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Golden
Candlestick

RECOVERY IN A DAY OF FAILURE

Part 2

T. Austin-Sparks

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FAITH TO TAKE HIS STRENGTH

“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:15-23).

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man” (Eph. 3:14-16).

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10).

“And when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb’s younger brother. And the Spirit of the LORD came upon him, and he judged Israel, and went out to war: and the LORD delivered Chushanrishathaim king of Mesopotamia into his hand; and his hand prevailed against Chushanrishathaim” (Judges 3:9,10).

In the first place we want to know how the book of Judges should be read. It is always good to know how to read any particular part of God's Word, and when we come to the book of Judges we always want to bear in mind that the background of this book is a representation of Christ as the inheritance of God's people; that is, Christ as God's fulness for His own. If you like, you can put it the other way, the saints' inheritance in Christ. As we know, the land represents that.

Inasmuch as the book of Judges shows the Lord's people as having failed to possess all the land, it speaks to us typically of a stopping short on the part of the saints, and a failure to appropriate all God's intended fulness for them as vested in Christ. These two things simply go alongside one another. The land, representing the fulness of God's thought for His people, speaks of Christ and all the fulness of God in Christ for them.

We know what the thought of God is for us. It is fulness in every sense, in Christ. That thought is for all the Lord's people. We want to establish that, and make that perfectly settled so far as our recognition of it is concerned. The condition among the Lord's people, we know, is anything but that, but it does not alter the fact. God's desire, God's purpose, and what God has actually done for His people, is in relation to their knowing fulness of every kind in a spiritual way in Christ. Then the other thing is the fact that there has been a stopping short and failure on the part of the Lord's people in relation to that thought and will of God.

Remaining elements contrary to Christ

A third thing arises as we read this book, and it is that there are elements which have been allowed to remain in the place which should be occupied by the fulness of Christ. Those elements, therefore, must be the things which are contrary to Christ. Anything which takes Christ's place must be contrary to Christ. Anything which is a factor preventing the greater fulness of Christ must be opposed to Christ. So what we have here in this book is a whole range of elements which remain in possession where the saints ought to be enjoying something of the Lord, and those elements are preventing that enjoyment and that possession. Thus there are elements keeping out of full possession.

Seeing these three things, we have the clue to the book. It is this: we must discover what those things are which are contrary to Christ, and we must see that they stand in direct opposition to some particular feature of Christ. If only we recognised the feature of Christ which is challenged and

set back, which does not obtain at that particular point, then we have the key to victory, to recovery, to moving on into God's full thought. These elements which are allowed to remain represent something that is other than Christ, so what is the characteristic of Christ which will eject them? For it is Christ in some particular characteristic or feature who is needed to be brought in to eject these other things, and so by the bringing in of Christ, the appropriation of Christ, the applying of Christ, we remove the difficulty, uproot the evil, displace the opposition, and enter into the greater fulness of Christ.

Therefore we have these two things. On the one hand, the people who dominated in the land were forces contrary to Christ. On the other hand, the judges bring into view the features of Christ for deliverance. Each judge himself or herself, (although not a type of Christ in the full sense), have something primarily spiritual about them which is a feature of Christ for the bringing of the Lord's people into the fulness of His will. That is how to read the book of Judges. That is simple, but it is tremendously instructive.

Othniel, "the lion of God"

So then we come to the first of the judges. You will notice that very little is said about him. We are told that God raised up a saviour for them, Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him; he judged Israel, went out to war, the Lord gave deliverance, the land had rest forty years and Othniel the son of Kenaz died (Judges 3:9-11). Quite a lot of history is crowded into a very abbreviated record of a man's life. Yet if we look inside we shall see all that we want to know as to a primary feature of Christ for deliverance from that which held back from fulness. It is impressive to recognise that right at the beginning of things this should be the first judge, the first step for deliverance, for recovery. Othniel. You notice how the name ends, therefore you at once conclude that it has something to do with God. God's Name is at the end, El. The first part of the name means lion. The lion of God! It goes right to the root of matters.

