

DEFEAT THROUGH DRUNKENNESS

– *I. KINGS 20:12-21. – MARCH 19. –*

**"It is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink."
– Proverbs 31:4.**

TODAY'S lesson recounts an invasion of the land of Israel by King Benhadad, over-lord of Syria, who had under him thirty-two kings of Syria and a large army of invasion. Warfare in those days, of course, was very different from what it is today. The numbers in conflict were fewer and their weapons inferior. Their motive was plunder. They would take back with them, not only the gold and silver and other valuables but fruits, grains, etc.

Our day witnesses a considerable advance along the lines of diplomacy. Wars and invasions now are always based upon some philanthropic motive – to free people from bad government, or to compel them to pay their debts, or to open up their country to civilization, or to give them more responsible and representative government, or greater freedom of religion. Robbery and pillage, by an invading army, are reprobated. Whatever is taken from the conquered people must be obtained in a different manner – by the levying of an indemnity fund, amounting to far more than could be stolen by the looting processes. All this speaks to us of a higher moral sense, even though much relating to it be hypocrisy. The very need for the hypocrisy implies that, with a considerable number, there are qualms of conscience on the subject.

THE BATTLE WAS THE LORD'S, AND OF COURSE HE WON

Benhadad sent his demands to King Ahab saying, "Thy silver and thy gold are mine; thy wives and thy children, even the goodliest of thine." King Ahab, recognizing the greatness of the army and his own unpreparedness for resisting them, answered, "My Lord, O King,

according to thy saying, I am thine, I and all that I have." But when the invader broadened his demands and included with it the wealth of all the nobles of Israel, their wives and their children, etc., resistance was aroused and the message went back that the additional demands would not be granted. Thereupon the invaders set the battle array against the walls of Israel's capital, Samaria.

At this juncture God sent a Prophet to Israel's King, informing him that he would deliver the invaders into his hand and give him a great victory. The astonished Ahab asked by whom would the battle be waged against the host. The answer was that at the command the princes of the provinces should fight under Ahab's direction, supported by the militia. By this signal victory God would demonstrate his power by protecting the nation with whom he had made the Law Covenant. He would revive their faith and loyalty.

The Divine order was followed. Two hundred and thirty-two princes, or chiefs, of the people at noon passed out of the gates of the city, followed by seven thousand militia – a small number wherewith to meet a host. Apparently this was poor generalship; but the Lord was the General and overruled the results. King Benhadad and his associates had been drinking and were amused by the sallying forth of the battle army from the gateway. The Syrians were ordered to capture the men alive. **[R4759 : page 43]** But this they did not do. Soon the Syrian forces were in disorder and completely routed. Humanly speaking, the battle was lost by Benhadad's over-confidence, and particularly by his indulgence in intoxicating liquors.

LESSONS WHICH WE MAY DRAW

The honest, the holy, the reverential of mankind, who seek peace and righteousness may be likened to Israel, to God's people. Benhadad and his thirty-two kings and their armies would correspond to Satan and his various hosts of unrighteousness. We may name these hosts as we please. To some, one portion, and to others, other portions of these hosts are the more reprehensible. Many of these kings may represent

various trusts which, by manipulation of life's necessities, are attacking the welfare of the people. Others of these kings may represent political grafters. Others may represent various vices which prey upon the public, including intemperance. The forces thus set in battle array against the public are appalling, especially when the wealth at their command is considered.

The demands of these various "interests" come first upon the honorable and well-meaning public servants. These, like Ahab, would be inclined to submit, even ignominiously, if thereby the public would be safeguarded. But when the demands broaden, and it is evident that general pillage is the intention, the voice of the Lord [R4759 : page 44] should be heard and heeded, and a stout resistance should be made.

As with Ahab, the resistance should not be defensive merely. The call is for the princes, the chiefs of the people, who love righteousness, to go out first to do battle with all iniquitous invaders of the rights, happiness and interests of the people. And these princes or leaders who stand for righteousness should be ably seconded by all the courageous and efficient of the people who love the same standards.

KING ALCOHOL RECENTLY SUFFERING NUMEROUS DEFEATS

Every man and woman should have positive convictions respecting every question of right and wrong, and they should have the courage to take their stand on the side of right. Christians, of course, should expend their activities mainly along the higher lines, which others do not so clearly see and could not so well serve. But in every question of right and wrong, equity and inequity, every child of God should be a positive force for righteousness.

Amongst the most powerful foes of righteousness is King Alcohol, who has recently been suffering numerous defeats and admits being badly crippled and fearful.

Not long since the streets of Chicago witnessed a novel parade, which at first was headed by General F. D. Grant, Major-General of the United States Army. Later he withdrew from the ranks and reviewed the marchers for nearly two hours, frequently doffing his hat. The General evidently wished to give his moral support as against drunkenness.

The Springfield *Republican*, commenting, said, "The sudden and unexpected prominence of General F. D. Grant, as a possible Prohibition candidate for the Presidency, is explained by his alleged statement in an interview, 'If I could, by offering my body as a sacrifice, free this country from this fell cancer, the Demon Drink, I would thank the Almighty for the privilege of doing it. If I had the greatest appointive power in the country, no man would ever get even the smallest appointment from me unless he showed proof of his absolute teetotalism.'"

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