

# SIMPLE TALKS ON THE TABERNACLE

by

D. H. Dolman, M. A., D. D.

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### A POT OF MANNA AND A BUDDING ROD

**“And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations”** (Exodus 16:33).

**“On the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds . . . And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt take away their murmurings from me, that they die not”** (Numbers 17:8, 10).

Two memorials, one of human folly and sin, and one of divine mercy and grace, God commanded Moses to put into the ark.

God had done mighty deeds for Israel. He had delivered them out of the hand of their Egyptian taskmasters. He had led them safely through the Red Sea. He had made the bitter water of Mara sweet. He had been a shelter from the heat for them in providing the palm-trees of Elim, and notwithstanding His loving care, they soon began to murmur against Him that He had only led them in the dreary desert to starve them by hunger and thirst. It seems all but incredible to us when we read this of others.

In response to this want of confidence, God provided them each day with fresh food from heaven during the forty years of their wanderings in the desert.

**“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; neither rewarded us according to our iniquities”** (Psalm. 103:10).

Of this manna, angels' food for His children, God commanded that an omer, a man's daily portion, should be put into the ark in a little pot to be kept for generations. Some Israelites tried to keep manna for the next day; it became bad; it bred worms. We cannot live on past blessings. The only way to deal with them is to pass them on to others. What we commit unto the Lord, He is able to keep till the great day.

*The manna in the ark did not turn bad.*

**“That they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness.”**

We are so apt to forget. Our memory is also perverted by sin. We forget what we should remember and we remember things we should forget. David says: **“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”** David thought we were most likely to forget most of them.

“Count your many blessings,  
Count them one by one,  
And it will surprise you  
What the Lord has done.”

**“The Lord knows our frame.”**

We need the pot of omer filled with manna; we need the Holy Spirit, the best Remembrancer.

What is manna? An Israelite would have answered: “It is a small round thing; it looks like coriander seed; it is sweet to the taste and so light that it fell on the dew in early morning.”

Our Lord answered: **“My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst”** (John 6:32, 36).

How is it that many of God's children look starved? Father is not to blame. In Father's house is bread enough and to spare (Luke 15:17). The fault lies with the children. Healthy children have a good appetite. They do not forget their meals. They like home-food best. Sick children have no healthy appetite. Some of the Israelites were sick. They longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt because their heart was still in Egypt. My friend, you cannot live on the blessings you received yesterday; you must gather fresh manna every morning when your mind is fresh, before you open your post or your newspaper.

*Your soul gets starved if you spend more time on your newspaper and magazines than on the Word of God.*

Read the Bible with your children; read it for yourself and you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The more you study the Bible, the more you will love it. Dig deep and you will discover the hidden treasures of darkness (Isaiah 45:3). You will not complain about the drought, for **“the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not”** (Isaiah 58:11).

Besides the pot of manna, a token of God's loving care for His people, a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true bread of life, there was Aaron's rod, a sign of Israel's murmuring and disobedience.

If that rod could speak, what a sad story it would have to tell! Korah, Dathan and Abiram wanted to be great. The sixteenth chapter of Numbers is one of the saddest in the whole Bible. Korah and his two friends were dissatisfied. They rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

They envied them the place to which God had called them. The poison of dissatisfaction and rebellion had spread amongst the chief princes and the people. The Pharisees sought the first places in the synagogue. Christ says: **“He who will be first among you, let him be the servant of all.”** God laid His hand in punishment on Korah, Dathan and Abiram. They had provoked the Lord. The earth swallowed them up and they perished from among the congregation (Numbers 16:33).

Had this dreadful punishment brought Israel in repentance on their knees? We might have expected so. Instead, the next morning they reproached Aaron again for having assumed a position to which he had no right. I am so glad that in the whole story there is not a word of defence on the part of Aaron. He had committed his cause to the Lord and He would legitimate His servants. We too have an advocate with the Father, and if we commit our cause to Him, there is no necessity of defending ourselves (I John 2:1). How much time and anxiety this saves us.

**“The Lord shall fight you, and ye shall hold your peace”** (Exodus 14:14).

**“Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he starts doing”** (Psalm. 37:5).

*He always does even if we fail to notice it.*

He sometimes has to keep us waiting and keeps away encouraging results until we learn to trust the Lord without them, and then the result will be all the more wonderful. The Lord commanded that the head of each tribe should bring his rod and put his name on it. Aaron represented the tribe of Levi, chosen by God to minister in the tabernacle for the people.

Moses put the twelve rods before the Lord before the ark of witness. God said that **“the man's rod whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel.”**

The next morning Moses went into the tabernacle and behold the rod of Aaron was budded, brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds (Numbers 17:8). The buds of spring, the green leaves of early summer, the fruit of autumn — God had done a miracle and legitimated His servant who had entrusted his case to Him.

Was Aaron's rod so much better than the others? No, it was not. God had worked a miracle: He still does. Aaron's rod speaks to us of want and fullness. In the evening Aaron's rod differed in no respect from those of the other princes. There was no life whatever in it; it was a dead stick. If you had asked anybody they would have said: “It is quite impossible that that stick could ever blossom.” It did not bear fruit either. Where there is no life, there is no fruitfulness. Fruit is the result of the juice which, from the roots, flows through the branches.

*Aaron's rod was not only dead, but fruitless. It had no value.*

The carpenter could make nothing out of it.

**“What is the vine-tree more than any other tree? Shall wood be taken thereof?”** the prophet asks.

As a living branch of the vine it can bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit. Apart from the vine it can do nothing. You cannot even hang something on it. The carpenter can make use of other wood, but branches of the vine are only good for firewood (Ezekiel 15:2-4).

Now look at that same rod the next morning. If Aaron's name had not been carved into it, you would not have recognized it. It was a new creation. It budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. Fresh life is sprouted out everywhere. The blooms spread a lovely odour all around.

The rod, instead of being repulsive, attracts people. When the Christ-life manifests itself in us, we find grace by God and man. We are a sweet odor of Christ.

If you have spent a day in the tulip fields of Holland you smell of the tulip fields. If you have been with Christ long enough, it will make people think of Christ when they meet you. You are a sweet savour of Christ (II Corinthians 2:15), an epistle of Christ, a recommendation of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, commending Christ to your surroundings.

You are **“like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper”** (Psalm. 1:3).

Is this really possible? A wonder must happen. You are right, but we reckon with a Saviour whose name is **“Wonderful,”** who can restore the years that the locust has eaten and who will do great things (Joel 2:25).

**~ end of chapter 23 ~**

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