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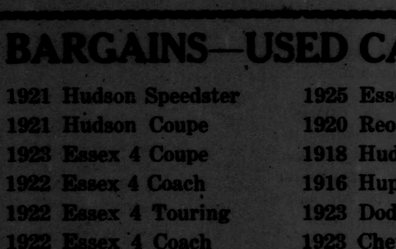
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THE CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR TOPIC

By the Rev. Charles E. Schaeffer, D. D.

August 7th—What Does the Bible Reveal About God? Gen. 1:1; I John 4:16.

The principal purpose of the Bible is to reveal God. It is our source book and naturally we turn to it in order to get a correct and complete conception of God. The quest for the knowledge of God has been age-long. It lies at the basis of all other quests in life. If we would know all about God and if we were to conform our lives to our knowledge, all the problems of human life would be solved. The simple questions: "Who is God? Where is God? What Does God Do?"—have never been fully and satisfactorily answered. There has never been formulated a satisfactory definition of God. Whatever attempts in this direction have been made have always reflected the theological conception that may have prevailed in the minds of men at any given time. Perhaps the nearest approach to a satisfactory definition is this: "God is the personal spirit, perfectly good, who in holy love creates, sustains and orders all." Here we have expressed the nature of God as "a personal spirit; the character of God as 'perfectly good;'" the relation of God "creates, sustains and orders all;" the motive of God, "holy love." But even this definition is not exhaustive. The Bible does not define God. It designates Him by certain names and assigns certain attributes to Him, but these do not constitute a definition. Each person must in a sense discover God for him or herself. God cannot be known from books, from hearsay, but only through a living, vital experience of the soul. That is the value of the Bible in revealing God to us. It is the record of an experince which individuals and nations had of God. One does not need to penetrate very far into the Bible to see stages and degrees of this revelation. The full-orbed God does not immediately and instantaneously break forth upon the consciousness of the people in the beginning of the human race. They came to a gradual apprehension of God. There were some very vague and strange and misty conceptions of God which became clearer and brighter and truer with each successive age until Christ came who revealed God fully and truly in so far as men could understand that revelation. Even today new light upon God bursts forth from the Bible and from our own personal experience and relationship with God. If we bear in mind this idea of what is called progressive revelation, it will enable us to understand many otherwise difficult things in the Bible. There is certainly a very marked difference in the revelation which Jesus makes of God as compared with that by the historians and prophets and writers of the Old Testament.

I. What the Old Testament Says of God. The Old Testament thinks very largely of God as a transcendent Being, one who sits upon the throne at the rim of the universe and from there created and now governs and upholds this world in which we live. Only occasionally does He condescend to come down upon the earth. He is a far-away God on the outside of the universe visiting men in great crises, a God who is in a sense limited to the Jewish people, a great national deity to whom certain attributes are assigned; certain moral qualities such as, holiness, goodness, justice, righteousness, wisdom, and certain modes of activity like omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence. God is described as the creator of all things, the maker of the universe, and the judge of all men. The Old Testament reveals God as a person, not merely a force in the universe. A person possessing intelligence, feeling, will, is a moral being. That idea of God runs like a scarlet line throughout the whole Bible.

II. What the New Testament Says of God. When we cross the threshold of the New Testament we seem to have come into a different atmosphere. Things brighten up for us. There we meet with the very words of Jesus who came to show us God. The great word that Jesus used for God is FATHER. The Fatherhood of God was the great contribution which Jesus made to the understanding of God. One or two of the Prophets in the Old Testament spoke of God as Father, but not in the same sense in which Jesus used the word. The Prophets thought of God as Father in the sense of creator and sustainer of mankind, but Jesus thought of God as Father in the sense of love and kindness and goodness and pity and compassion. A side of God's character is revealed in the New Testament which scarcely at all appears in the Old Testament. God is love. This is more than that He loves. Love is His very nature, His being, the actuating, controlling motive and passion of His life. The New Testament gives us an idea of a very present God, not simply sitting on a throne somewhere in the Heavens, but an immanent God, a spirit who lives in His people, in nature and who pervades all things. The New Testament shows us more of what might be called the human side of God, His attitude, His relation to His interest in His children. "The heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind."

The Bible reveals a God who is faithful and just. His promises are sure and steadfast. He kept His word. The prophecies of the Old Testament laid great emphasis on this fact. God never deceives nor forsakes His people. He can be trusted absolutely and He constantly invites His people to trust Him. He is likewise just. The God of all the earth does what is right. The word righteous or righteousness as associated with the idea of God appears everywhere in the Bible.

Then God is holy. Holiness originally meant separation. But the holiness of God does not separate Him from His people, it simply declares Him to be pure and clean and good.

