Sin versus Victory

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"Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from among you."—Joshua 7:12.

It is stated here that the nation of Israel was accursed and deprived of victory because there was an accursed thing among them.

Moses, the great leader of this people, had but recently died. Upon Joshua, a worthy successor, fell the charge of marshalling the tribes and leading them into the full possession of the land of Canaan. The Jordan crossed, Jericho with its mighty walls, the most immediate and impregnable defense of the land, was soon subdued. God was pleased to use such humble means as trumpets to bring to naught the things that are.

Next to oppose the progress of Israel and hinder

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their possession of the land was the city of Ai. Thither the men of Israel were sent to win victory as they had done at Jericho. But, notwithstanding the city was not so large nor the opposition to be met so great, yet there was defeat and ruinous failure. Many are smitten dead, the hearts of the people of Israel are melted and become as water; while Joshua, their leader, rends his clothes, falls to the earth and in dismay cries out: “Would to God we had been content to dwell on the other side of Jordan. O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their back before their enemies! For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall envies us around, and cut off our name from the earth, and what will they do unto thy great Name? And the Lord said unto Joshua, ‘Get thee up, Israel hath sinned. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies.’”

God tells Joshua two specific facts about the situation. First, there is sin in the camp of Israel and they are accursed because of it; and second God will not be with them for victory except they put away the sin from them. Their sin was a disregard for God’s command. Gold and silver and a fine Babylonian garment were unwisely taken from the spoils of Jericho and secretly stored in one of the tents. It was a transgression of God’s order to Israel in their taking possession of the land of Canaan. The consequences they sorely realized at Ai.

This incident in the history of Israel furnishes a most important and timely study of sin as a direct cause of failure and defeat on the part of a nation in war. Not a few are disposed to regard the Hebrew nation and its history as in a class entirely by itself, and what sin did for that nation, say they, is no index as to what it will do for any other nation. But such reasoning is unwarranted and most fallacious. All nations alike are under moral government, are accountable to God, capable of sinning, and what sin has done for one nation it will do for another. The Hebrew nation was formed among other things for the reason that it might be a standing witness to all the nations following as to what the effects of sin on the one hand or righteousness and obedience to God on the other will be in the life of a nation for victory or defeat. Hence we are invited to go back to Joshua to find out what is going on today, and the lessons that stands out as clear as the day is that before the battles of the nations can be settled now sin will have to be reckoned with just as it was then. There was a potent factor that caused the swaying from victory at Jericho to defeat at Ai and that potent factor was the accused thing in the midst, and the nation today that would have the favor of God and ultimate victory for its life needs much penitence and to look well to the riddance of sin from all its tents.

Israel was defeated at Ai because she was not morally fit to win, and that may be precisely the situation of some of the nations today. And if there was ever a call to the nations to search their camps and clear themselves of sin and iniquity that call is now. The final issue of this war of the nations is not necessarily going to be victory where the great-
est armies are lined up; there may be defeat before an insignificant Ai. They may be in the minority who cherish iniquity in the land, but if the leaders and the rest are content to have it there then the nation as such must face its failure.

The Israelites were brought to their knees at Ai. Joshua could not understand why. Perchance he blames the captains for their stupidity, and the rank and file for their lack of physical courage. At his wise ends he doubtless said: "We will make an alliance with the Hittites, and when we with their help have subdued all the other enemies of Canaan we will turn on the Hittites and subdue them." But in the midst of his fault finding and blaming God makes known to him the why of it. About the last thing the average nation will consider as a secret of its reverses and sacrifices in war is its sins. "Ye are accursed. There is sin in your midst. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies; neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing from your midst." A nation that is not right in the sight of God is not fit to win victories over other nations and subdue them unto itself. More important even than making the world safe for democracy is the making of a democracy that is safe for itself and the world by putting sin from its midst and God at its head.

God wanted a nation in the land of Palestine to exemplify the righteousness and principles of his moral government, to submit to his authority, receive his commandments and obey them, that by so doing they might become a nation that would be safe for the world. The cap of the iniquity of the Canaanites that dwelt in that land was full; moreover of the ground because they fulfilled not the Divine mission of nations. Hence it was that God called Israel to subdue that land and possess it. But Israel should never forget why. Victory with sin in the camp would have been contrary to the whole mission of righteousness and obedience for which God called the nation into being. Israel got right with God, renewed the battle and there was victory. Sin ever versus victory in a nation's life. This truth all history as well as revelation confirms, for the historian reasons sin as the cause of the ultimate overthrow of every great nation of the past.

