

THE LESSON APPLIED

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Avoid the habit of blaming. Our first instinct, when things go wrong, often is to accuse some person or thing of causing the trouble. Anything except ourselves will do. It is both a foolish and a vicious habit,—foolish because it prevents us remedying the wrong, and vicious because it leads to malice and uncharitableness.

The traveler Bruce tells of an Arabian town where the garrison and townsmen got fighting, and fiercely slew each other till the ammunition was exhausted on both sides. Then, realizing their common danger in case of an attack on the town, they met together and agreed that the whole trouble was the work of a camel. A camel, therefore, was seized and led outside the walls. A number of both sides surrounded and upbraided him. They accused him of having killed men, of threatening to burn the cattle, of cursing the sheriff, and of attempting to destroy the wheat which was being shipped to Mecca. They concluded by thrusting him through with their lances, each thrust being accompanied by a curse.

That was a faithful exhibition of the stupid and wicked habit of blaming. When failure gets on our nerves we are apt to lose self-control and discharge our anger upon anything that presents itself. Adam blamed his wife. Balaam blamed his ass. Saul blamed David. Nero blamed the Christians. One blames his bringing up. Another blames his luck. Another blames the devil. Another, like Moses, blames God. This is the worst of all.

Never blame God. That is the extreme of reckless impiety. Two boys were chatting about Elijah's ascent in the chariot of fire. Said one,

"Wouldn't you be afraid to ride in such a chariot?"

"No," was the reply, "not if God drove."

Of one thing we may be certain, that God will not bring us into circumstances where He will not see us safely through.

But once in a while blame meets forgiveness. A divine serenity and compassion looks upon its tortured, furious face and

thinks, "My poor child. You have been tried beyond your strength. You would not have been so angry unless your burden had been too heavy. I must make it easier for you." That is the way God acts. "With the temptation He provides a way of escape." He does it sometimes by lessening the load, as he did for Moses at this time; and He does it sometimes by increasing the strength, as He did for Paul when he asked three times to be rid of his thorn in the flesh, and was told, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

That is the way to conquer blame. It disarms our assailant. It has all the effectiveness of a sudden and overwhelming counter-attack from ambush. It is unexpected, disconcerting and bewildering. It heaps coals of fire on the enemy's head. It fairly puts the blame "out of business." In the bitter wars between the Moslems and Christians in the 17th century a Turkish grandee took a Hungarian nobleman prisoner. He treated him with the utmost barbarity, reducing him to slavery and actually yoking him with an ox to a plough. After a time the nobleman escaped. In later wars the Turk who had oppressed him fell into his hands. "Now for your revenge," said his friends. That was what the Turk expected, and supposing, as a matter of course, that he should be tortured to death, he had already taken poison. When the messenger arrived telling him to go in peace and fear nothing, he proclaimed with his dying breath, "I will not die a Moslem; but I will die a Christian, for there is no religion but that of Christ which teaches forgiveness."

So Jehovah meets the blame of Moses by lightening the responsibility which had broken down his patience. Many hands make light labor. It is good to work in partnership with others. And when the work is of the nature of fighting, union is ten times more desirable. Cohesion and discipline are indispensable in an army. Victory can come only through comradeship and co-operation.

That is why a Christian, if he is in earnest, joins a church.