

## No Promotion Needed

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From Some Notes on Judges.

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At the time of the incident related in Judges 9: 1-21 Israel had been delivered out of Egypt; carried through the wilderness and were established in the land. God had brought them there, as Joshua had reminded them and he had exhorted them to "fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in truth" (Joshua 24: 14).

Joshua and the leaders had passed away and failure follows. The people did not continue in the fear and service of the Lord. Consequently they are beset by enemies from without and within, being "mightily oppressed," "greatly impoverished," and "sore distressed." Yet they seem to learn no lesson from all this or to seek a reason why they are in such trouble. They forgot the resource of true saints, to whom there is one God, one Judge or Deliverer.

From the sixth chapter of Judges we learn that, following the evil which Israel did in the sight of the Lord, He delivered them into the hands of the Midianites seven years, and the Midianites reaped what Israel had sowed, so that Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; they cried unto the Lord because of them.

In reply to their cry to Him, God sent a prophet to tell them that they were suffering because they had not obeyed His voice. At the same time He raised up Gideon to deliver them out of the hand of the Midianites and the land was recovered and the foe expelled; "the country was in quietness forty years in the days of Gideon." Alas, Gideon failed, in that he set up in Ophrah an ephod as a memento of the victory which the Lord had given him for Israel. This became a snare unto Gideon and his house and turned the people's heart to it and not to the Lord. Anything in the nature of a memento, set up on earth, to the Lord's victory is not of Him; He abides, the eternal witness to Himself and all that He has done!

Gideon's successor, Abimelech, is characterised by ambition which leads to the constitution of a central authority on earth with the determination to get rid of all that stands in the way, as seen in the most ruthless means taken to cut off the seventy sons of Gideon, all of whom were destroyed except the youngest, Jotham, who was not there, having hidden himself.

At this point we have the testimony of Jotham from Mount Gerizim, and in his parable we find much that is instructive for us today.

The trees wanted a King. But why? Had not God made all; why alter God's order?

They ask the **Olive Tree**, but the Olive Tree is content with God's order. It represented Israel in its place of privilege. "Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man." The fatness of the olive tree is the oil pressed from its fruits.

The Spirit of God would produce, and work out in God's people in daily details, a character in line with the promise and purpose of God at any given time. His call was individual in Patriarchs, national in Israel, and is corporate in the Church age. The fatness of it in man, honours God and means power for worship Godward and for service manward. Saints who apprehend this highest, of all **privileges** want no promotion. It is enough to be what God has made them.

They ask the **Fig Tree**. The fig tree is contented with God's order. "Should I forsake my

sweetness and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?" It is our **responsibility** to correspond with God's call and present purpose. If we answer to our present calling it produces sweetness and fruit. It requires to be tasted to be known. There is nothing finer than the internal features of character, produced by the present testimony of God; the mind of God understood for the present time and expressed. Fruit also, the external evidence of the grace within. The responsibility taken up and acted upon — saints apprehending this want no promotion. They are content with God's order.

They ask the **Vine**. The vine is a lowly plant, dependent and clinging. It is contented with God's order. "Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?" It yields wine and has its place in giving gladness to God and man. **Christ**, the lowly man of God's pleasure, the **true vine**, yielding fruit for the Father, always doing the things that please Him. Saints also, abiding in Christ, living of His life, fed by His love, quietly expressing that life in fruit; love to one another and testimony to the world. A wondrous position affording contentment with our happy lot and desiring nothing of promotion from the world where Christ was, and is, hated.

They ask the **Bramble**. Being determined in their perverseness and in spite of these rebuffs, to have a king, they find that God in anger may give them one and take him away in His wrath. Their choice may turn out to be one of the basest of men. Only by debasing themselves could the trees acknowledge the bramble as having authority over them, and such is its demand in the parable. It is too insignificant and paltry to stand up with its own strength and dignity but is quite content to lift up itself if others will put themselves down under it. The devil himself will one day lift up a man the political antichrist — as the puppet of his own ambition, giving him his power and throne and great authority and yet he is, in the Divine picture (Rev. 13) but a beast. But with what result? Only the destruction of the puppet and of all who trust in him and the final confusion and overthrow of Satan himself. The Shechemites of our chapter find out in the long run that their choice becomes their affliction and punishment.

The lesson for us in all this is that neither saint nor people going on with God require promotion. His life and character and service as he moves quietly in the sphere to which God has appointed him, commend themselves; and ambition - save to honour God — leaves them cold. But one who is graceless and self-centred will gladly accept the adulation of foolish men and climb over them to a tyrannical position, comparable only to the pride that goes before destruction. Christ, on the contrary **humbled** Himself. God highly exalted Him.