All the best features of the book of Judges are gathered into the first chapter. This book must never be read as though it were chronological. Everything that is good that can be said is gathered in the one chapter; after that there is not a great deal of good, so far as the people are concerned. But remember Joshua. In Joshua we have presented to us a

wonderful possessing of the land, an entering in and a taking possession, a movement of faith in God, and a resultant fulness; fulness up to a point, and then a stopping. When Joshua died there was still land to be possessed, still these inimical elements to be overcome and cast out. At some point, for various reasons, the people ceased to go on.

It is not for us to judge them and determine why, but I think we could get very near the truth if we said that they felt perhaps that enough had been done. They had gone so far, and it was hardly necessary to go any further. A great deal of land was possessed, they had a measure of the knowledge of the Lord — to put it into spiritual terms — and now it was not necessary to go on any farther. At any rate, that was their spirit.

It may have been that they had grown somewhat weary, and that they recognised that these forces were a little more deeply entrenched than they had imagined, and could not be expelled quite so easily as they had thought. Whatever the case, they were coming up against fresh challenges, demands and difficulties, and the way led them into a state of spiritual decline. For some reason or another they came to the place where their spiritual strength for going on was surrendered. Although they had gone on in a large degree, had known wonderful deliverances and victories, had proved the Lord marvellously, they failed to go on. Yet all that the Lord had shown was not yet realised, and seventy-five per cent, ninety per cent, or ninety-nine per cent would not satisfy Him.

For some reason or another that spiritual energy to go on ceased; spiritual strength gave out; they let go. It may have been a wrong attitude of contentment, a false satisfaction or it may have been discouragement, the hardness and difficulty, and the long delay. Many other things may have come in, but whatever they were, the fact was that they let go, became weak, ceased to lay hold on divine strength for what remained to be dealt with. The result was, of course, that those forces doubly entrenched themselves and consolidated their position. This failure in faith led the Lord to take another attitude towards them that, rather than being favourable towards their position, He allowed these things to bring home to them the evil of their position, and bring them into a state of bondage to the things to which they had voluntarily surrendered. They did not find the Lord with them as He was before. So we have this terrible state of things in the book of Judges.

How is there to be recovery? How will the Lord's people be delivered from this bondage of limitation, this state of spiritual defeat where they are not enjoying the Lord and His fulness? How will it be? Well, the Lord

raises up judges; that is, the Lord raises up those who will make known to His people just what is of Himself that is the way of deliverance.

Divine strength

The first judge is Othniel, the lion of God. The significance of Othniel and his name is that there is divine strength for these people if only they will lay hold of it. Yes, all the things round about are calculated to weaken the Lord's people today. He knows the intensity of the conflict, the length of the road, the weariness of the flesh, for He has been this way Himself. He knows all about it, the cause of the suffering, the fury of the oppressor, the subtlety of the devices of the enemy. He knows all about our frame; He concedes that we are dust. We can tell Him nothing about that that He does not know, and probably He knows more, for He came down and went this way Himself. In a spiritual way, in a human body, He went this way.

See the Lord Jesus as He travels this road. Mark you, He was in moving Himself towards divine fulness. That statement needs guarding at once. He had emptied Himself. He existed in God-form. He changed His form and came into man-form, and that meant a voluntary emptying of Himself, not of His Godhead but of His form. He was here on a basis of dependence upon the Father; just as dependent upon the Father as we are. That was His choice; that was the wonder, the glory of His emptying, that He accepted a life of dependence upon the Father, so that all that He got was to be had in exactly the same way as we get it. His purpose was to come back to fulness — not now on the ground of the right of Godhead, because it was His right to be there; not back into divine fulness, because of His eternal right as the Son, but to come back into a divine fulness which was God's fulness for man. When Christ got through at length He was filled with all the fulness which was man's inheritance in God. Christ possesses the fulness of God, which is our fulness, our inheritance. There is a fulness of God which is not ours; that is, the fulness of deity, Godhead. That is Christ's on the side of deity. But on the other side there is that fulness, the inheritance which God had for man, intended for Adam, which Adam never attained. Christ came to redeem the possession, redeem the inheritance, and God vested Him in glory with all that inheritance which is ours. But to arrive at that fulness as a Man was along the road of dependence, suffering, where He had to draw strength, not out from Himself as Man, but from God.

