

THE WORK FOR A CONVERTED WILL.

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

– Prov. 16:31,32.

TO BESIEGE and capture a city is a great undertaking, because every city has its massive defences of law and force, and is built with all the probable contingencies of attacks from enemies in view. In olden times the defenses were walls and gates; but now they are of the improved order of governmental arrangements. Cities and communities of immense proportions are now banded together into great nations for mutual cooperation and defense, so that to attack a city now is to attack a nation, and to be withstood with all the defensive armory of the nation; and in no instance can one undertake it single-handed and alone. He who would undertake it must be backed by other powers equal, or at least apparently equal, to the emergency. And the victory of such a general will depend on his superior skill and ingenuity in utilizing the various forces and advantages in his possession against those employed by the defenders of the city.

Such ability as is thus required in a great general is quite rare. It indicates indomitable purpose, methodical planning and skill in execution, though these good qualities are often exercised in a bad cause. Such ability has always been highly esteemed among men, and the aspirants for fame have, therefore, in times past, sought it chiefly along this line, though they gained their laurels at the expense of the blood and groans of millions of their fellow-men.

While the exercise of these successful qualities along the lines of human ambitions is required of earthly heroes, the exercise of similar qualities along the lines of God's appointment is required of

those who would be heroes in his estimation. If there were not a similarity [R3629 : page 279] in kind of the effort and success the comparison would not be instituted. Let us first notice the similarity, and then the difference, that we may see clearly what the Lord here commends.

To rule one's spirit (mind, disposition) implies a conflict similar to that of taking a city; for, no matter when we begin, we find entrenched therein many armed and opposing powers. They have possession by heredity – they are there as the result of the fall. And, if we have passed the days of youth, they are the more entrenched, and it requires the greater skill and generalship to rout them. But, whether he begin early or late, he that would rule his own spirit must war a good warfare – he must "fight the good fight" of faith down to the very end of the present existence. If a man would rule his own spirit, he must not only storm all the fortresses of inherited evils which seem to be almost a part of his nature, but, having gained possession and taken his seat upon the throne of this symbolic city (viz., the will), he must thereafter be continually on the defensive; for the old enemies are constantly on the alert, and ever and anon seeking to regain possession, so that he that continues to rule his own spirit is one who not only has routed the enemy, Sin, from the throne of his being, but who continues to keep him at bay.

To rule one's own spirit is by no means an easy task; and, as in the illustration, it cannot be done single-handed and alone. Consequently, the wise general will invoke all the assistance at his command, remembering the words of the Apostle – "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the powers of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." These powers of the world, the flesh, and the devil are all closely allied; and, therefore, he who plans for conquest and an established reign thereafter must seek alliance with another and a stronger power; which power is tendered to all who earnestly undertake the great work. This power is none other than the almighty

arm of our God, who says to all who accept his strength, "Greater is he that is for you than all they that be against you;" gird yourselves like men, fear not, be strong.

The ruling of this symbolic city – one's own spirit – never will be done until first the commanding general, the Will, has decided to change his allegiance from Sin to God, and to rout the rebels who resist the change. But, in the words of a trite saying, "Where there is a will there's a way" – for good or for evil. God will assist, through various agencies, toward good; Satan, with various agencies, toward evil. If the Will says, It *must* be done, it calls in the needed and available help, and forthwith it sets all the other faculties of the mind at work, first to subjugate and then to rule and regulate the entire being. The Conscience is commanded to keep a vigilant watch over all the mental operations; and the Judgment, under the influence of the Conscience, must decide as to righteousness or unrighteousness and report to the Will, which is under the same moral influence. Thus we have the three departments of government established – the legislative, which should always be the Conscience; the judicial, the Judgment; and the executive, the Will. And in every well-regulated or righteously ruled mind all the other faculties must make their appeal to this Congress, and that, as the Will insists, in due and proper order. Their appeal to the Will to execute their desires before submitting them first to Conscience and then to Judgment should never be tolerated; but, when approved there, they may freely urge their claims upon the executive power, the Will. But the Will governs; and, if it be weak, the government is slack, and the appetites and passions and unholy ambitions of the whole man take advantage of the situation: they seek to overbalance Judgment and to silence Conscience; and loudly clamor to the Will to have their own wild way. If the Will be weak, yet striving to keep under the influence of Conscience and sound Judgment, it will be fitful and irregular in its rulings, and the government will be unstable and ultimately wholly at the mercy of the appetites, passions and ambitions. The condition of such a soul is one of anarchy, which, unless its wild course be

speedily arrested, hurriedly sweeps the whole being toward destruction.

It is all-important, therefore, that the Will be consecrated to God and righteousness; and, secondly, that it strengthen itself in the Lord, and in his name and strength rule with a firm hand, cultivating as its assistants [R3630 : page 279] Conscience and Judgment, in determining the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, as expressed in his Word.

The Will has the most difficult office to fill; and the Lord's commendation is to the man of resolute Will, under the influence of a divinely-enlightened Conscience and Judgment. Blessed is the man who sets his house in order, and who maintains that order to the end of his days. Truly, to such a one the hoary head is a crown of glory. The warring elements of his nature having been brought into subjection, the arts of peace have been cultivated, and now they flourish and adorn his character; and as Mr. Whittier beautifully expressed it –

"All the jarring notes of life
Seem blending in a psalm;
And all the angles of the strife,
Now rounding into calm."

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