America is now crossing the seas to pitch battle against the modern Ai, and the significance and importance of it are just as tremendous as when Israel under Joshua crossed the Jordan and pitched battle against the Ai of old. In the presence of the conflict we are persuaded that God is saying to America, as He said to Israel of old, if ye would win and prosper get away sin, whatever it is, from your midst. Our camp is not as free from what is accursed as we could wish it were in view of the trial that awaits us.

First, there is that wedge of secularism that has been driven into the heart of our nation and has divided it and separated us from any avowed allegiance and responsibility to God. I would that this wedge were out of our camp in this day when our brothers and sons and husbands are about to go up against the greatest Ai of history.
Second, there is that 300 shekels of silver in our camp that has turned our hearts and truly has made us lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, trampling under foot his holy Sabbath for the sake of doing our own pleasure, and spending our sinecure and a good part of God's tenth on ourselves while the saving work of our blessed Saviour has gone a begging in the world for means,—I would this thing were not in our camp against us in this day when we must face Ai.

Third, there is that Babylonish garment in our midst with which the pleasure seeking generation in the social order have sought to don themselves with respectability while God knows that the forty or more grounds of divorce in this land with all that that means, the white slave traffic, together with rehabilitation out of wretched, have magnified the sin of fermentation in the land until Baal Peor, at which twenty-four thousand were slain because of the sin, sinks into insignificance, and I would that our camp were free from that accursed thing as we must face Ai.

Fourth, there is one thing more we would do well to put away from our camp at this time if we want victory, and that is the drink curse, the licensed liquor traffic,—the accursed thing that has been in our camp ever since America captured the Jericho of human slavery in the 60's. America then embraced it for silver as a revenue getter, and during the 60 years that have followed the nation has nourished it in politics, in the licensed saloon throughout the land, in conviviality, in chambering, wantonness and drunkenness; and during all the time God has been calling by his holy and righteous precepts to the nation to put the accursed thing away, and now that we are called to go to Ai he is calling by judgment, by a threatened famine of food and fuel and rainment, and by the sacrifice of millions of lives, to put the accursed destroyer away,—the destroyer of wealth, of manhood, of homes, and of the nation's virtue; and conserve every ounce of our energy for the conflict and above all conserve the favor and help of God.

Crippled, mangled, suffering England has as her greater foe today the drink curse, as declares Lloyd George, the Kaiser of rum in the camps a more threatening factor for defeat than the Kaiser that sits crowned in his seat in Berlin. Any inhabitant who supports the liquor traffic in America is giving comfort to a pitiless, unsatisfied foe to national liberty and victory. The sooner America clears her camp of the accursed thing the sooner will her hopes be brighter for true glory and success.

That there will be hindrances in the work of clearing we may be assured. Spokesmen will seek for the prizes of silver and gold to be gained from the liquor traffic though they be thereby crippled and starve the nation into utter defeat. One trouble in the camp of Israel, was there were men among them who at the siege of Jericho made it their chief concern to think of nothing but of their private gain. And hardly had the war begun when they were saying, "What is there in this for me?" When the nation is being called to sacrifice, to give up, to deny itself of bread
and to cleanse itself for moral strife and victory, the only thought of some is unusual profiteering no matter what defeat it may bring to all other interests concerned. By such there is nothing seen in a great movement, in a great national crisis, but an opportunity to feal for themselves. Achans, that are traitors to the nation for its truest success! Spani-
men, that would grow fat off the bread that is need-
for the nation's very life and existence. Such in
Joshua's day were taken out and stoned to death, and if some of these modern ones had lived in that
they would have met a like fate. All sinners and
every accursed thing in the camp are preventers of
righteous victory. It is high time just now for this
nation to put the liquor curse away from its midst.

1. It is robbing the nation of food, every curse
of which needs to be utilized to the very best possi-
ble advantage.

Among the people of God of old there used
to be the saying that he who tramples a piece of
bread under foot shall come to want. If there
be any truth in that saying surely this nation has
heaped up for itself a day of famine, for truly it has
set the destructive foot of the still upon millions of
God's precious gifts of golden grain and stamped
them with the curse of the rum bottle. We are being
told that this is a food war and that the greatest
general to be feared is General Famine. Hoover, who
is supposed to know the food situation as well as
any man in the country, says America cannot win at
the present rate of consumption. Food! food!!
food!!! is the cry. The same Mr. Hoover states that
in 1916 there were used in the production of malt for
the manufacture of beer alone 60,000,000 bushels of
barley, 50,000,000 bushels of corn, and 3,000,000
bushels of rice. The brewey stands condemned and
accursed before the nation's demand for bread.

