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Your Heart His Target

by Edward Griffin

(original title: Arrows Sharp in the Heart of Enemies)

“Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies; the peoples fall under you.” Psalm 45:5

While tyrants are wading to power through the blood of slaughtered armies, and marching to the music of a nation’s groans, there is a Conqueror of a far different sort. He too has his arrows and his two-edged sword, and “goes forth conquering and to conquer”; but his track is not marked with desolation and woe. His coming is not proclaimed by the cries of widows and orphans. Mercy is his banner, and with him marches salvation. He wounds only to heal, and kills only to make alive. “On his head” are “many crowns,” and his name is called, “The Word of God.” When the Gospel was sent forth, then this glorious Conqueror girded his sword upon his thigh, according to the prayer in verses 3 and 4 of this Psalm: “Gird Your sword upon your thigh, O Mighty One, with your glory and your majesty. And in your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; and your right hand shall teach you awesome things.” This is a devout prayer for the extension of the Redeemer’s kingdom in all the fullness of its blessings. Although the idea of severity to enemies may be included, and a full view of the Conqueror as here arrayed may show us a Monarch marching into a rebellious province, reducing some to obedience and destroying others, yet the idea of mercy is much stronger. Although the Gospel, which is the grand weapon employed, may be “set for the fall” as well as “rising of many,” and may prove a “savor of death unto death,” yet who does not know that its leading feature is mercy? To this second view of the subject I shall confine my attention, and do my best to celebrate the gracious triumphs of our King. In order to show this, I will:

I. Examine the process of his individual conquests.

II. Contemplate the general march of the Conqueror.

I. I shall examine the process of his individual conquests.

“Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies,” (that is, the enemies of your kingdom,) whereby “The peoples fall under You.”—fall prostrate at your feet after the manner of vanquished foes. Several ideas are included in

these words. which, followed out in their proper order, will lead to a right understanding of these individual conquests.

1. It is plainly implied that the King marches against none but enemies. This clearly shows us the earlier character of all who are subdued, and of course the natural character of all mankind. The text does not limit its view to the conquest of thieves and robbers: it looks at the general extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. It does not limit its view to the reduction of pagans, unless all besides pagans are real subjects of his kingdom and heartily obedient to his laws. If you can find any in Christendom, any even among the baptized, who do not submit to his laws in heart as well as in practice, (for the heart is included in his requirements,) you find those who, as really as pagans, have yet to be reduced to subjection to his empire. And all who need to be thus reduced, are his enemies according to the text. If then you can find any with the Bible in their hands, who have not truly repented and forsaken their sins, who have not exercised a saving faith in Christ, who do not live a life of prayer, who have not heartily renounced the world, who do not love God supremely, who do not possess the spirit of martyrs, (for all these are essentially characteristic of his subjects,) you find those who still remain the enemies of Christ. "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." But: "he who is not with me is against me." In a word, all who are yet to be brought into the kingdom of Christ, that is, all the world except real Christians, are his enemies.

2. The conquering of these enemies is the work of Christ. The history of all genuine conversions is written in these words: "Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; The peoples fall under you." Every new subject brought into his kingdom is a trophy of his conquering power. His empire is extended only by conquest. Allow that the text has reference to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and all this follows with irresistible certainty.

3. We are now prepared to examine the process by which these conquests are made. The first question is, What are these arrows by which the enemies are shot through? Doubtless they are the same with the sword mentioned in a preceding verse. Now the sword of Christ is represented as proceeding out of his mouth; and long ago he said by a prophet, "He has made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand he has hidden me, and made me a polished shaft" "The sword of the Spirit" is expressly said to be "the word of God"; and we are told that "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." No doubt then that the arrows which he pierces us are the truths of his word. This piercing is