See the Lord Jesus drawing His strength from above. He knew weariness of body, mind, and soul, perhaps weariness of spirit. He groaned in His spirit. "Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus upon the well" (John 4:6). And yet, what persistence! What going on! What refusal to be turned aside by enticement, promise, or the attempted comfort of friends! You find in this One a setting of the face, a going on resolutely, strongly, determinately, not being turned aside one hair's breadth, and all the time drawing upon the Father for that strength necessary, until He came right through. Heavenly ministrations strengthened Him to go through. He was being strengthened from heaven. Just think of Very God needing angels to minister to Him, to strengthen Him. Is not that a proof that for a little while He became lower than the angels for the suffering of death? It was not upon His own deity that He was drawing. He was being succoured by the angels whom He had created. The point is that His strength was above, and it was by drawing upon that strength above that He could go through.

What is the nature of this Lion of God? Look at Him on His face before God, pleading for strength that He shall not break down, reaching out with both hands to draw His strength from His Father to go on. Nothing turns Him aside; He goes on in that strength. This Lion of God is not some great majestic being that the natural eye can behold as such. When we think of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" we immediately conjure up in our minds something very terrible, terrific, impressive, something that is a great outward demonstration of power, of strength, of majesty. If you look at the Lion of the tribe of Judah down here there is nothing like that about Him. You have got to look inside to see the Lion nature; the strength is spiritual, not natural; it is from above, not from beneath. But it is very real, very wonderful, a strength which in the end all the combined power of hell and man cannot break, but which rather breaks all other forces in this universe as they converge upon Him. You and I know very little about the power of the enemy, but all the power and all that the enemy had at his command was brought to bear upon God's Son, the Son of Man, to break Him, yet there was a strength in Him which broke that united force of the whole kingdom and power of Satan. It was spiritual strength by which He came through to that fulness as Man for us.

Now we see where we begin in the book of Judges. Who is Othniel? You need no fuller study of his life, you do not need to know his whole life background, all you need to know is what he stands for. The Lord's

people have come into a bad condition because they have let go of their strength in the Lord. The only way for them to get into a good condition and out of the bad condition is to get hold of the strength of the Lord. In spite of conditions, in spite of what they are themselves, in spite of everything, they need to get hold of the strength of the Lord by faith. The Lord's strength which is more than our human frailty, the Lord's strength which is more than all the power of the enemy against us, the Lord's strength which is more than all the circumstances which would discourage us, is ours through faith.

Judges and Corinthians

You see, there is Joshua and Ephesians, and in between there is Judges, and, if you like, Corinthians. The book of Joshua represents the fulness in the heavenlies, the Lord's strength marvellously in evidence. The Epistle to the Ephesians represents the fulness of the heavenlies, "strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man"; "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe"; "that strength of His might which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead" (ASV); "be strong in the Lord". Judges is not in the heavenlies, in the fulness, in the victory, but is on the earth, grovelling in weakness, defeat and helplessness. What, then, do we need? We need Ephesian conditions, Ephesian elements, Joshua elements. That is just what we have already referred to. Look at Ephesians 1:18-23 again.

How do we get recovery? How shall we come into the fulness? How will the Lord's people be delivered from this terrible state spiritually? The answer is in a name in the book of Judges — Othniel, the Lion of God. In Ephesian language it is "the exceeding greatness of His power which is to usward who believe"; "strengthened with might through His spirit into the inward man".

That is what it is simply in words, but it has to be practised. It is a challenge. So the apostle brings the Ephesian letter concerning all this fulness to a close with this word: "Finally ... be strong ...". That is your business. That is your responsibility. It is not: "Finally ... may the Lord strengthen you." That is how we should like it to be. We should take hold of that promise, if it were a promise; but it is not a promise, it is a challenge. "Finally ... be strong in the Lord ...", and take the whole armour of God.

