

STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

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SIX SHIPS OF HOPE

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It is very easy for us as Christians to become so much involved in the defense of the Faith that we neglect other, personal compartments of the Christian life. No matter what may happen on the other battlefields involving sin, heresy, and apostasy, each one of us must still live the Christian life, personally and privately. Winning the battle on the battlefield where apostates attack the Lord's truth does not automatically win the personal battle in the privacy of our own heart. Ecclesiastical separation is very necessary, but personal separation and sanctification is a priority of the first magnitude for all of us. We will not be fit for the battlefield with our enemies if we do not win the battle in our own heart and home. In fact, the most beloved enemy is ourselves; and we too often take up for ourselves when we would not do so for our other enemies.

I have often wondered across my years in the ministry since 1952, if there should not be a conference called just

for the warriors who do indeed fight the good fight of faith without compromise. Such an Irenic Conference would probably become infected by our own personal ways so that it would deteriorate into even a battle over the peace that we would share with each other away from the battlefields of victory.

Like A Ship At Sea

Both the biblical philosopher and the psalmist use this figure of a ship at sea for the voyage of life. Job reiterates life in this figure:

Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good (Job 9:25).

In this figure, Job speaks of his life as swift as a postman bringing letters filled with only bad news.

Job also speaks of the swiftness of life in the language of the navy.

They ("my days") are passed away as swift ships:... (Job 9:26a).

The Psalmist also casts his figure in the metaphor of the ship at sea.

They that go down to the sea in ships, they do business in great waters;...He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them into their desired haven (Psalm 107:23, 29,30).

This figure of life as a stormy sea is also universal in the masterpieces of painting and sculpture. In the Carpaneto Monument, by Scanzi, the sculptor, we view a superb work, collocated in 1886, to the memory of Chevalier Giacomo Carpentio, a sea trader. The sculptor has wished to represent Life as a stormy sea which a human being, guided by his Guardian Angel, and firm to holy precepts, succeeds in overcoming the sea and all its violence. An angel of finely proportioned form with the dexterous hand of a sailor draws in the sail of a boat which has finished its voyage and this idea of the artist is explained by the following words written at the base of the monument: "Happy he who on the Ocean of Life had such a trusty Pilot."

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Six Ships of Hope

In our personal and private lives, together, we need six great ships of hope in the peace that we need between ourselves as brethren. We need this all along the way as we return again and again to the battlefield upon which our enemies stand.

These "Six Ships of Hope" are: Discipleship (cf. Matthew 28:19-20 & Luke 14:26,27,33); Stewardship (cf. Romans 15:1-3 & II Corinthians 9:7); Friendship (cf. Matthew 11:18-19 & Luke 16:9); Fellowship (cf. Acts 2:42 & Hebrews 10:23-25); Worship (cf. John 4:23-24 & Revelation 4:10). Of course, the Flagship, the first of the six ships, lies in the harbor of our meeting for our departure on earth to our arrival in heaven, is the Lordship of Jesus Christ (cf. Matthew 7:21 & Acts 2:26).

A pure and holy heart of life could give us the unity, together. Although it is more rare now, we still meet some brethren, of the holy walk, who invite a friend to speak of peace, build a Christian, maintain a hope, pray, delight a father, play the child, experience laughter, encourage another, play the instrument, companion the wife, be a child again, buy a hotdog, read a book, taught a beauty, or break bread without betrayal.

Going Forth in Bonds of Bands

We, together, with these six sanctified ships of hope on the high seas may also serve in the warfare for Christ. We may do this going forth in bonds of bands.

All the way through the Bible God's men go in bands: there is the Enos Band (Genesis 4:26); the Noah Band (I Peter 3:20); the Amram Band (Exodus 6:20); the Moses Band (Numbers 11:26); the Gideon Band (Judges 7:7); the

Hannah Band (I Samuel 1:20); the David Band (I Samuel 22:2); the Naomi Band (Ruth 1:22); the Issachar Band (I Chronicles 12:32); the Zerubbabel Band (Ezra 2:1-2); the Elijah Band (II Kings 2:9); the Malachi Band (Malachi 3:17); the Daniel Band (Daniel 1:7); the Andrew Band (John 1:40-42); the Peter Band (Matthew 17:1); the Pauline Band (II Timothy 4:11a); the Lois Band (II Timothy 4:11a); the Lydia Band (Acts 16:14-14); the Aquila Band (Acts 18:24-26), etc.

