Holy Spirit’s power to redeem from the slavery of sin. How our soldiers of the Indian mutiny advanced like lions against the mutineers when they remembered Cawnpore and all the cruelties to which their brethren had been exposed!

How unweariedly they marched, how sternly they fought when they were within sight of the foe! After this sort should we fight with those who have enslaved and injured our brethren. Remember, there are tens of thousands of God’s elect who are captives to death and hell—some of them blasphemers, many of them drunks, some plunged in the direst vice, others of them in the blackest despair. And it is only through your efforts, blessed of the Holy Spirit, that they are to be set free.

I charge you, therefore, earnestly contend for their liberties. When David and his men came to Ziklag, and found that their wives and children had been carried away captive, how rapidly did they pursue the foe, and how courageously did they fly upon the spoilers to ransom their wives and children from captivity.

Your children may still be in captivity to Satan, your husband still a prisoner, your wife not yet emancipated, your brother, or neighbor, or sister still in “the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity.” Soldiers of the cross, as you love liberty yourselves, and as you love your kinsfolk, and your fellow countrymen, I charge you—come to the battle, that these may be set free by the Holy Spirit’s power.

Remember, again, and this word ought to stimulate us to fight well, *the enemy*, the black and cruel enemy. We contend not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness. Our warfare is not with men, but with evil in every shape and form. Our warfare is with the serpent who blighted Eden and who destroyed our race. O God, if anything could make us fight, it would be enmity to the old dragon who has been the murderer of our race.

Yet one more encouragement and that is *our reward*. “They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.” If by your prayers and tears, through God’s Holy Spirit, any should be saved, you shall have joy on earth akin to angels’ joy, and in heaven unfurling honors shall be bestowed upon you by the Master Himself, when He shall say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

I will put these five things then, together. By the King who leads you, by the banner that waves above you, by your captive brethren who wait to be delivered, by the horrible enemy against whom we

may well take revenge, and by the glorious reward, let every soldier gird his sword upon his thigh in this the time when kings go forth to battle.

IV. THE HIGHEST ENCOURAGEMENTS READILY PRESENT THEMSELVES TO PERSUADE YOU TO JOIN THE WARRING ARMIES.

I shall mention these encouragements thus.

It is quite certain that *God has an elect people* still upon the earth—then see you not that it is hopeful work to find out these elect ones by the preaching of the Word? “I have much people in this city” must have been a great encouragement to the apostle when he went there. God has much people in London yet, and I am persuaded He has much people in this congregation that gathers here. And as the farmer is encouraged to sow his seed in good soil, from which he may reasonably expect a large harvest, so ought you to be encouraged to work for Jesus Christ just now.

Remember, also, that *God has never failed a true worker yet*. Many have been discouraged, but God has in the long run, if they have been true to Him, given them their reward. Oh! it cannot be that we shall be disappointed. It is not written, “Paul planteth, Apollos watereth, and God gives no increase.” No, “Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase.” God is not tied to give success, and as a sovereign He may do as He wills, but the whole record through, the faithful have not been left of God.

Remember, too, that *if you did not see any souls converted, yet God would be glorified by your exaltation of Christ*, and your talking of Christ, and your earnest prayers and tears for the good of others. You are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, as well in them who perish, as in them that are saved. You will have done your duty and in so doing will be accepted of the Most High. To the battle, then, my brother, to the battle, for you cannot fail.

Remember *the promises*, let them come up before your mind. Believe them and go in the strength of them. “In due season ye shall reap if ye faint not.” “God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labour of love.”

“As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

“Cast thy bread upon the waters, for ye shall find it after many days.” “In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that.”

O do you not desire to be the spiritual parent of a new-born soul? Would you not rejoice to pluck some brand from the burning, to rescue some sinking sinner from a seething hell? Then, I beseech you, in prayerful anxiety, with much dependence upon God, use the means. And that means is simply this—the telling abroad of the Gospel, the persuading of men to lay hold on eternal life, which eternal life lies in believing in Jesus Christ whom God has sent.

V. Lastly, if nothing else could nerve my brethren here to service, I should like to remind them of one solemn fact and call them, stir them to exercise by **THE SOLEMN DANGER OF INACTION**.

Read at your leisure the connection of my text, “It came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle.” He sent Joab his servant to contend with the Ammonites. Unhappy king, unhappy king! He had been called to fight the Lord’s battles. He had been anointed king for the very purpose—to be a captain in Israel—but a fit of sloth had seized him, and true in David’s case, was our children’s song—

*“Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”*

The eyes that ought to have been looking on the foe, looked on Bathsheba. The heart that ought to have been stout against the enemies of Israel, softened with lascivious desires, and the king had a fall,

not from the battlement of his house, but a fall from the elevation of his purity and faith, from which he never altogether recovered, which has left the blackest stain upon his reputation.

Such are the dangers of inaction to us all. Not precisely that form may it take, for Satan knows how to adapt the temptation to each man's temperament and to each woman's case. I do believe it is before every Christian either to serve his God with all his heart or to fall into sin. I believe we must either go forward or we must fall.

The rule is in Christian life, if we do not bring forth fruit unto the Lord our God, we shall lose even our leaves, and stand like a winter's tree, bare and withered. God grant you, brethren, to make no ill choice in this matter, but to resolve that if you are overtaken in a fault, it shall not be because you traveled so slowly that sin could readily overtake you.

I would remind you that in some form or other evil must come to you if you loiter. If you will not serve your Lord, neither shall you be established. If you will not bring forth fruit to His glory, neither can you expect the comforts of His Gospel.

How terrible are those words which I would fain make to ring like a thunderblast in the ear of every professor here, "Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty." Remember the Master's words, with which I conclude, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

And now, by the blood that bought you, by the Spirit that quickens you, by the heaven that awaits you, men and brethren, I ask you to go with me to the battle. Deacons, elders of the church, Sunday school teachers, all of you come with me to the battle, and let us see whether during the next few months the Lord does not give us a greater blessing than we have ever had before. I believe He will even open the windows of heaven and pour us out a blessing. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 145

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