The strength of the Lord

The point is clear: this is the strength *of the Lord*. If you are feeling sufficient and strong this word has no meaning for you. Sooner or later you will come to the place, if you are going on with the Lord, where you will know that only the Lord's strength will get you through. The fact remains that we may or may not feel strong, but that does not count, and we shall never get through on our own weakness or strength, so we must not rest upon either. Let us come off our natural ground, of whatever kind it is — our sense of sufficiency or our own weakness. If we take the position of our own natural condition spiritually or physically, circumstantially or temperamentally, there will be limitation. If we say, I am one of the weak, fearful, timid ones, we will be in very severe limitation as to the measure of Christ, and we will be of no value to the Lord for the deliverance of others from limitation. Remember that is not the Lord's thought for you, nor is it for me. The Lord's thought is perfectly clear, and it is the fulness of Christ. We must come right off our natural ground, and recognise that it is the Lion of God, that it is the strength of God, the strength of the Lord, the power of His might, and when we recognise that, that the exceeding greatness of His power is to usward, we shall get through. Who is it to? Is it to "usward", who are such strong, go-ahead, robust people with such a lot of faith and confidence; to "usward" who are quite sure we shall get through? No, it is to "usward" who *believe*. Are we going to put ourselves among the unbelievers? That is all that is required: "... who believe". We are weak in ourselves, we are finished, beaten, everything is too much for us. Are we going to accept that position and sit down in it? It will not be long before we find that other powers will rise up and gain the mastery of our life, and we will be beaten and harassed, just as these people were from these various forces coming in from round about, simply because they had accepted a lower level than the Lord intended. But even though we may be feeling perfectly unfit and worthless, if we will accept this position of appropriating faith as to the strength of His might, the Lord may take hold of us as that weak thing and bring to naught the mighty things, as a nothing to bring to naught the things that are, His strength made perfect in weakness.

We must not accept our own natural condition as the final criterion. Remember that God calls us through faith to His fulness, and to come there we must rise up and lay hold of His strength. The Lord needs, right at the outset, men and women who will — though they are weak in

themselves, utterly worthless and useless — are *strong in spirit*, inwardly unbending, inwardly refusing to capitulate to the conditions, whether these are enemy conditions from without or from within, or human conditions from within. These things are not to dominate, for they are contrary to Christ. Our human conditions are contrary to Christ, and they will work against Christ. Whether they be physical, or moral, or any other conditions, they will work against Christ, and keep us in limitation and in bondage. We must lay hold of His strength by faith, and appropriate it to overcome the conditions which we find in ourselves which are holding us in bondage.

There were two things about Othniel; he judged Israel and went out to war. He determined the nature of the cost, and then went out to meet the enemy. That judgement, perception and insight caused him to recognise what the position was. He had the eyes of his heart enlightened, and he saw that this was not something that was to be surrendered to, because this was something against the Lord's thought, something that the Lord did not accept. Argue as you might for it, and for the hopelessness and helplessness of the position, nevertheless, it stood in contrast to what the Lord had shown to be His mind, and that is the final argument.

Ask yourself whether your condition is what the Lord wants for you, or whether the Lord has not revealed something other than that. Let that determine. Does the Lord want us to be poor, grovelling things, beaten and harassed by enemy forces and by human elements and natural conditions, so that all the time we are at the mercy of these things, in bondage, unable to deliver souls? The answer does not lie far off. That is not the Lord's thought for you and for me. The Lord has called us to liberty, victory, and fulness.

Othniel judged. He that is spiritual judges all things. He knows what the Lord wants and what the Lord does not want, and he sees the situation in a spirit of clear judgement. Othniel went out to war. There are a lot of people who think that they have a lot of spiritual perception, that they understand the difference. They can tell you the difference between conversion and new birth, and all these fine distinctions, but they are no good at fighting. The Lord does not want us to talk about distinctions, discriminations, or fine differences. The Lord wants that we, in seeing things spiritually, should go out to battle, and thus lay hold of His strength against ourselves, our weaknesses and conditions, and all else. We must lay hold of the Lion of God, which represents the strength that is in Christ Jesus.

The Lord make us strong, and give us faith to take His strength.

STANDING ON THE GROUND OF OUR UNION IN CHRIST

“And the children of Israel again did that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah: and Jehovah strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah. And he gathered unto him the children of Ammon and Amalek; and he went and smote Israel, and they possessed the city of palm-trees. And the children of Israel served Eglon the king of Moab eighteen years. But when the children of Israel cried unto Jehovah, Jehovah raised them up a saviour, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a man left-handed. And the children of Israel sent tribute by him unto Eglon the king of Moab. And Ehud made him a sword which had two edges, a cubit in length; and he girded it under his raiment upon his right thigh” (Judges 3:12-16, ASV).

“And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said ... And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2 Chron. 20:5-12).