Here, in our time, we need to go about in bands, united to each other, doing the will of God in bonds of bands. Although separation separates us from the sin, error, and enemy of our generation, yet, in the brotherhood we are bonded in bands with the Christ, our invisible leader. Remember the words of the Sage of Jerusalem:

The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands (Proverbs 30:27); so, our king is invisible too.

Six Anchors of Victory

These same six ships, together, may triumph, being kept secure with the anchors of victory through the Promises of God. Let us also note them with care.

1. The anchor of God's omnipotence **over** us (Revelation 19:6).
2. The anchor of God's presence **with** us (Matthew 28:20b).
3. The anchor of God's Name **to** us (Acts 4:12).
4. The anchor of God's Holy Spirit **in** us (I John 2:27).
5. The anchor of God's Providence **for** us (Romans 8:28 & 31).
6. The anchor of God's protection **around** us (Psalm 34:7).
7. The anchor of God's victory **through** us (I Corinthians 5:7).

Hope and Victory: With or Without Revival

Practical holiness could result in these "Six Ships of Hope" and "Six Anchors of Victory" for fundamentalists as they face the twenty-first century.

The posture of faith must lean forward in hope and triumph in victory.

Although we pray earnestly for revival, yet, whatever our sovereign Lord may bring us, there must survive in every individual heart the cry, "I must be revived." Habakkuk's prayer is our model for revival.

O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy (Habakkuk 3:2).

There are really three prayers here, each more limited in scope.

First, with a magnanimous heart, he prays: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years."

God had already revealed to Habakkuk bad days ahead. Nebuchadnezzar was coming to Jerusalem; Judah would go into seventy years of captivity. When Habakkuk heard all of this he was "afraid" (v. 2a), but he still prayed for a revival in Judah, "in the midst of the years." The middle of the years would rise from an idiomatic expression like "in the midst of the seasons of a year;" therefore, the hot, dry summer.

The second prayer reiterated: "O Lord in the midst of the years make known;" or, in other words, "if we do not all have a revival, make yourself known to at least some one. Send a revival to someone even if I am not present, O Lord."

But the third prayer concludes: "O Lord," if you do not give a revival to

Judah or to any other individual, "in wrath remember mercy." If things are increasing worse, "in wrath remember mercy."

No one of us knows the future: a wide revival, an individual or local revival, or no revival at all. However, hope and victory still awaits us with our faith in the Lord Jesus. Our ships of faith in Christ Jesus must one day dock at our "desired haven," too.

Through all the aloneness of our days as pilgrims and strangers in the earth we need our "Six Ships of Hope." Through all the storms we must face to cross our sea of life, we will need our "Six Anchors of Victory."

From these we may travel with bonds and bands of unity with each other in this holy, watery trek.

From these we may travel with an offensive and defensive armory of the fundamentals of the Gospel in our united faith and fellowship.

Let us note this sanctified prospect as we await the final harbor when life and the battlefield is over, tomorrow.

There Remains

THERE REMAINS yet a Biblical Quest for this generations in spite of the current Apostasy.

THERE REMAINS yet a Holy Experiment for God's people in the Twentieth Century.

THERE REMAINS yet a sacred Vision for those who dare to devise a Divine Consort with God.

THERE REMAINS yet the urgent need for the Biblical Institutions of the Home and the Church to set forth the genuine orthodoxy and orthopraxy seen in the Gospels.

THERE REMAINS yet the right and the reality of certain Biblical institutions in Christian Education where

there is the liberty of saying anything that is true to those who desire to hear it.

THERE REMAINS yet a certain Holy Ghost solution for this generation; a solution that God has always provided to those who dare to be different and think aright.

THERE REMAINS an always overwhelming Master Truth from the Word of God which has been sovereignly appointed to cope with the ever-mutating new forms of the growing Apostasy for His people in each succeeding generation.

THERE REMAINS yet that spiritual hope of final fruit perpetuated from the initial root of Truth given by the Gospel: that of Godly character concluding our Christian conversion and grandly growth continuing from our lowly birth as a babe in Christ.

THERE REMAINS yet the need of renewing those particular covenants made to our forebears which, since their time, have been neglected and which not even sin can preclude His promise to the succeeding generations who would repent.

THERE REMAINS yet the very Word of God and the Christian's Eternal Destiny in Heaven.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God"
(Hebrews 4:9).

"And, Thou, Lord,...remainest"
(Hebrews 1:10-11).

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O. Talmadge Spence

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