

## GOD'S KINDNESS TO LAME SOULS

By Rev. Theodore Cuyler, D.D.

After David had been firmly seated on the throne he inquired whether any of the house of Saul were yet living; for if so, he would like to show them kindness for the sake of his beloved friend Jonathan. An old family steward named Ziba, reports to the king that there is a son of Jonathan yet living who is "lame on his feet." This is about the only fact known in regard to the poor wail of a dethroned royal family. He is a cripple. Ever since his nurse had fled from the house at the tidings of Jonathan's bloody death, and had dropped the little five-year-old in her panic, he had been incurably lame in both his feet. And so he had been sheltered in the house of one Machir, over on the eastern side of the Jordan.

As soon as David learns that a child of his bosom friend is still in the land of the living, he remembers that he had once made a covenant with Jonathan to show the "kindness of the Lord" to the house forever. He promptly sends one of the royal chariots to Lodebar with orders to bring the poor lame Mephibosheth up to court. When the abashed cripple reaches the palace, and hobbles into the king's presence chamber, he is perfectly overwhelmed. He falls on his face, and exclaims, "What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am!" Mephibosheth seems to have been a shy and gentle creature, like many others who suffer from bodily infirmities; but there is nothing which so soon lays one flat on the face as a volley of unexpected kindness. No artillery kills an enemy like a broadside of love. If Mephibosheth had been taught from his childhood to regard David as the destroyer of the dynasty of Saul, all his early prejudices must have melted at once when the monarch receives him so graciously. Not only receives him, but adopts him, "for Jonathan's sake," into the royal household! He sits at the king's board every day, and finds a royal table "a good hiding-place for lame legs." In that wild age of war and violence, when revenge was so constantly practised, this little cabinet picture of the fugitive cripple seated at the imperial banquet, has in it the lineaments of the "w Testament gospel. It is a very pretty parable of God's mercy to crippled souls.

Every sinner is lame by sin, and is wholly impotent to restore himself. When the Holy Spirit awakens a sinner to a deep conviction of his own guilt, he is ready to confess his utter unworthiness in language as strong as that used by Mephibosheth. The godly Rutherford of Scotland describes himself in the same impassioned language as having once been a "dead carcass, not able to step over a straw." John Bunyan uses quite as vehement expressions in his "Grace Abounding." Pungent convictions of personal guilt do not appear to be as common in these days; but I doubt whether any man can rightly appreciate the wonderful mercy of God in Jesus Christ, and the infinite preciousness of atoning love, unless he has been broken down in penitent self-abasement. The lowliest convictions of guilt are usually the prelude to the loftiest attainments in godliness. The repentant and restored cripples are those whose feet become "like hinds' feet" in running in the pathway of God's commandments.

There is a beautiful parallel between David's embassy of kindness to bring up Mephibosheth to Hebron, and the mission of the atoning Saviour to crippled humanity in its far-off wanderings. That royal chariot halting at the poor lame fellow's door to carry him up to the king is a fine figure of the divine mercy that stops at the sinner's doorway. Grace furnishes the chariot. Grace sent the only-begotten Son of God into the world that whosoever trusteth in Him should

not perish, but have everlasting life. This home-bringing of the lamented exile to the place reminds us of that scene where the father welcomes home the wanderer from the far country, and kills for him the fatted calf, and clothes him in the goodly robe. This reception of a repentant and believing soul is all for Jesus' sake, even as Mephibosheth was welcomed for Jonathan's sake. Christ's sufferings on the cross, and his intercession are at the bottom of every sinner's salvation. When any of us get admission to the marriage supper in our Father's house, our song will be to him who came to seek and to save the lost. What a family of restored cripples there will be at that supper of the King!

God's kindness to the lame is not only manifested in the atonement, or in pardon to the penitent sinner, or in converting grace; it is shown in his patient forbearance and compassion to stumbling Christians. For Christians do stumble, and some of them shockingly. Peter was not the first or the last to catch a disgraceful fall; he never would have healed a cripple in the "Gate Beautiful" if his own spiritual lameness had not been cured by his forgiving Saviour a short time before. God's ambulances are kept busy. The difference between an impenitent sinner and a Christian is that the one is willing to continue weak and wicked; the other, when he slips and sprains himself is not content to lie on his face, but repents and seeks recovery, and walks more circumspectly. God is very forbearing towards the feeble Christians who, like Bunyan's "Ready-to-halt," hobble on crutches; but such slay no giants, reap no harvests, and win no crowns. They are not models. When a soul has once been healed by divine grace of its lameness, it ought, like the cured cripple at the Temple gate, to be walking and leaping and praising God.