Ehud — unity or joining together

In our last meditation we were considering Othniel, the first judge. We now come to look at the second, Ehud. Ehud means “joining together”, or “unity”. Another meaning of his name is practically the same as the meaning of Judah, that is, “praise” or “confession”. We shall see that these two things are really all of one.

Then it is said that Ehud was a Benjamite, and that fact in itself

carries a significance, because, as we know from the Word, Benjamin means “the son of my right hand”; but it is said that he was left-handed, which looks like contradiction, though it is not. Then he made a sword with two edges, and the length of it was one cubit.

That is all we need say about Ehud, because in those features we have all we need to show of the features of Christ which lead to deliverance from a wrongful bondage and limitation into which we as the Lord’s people may come by our own spiritual decline, and which lead us out into that fulness of life and fulness of victory which is the Lord’s mind for us.

Unity of God’s people

The name itself surely is significant, and I wonder if in the Holy Spirit’s fuller and deeper knowledge and understanding of things this name itself does not go to the root of the matter – unity or joining together. That may not have to be understood, in the first place, in the collective sense. It is quite true that a good deal of the condition among the people of God in this book of Judges was that of intertribal conflict and strife. They were a divided people, and we read of several very painful exhibitions of their state of schism and division. Probably Ehud has something to say to that, and as he speaks of joining together, or unity, he indicates quite clearly that there can be no going on into the fulness of the Lord, no knowledge of the Lord’s fulness in life and victory only as the Lord’s people are together in love. That is distinctly an Ephesian characteristic. The body builds itself up in love, makes increase by love. The Lord’s people come really to the Lord’s fulness in life and power and fruitfulness by being together in the true concord and fellowship of the one Spirit, in the one Body. There is no doubt about that being true, and if Ehud has a message for the church as a whole that is the message very largely. We have proved it to be true both by the positive and the negative side of it. There is always loss, arrest, paralysis and defeat when once the enemy can divide the Lord’s people. That is a master method of his to defeat the end of God which is the coming into the fulness of Christ. And we know, on the other hand, that apart from any organising or human efforts to bring about oneness or union, and apart from all the mechanical contrivances of registers and what not to make a people one, if they come together in one Spirit and one testimony, there is a very great spiritual increase; there is an enlargement of the Lord among them; there is growth, progress, a pressing back of the horizon to a great revelation, vision and unfolding of the

purpose of God. That is surely known to us to some extent at least. Get the Lord's people together on a spiritual basis, and you get enlargement and enrichment.

Unity of the individual

That is one side of it, but Ehud has something more to say than that, and what he has to say is very largely in connection with the individual. The application is true to the company, but it is just as true, and just as important, for the individual. The individual has to be united. The individual has got to be joined together. The individual has got to be a solid whole. Just as a master-stroke of the enemy is to divide the Lord's people collectively, to break into the fellowship of the saints, so a master-stroke of the enemy is to divide the soul of the individual, to make the individual two rather than one. If we for one moment, for one instant, have a question as to the Lord, and as to our standing or our relationship with the Lord, the enemy makes full use of that doubt to bring a divided state in our lives. This will cause conflict with ourselves and a continuous warfare going on inside; we are divided against ourselves. A house divided against itself cannot stand. The enemy always makes full use of any kind of uncertainty in our hearts in relation to the Lord to bring us down into bondage, and to destroy us and prevent our spiritual progress. That is a thing to be recognised. We know it but we need to lay that to heart. Any kind of dividedness within that is of uncertainty, of question as to the Lord, as to our relationship with the Lord, as to our spiritual position, or as to our place in the will of God, lays us open immediately to a watching enemy who takes instant advantage of that uncertainty, and encamps upon it, and seeks to force a breach in our own souls to our undoing. The result of any question like that is always to bring us into bondage, to arrest our spiritual progress, to turn us in upon ourselves, and to make us totally incapable of serving the Lord's fuller and higher interests in others unto the fulness of Christ.

