

THE INVINCIBLE ANCIENTS ... and the secret of their power  
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(I SAMUEL 31:11-13; 1 CHRONICLES 11: 15-19; 3 JOHN 7)

Spiritual enthusiasm is controlled passion; the dynamic which sends weaklings forth to subdue the mighty. Men fired with this rare quality conquer worlds. Today scientists lean over their drawing boards, technicians work overtime, and the resources of great countries are dedicated to the thrilling prospect of sending space-ships to explore the heavens.

Enthusiastic men never admit defeat, and that undoubtedly is the secret of their eventual triumph. Long ago this same quality enabled unlearned men to challenge the might of pagan empires; this unconquerable energy established the Church, and sent missionaries to the end of the earth. In all ages, enthusiasm has been the life of the Church. For a few moments, let us turn back the pages of history.

The Citizen's Challenge . . . on the Walls of Beth-shan-  
I Samuel 31:11-13

It was a dark and shadowy night for the fugitives who lay around the make-shift camp. Far away, upon the field of battle lay the bodies of many comrades, and buried forever were the hopes of Israel. Demobilized and completely vanquished by hordes of Philistines, survivors had fled for their lives. When a sentry whispered a warning, the men became alert; someone was approaching their camp. Then a man staggered into the midst of the watching soldiers, and was recognized as one given up for dead. He told the story of the death of Saul, and how his headless body had been suspended from the walls of the Philistine stronghold; and instantly "the men of Jabesh Gilead arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan . . . . They remembered how Saul had once been their saviour (I Samuel 11), and their undying gratitude banished their weakness and turned each man into a giant. They did it for the king's sake!

The Captain's Courage . . . for the Well of Bethlehem-  
I Chronicles 11: 15-19

Stealthily, with infinite care, the young man wriggled his way up the face of the hillside. He was in enemy-controlled territory, and one mistake might lead to worse than death. Occasionally he paused, his keen eyes sweeping the surrounding hills. Every tree, every rock was examined for the presence of an enemy; but the whole scene seemed devoid of life. A little farther, and then peering over the highest ridge, the watcher gazed down upon the quaint little town of Bethlehem. Alas, the Philistines were in evidence everywhere. Turning to beckon the others who had quietly followed, the man was soon joined by David and two other captains. Together they watched the intruders in the valley. Suddenly, David sighed and said, " Oh that one would give me drink of the water of Bethlehem, that is at the gate." and even while he was speaking, his faithful captains resolutely made their plans. " And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water . . . and brought it to David." Perhaps it seemed a foolhardy thing to attempt, but they remembered how David had been their saviour (I Sam. 22:2) and their enthusiasm made possible the impossible. They did it for the Master's sake!

The Christians' Crusade . . . in the World of Bloodshed  
3 John 7

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The old man John paused, quill in hand, and reminisced. He was writing a short letter to the well-beloved Gaius, but his wandering thoughts had interrupted the task. His mind was going back over the decades; he was remembering colleagues who had long since gone home to heaven. He smiled; yes, they had been wonderful workers. They had vanquished heathen powers, and had triumphed in the greatest cause on earth. He sighed, and returning to his parchment, wrote, ". . . for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." Enthusiasm took the early Christians to market places, to synagogues, to homes, to face the lions, to suffer death by inhuman means. Enthusiasm gave birth to eloquence, and the story of Christ was told everywhere. These early Christians remembered the Cross, and their enthusiasm propelled them into the unknown. Today our world is filled with churches, clergy, and institutions, but something is wrong. We are machines without power; rockets without dynamic; Christians without holy fire. Church deacons throw their hats in the air at a ball game; shy, nervous creatures embrace strangers when their favorite star scores a goal; stammering people possess silver tongues when market prices, weather prospects, or even new fashions are under discussion; but when Christ's name is mentioned - "Shhhhhhhhh! We must not steal the minister's job! Yes, sir, there is a time for everything, and this is Wednesday afternoon, not Sunday morning! Shhhhhhhhh! Turn on the T.V., there might be a mannequin parade coming on! "

I'll Stay at My Post Until -"

