

"The Rod of the Lord"

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After the Lord had told His name to Moses, that he might tell the Children of Israel "I AM hath sent me unto you," he was still afraid that they would not believe him, nor pay any attention to his words.

Then God gave him signs which he was to show them, so that they might learn of His mighty power to deliver them, and might know that Moses was His chosen instrument.

In his hand Moses held the rod usually carried by the eastern shepherd. David, who had been a shepherd himself, speaks of this rod, you will remember, in the beautiful shepherd psalm, "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

"And the Lord said unto him, What is in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And He said, cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand."

The poisonous, writhing serpent has always been used to represent sin, from the time when Satan took the serpent's form in the Garden of Eden, and through it tempted Eve to disobey God. Satan himself is spoken of in God's Word as "that old serpent."

Little did Moses think that the rod upon which he leaned could become a poisonous serpent to destroy him. Yet so it was; and in this God is showing us how Satan can use whatever we have in our hands, anything in our possession, even though it may be good in itself, to lead us into sin and to destroy us.

The trail of the serpent is everywhere, over all the earth, and in all things, changing the blessings that God gives us into a curse to kill us. But, thank God, there is a greater power than that of sin or Satan working in all things,—the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, who can change the curse into a blessing, and can take even the things by which the evil one is trying to take our lives, and make them a means of blessing and help and strength to us and, to others.

This is what God showed to Moses when he was fleeing in terror from before the serpent; God command him to take hold of it by the tail, and as he obeyed the word of God, all the serpent's power to hurt him was taken away. It became a rod in his hand,—the rod by which many wonderful works of God were wrought in the land of Egypt and in the wilderness, as we shall see.

In all this we see the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to overcome Satan, and when we know this, we shall do what the Word of God tells us: "Resist the devil, and he

will flee from you." He is always trying to get his poisonous fangs into us, but all that he brings against us, we can take hold of in the strength which Jesus gives us, and it will become a help to us instead.

Is there something in your life, something in your character, that is the means of constantly leading you into sin, something that you feel you cannot overcome, but can only flee before it, as Moses fled before the serpent? No matter what it is, Jesus Christ can work through that very thing to strengthen your character, and so make you better able to overcome all temptations, besides making you a help to others.

This miracle was also an allegory, a picture of the history of the Children of Israel. It was a time of famine when they went into Egypt, and Joseph invited them all to come there because "there was corn in Egypt." So Egypt was as the rod upon which they had leaned in their need, but it had now become like the serpent, seeking to swallow them up.

The name that the Lord gives to Egypt is "the great dragon." In the first chapter of Exodus you may read of the cruel ways in which Pharaoh, king of Egypt, tried to destroy the Israelites. The power that was holding them in bondage in this land of darkness was the cruel power of Satan, but God wanted to show them that He had the power to deliver them. He could even use the Egyptians themselves to carry out His purposes of good to them. For He told Moses that they should "spoil the Egyptians" and not go out empty-handed, but with the silver and gold, and raiment, and other things that they would need on their journey.

Pharaoh would, not listen to the message that the Lord sent to him through Moses, "Let My people go." He hardened his heart, and afflicted and oppressed them worse than before. Then through the mighty works that God did to deliver them from the Egyptians, all the nations round learned of the true God. So God used Egypt which rose up against Him and tried to destroy His people, to make His power known in all the earth.

God gave Moses this sign of His power, turning the rod into a serpent and the serpent back into a rod again, that he might show it to the Children of Israel for them to read in it the history of their own deliverance. And we, too, may read there, if we will, our own complete victory over Satan through the Lord Jesus Christ, and that he can do nothing against us but what God will turn into a blessing for us.