That is why it is significant that the Holy Spirit takes care to give us details like that. Ehud, meaning unity, joining together, was a Benjamite, "the son of my right hand". Surely that means standing in the place of strength. It speaks to us of our standing in the Lord, and a standing in the place of strength. You will know what we mean when we speak of our standing. Have you any question about your standing before the Lord, about your position, about your acceptance? Have you any question as to

whether, after all, your sins are all remitted, that the sin question has been fully and finally dealt with, as far as you are concerned? Have you any shadow of a doubt as to your acceptance by the Lord and that that acceptance is an abiding acceptance, that you stand there not on the ground of what you are? If that were the ground you would not stand there two seconds, but on the ground of what Christ is you are able to stand securely. Do you believe that Christ is settled in the presence of God, without any fear whatever that He will be ejected? Have you ever thought that Christ will ever be turned out of God's presence? Do you think it is possible through all eternity that the Lord Jesus will be expelled from the presence of God because of something in Him that is wrong? Such a thought is ridiculous. We would never entertain such a thought. Well, that standing is yours by faith. If you will only, by faith, take Christ as your standing you come into the Son at God's right hand. That is what it means to be in Christ: established, settled, fixed in the presence of God.

A true acceptance of that will never make us careless, it will never leave room for presumption, it will never lead to the sin of saying, "Well, I am saved, nothing will alter that!" A true appropriation of Christ, which is a true appreciation of Christ, will always smite anything like that in our hearts. When we come to the place of faith's settlement in Christ as the Son at God's right hand, we have beaten the devil of most of his tactics, and are delivered from paralysis. Have a question about that, and you are defeated; it is into that crack which defeats you that the enemy forces his way and he will drive it home until you become two in one, fighting within, the house divided, ready to fall.

This Son at God's right hand speaks to us of our standing, meaning we are whole, a unity; we are one, we are joined together. There is nothing like this faith position as to our standing in the Lord to make us a solid whole, and to defeat all those forces of the enemy that would bring us into bondage and defeat, uselessness and barrenness. This eternal questioning about the Lord, our acceptance, our sins, how we stand with the Lord, what His attitude is towards us, and a thousand and one forms which this questioning takes, can destroy unity.

Ehud, the Benjamite, speaks of the divine side of things, that we are established as a unity on the ground of our acceptance in the Son at God's right hand. We know that he was a left-handed man. Paul was a Benjamite, and he was a left-handed man. The Word does not say that anywhere, but he was. What is meant by a left-handed man standing in a right hand position? "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing."

As for myself, I am weak. Left-handedness in the battle is a type of weakness. It speaks of man's own weakness; here is a man who in himself is weak, who is regarded as less than others, a man who is at a discount, under a handicap in himself, and yet is nevertheless in the Son at God's right hand.

There are two sides: there is the divine side, and our side. These two sides must go together; they are not contrary, they are one. We have to come to the place where we recognise our left-handedness; that is, that in ourselves we are nothing, we are weak. When we have come to the full consciousness of that we are in the strongest position. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, but look at the two sides of that man. Was there a man more confident, more assured, more certain as to his standing? See the words he uses of positive conviction: "... hath translated us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13). It is all quite certain on that side, yet he was always ready to confess his own weakness, his own faultiness, his own worthlessness.

Do not think you have got to feel tremendously able and worthwhile in yourself to have this assurance. We have got to know how utterly worthless we are in ourselves before we can fully appreciate our standing in Christ, because it brings us to the position that it is not what we are but what He is. God demands that, and that is where God's strength is found.

This left-handed Benjamite, a solid unity in himself, made a sword with two edges. See the man who wields the Word of God to good effect! We are not dealing with all the typical elements in the book of Judges. If we were dealing with Eglon, and all that that man represents, you would see the point, but we take the positive side. Here is the two-edged sword, which leads us to think of Hebrews 4:12:

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

This sword goes right through, as did Ehud's.

The spiritual application

In applying this, first of all let us say that the only man who can wield the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to real effect, is a man who is a unity. When you and I have this dividedness of soul, this question, this uncertainty, we can never use the Word of God to real effect. We shall

never be able to take the Word of God into our hands and do real work with it for the deliverance of others. We have to be sure of our standing, our acceptance and place in the Lord.

Ehud made his sword a cubit in length. A cubit is a measure from the elbow to the finger tips, and you will see that a cubit is said to be according to the measure of a man. That cubit from the elbow to the fingertips is therefore, representative of the measure of the man. Ehud made his sword according to the measure of a man. That does not mean that the Word of God is brought typically down to human dimensions, but it means that the Word of God was vitally related to his human life.