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## NO DANGER OF TOO MUCH LOVE.

When Jesus comes between true friends, he does not separate, but he unites them. Some tell us that we must not love our dear ones too much, lest we make God jealous and he take them away. This is only pagan teaching. The man who had the best right to speak on this subject had a very different idea. He said, if you cannot love your fellows on earth, how can you love your Father in heaven! The Master always stands between real friends, but ever to bring them closer. Formerly the ocean separated the continents, now it connects them. As we get to know more of the purpose of the Lord in our lives, we see that he alone makes great and abiding affection possible.

## IMPROVING ON EXPECTATIONS.

Doing better than is expected of one is the secret of truest service. The workers in any business establishment can readily be divided into two classes by this test: those who do just what is asked and expected of them, and who stop with that; and those who are not content to stop there, but who are constantly rendering themselves invaluable by doing more than any one has asked or expected. The latter are in the minority, of course, but it is a minority to which the door is always open, and which the door moves steadily to the top, where there is always plenty of room. The principle is the same all through life, for it is the secret of service in the Kingdom. Christ wants his followers to improve on the expectations of their fellows.—Sunday School Times.

To cherish revenge against a neighbor is like warming a viper on the hearthstone.

## WANTED; MEN FOR GIDEON'S BAND.\*

By Robert E. Speer.

Truth is almost always in the custody of the minority, and the great victories have ever been the victories of the few over the many. It was Elijah single-handed against the prophets of Baal, and Gideon and his three hundred against the hosts of the Midianites. And in our day every reform has begun with the few, and fought its way against inertia or opposition.

So the need of all days, of Gideon's and of our own, is for men who fear God and have no other fear, who will destroy sin, but will not compromise with it, who go out to war ready for the foe, expecting war to be war, and who believe that with God they can prevail, however many be the armies that come out against them.

There are some who tell us, though, that all such language is out of place now. We must not talk of fighting. In all men and all opinions that have held the allegiance of men the root is good, they say. What we need to do is to approach them with conciliation and sympathy, discover that which is good in them, and foster and develop that. There is a real truth there. But there are bad men and bad opinions, which it is our duty to antagonize and destroy. And there are men and opinions in which the bad and the good are so intermingled that they can hardly be separated, and it becomes a question of cutting hard at the evil or of letting them alone in their entanglement.

And there is evil in men and opinion which is made worse and more dangerous by the plausibility of its excuses, and by its alliance with good which ought to have no part or inheritance with it.

Our Lord perceived this. "I came not to bring peace, but a sword." Now, he did bring peace, such peace as the world, with its wise ways of doing things and its cunning compromises, cannot give. But his peace is peace after battle, after conquest.

And he wants men to come after him who, in the spirit of Gideon and his band, will go anywhere and do anything, and will realize that they are in a war.

If this is not true, if the Son of God does not go forth to any war, if he is not asking for any one to follow in His train, if the apostles, saints, and martyrs erred in thinking that His blood-red banner was ahead of them and summoned them to battle,—then let us cease singing the war songs of the church, and let us cross out the war passages in the Bible, and let us try to think of life, not as the "good fight." Paul found it, but as a genial adjustment of truth to error, or a kindly tolerance of what Christ so abhorred.

But we cannot do this, for sin will soon break any truce and reopen hostilities. We cannot be at peace if we try. It is battle always, so long as life remains.

But it is also victory if we will go in and fight in the faith and spirit of the band of Gideon.—S. S. Times.

## Daily Readings for Preceding Week.

Mon.—Servants to sin (Judg. 6:7).  
Tues.—Promised deliverance (Judg. 6:7-10).  
Wed.—The deliverer chosen (Judg. 6:11-24).  
Thurs.—Gideon prepared (Judg. 6:25-32).  
Fri.—A sign given (Judg. 6:33-40).  
Sat.—A splendid victory (Judg. 7:1-25).

The spirit of inquiry lies very near the foundation of knowledge. The life that is free from interrogation points is shy on wisdom.

\*Young People's Topic—Sunday, November 20, 1907. Wanted: Men for Gideon's Band (Judg. 7:2-7).