

GOD'S USE OF THINGS IN OUR HAND

**"And the Lord said unto Moses, What is that in thine hand?"
– Exodus 4:2.**

MOSES had been called of the Lord to the great and honorable work of delivering His people from the bondage of Egypt. He was now eighty years of age. His long experience in the Egyptian court had given him an insight into the affairs of government. Stephen tells us (Acts 7:22) that "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and in deed." Tradition says that he was also an able general in the Egyptian army.

Yet he relinquished all these earthly advantages to cast in his lot with the despised people of God. (Heb. 11:24-26.) "Moses...refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" – he preferred to share with God's chosen people, Israel, in their affliction, and to have part with them in the Promise made to their fathers.

How appropriate it was that the man whom God called to be the leader of Israel out of bondage should be a learned man, and one well equipped to be at the head of such a people and under such circumstances! We cannot doubt that his wandering as a shepherd in the wilderness for forty years, tending the flocks of Jethro, his father-in-law, made him thoroughly familiar with every road, every hill, every stream; and that this was subsequently of great advantage to him, when, under the Lord's direction, he became leader of Israel through this wilderness en route to Canaan.

MEEKNESS TAUGHT BY EXPERIENCE

But this forty years' experience in Midian had taught Moses another important lesson – the lesson of *meekness*. And his long isolation had made him reserved. Furthermore, soon after severing his connection with the royal [R5419 : page 78] house of Egypt, he had made an attempt to deliver his people; but they had not wished his services, and had rather resented his interference. So now, when the Lord would send him to do this great work, he was distrustful of his ability to lead the people of Israel out of bondage into the land of Canaan, and was fearful and reluctant.

The Lord had appeared to Moses in the burning bush which was not consumed, had given him his commission, and had assured him that He, Jehovah, would certainly be with him. Moses, however, very properly felt the magnitude of the undertaking and his own insufficiency. He urged that he was incompetent, that it would require some one more powerful than he to influence the heart of the king of Egypt. He knew that it would be entirely contrary to the purpose and policy of the Egyptians to let the Israelites go from their service. He said to the Lord, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" But the Lord assured him that He would Himself be responsible; that He would direct in the matter.

"WHAT IS THAT IN THINE HAND?"

Still Moses wanted some demonstration of God's approval and power. He asked, How shall I make Israel *know* that Thou hast sent me? for they will not believe. Then the Lord asked, "What is that in thine hand?" Moses answered, "A rod." And the Lord said to him, "Cast it upon the ground." Moses did so, and the rod became a serpent, and Moses fled from it. If he had not particularly noticed what he had in his hand, he might have thought that possibly it had been a serpent before. But he had looked, and was sure that it was a staff which had been changed into a serpent. Then God told him

to take up the serpent by the tail. He did so, and it again became a rod in his hand.

THE LESSONS FOR US

From this we would take the lesson that if the Lord sends us on any mission, we should not have the feeling that we could conquer the world, but should realize our own littleness and should properly feel wholly insufficient of ourselves. We should realize that without His assisting grace we could accomplish nothing. We should be very sure that He has commissioned us, and that our mission is not some foolish thought of our own. We should be very sure that the Lord is back of the whole arrangement. Then we should have full confidence in Him.

We should feel like saying with Moses, "I cannot do anything." But if we wish to serve the Lord, we are to look to what we have in our hands, whether it be one talent or another. God is so wise that He can use our humblest talent to His praise. What He wants us to use may be right in our hands, and we may not have noticed it. No matter how ordinary our lives may be, God is able to use us, and to give us also the needed lessons in connection with our experiences.

Another lesson that we could draw from the Lord's dealings with Moses is that the things which we have in our hand, those things closest to us, might become injurious to us, if it were not that the power of God is able to make everything work together for our good. If we have the spirit of *service*, the Lord can and will use things right at our hand – not necessarily things afar from us; and the Divine power over evil can make all things work out good to those who love Him. More and more we are learning these lessons. If, then, we would serve, we should look to see what we have in our possession; what things we can make use of.

FAITHFUL IN LEAST – FAITHFUL IN MUCH

A great many people would like to serve the Lord with a *thousand tongues*. If they had a thousand tongues, they feel *sure* they would sing with them *all*. How do we know that we would use a *thousand* tongues, if we do not faithfully use the *one* we have? "He that is faithful in that which is *least*" will be faithful in the *greater* things.