accomplished by the working of his Spirit, whose special work is to “convict the world of sin and righteousness and of judgment.” In an hour when the mind is thoughtless and wandering upon the world, it is made to feel one of these truths, and then another, and another still, with increasing and decreasing power. The precise order is not the same in every case; but sooner or later the same truths get into every mind thus affected. The sinner is made to feel, to a degree unknown before, that there is a God “who is angry with the wicked every day”; that he himself is the creation of God sent into the world to serve that God; that he has wickedly neglected the work; that he has violated the laws of God in numberless instances, in thought, word, and deed; that for his sins he is justly condemned to eternal death. After seeing these things he cannot but be deeply affected and dismayed. The careless world may well pronounce him mad: but is he really insane? Is it madness to believe the truths of God? The things which he sees and feels are everlasting truths; and the only difference between his present and former state is, that *then* he did not realise the truth, *now* he does. Formerly he lived in unbelief, like the rest of a careless world, heedless of the things which God has spoken; now he believes them. Which is the real madman, one who can refuse to believe infinite truths, and rush on to eternity unmindful of the terrible declarations of God respecting the world he lives in, or he who views things as they are?

It is a fashionable opinion among the heedless, that men submit to the empire of Christ in a calm manner, without any distress or ferment; that as religion is a pleasant service, all gloom at the entrance upon it must indicate a morbid state of the imagination. But this does not agree with the statement of the text. The heart of a rebel will be transfixed with arrows: and if arrows enter a heart there must be pain. And to look at the thing in its own light, how can a man wake up and find himself an enemy to God and under condemnation, and not be distressed? How can the sins of his life be laid open to his sight without filling him with confusion and anguish? How can “the wrath of God,” which “is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness,” be applied to him without producing trembling and dread? You say, he ought to trust in the mercies of God in Christ: and so he will as soon as he has fully seen his need and humbled himself for his sins. But are there no pains of sickness to be felt before he will apply to the physician? Is there no view of ruin before he will prize the grace which came “to save that which was lost?” —before he will flee to the refuge provided? Are there no bitter tears of repentance before he can be pardoned? And is it necessary to suppose that all these realizations occur in a single moment? Is it not more consistent with the nature of the human mind, with facts recorded in Scripture, and with the testimony of daily experience, to suppose that these new

understandings must pass in succession, and often in slow succession? And that the mind, hard and obstinate as it is, must ordinarily linger for a considerable time under a sense of guilt and ruin before it will embrace a Saviour? And is it not reasonable to suppose that one who has been so deep in guilt, will be held off a while, (like Miriam who was left to “be ashamed seven days,”). before he is admitted to the embraces of pardoning love? It is perfectly reasonable and Scriptural and agrees with personal experience, that a sinner should remain a while in darkness and distress before he tastes the sweetness of forgiving mercy. And there are too many reasons to fear that those who condemn these temporary glooms, and find no difficulty in trusting at once on divine mercy without a conflict or a pain, have never seen their need of mercy and do in fact rely rather on the general clemency of God to which they feel themselves justly entitled.

But our text carries the idea farther. I have said, if arrows enter a heart there must be pain; I now add, there must be *death*; and if life succeeds, it must be by a resurrection. By these arrows the heart of Paul was pierced on the plains of Damascus; and he himself tells us the effect: “When the commandment came, sin revived and I died.” The majesty and purity of God opened to his sight; the strictness and extent of the divine law stood before him; his own sins rolled upon him like a dark cloud of thunder; he saw himself to be utterly condemned, utterly unable to atone for one sin, utterly ruined, helpless, and hopeless. Then it was that he died to all hope of justification by the law,—all hope of helping himself,—and pronounced himself a dead man. Then, and not till then, he lifted an eye to the Saviour,—lifted it from the bottom of the grave, and rose to a new life of hope,—rose to eternal life in Jesus Christ.

The work which the Saviour came to accomplish was nothing less than to raise the dead. He did not come to remodel an old life, but to raise men from their graves. He came to be, in every sense, “the resurrection and the life.” His purpose was to raise to spiritual life the “dead in trespasses and sins,” to raise to the life of hope and to eternal life those who had seen themselves to be dead in the sentence of the law, and had died to all hope of helping themselves. Finally he will raise the body from the grave. Every part of his work is a resurrection.