It is just possible to take the wonderful revelations of the Word of God and use them, or talk about them, out of all relationship to ourselves, without our having a living, practical relationship with the Word of God. The very first thing that the Word of God has to do in the one who uses it is to measure him up, and deal with him. If you and I use the Word of God out of correspondence with our own lives, then we have gone beyond our measure, and we shall not be effective. The Lord is able to say, "That man is talking about something which he is not living. That is out of relationship; that is not true in life." The Lord will bring conviction on such a one sooner or later. The Word of the Lord has got to be brought into active, immediate relation to the life of the one who uses it. Ehud was such a man. He was in living oneness with the Word of God, typically speaking; and, being this kind of man, he dealt with and destroyed the power that had imposed itself upon the Lord's people, and led them out into liberty!

We have referred to 2 Chronicles 20. Do you see the parallel? In that chapter the enemies Moab and Ammon were mentioned. They came against the Lord's people. It is very inspiring to notice that what we have been saying is closely related to this chapter. Here you have these forces rising up, and you notice that Jehoshaphat says that these are the people whom the Lord Himself dispossessed, and gave the land unto His people. These dispossessed foes sought to repossess themselves and dispossess the Lord's people. Jehoshaphat made it a matter of the Lord's purpose, the Lord's mind, the Lord's intention about this. He says, in effect, "You never intended this; You showed what you intended when You drove them out! Now it is not Your intention that Moab and Ammon should dispossess Your people; Your purpose is the other way round!"

Then you notice that everything here is a matter of strong confidence. We are left-handed in ourselves, "*but our eyes are upon thee*"! The Son of the right hand!

Then listen to Jehoshaphat later: “Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.” Isn’t that what Ehad means? “Believe in the Lord your God”, get rid of all doubts, uncertainties; get rid of the dividedness of heart; get rid of the questions; stand solidly in your God, “so shall ye be established”.

You see the message to our hearts. If there has come arrest, limitation, defeat and a falling short of what the Lord intended, and the forces against us have obstructed our way and imposed themselves upon us so that we feel incapable of getting through, what is it that is said to us regarding the way of deliverance?

The first thing is faith’s laying hold of God’s strength. The second is coming to a settled place as to all questions concerning our relationship with the Lord, our standing, our acceptance; getting rid of all dividedness of soul, and standing by faith firmly in the Son of God’s right hand. Then, on that ground of faith’s assurance of the Lord, the faithfulness of God, the certainty of His will for our being in a place of victory, rising up with the Word of God closely related to our own lives to strike those forces that are besieging, that are hemming us in.

We have in our remembrance how the enemy tried this very thing with Martin Luther. He tried to divide his soul regarding his acceptance with God, by bringing against him his own left-handedness; that is, his own worthlessness, his own weakness, and the devil sought to write his sins over his head as a charge against him. Martin Luther said he felt himself going to pieces, sinking, and losing confidence and faith, until he recollected the word of the Lord. Then he laid hold of the Word of God and rose up and smote the enemy by declaring: Yes, all that is true which you have said but you have forgotten one thing, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin.” The devil left him, and Luther came out in victory. This is a simple, and well-known illustration of this very thing. If the enemy can divide our souls with doubt, with questions or uncertainty we are a bound and defeated people; but, taking our place solidly upon the fact of Christ our life, Christ our righteousness, Christ our standing, Christ our everything, and refusing this dividedness of soul, we can take up the Word of God and use it against the forces of evil and cleave a way through. The whole matter resolves itself into a strong standing on the ground of our certain union with God in Christ, and refusing all dividedness of heart. If the enemy could have succeeded with us, very few of us would be where we are today. The enemy can create

dark, dense and thick atmospheres so that it seems that heaven is closed and hell circles around. Then he immediately tells you that the Lord has a controversy with you, the Lord has left you to your own devices, and the Lord is not with you any longer. The devil is always the accuser of the brethren. How are we going to escape? If we give in, that is the end of our progress, the end of our victory, the end of our spiritual growth. How are we going to overcome? By being united in heart with God's testimony concerning His Son, and, standing on that ground, to use the Word of God, "It is written ...". It was after the Lord Jesus had said those words that the devil left Him. It was when Ehud had triumphed that the land had rest forty years. It would have been much longer if the people had not gone wrong again. While we stand our ground there is the rest and peace of victory. The Lord speak that word to our hearts.

To be continued