

THE PATRIARCHS . . . who were busy doing nothing
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(PSALM 46: 10; EXODUS 14: 13; 23: 11)

The advertising methods of the late Dr. Lionel Fletcher once caused a minor sensation in the stately city of Cape Town, South Africa. When he announced a special meeting for ladies only, he intimated that his topic would be, "Woman's Greatest Sin." Many sensationalists attended the service, but were extremely disappointed when Dr. Fletcher declared this sin to be worry. He exclaimed, "You worry about this; you worry about that; you worry about everything." Whether or not he was correct in his deductions may be open to debate, but no intelligent person would deny that worry undermines health, mars happiness, and fills homes with tension. It is thrilling to know that the Bible mentions a remedy.

Be Still . . . and know that I am God

Our world has become a place of noise; of ceaseless activity where men are moved to frenzied effort. Alas, many people only pause when they are demoralized and beaten; they stop then in bewilderment, for they know not what to do or where to go next. When disaster looms ahead, fear grips the soul, and humans droop with weariness. Modern philosophy seems to say that if survival depends upon action, then we must work until we drop. There are times when this is proved to be wrong. There are occasions when being still is a divine art; when to be quiet and inactive are degrees of great distinction. Few men can have more trials than those known to David. Psalm 46 reveals the secret of his confidence. He speaks of the greatness of God; he supplies a glorious text; and finally seems to say, "Stop worrying; banish your anxiety; cast your burdens down, and in the absolute knowledge that the Almighty is your God, be at rest."

Stand Still . . . and see the salvation of the Lord

The situation was desperate; fear clutched the hearts of the children of Israel. Already they were beginning to dispute the wisdom of following Moses. They had been carried away by the enthusiasm of a stranger; they had been irresponsible and foolish! Ahead lay the impassable sea; on either side were lofty mountains; and behind, the legions of the mighty Pharaoh. Soon, whips would be lashing Hebrew backs; soon chariots would be crushing old people too tired and weary to move from the path, and disaster would overwhelm the nation. ". . . and the children of Israel said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness. And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord. . . ." We do well to remember that although God may delay His coming, he is never too late to rescue those who trust Him. The well-known story of Israel's deliverance provides the only comment necessary to enhance the importance of this section of our study.

Lie Still . . . and be fruitful

The commandments given by God to Israel were meant to safeguard their happiness. God had much to say concerning

THE PATRIARCHS ... who were busy doing nothing their homes, their families, their possessions, and even their lands. Not the least important was the commandment which said, " And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat.

" Experience taught the ancient farmers that in obeying this command they increased their prosperity. They discovered that the land which was permitted to lie still ultimately became increasingly productive.

This undoubtedly is a law of life. The man who never sleeps is on his way to a suicide's grave; the machinery which never stops for an overhaul may be expected to break down. There are times when a man may do most by doing nothing! The crazy rush of our modern world has almost banished the quiet place and the restful soul. Let us remember again the words concerning the potter, and reflect on the fact that the clay was never quite as valuable as when it lay yielded and still in the craftsman's hand. Let us pause and turn our backs on the madding throng. Let us climb our Olivet, and in the solitude be still, and God's benediction will turn our hearts into a fruitful garden.

Lie still, and let Him mould thee:
O Lord, I would obey:
Be Thou the skilful Potter,
And I, the yielded clay:
Bend me, oh bend me to Thy will,
While in Thy hand I'm lying still.

Opening Doors ... the new way

"The supermarket stores of Canada are an institution. Customers with cute wire-made push-cars wander along the aisles, selecting from innumerable shelves things they desire to purchase; and when this has been completed, the articles are placed on the turn-tables to be carried to the waiting cashier. When the account has been paid, the goods are neatly packed in cardboard containers, and the customer is ready to leave.

My wife had come to the desk; her money had been paid, and the goods placed in my waiting arms. Ahead was the exit-a large glass door. I waited for Mrs. Powell to open that door, but she smiled and said, " Go on."

" Open the door for me. I cannot walk through the glass." " Go on," she repeated. For a moment I wondered what had happened to her. She made no attempt to help me, and her smiling face suggested she was either expecting the impossible or going crazy! We had only just arrived on the American continent, but she had made the discovery which later explained her reluctance to help her long-suffering husband!

" Go on," she repeated again; " walk through the door and see what happens." I had a shrewd idea what would happen, and since I desired to preserve the appearance of my nose, suggested she should go first. " Walk," she said again, " and the door will open of its own accord." Her confidence increased my interest in that door. In order to approach the exit, every customer had to walk over a panel let into the floor, and obviously beneath that panel were invisible springs which responded to the pressure of a foot. I had never seen anything like this, and I smile now when I recollect the way in which I went back repeatedly to try out the mechanism. The moment I stepped on the panel, the door opened. Sometimes, when a customer had preceded me and the door was closing, the swing was automatically arrested when another

THE PATRIARCHS ... who were busy doing nothing foot touched the hidden mechanism. I have never forgotten my introduction to the doors of the supermarkets. They taught truth of superlative worth. Sometimes the path of the Christian is blocked by insurmountable obstacles; the way to freedom is closed. Yet, as in ancient times, God commands, " Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." The march of faith touches hidden springs of divine power; obstacles are removed, and the way to freedom is opened.

The Door That Defied Houdini

During my childhood the name of the master magician, Houdini, was known throughout the world. His performances suggested the supernatural, and some of his exploits were truly amazing. He performed seemingly impossible feats, and even kings and queens became interested in the achievements of the illustrious artist. Yet one story concerning this strange man deserves a little more publicity; it is the account of one of his rare failures.

During an entertainment tour through the British Isles, Houdini boasted he could escape from any gaol; and in one small provincial town his challenge was accepted. He was escorted to a very small prison, the door was closed against him, and he was told to get out if he could. Houdini worked on the lock until he was almost exhausted. His reputation was at stake; his challengers were waiting to see what would happen. Usually only thirty seconds would elapse before the most intricate mechanism yielded to his persuasions. But this time, the infuriating lock refused to spring. Houdini used every device known to him, but finally, and with great disgust, gave up. As he moved back, his foot slipped and he fell against the door. The sudden bump jarred the handle, and the door opened. The magician was astounded, but his challengers only laughed. The door had never been locked. All his struggles had been needless; the way to freedom was open, but he did not know it. It has been said that Houdini enjoyed the joke, but we may be assured he never fell for the same trick twice.

We live in times when around the world men do all kinds of things to be saved. They go on long arduous pilgrimages to distant shrines; they fast, and pray for months on end; they pay enormous sums of money in the hope of gaining forgiveness; they do all kinds of things in all kinds of ways: but this is needless. The Lord Jesus Christ said, " I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved " (John 10: 9). Sometimes we do most by doing nothing; we travel farther by remaining still; we reach higher by kneeling.

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