How wonderful is the literal truth behind the figurative language of our text! This glorious King and Conqueror, finding a rebel in arms against him, thrusts him through with the arrows of truth, fills him with the anguish of conviction, lays him dead at his feet, and then raises him to the life of hope and to life eternal in himself. This single figure presents the whole process of supernatural conviction and conversion, and proves the reality of such a work.

Here I pause, and ask my hearers whether they have ever experienced such a change. If you have not, you have no part in Christ. This is precisely the change intended by the Saviour himself when he said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." If you have not felt the arrows of truth penetrating your hearts, filling you with remorse and anguish and repentance, showing you the justice of your condemnation, causing you to die to all hope of thinking good of yourselves before God, leading you to look up from your graves to the Saviour of sinners, and raising you to a new life in him; you may be moral and charitable to the poor, but you have no part in Christ. You still lie under condemnation, and dying thus, must sink into eternal woe. Have you then, my dear hearers, ever felt those arrows penetrating your souls, and felt them extracted by him who applied the balm of Gilead? How beautifully is this process described by the tender poet Cowper!

"I was a stricken deer that left the herd
long since: with many an arrow deeply pierced
my panting side was charged, when I withdrew
to seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One who had himself
been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
and in his hands and feet the cruel scars,
With gentle force extracting the darts,
he drew them forth, and healed and bade me live."

II. Let us now contemplate the general march of this divine Conqueror.

The great work of subduing a rebellious race is taken into his own hands;—a glorious truth, which, though offensive to wicked men, lays the only foundation of human hope. He made a promise to undertake this wonderful campaign when there was nothing to require him, no one to speak of our miseries, no one to plead in our behalf. He undertook it from no desire of fame, with no desire for reward but the pleasure of relieving the wretched and bestowing on prostrate rebels freedom and life. He undertook it knowing full well the perils of the war and the many pains and scars it would cost him. The scene of the battle was not to be a single district or kingdom, but a world. The interest at stake was the dearest interest of God and his creation.

The warring sides were the strongest powers in the universe. The army collected to oppose this mighty King made up of all the inhabitants of two worlds was the greatest host that ever was marshaled since time began. The great army of

Xerxes was a platoon compared to this. Against such an immeasurable host, who for ages had been entrenching themselves throughout the world, in every temple, in every school, behind every throne, in every heart, he went forth single-handed. He girded his sword upon his thigh, he mounted the chariot of his Gospel, and marched directly into the heart of Satan's empire. Wherever he came he conquered. At his approach devils fled, their temples and altars fell, their oracles grew dumb. The Roman empire, the chief seat of Satan's visible kingdom, shook to its center, and afterwards opened to the Conqueror and fell prostrate at his feet. Wounds he carried, but the very blood he shed dissolved the strongest hold of Satan, the heart of man. He sent forth his arrows and three thousand wore pricked in the heart at once. He marched through the nations, breaking down the prisons which Satan had reared to confine his wretched captives. Hundreds of millions who had been confined in dungeons from their birth, were released from their chains and brought forth to joyous light. Wherever he came freedom and joy sprung up around him. He marched down the ages, scattering his arrows from his quiver and bringing his enemies to his feet.

He still rides today through the nations "conquering and to conquer." His arrows never miss their mark. No trumpet is sounded before him: his march is silent and unobserved by the world, but it is uninterrupted still. While the world dream that he has retired from the earth, he is extending his conquests every hour. It is the chief employment for which he lives. All the piety of the present generation in the four quarters of the globe, is the fruit of his recent conquests. Every saint on earth is a vanquished rebel, whose heart was once pierced by the shafts of his quiver. God speed thee, thou glorious Conqueror! Go on and prosper. "And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness" and may the praises of millions ready to perish come before you.