Pailo cemetery, near the city of Tacloban, on Leyte Island in the Philippines, was very still. Officers and men of the United States Navy stood silently in long straight lines, and each heart was deeply stirred. The padre, the Rev. William Prigger, was concluding the burial service for 131 men who had been killed when a Japanese Kamikasi (suicide plane) brought devastation and destruction to the U.S. battleship Nashville. The men watched and listened, and were conscious of the fact that so easily they too might have died with their comrades. Suddenly the plaintive notes of " Call to Colors " rang out, and the flag which had been flying at half-mast slowly rose to the mast-head. The firing squad had paid their tribute to fallen comrades, and all men stood at the salute. They would never forget that tragic day when destruction hurtled from the skies above the Pacific.

To them, at first, it seemed inconceivable that fanatical Japanese pilots would willingly sacrifice themselves for their Emperor, but their superior officers insisted that this would be the case. Indeed, the suicide flyers would be a menace to all United States ships. When the treacherous attack was launched, the sky seemed filled with planes, and bombs were soon falling everywhere. Then came the screaming sounds of a plane hurtling toward the decks of the battleship, and in the ill-fated moments which followed, 131 men were killed. The wounded were rushed to hospital, where the grim fight to save life continued day and night; but in the quietness of the Pailo cemetery the unfortunate victims of enemy madness were buried with full military honors.

The padre, his task completed, stood back and looked at his boys. They were all impressed; but one young man, Harold Adams, seemed more upset than the rest. His face was intensely grim, and when he was asked the nature of his thoughts during the interment, he replied, " Chaplain, those men died for us." " Yes, I know," answered the padre; " but

THE INVINCIBLE ANCIENTS ... and the secret of their power what do you think we should do about it? " With compelling energy, Adams said, " I don't know what you are going to do, chaplain; I don't know what the other chaps are going to do; but I'll tell you what I intend to do. When the ship is refitted and out on the ocean again; when General Quarters is sounded, I'm going back to my battle station. I'll stay at my gun till every enemy plane is shot out of the air, and every enemy ship is sunk to the bottom of the ocean. Yes, I'll stay at my post until that for which these chaps died becomes a reality in this world."

Years later, in October, 1958, when I was welcomed to the city of Edmonton, in Alberta, Canada, I was delighted to discover that the Rev. William Prigger, then the minister of the First Baptist Church, Calgary, had been invited to deliver an address at the inaugural meeting of the evangelistic crusade. I shall never forget the moments when this fine servant of God re-lived his wartime experiences. As he described the Japanese attack, and recalled the burial service, for his comrades, he reiterated the sentiments of Harold Adams. Then he spoke of Another, Who died to bring peace to a troubled world. He reminded us of Christ's sacrifice, and asked what we intended to do about the matter. Against the setting of a sailor's determination, Mr. Prigger intimated that each Christian should stay at his post until every evil agency had been swept from the battlefields of life; until each hateful thing in national and international life had been destroyed; until those glorious principles for which Christ died swayed the world.

It was said of the church at Laodicea that its members were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm, and as such were quite unacceptable to God. It is difficult to understand how some Christians vow allegiance to Christ and then remain apathetic in regard to the extension of His kingdom. Some desire increasing wealth, and forget that ultimately it can only supply a tomb. Others crave for fame in the realms of sport, and forget that humans have poor memories. Things which are temporal are quickly forgotten. Even empires may arise and fall, to be remembered only by historians. The kingdom of God is eternal; to work for it, to extend its influence, to please its King-these are the greatest achievements in life.

Christ wants the best. He in the far off ages

Once claimed the firstlings of the flock, the finest of the wheat;

And still He asks His own, with gentlest pleading,

To lay their brightest hopes, their riches, talents at His feet:

He'll not forget the feeblest service, humblest love;

He only asks that of our store we give to Him

The best we have.

And is our best too much? Ah, friends, let us remember

How once our Lord poured forth His soul for us,

And in the prime of His mysterious manhood

Gave up His precious life upon the cross:

The Lord of Lords, by Whom the worlds were made,

Through bitter griefs and tears gave us

The best He had.

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