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Great Deeds With Small Tools

By the late: C. D. Cole

"And the Lord said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, a rod" (Ex. 4:2).

Great things have been done with small tools. When God called Moses at the burning bush, Moses demurred and offered excuses. He felt unequal to the task. God said to him, "What is that in thine hand?" Moses said, "A rod." Small tool, but with that rod, mighty things were done.

It had been 40 years since Moses refused to be the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. He did this by faith. He took God at His word. He believed what God said, and esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt.

His faith had undergone a long and severe test. He had flung away bright prospects. Looking after sheep in the desert was a sad comedown from the possibility of sitting on the throne of Egypt. Quite so, and yet it was in the desert that the vision of the bush burning, and not burning out, came; and it would not have come if Moses had been in a palace.

Soon after Moses made his choice to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, he tried to play the role of Israel's deliverer. He killed an Egyptain whom he saw beating one of his people. This was a rash act that sent him running for his life. He was running ahead of God; his timing was bad. And now for 40 years at the backside of the desert, Moses must have had many temptations to say, "I have played the

fool." Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, and so Moses probably thought no more about being Israel's deliverer. He seems to have settled down quietly as Jethro's son-in-law and be nothing more than an Arab shepherd.

The divine call to go back to Egypt and appear before Pharaoh with the command to release Israel must have come to Moses like a thunder-clap. It is no wonder that he shrank from such a task. Moses hesitated and protested not so much from cowardice as from lowliness. His former impetuous self-confidence had all been beaten out of him by his past sad failure. There was a time when he was ready to take up the role of deliverer in his own strength; but those hot days are past; age and solitude and communion with God had mellowed him into humility and a feeling of inadequacy. His recoil before such a task has been characteristic of the shrinking of all truly devout men, when designated for great tasks. Jeremiah, when called of God to preach to a sinful and dying nation, said, "I am just a child." Paul, when called to super-human tasks, cried out, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Men who do such work as the Jeremiahs, Pauls, Luthers, and Cromwells, are never forward to begin it.

Self-confidence is not the temper which God uses for His instruments. He works with "bruised reeds," and breathes His strength into them. It is when a man says, "I can do nothing" that he is fit for God to use. Paul, conscious of his own weakness, said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me."

Moses remembered enough of Egypt to know that it was no little thing to confront Pharaoh, and he knew enough of Israel not to be eager to have the task of leading them. He does not refuse the charge; he merely hesitates and expresses his inadequacy. His words were more of a prayer for help than a refusal to go.

God deals very gently with conscious weakness. When Moses said, "Who am I for such a task?" God said, "Certainly, I will be with thee." Moses did not have to calculate the difference between his feebleness and the strength of Pharaoh. Such arithmetic left out one element: the power of God. Moses versus Pharaoh did not look very hopeful, but Pharaoh versus Moses and God was a very different matter. One with God is always a majority. God and I are always stronger than any antagonist.

When God told Moses to go and deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, he shrank from the undertaking. It is a good thing he did, and we should not wonder at it. If he had gone at the task feeling he was able to do the job, he would have failed.

Look at his equipment. He had nothing but his shepherd's rod, a mere crab-stick with which he guided the sheep. Any day he might throw it away and get a better one. God said to him, "What is that in thine hand?" And Moses said, "A rod." But that was enough with God behind him.

So Moses was challenged to use what he had in his hand. And this same challenge comes to God's people today. Don't say you can't do anything in the service of God. "What is that in thine hand?" Use what you have. The strength is not in what you have in your hand, but in God. This is the way all great work for God has been done. Let us look at some examples of great deeds with small tools:

1. "What is that in thine hand, Shamgar?" "Just an ox-goad with which to prod lazy beasts!" But when used in obedience to God, Shamgar's ox-goad defeated the Philistines. Suppose Shamgar had refused to use his ox-goad because it was crude or ill-suited, as he thought, no such honor of victory would have been to his credit.