His signs of victory are not desolated countries, but prisoners set free, souls delivered from the destroyer, sighs and groans comforted, and the sting of death removed. These are *his* trophies; these are his spoils. The high minded spirit of medieval legend celebrated the feats of knights uninterested in their own gain, who roamed the kingdoms, supposedly to deliver oppressed females from enchanted castles or from the grasp of giants and monsters. But how much more generous and kind a Deliverer is here,—marching through the nations and rescuing the oppressed and those that have no helper. "Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, Or the captives of the righteous be delivered? But thus says the LORD: Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, And the prey of the terrible be delivered." O the divine compassion of this Godlike advance! Again we say, the Almighty God speed thee, thou glorious Conqueror! We will follow the wheels of

his triumphal chariot, and shout as we go, “Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord” to redeem a wretched race: “Hosanna in the highest.”

How many millions has this high-minded King subdued, from Abel to the present day? How many even of us? How many of our dear children and friends? Has not some of us seen a parent or a brother delivered from eternal slavery and ruin? Has never a parent among us seen a child set free from bondage and restored to his right mind? In the hour when that parent stood with his child to thank his Deliverer, did he not say again, “Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that comes” to save our children from eternal death?

But the most glorious triumphs of this divine Conqueror are reserved for ages yet to come, which the voice of prophecy and the signs of the times declare to be now at the door. His hand is brushing away the kingdom of religious authority and dropping spiritual Babylon like a millstone into the mighty deep. His shafts will shortly pierce the curtain that hides from the seed of Abraham the glories of their Messiah; and some of you, I trust, will live to see that long lost race restored to the land of their fathers. His hand will break the Muslim powers, when they assemble on the mountains of Israel to disinherit the restored tribes, and will thus put a final end to that delusion which has long enchained that part of the human race. His bow will bring down many nations which are now kneeling to gods of wood and stone. His arrows will pierce the priests of Hinduism and Buddhism, and lay the dervishes of Turkey at his feet. They will sing his triumphs on the banks of the Ganges and in the deserts of Sahara. They will celebrate his victories on the frozen beach of Kamchatka and in the sultry regions of Congo and Peru. The mosques of Mecca and the pagodas of Hindustan shall be converted into temples of the living God: and the enemy who deceived the whole world, ejected from all his dominions on earth, shall be confined to his prison for a thousand years. For a thousand years shall he who hung on Calvary reign over this restored world, with all his enemies under his feet, with none to question his messianic office, with none to deny his godhead. At the end of this period he will triumph once more over “Gog and Magog”; and then, as the last act of his dominion on earth, will judge the world. And when he shall have committed all his enemies to prison, and shall be returning, at the head of his redeemed Church, towards heaven’s gate,—going home from all his wars and victories, covered with scars and honors,—how will they shout his triumphs as they ascend: “Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, The LORD mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O you gates! Lift up, you everlasting doors! And the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory?”

The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory.” And when they have conducted him to his throne, they will sing out the eternal strain “like the sound of many waters”: voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” And the whole sanctified creation will send forth the loud response: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

My dear hearers, fall down at the feet of this divine Conqueror, and submit to his empire, and risk your eternal all upon his mediation. If you refuse, know you that he has other arrows with which to reach your heart. “God shall shoot at [you] with an arrow; suddenly shall [you] be wounded.” They that will not have this King to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him. He will reign till all his enemies are made his footstool. His first advent, with all the kindness which attended it, was foretold in terms terrible to the wicked. “And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire.” And that coming in his kingdom which is yet future, is predicted in language equally alarming. “Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this One who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?; ‘I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.’ Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? ‘I have trodden the winepress alone, And from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, And trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, And I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, And the year of My redeemed has come.’” Terrible things are to be accomplished upon the wicked, which will cause men’s hearts to fail for fear. “The kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, [will hide] themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and [say] to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”

Therefore my friends, seek the arrows of his love before the time comes for the arrows of his wrath. Run to the shelter of the Savior before you wish for the shelter of the rocks. May you be a trophy of his grace and rejoice in the day of his coming. Amen.

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