Articles by Leonard Linstead

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The Spiritual Conflict (Feb 1962)

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This is the digest of a tape-recorded address by our brother Leonard Linstead, Witchita, Kansas, on March 2, 1961, to saints gathered in the Pacific Avenue Gospel Hall, Toronto, Canada. We pray that in its present form it may be even a greater blessing than when delivered orally.

Everyone saved by the grace of God is aware of the fact that the Christian pathway brings one into daily conflict with the enemy, and that unless he is going to take a strong stand, he is going to be overcome. It is the desire of the Lord Jesus that each one be an overcomer in the conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil.

There is a portion in the Old Testament that might be a help in this very matter: “When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; For the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you. And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. And what man is he that

hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her. And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart" (Deut. 20:1-8).

Four things are mentioned here which may serve as illustrations of how we are to cope with our enemies. First, there is the matter of the undedicated house; second, that of the untasted vineyard; third, the case of the man who had engaged or betrothed a wife, but had not taken her; then, last of all there was the faint-hearted person who would discourage his brethren. Let us see if we can learn some spiritual lessons from these things.

The Undedicated House

The officer gave instruction that if there was a man who had built an house and had not dedicated it, this he must do before going into the battle. A man who has failed to carry this out can be visualized going into battle; as the conflict waxes hotter, and the foe presses harder and closer, he thinks about his house, the house he had not enjoyed. Finally, completely frustrated by thoughts of that house, he throws down his weapons and runs away, the house having become a snare to him.

It is otherwise with one of the other soldiers. In the heat of battle he may think that his life is going to be cut off, but he has no worry about his house for he has

dedicated it to the Lord. Inasmuch as he has turned it over to the Lord, he is able, without further thought, to detach himself from it and concentrate his efforts on the war, able to fight on furiously until the victory is secure.

No Christian can fight successfully against the world, the flesh, and the devil unless everything in his life has been turned over to the Lord Jesus. Too many Christians are attempting to fight the battle with things in their lives which have not been dedicated to the Lord Jesus. There are some among the Lord's people who have made an idol out of their homes and the things in their homes; consequently, they have no time in which to exert an effort in the service of the Lord. An older brother used to say that the saints were suffering from an over-dose of good-housekeeping and better-homesand-gardens. When hearts are too taken up with these things, the energies are spent which should be used in the work of God. Where a Christian has dedicated his house to the Lord, we are sure that the house will be open to the people of God. It is sad when the spirit of hospitality ceases, and when there is no home open for the entertainment of the servants of the Lord.

Even an automobile, if it is dedicated to God, can be a wonderful blessing, but if it is not dedicated to the Lord, it can be a dreadful snare.

The Untasted Vineyard

According to Jewish law, when a vineyard was planted it was left for three years. On the fourth year all the fruit was for God, and on the fifth year, the owner received his portion. In those far-away times, any man who had enjoyed the fruit of his own vineyard would fight the

harder for that parcel of ground. The vineyard from which a harvest had been reaped might suggest that when one has appropriated the truth of God, he will be very slow to relinquish it. From the New Testament we learn that in the closing days, men will be giving up the truth of God little by little simply because they had never actually tasted the blessedness of God's revealed will. We might well appropriate Paul's charge to Timothy: "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning (the) faith have made shipwreck" (1 Tim. 1:18-19).

The Betrothed Wife

There is also the hindrance of the unfulfilled vow: "What man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another take her." Here is the danger of the unfulfilled pledge. There are obligations that we have the one to the other and to the Lord; unless these are fulfilled, we cannot expect to have courage to face the conflict. We must learn to expel the things which would crowd out of our hearts love to the Lord Jesus.

The charge against the Ephesian church was that she had left her first love. How many have followed her bad example since then! If this has been our bitter experience, may the Lord in His grace draw us back to Himself. May we never again allow anything to rob Him of His rightful place in our hearts.

We have an obligation to the people of God, and if we but remember that, it would save us from forming little cliques of our own. Similarly, we have an obligation to the world. The love of Christ should constrain us in our work among the unconverted. If we were possessed of a true love to the Lord Jesus and a real love to the unsaved, at the close of our Gospel meetings, we would not gather in clusters and leave poor visitors standing around looking this way and that. We would greet them with a warm handshake, and let them feel the power of the love of Christ in our hands. They will learn the truth of God more easily, if they feel that it passes from your heart through your hand to them with a little love, a little warmth, and a little consideration.

The Faint-Hearted Person

To fail in real dedication to the Lord, to come short in an appropriation of the things of God in Christ Jesus, to shun the obligation to the Lord, His people and the world, is to develop into a faint-hearted Christian. Such a person can only be a discouragement to his brethren. In doing little or nothing for the cause of Christ, one becomes a great hindrance to others who are attempting things for God.

If we can face the enemies with a consciousness that we have submitted to the Lordship of Christ, that we have yielded our all to Him, ours will be an assured victory. If we fail to defend that which He has entrusted to us, that which we may have enjoyed at one time, but now fail to taste, well might we expect defeat. May we heed the call to Ephesus: “I have somewhat against thee, because thou had left thy first love. Remember therefore from

whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Rev. 2:4-5).

If you have been just playing in the vineyard, and have not been really feeding upon the Word of God, confess this, and take up the Word of God in the spirit of Jeremiah: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Then strength, courage, and wisdom will be yours, and you will realize as maybe never before, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

May we strive for the commendation of the Apostle John, "Ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14).