2. "What is that in thine hand, David?" "It is only a sling, a little thing made for pleasure or with which to keep the wolves away from the sheep." Yet, with that sling he slew Goliath whom the whole army of Israel dared not meet. Suppose David had said, "Why a sling is no weapon of war; it is foolish to meet a giant in mortal combat with a sling!" Israel would have been humiliated and defeated, and David would have been no asset but a burden to Saul's army. A sling was the only thing for David because it was all he had in his hand. Everybody has some peculiar talent or skill that may be used for God.

3. "What is that in thine hand, little boy?" "Oh, nothing but five loaves and two fishes." Christ said, "Bring them to me." That boy could not have given one man a square meal, but his small lunch in the hand of Christ was sufficient for the multitude. Little things become great things in the hand of Christ. "What is that in thine hand, lad of the church?" "What do you have to work with for God?" You say, "I do not have much, but I have a tongue." "I can't talk very well to big men, but I know how to talk to boys." Let God control your tongue, and you can bring boys to church that the pastor cannot bring. A girl can reach girls, and boys can reach boys for Christ and His church.

4. "What is that in thine hand, poor widow?" "Only two mites," did you say? "Give them to God, and thus, become an example through the centuries of complete consecration to God." Give to God what you have in your hand. Don't wait to grow rich and give millions. Give from what you now have, and it will be worth more to you in spiritual blessings and to the cause of Christ, than the mere thinking of what you would give if you were rich. A person of wide experience and observation said he had never known a rich man to begin tithing while rich, but that he had known many who began tithing while poor and then became rich. God was talking about material things when He said to Israel, "Them that honour me I will honour." I cannot tell you just how God will honour you, but by the authority of His word, I can tell you that He will honour you if you will honour Him. It may be by making you poor as a trial of your faith which is the most precious thing you have. It may be by making you rich so that you may give much more to His cause. It may be by making you a martyr to your faith. It doesn't matter how he will honour you. Leave that to His wisdom and good pleasure.

5. "What is that in thine hand, Mary?" "Oh, it is only a little alabaster box of fragrant ointment." It represented her life's savings. "Break it, and pour it upon the Saviour's head, and its sweet perfume will be a fragrance in the church through centuries to come."

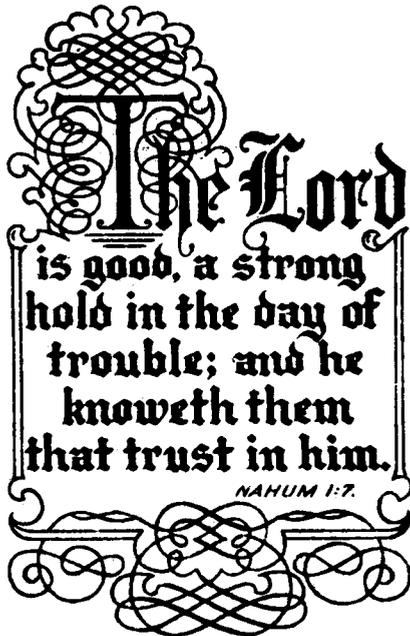
6. "What is that in thine hand, Dorcas?" "Just a small needle." Dorcas used it for God and the coats and garments kept multiplying, giving warmth to the cold and clothing for the poor. Many benevolent societies have been inspired by the needle of Dorcas.

To everyone who reads this message, I ask, "What is that in thine hand?" You have something. You have some talent or some ability, or some opportunity. Don't waste it by dreaming of what you could do if you were a preacher or big business man or something else you will never

be. Use what you have for God. Turn it over to Him, and He can do wonders with it. It may not be much in your hand, but consecrate it to God, and it will become a mighty instrument for good.

Our trouble is not hand trouble; it is heart trouble. It is not that we have no ability; the trouble is that we do not use the ability we have for the glory of God and the good of men. The number of our talents is not of much importance; the important thing is what we do with what we have. God does not depend upon our ability. He takes the weak things to confound the mighty. Speaking of the gospel, Paul says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (II Cor. 4:7).

May God give His people the grace of wisdom to use what we have, remembering that the power for success is in Him, and that the glory belongs to Him!



Jesus Christ is Lord

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HOW SHALL THEY BELIEVE IN HIM OF WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD?—Rom. 10:14

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