There are plenty of people who like to address thousands. But if we cannot address *thousands*, it is all the more necessary to address *one*. Some say that if they had a million of dollars they would give it to the Lord. But the Lord is not likely to ever give them the chance of giving large sums if they do not manifest a disposition to give of the small amounts already in their possession. "To him that hath [through use of his talents] shall be given,...and from him that hath not [from neglect of his talent] shall be taken away even that which he hath."

So the lesson to us of Moses' experiences would seem to be – the use of things we have in our hands. The same lesson is taught in another way in the case of the poor widow who cried to the Prophet Elisha for help. She was in poverty, and her creditors were about to take her two sons for debt. "What hast thou in the house?" asked Elisha. The woman replied, "Not anything in the house save a pot of oil." Then the Prophet told her to go and borrow empty vessels from her neighbors – "not a few" – and to then begin to pour out the oil into the vessels. The woman obeyed, and all the vessels were filled with oil, and she had oil to sell and thus pay her debt. The Lord used what she had in her hand. **[R5419 : page 79]**

It was the same way with the Lord's miracle in feeding the thousands. He asked, What have you on hand? He did not say, How far is it to town? And He did not tell the Apostles to get wagons and go to town for bread and meat. But He said, Use what you have. And He blessed the five loaves of bread and the two small fishes,

to the abundant feeding of the five thousand; they all ate "as much as they would," and of what remained the disciples gathered up *twelve baskets full*. (John 6:5-13.) So we should use all our talents and opportunities. The Lord is looking for us to use *what we have*, and we shall receive blessing therefrom; and the more faithful we are in the performance of our privileges, the greater will be our blessings from Him.

MOSES' EXPERIENCES TYPICAL

In addition to the lessons just noted, we believe there is a further significance in the experiences of Moses, and the deliverance of Israel. We are to see something representative of conditions in our day. Moses was acting under Divine instruction. Many things connected with this mission of Moses to the Israelites seem typical of the deliverance of God's people from the power of evil. Pharaoh was typical of Satan. We are living in the corresponding time, when God purposes to deliver all from the power of Satan. Jesus and the Church will be the Agent of Jehovah – the deliverance will be the work of Messiah as God's Representative.

The rod represents *authority*. This was illustrated at the time when the Lord instructed that Aaron should represent Him as the head of the tribe of Levi. There had been murmurings in Israel, and the principal men of the twelve tribes were instructed by the Lord through Moses to take each man his rod, write upon it his name and send it into the Tabernacle. (Num. 17:1-9.) Aaron's rod was to go in with the others, because it was the rod of his father's family. And when they examined the rods in the morning, Aaron's rod had budded, blossomed and brought forth almonds.

This would give us to understand that a rod might generally be considered to represent authority. As the *hand* is *power*, so the *rod* is *authority*. Thus the rod would seem to be a special manifestation of Divine Power and Rule. We may not speak too

positively of the antitypical fulfilment of this experience of Moses. But we might think that in some way or other the power of God would *appear* to be evil – the serpent was evil. Evil has seemed to triumph for these six thousand years. When Moses and Aaron went into the presence of Pharaoh, Moses' rod became a serpent there also. Then the magicians cast down their rods, and they became serpents. But Moses' rod swallowed up all the rods of the magicians.

RESUMING THE ROD OF POWER

We would very much like to know just what these things signify – just how God will permit the world under the power of Satan to have an hour of triumph. There is to be permitted a great Time of Trouble, and it will be because of the casting down, for a time, of Divine authority and rule.

We think this condition is present now. People are losing confidence in God. They are feeling, for the time, as though there were no God. The tendency of Higher Criticism and Evolution is to give humanity the impression that there is no God but Nature. And as mankind get this idea of a Nature-god that is ruthless, relentless, impersonal, it is very likely to efface all thought of a living God of Justice and Love. "There is no fear of God before their eyes," the Scriptures say. So we may expect a great Time of Trouble, when the power of God will seem to be a further manifestation of evil – as the power of evil. The taking up of the rod of power again, a little later, will be the resuming of Divine authority.

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