Practical Truths

Reality

Judges 7:1-8

W. T. Turpin

whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

But in Deut 9. the land is described in its contrast. In Egypt there is trouble connected with the best of things; they had trouble to procure the fertilizing streams of the Nile; Canaan, on the contrary, drank water of the rain of heaven, and the eyes of God were always on it, from the beginning to the end of the year.

The very best thing you possess in this world has trouble connected with it; who can tell when we may lose it? The sweeping desolations of death may come in upon it; and increased happiness does but widen the target at which death shoots his arrows. I may die to them or they may die to me; here we are in the presence of death; there we shall be in the presence of Christ.

The only place that can command or detain the eye of God now, is the spot where that blessed One is, and there I go to remember my sorrow no more; by faith I am *now* introduced into it, and share His joy. I love to think *He* cares for me in the wilderness; still I love to think He says, you shall know another place the exact contrast to it. Now what is to engage us in this place of rest and satisfaction? This we have in Deut. 26. "When thou art *come* in and *possessest* it, and *dwellest* therein." Every Christian has come in, but then it is another thing to take practical *possession,* or make it our own; and to *dwell* is to make it our *home.* Are you rather a visitor to earth upon His business, and a dweller in that home? A stranger here -- at home there? In Christendom the effort is to be what they are not. No one can work themselves up to be heavenly. I am to walk here in the sense of what I am in Christ. Do you *dwell* there? Have you possessed it? Can you say, Thank God, He has brought me in, given me possession, and now I dwell there; and the spot I possess is the very place where the Beloved One of God is crowned?

Thus we have looked at the wilderness and the land, the objects and purports of each. May our hearts largely profit by the lessons of both, while we have deeper and larger apprehensions by the Holy Ghost of our present place on high in Christ before God, as well as one with Him in glory, for His name's sake. Amen.

"O Lord, how blest our journey,
Tho' here on earth we roam,
Who find in Abba's favor,
Our spirits' present home:
For where Thou now art sitting
By faith we've found repose,
Free to look up to heaven,
Since Thou our Head arose.
"In spirit there already,
Soon we ourselves shall be,
In soul and body perfect,
All glorified, with Thee:
Thy Father's smiles are cheering
The brief, but thorny way,
Thy Father's house, the dwelling
Made ready for that day.
"The Comforter, now present,
Assures us of Thy love:
He is the blessed earnest
Of glory there above:
The river of Thy pleasure
Is what sustains us now;
Till Thy new name's imprinted
On every sinless brow.
"Lord, we await Thy glory,
We have no home but there;
Where the adopted family,
With us Thy joy shall share; --
No place can fully please us,
Where Thou, O Lord, art not;
In Thee and with Thee ever,
Is found, by grace, our lot."

Reality

Judges 7:1-8

It is an immense comfort to meet with reality in this world, where everything is so confused, and there are so many mixed motives at work. God looks for reality. Nothing less suits His mind, or meets His thoughts. In the scripture which heads this page there are deeply solemn lessons on this subject, which we do well to ponder. May the Lord Himself, by His Spirit, teach us, making our hearts willing and subject to His word. In the previous chapter we find the Lord getting His instrument ready for His work. This is a principle of the deepest value. God's instruments must not only be raised up by God Himself; they must be adapted and fitted by Himself for the work He has for them. Abundant instances and illustrations of this are to be found in the word. We shall only refer to one. God it was who raised up the man Moses to be the deliverer of His people Israel out of their cruel bondage. Of this Moses we read, "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22). Nature would say, What a *fitted, prepared* weapon God has now at His hand! But this is the very thought which is short of the mind of God: for He will not, and does not accredit the qualifications of Egypt, but sends Moses to school (as we would say) for forty years, in order that he may be fitted and prepared and qualified for the work God has for him to do. Oh, what *reality* there is in all this. How real is the fact that God's instruments must *learn* in God's school. There is no such thing, reader, as purchasing commissions in His army; *there* all must rise from the ranks.

Now, in the history before us, the same principle is found. God raises up Gideon, the son of Joash the Abiezrite, that through him God might deliver Israel out of the hand of the Midianites. His family is poor in Manasseh, and like David, he is the least in his father's house. Yet, what of all this? "Have not I sent thee?" withers up all such thoughts, and places a living *reality* before the soul.

Reader, have we known this? It is an easy thing in these days to put on an appearance before one another, and even to keep up, but do our own souls know the deep reality of

having to do with the living God? And here remark that what is so sweet in the exercises of soul to which the words, "Have not I sent thee?" and "Surely I will be with thee," were a reply, is that what occupied the mind of Gideon was the relation between God and His people. "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us?" Now let us turn and look at the steps -- shall I say the forms? -- of the school of God, in which this mighty man of valor was trained, and see how *reality* marks it all.

