

1946

UA3/2/4 Sunday School Lesson

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We studied this morning in our Sunday School lesson one of the most encouraging and at the same time one of the most challenging episodes of biblical history-the story of the occasion when the forces of the King of Syria had surrounded the city in which God's prophet, Elisha, slept. You will remember the following language " And when the servant of the man of God was risen early and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, "Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" And Elisha prayed and said, "Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw: and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

This is but one striking incident from an historical account covering many years in which the theme is the protective care of God for those nations whose leaders and people walk in his paths and heed his counsel. If He was concerned then about the development of nations and individuals toward an ever greater conception of the proper relationship of the individual toward God and toward his fellow men surely one can not think the development of freedom has taken place except thru His concern and guiding care. Down thru the ages the spark of freedom has glowed, now faintly, now more brightly as freedom loving men have cherished and protected and fanned it that its beneficent light might reach more of the world and push backward in its expansion the blackness of tyranny and oppression.

It has always seemed to me that there came a time in the history of men and the wisdom of God when new spaces were needed for the development of freedom and that it was under His guidance men came to America seeking social, economic, political, and religious

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freedom and eventually established here a government founded on the principle that all men are created equal, endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which government was established to secure for the individual these rights.

Did you ever consider how impossible was victory for the colonists in the Revolution? On one side the invincible power of England, on the other the struggling ill clad, ill fed, ill armed, ill trained men of the colonies. Whence came then the courage and inspiration of men like Franklin, and Otis, and Henry and Samuel Adams, and Paine, who fanned the spirit of our forefathers to the point where they were willing to undertake the so unequal struggle and to continue it? Whence came the brilliant leadership of men like Washington to bring the struggle to success against impossible odds? Whence except from the God of Elisha and His intent that the spark of freedom might flame as a torch in the new world as a beacon of hope for all mankind? As our late lamented President phrased it, "America has been the new world, in all tongues to all peoples, not because this continent was a new found land but because ^{all} who came here believed they could create upon this continent a new life that should be new in freedom"

Whence came the protective power that preserved the colonies when war was done, powerless and without credit, with a thousand causes for disagreement ~~and~~ from destruction? Whence came the wisdom which enabled our forefathers to draft a constitution which for its protection of the rights of the ordinary man and for its ability to meet the so difficult demands of the changing years with their ever new problems, has been a miracle of conception? Whence but from God?

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Of what should we boast as we trace the expansion of America to the Pacific and beyond, our success in wars, our genius for invention and phenomenal industrial development, our high standard of living, our accomplishments in the field of letters and of art and of education for the children of all the people, except the protective guidance of the God of Hosts?

Who gave in our time of greatest domestic crisis the simple, wise and kindly Lincoln and who gave him the magic of words so pertinent to our present situation, "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us: that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people and for the people, shall not perish from the earth." Who but the God who said to Moses, "Certainly I will be with thee" and again, "Who hath made man's mouth, have not I the Lord?"

Within the memories of many of us, twice the flame of liberty has been threatened with extinction by a fast and all enveloping cloud of tyranny and oppression from abroad. And this in times when we had thought this flame so strong and its brightness such a blessing that surely none could want to destroy it. The last threat was the most dangerous of all. In so many countries of the earth the blackness came down and freedom loving men again went forth to roll it back at the cost of struggle and pain and death. When the struggle seemed most hopeless it was told me that a little old lady with no wisdom based on books said to one of much education but whose wisdom gave him no hope, "Don't worry about this war. Hitler is against God. God will not let him win. Hers was the assurance of faith. So because of courage and sacrifice

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and faith in the importance of freedom and because of God's will that freedom should not be destroyed, the black cloud never reached our shores and now there is light again in much of the world where it was not, and before ^{too} long we know now, the wise and the foolish alike, that this last and greatest threat to the dreams of men for freedom will be destroyed.

It is not fitting that we who are safe or whose sons are safe ~~we~~ should rejoice in our immunity when so many have died but we can rightly and appropriately rejoice that the freedom for which they died and which was so well worth dying for, has been preserved for the future.

Neither is it fitting that we should glory in our accomplishment or in our might but rather that we should with strengthened faith give thanks to Him who added his blessing to our strength that men thruout the earth might lift their eyes in hope because of our victory ,that the light of freedom may illumine the faces of all men and that in due time there shall be no dark places anymore.