The cry from our Allies across the seas is, food!!
Seventeen million tons of beer manufactured in the
United Kingdom during the war. The conflict that
is on presses the battle to the very gates of the bread
box in every home and we sometimes wonder if the
nations that ought to win will ward off defeat by
arising soon enough to put away from their camps
the things that curse and bind.

2. The liquor curse takes fuel that ought to be
used for better ends.

The motto should be fuel for life and health and
the things that win. During the winter of 1917-18,
in the midst of severest weather many households in
American cities were destitute of fuel; infants and
others perished, schools and churches closed because
coal could not be had while in some of these cities
the brewey was having all they wanted and were
consuming it at the rate of 3,000 tons a day. Seven
million tons of the nation's coal carried in one year
to the furnaces of the brewey to set flowing
through the land the fiery and blighting stream of
rum.

In the midst of the winter a man said complai-
ingly: "I do not see why God sent such a cold winter
when coal is so scarce." Rather might we hang our
heads in humility and shame and say, I don't know
why God stored up coal in such abundance for the
nations blessing when it consumed such quantities of it for creating in its midst a curse that robs of comfort, favor and victory.

3. Victory calls for wealth. This fact also stamps the liquor traffic as an accursed thing in the nation's life. It produces nothing valuable. It is only an impoverished and a destroyer.

A pamphlet put out by the Treasury Department at Washington on "War Savings Stamps," says "The main reason for the purchase of war saving stamps is because your country is at war. Your country needs every penny which every man, woman and child can save and lend, in order to feed, clothe, arm and equip the soldiers and sailors of America and win this war." The rum traffic equips and clothes nothing except with rags. It produces no wealth. For the $1,600,000,000 it has drawn annually into its coffers it has given the land its saloons with all their debauchery, the saloon type of men, drunkenness, inefficiency, poverty, crime, prisons, cursed habitations. These things constitute its only real revenue to the nation.

Once said the great William Gladstone of the English Parliament, "Gentlemen, you need not give yourselves any trouble about revenue. Give me a sober population, not wasting their earnings in strong drink, and I shall know where to obtain the revenue." Was Gladstone right? He was if God is right who said, "The drunkard shall come to poverty." What tends to poverty furnishes no saving means to the country.

The call that comes from Washington to every man, woman and child to provide the pennies with which to capitalize the nation for its struggle is a direct blow to the impoverishing curse of the liquor traffic.

4. The Nation, in order to succeed, needs a clean, sober and efficient manhood. On this score the liquor traffic is a curse in the camp. The Kaiser that mams the gun of strong drink has inflicted sore and deadly wounds on the manhood of the Allies. Across the seas according to the most reliable testimony many have fallen by its deadly thrusts before they ever have lifted a hand for their nation's defense. Some have gone so far as to say that if Great Britain fails to win it will be because she fails to conquer and put away the benumbing, slaughtering curse of rum.

Our own President said in Texas before leaving for France, "I shall not go slow on prohibition, for I know what is the greatest foe to my men, greater even than the bullets of the enemy."

Let the patriotic pay and labor for their nation that she may clean from her camp the accursed thing for the sake of a cleaner, stronger and more efficient manhood which is so much needed when God is pressing the nations to the judgment bar and weighing the character of their citizens in the balance of pure, holy and godly living.

As we say "Good-bye" to our sons and brothers who are to go by the millions to play their part on the European fields of conflict we would raise as our prayerful song:
"God save our boys and men. God save our home again; God save our men! Make them victorious; Clean, strong, and glorious; Flag flying over us. Strengthen our men."

America may help to answer that prayer by putting away the curse of drink.

5. Above all, this curse and other evils of the land should be repented of and put away that there may be with us the presence and favor of God. "Neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed thing among you.—Sanctify yourselves against tomorrow: for thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel. There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou shalt not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." Israel obeyed God, cleansed her camp, and got victory. The greatest factors to be reckoned with in this war of the nations are God and His righteous and living Word. The light of the ages has shone upon us and the responsibilities of the nations are increased. At this hour they are in the furnace of judgment. Will they be purified or consumed? Sin in the nation versus victory. "For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yes, those nations shall be utterly wasted."