First. -- The relationship of peace must be set up between him and God. He is brought into the presence of God, and hears these words: "Peace unto thee," fear not. Sweet, precious words! O what *reality*.

Secondly. -- As it was with himself; so must it be with his own family, namely, the relationship with God must be set up; and hence Gideon is set to work *at home* before he is sent out abroad. "And it came to pass the same night that the Lord said unto him Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it; and build an altar unto the Lord thy God on the top of this rock, in the ordered place and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down" (Judg. 6:25, 26). Reader, what a searching principle is found here! God's weapons are set to cut down the evil at home before they are used to cut it down abroad. It is the principle of 2 Tim. 2:21: "If a man therefore purge himself from these (see v. 21), he shall be a vessel unto honor, *sanctified* and *meet* for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." There must not be in the Lord's vessel that which is unsuited to the Lord. It is true that in the sovereignty of God He condescends to use a variety of means to bring about His own purposes. But this is not the thought of being *a vessel for God, sanctified* and *meet* for His use. What God looks for in His servants and people is *reality*. To use the expressive language of another God does not want "a lifeless finger-board to point along a way he neither leads nor follows." He does want and desire one who is "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," who can endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ who warreth, not entangling himself with the affairs of this life, and who laboreth as an husbandman, having *first* been partaker the fruits. This is all *reality,* and this God looks for. He finds it in Gideon, the fruit, too, of His own gracious work with him. And now let us see how God looks for *reality* in the people who follow Gideon. He cannot trust His honor to the thirty-two thousand, they are too many for Him. What a solemn rebuke to the very thought that rises earliest and is cultivated latest in the natural mind. God will test that crowd. It cannot be that all are true to Him, some will surely go back. And so it is. When the ordinance of Deut. 20 is gone through, which simply set each one to count the cost -- to do, as it were, a sum in profit and loss -- out of the thirty-two thousand, only ten thousand are found ready to stand in the face of danger and loss. But God has not yet finished. He says, "The people are yet too many for me." Most deeply solemn words these. Reader, He must work in a way which will leave no room for doubt that it is His hand that has wrought. So that the heart that is true to Him can say, "The Lord has done great things for us already." And why? Because He well knew there was in Israel a haughty uplifted spirit that would credit themselves with victory. And now, mark, there is great force in the Lord's words a second time to Gideon: "The people are yet too many; bring them down to the *water,* and I will try them for thee THERE; and it shall be that of whom I say unto thee, this shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, this shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water; and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down on his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men; but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water." The significancy of all this is striking! Out of the ten thousand which the previous testing had left, only three hundred are found to stand before and rise superior to the new test. And mark it attentively, reader, there are a greater number equal to the *difficulty and danger* than there are equal to what we may call the *blessing;* or, many who are able to face the danger fall before the blessing. But some one may say, What do you mean by all this? Was it wrong for thirsty people to drink water? Surely not. And that is not the point in the history at all, for the three hundred upon whom God set His seal of approval drank as well as the nine hundred and seven thousand who were sent away; but the point is, they used the water *in passing,* but were not engaged with it; the water which quenched their thirst and refreshed their body was not that which occupied their minds -- they had not time to halt, their hearts were in the work -- they were real and they exhibited reality. And, reader, has not this a solemn application to us in this day! How many a soul there who rises superior to difficulties that utterly breaks down in the presence of prosperity, or a position where they are well to do. Alas! how true it is that few of us can be trusted in sunshine (that is, when all is smooth around us). When tested by the Lord, those who *bowed down* were not fit for His use, any more than those who were sent back through fear or loss. And this is just the testing of the present hour, for God is bringing out the three hundred who are occupied with that which occupies Him. It is reality we need, dear reader. There is no lack in our day of head knowledge -- this is readily acquired, easily got up. Not only so, but nature likes it all, and turns it round to selfish purposes. In my mind, nothing is more sad or solemn than to see the way in which not a few, now-a-days, can talk about truth, and argue about it, who are themselves its living contradictions. *Reality! reality!* is the crying need of the day! Oh, reader, to be one of Christ's three hundred in this day of His rejection -- to have found in Himself the real secret of superiority, not only to the difficulties and dangers, but as well to the prosperity, ease, and quiet of this day. Oh, to be in earnest -- to be *real* for Christ. To have, I do not say low thoughts of self; but no