

HUMBLE INSTRUMENTS

Rev. Joseph B. Markey

"And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod.—Ex. 4-2.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Ecclesiastes 9:10.

How often do we sit idly by and do nothing because we seem to be able to do so little! Naaman's servants said to him: "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it?" Oh, yes, if we could only do some great thing—"but what is that in thine hand?" What have you? That is the question. And old proverb says: "Despise not the day of small things." Legend tells us of a great king who lost a kingdom for the want of one small horseshoe nail. A small thing indeed, but great consequence hinged upon it. Hornets are small insects, but God used them effectively to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan before the Children of Israel. The doctrine of the Gospel itself, the Prophet says, is "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." It is the faithfulness to detail, to the small things that makes for success.

God is a great God. He flings words from His finger tips; sets the sun and moon in their orbits; causes the whole to function harmoniously; and sends His rain and sunshine upon the just and the unjust. But in all His greatness and might He is ever using the smallest instruments, the most humble implements, to accomplish His purpose.

God's Word tells us of many humble instruments used in His hands, as the following verse calls to our attention:

"Shamgar had an ox-goad,  
Rahab had a string,  
Gideon had a trumpet,  
David had a sling,  
Samson had a jaw-bone,  
Moses had a rod,  
Dorcas had a needle—  
All were used of God"—Anon.

What is that in thine hand? A rod? A string? A needle? Then use it with thy might to the glory of God.

Moses before Pharaoh with his shepherd's rod performed miracles that could not be duplicated by the wise men of Egypt.

A scarlet line in the hand of Rahab was the means of escape for the Hebrews who had spied out the strength of Jericho, and was likewise the signal of her salvation when Joshua took the city.

We are very conscious today of the need of defense production and armaments for our soldiers, but Shamgar slew six hundred enemies of Israel with a lowly ox-goad.

We would expect the mighty Gideon to have a marvelous display of powerful weapons to gain such a great victory. What were they? Trumpets, pitchers and torches. Humble weapons indeed, but a sweeping victory.

And who but a Samson would choose the jaw-bone of an ass for defense? But with this unlikely weapon he slew one thousand Philistine enemies.

David with his sling and one smooth stone slew the giant, Goliath, put a whole army to flight, and gained a glorious victory.

With her little needle Dorcas sewed herself so securely into the hearts of those for whom she labored that when she died they would

not bury her, but called for Peter, who, when he had prayed to God, restored her to them alive again.

Peter and John entering the temple that day apparently had very little, for Peter said to the lame man, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus arise and walk." What Peter had, and what Peter gave that day put strength into those ankle bones, and the man leaping up, walked. It also moved the whole city of Jerusalem, for the disciples were called before the council and commanded not to teach in the name of Jesus. It also brought a refilling to the disciples, for when they had prayed the place was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.

What is that in thine hand? However humble the instrument you may have, do not hesitate to let God use it, and good will come. A little lad had five barley loaves and two small fishes. But he gave them to the Master. When Jesus had received them He blessed them, and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to distribute among the multitude. A great company of five thousand men, besides women and children, were fed to the full.

Give what you have to the Master. He will bless it. It may be He will break it. Perchance He will give it out. But it will return to you an hundred fold. Remember, there were twelve baskets of fragments from the five barley loaves.

Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days. What thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. Let God use your talent, though it be only one.

PAYSON A MAN OF PRAYER

As a preacher, Payson was eminently prayerful. It was manifest in private intercourse with his divine Master. "Payson," said an elderly minister of Christ, respecting him, "Payson does not need to go to the throne of grace; for he is always there." About the time I was licensed, and was leaving for the field where I laboured sixteen years, he said to me, "Brother M., I would never leave my study without first having prayed." And he seemed to read the Holy Word with much prayer. He studied, he planned, he wrote, he pronounced his sermons in prayer. He seemed to be habitually sensible that God only could give his words success; and such was his faith in the efficacy of prayer, that he once said to the writer: "If I really knew I needed two such worlds as these for my own private accommodation, I should no more hesitate to ask for them than I should hesitate to ask for my daily bread." And exercising this faith in the efficacy of prayer, it is not strange that he should be so much in prayer for the Holy Spirit to accompany his efforts in the ministry. Here was his chief dependence for success. For though his powers of oratory were far above most in the holy office, though his imagination was most inventive and brilliant, seldom surpassed, his memory remarkably tenacious, and his reading extensive, yet his dependence for success, I repeat it, was on the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit. This was seen in his sermons. It was especially seen in his addresses to the throne of grace. The assembly to whom he ministered were, by his manner in prayer, made to feel that their minister leaned upon a mighty arm, in his great work. They heard him address the Saviour in such humble confidence, as to convince them there was his only hope.—Sel.

OTHERS MAY, YOU CANNOT!

Dr. George Watson

"Live out Thy life within me,  
O Jesus, King of Kings!  
Be Thou Thyself the answer  
To all my questionings.  
Live out Thy life within me,  
In all things have Thy way;  
I, the transparent medium  
Thy glory to display."

If God has called you to be really like Jesus He will draw you into a life of crucifixion and humility, and put upon you such demands of obedience that you will not be able to follow other people, or measure yourself by other Christians, and in many ways He will seem to let other good people do things which He will not let you do.

Other Christians and ministers who seem very religious and useful may push themselves, pull wires, and work schemes to carry out their plans, but you cannot do it; and if you attempt it, you will meet with such failure and rebuke from the Lord as to make you surely penitent.

Others may boast of themselves, of their work, of their success, of their writings, but the Holy Spirit will not allow you to do any such thing, and if you begin it, He will lead you into some deep mortification that will make you despise yourself and all your good works.

Others may be allowed to succeed in making money, or may have a legacy left to them, but it is likely God will keep you poor, because He wants you to have something far better than gold, namely, a helpless dependence on Him, that He may have the privilege of supplying your needs day by day out of an unseen treasury.

The Lord may let others be honoured and put forward, and keep you hidden in obscurity, because He wants to produce some choice, fragrant fruit for His coming glory, which can only be produced in the shade. He may let others be great, but keep you small. He may let others do a work for Him and get the credit of it, but He will make you work and toil on without knowing how much you are doing; and then to make your work still more precious, He may let others get the credit for the work which you have done, and thus make your reward ten times greater when Jesus comes. The Holy Spirit will put a strict watch over you with a jealous love, and will rebuke you for little words and feelings, or for wasting your time, which other Christians never seem distressed over. So make up your mind that God is an infinite Sovereign, and has a right to do as He pleases with His own. He may not explain to you a thousand things that puzzle your reason in His dealings with you, but if you absolutely sell yourself to be His love slave, He will wrap you up in a jealous love, and bestow upon you many blessings which come only to those who are in the inner circle. Settle it forever, then, that you are to deal directly with the Holy Spirit, and that He is to have the privilege of tying your tongue, or chaining your hand, or closing your eyes, in ways that He does not seem to use others. Now when you are so possessed with the living God that you are, in your secret heart, pleased and delighted over this peculiar, personal, private, jealous guardianship and management of the Holy Spirit over your life, you will have found the vestibule of heaven.