Now, God can only be known in the degree in which we become Godlike. To know God means more than to have an intellectual idea about Him. To know God means to understand His life and purpose and to enter into His purpose. If we will to do the will of God we shall know Him. "The pure in heart shall see God."

It would make a very interesting study to go through the Bible and set out the different names which are used to designate God. Each of them has a special significance. Then it would be helpful to divide up the Old Testament time into historic periods and see how their idea of God in each period was modified. Then to trace the idea of God in the New Testament to see what traces of the old conception remained and what was new in the mind of Jesus and the Apostles and how they arrived at it. The study might then be continued so as to include the development of the idea of God since the days of Jesus and what our present day conception of God is. It is only such study that will prove rewarding and will give the student a clearer and truer conception of what the Bible says about God.

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Sunday School Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D.D., Dean Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)
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Lesson for August 7

DAVID SPARES SAUL

LESSON TEXT—I Sam., chap. 26.

GOLDEN TEXT—Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

PRIMARY TOPIC—David's Kindness to His Enemy.

JUNIOR TOPIC—David Shows Mercy.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—How to Treat Those Who Wrong Us.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Overcoming Evil With Good.

I. Saul in Pursuit of David (vv. 1-3).

Ever since David took his departure from Jonathan (ch. 20), when that crowning act of friendship was shown, Saul had been hunting him as a wild animal. He now pursues him with 3,000 chosen men. David flees from place to place and is in hiding as an outlaw. Sometimes he is in the enemy's country doing disreputable things. This is the period of his schooling, which fitted him to be the future eminent king. It was a bitter period in his life, but God sent him to this school and adapted the instruction to his needs. David could never have been the broad man that he was had he not been prepared in this crucible of bitter experience. He learned many lessons, among which may be mentioned:

1. His own weakness. It was necessary that he be humbled under the sense of his infirmities. Before any one is fit to be raised to a position of prominence he must be made to know his limitations and weaknesses. Unless a man has learned this lesson, sudden elevation to power will utterly ruin him.

2. His dependence upon God. David's many miraculous escapes caused him to realize that the Lord had redeemed him out of his adversity.

3. He learned the country and people over which he was to rule. By knowing the grievous afflictions which Saul had heaped upon the people, he could sympathize and remove them.

4. He learned the magnanimity of self-control. This a man must know before he can be a true king. He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city (Prov. 16:32).

II. Saul in David's Hands (vv. 4-20).

1. David sends out spies (v. 4). This he did to find out whether Saul was come in very deed.

2. David in Saul's camp (vv. 5-11). He took with him Abishai and went in the night to where Saul was sleeping. Abishai asked to be allowed to kill Saul, but David forbade him because Saul was the Lord's anointed.

3. David takes Saul's spear and cruse of water (vv. 12, 13). Once before at Engedi (chap. 24) David spared Saul's life. Now again he was at his mercy. This David did that he might show tangible evidence to the king that he had no evil intent.

4. David taunts Abner, the king's bodyguard (vv. 14-16). He calls to Abner and taunts him for his listlessness—his failure to watch over the Lord's annointed, the evidence of which is the cruse and spear in his hands.

5. David reasons with Saul (vv. 17-20). David reasoned with Saul, showing that he had nothing but good intentions toward the king. He asked that he would show what wrong he had done, or what evil intent was in his heart. If the Lord was directing Saul he was willing to appease His wrath with an offering. If Saul was only hunting him because wicked men were urging him, a curse should be pronounced upon them. David is very humble and begs Saul to relent, for surely if he had any wicked purpose he would not have saved his life twice when the Lord had placed Saul wholly at his mercy. David recognized the fact that the Lord had delivered Saul into his hands not to kill, but to save. He did not kill, neither did he allow his servants to kill.

III. Saul's Confession (vv. 21-25).

1. He confessed that he had sinned. The sad feature about his confession is that it lacked conviction, for he went right on sinning.

2. He confessed that he had played the fool and erred exceedingly. We see about us daily many using such expressions, but still they go on repeating their sins. David shows his magnanimity of spirit, however, in delivering the cruse and spear to Saul's servant. He knew that Saul's confession was not genuine, so he was afraid to go near. He still appeals to Saul's kindness to him, and they part never to meet again.

Praying

"It is better to do a little with prayer and in the Spirit than to be busy with many things in your own strength."

Spiritual Love

All real spiritual love is but a portion of Christ's love which yearns in all who are united to Him.—Alford.

An Important Duty

You have not fulfilled every duty unless you have fulfilled that of being pleasant.—Charles Buxton.

Beware of Low Aim

Not failure, but low aim is crime.—Lowell.

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