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"THE SUREST WAY TO DEFEAT IS TO DO NOTHING, BUT
EVERYBODY DOING A LITTLE MOUNTS TO A LOT"

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THE 108TH CONVENTION

OF THE INDEPENDENT ORDER OF SAINT LUKE

Commencing AUGUST 12TH, 13TH & 14TH, 1974

at the

VIRGINIA UNION UNIVERSITY OF RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

Address delivered by

REVEREND S. L. GARDNER - R. W. G. CHIEF

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MR. PRESIDING OFFICER, DELEGATES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Again by the providence of God the ST. LUKE Convention has convened in its 108th consecutive session. The River of years has poured much water under the bridge of time since the first meeting of this convention. During these many years this "old ship of state" has had her ups and downs, her good and bad days, her lean years and her years of plenty. But by the grace of God she is still afloat. Some of the dreams of the "Patriarchs" have been realized, and some are yet to come to pass.

In these passed 108 years technical-know-how in every area of science has made a giant leap forward. We have probed the depths of inner-space and scratched the surface of outer-space. We have found the hidden microbes that caused "incurable disease" and brought them under control of medical science. We have scrutinized the electron and proton and found out how to split the atom. The power that has come to men through science has been miraculous.

Although the sunlight of knowledge shines brightly above us I see a cloud in the sky about the size of a man's hand, it hangs ominous over this generation.

There are many strange voices that are calling the youth of this age to battle against the gates that have held back flood tides of evil across the years. There are people who are the recipients of the blessings of our government and the church of our land have sworn their allegiance to the causes that are with the foes of this government of ours. The church cannot stand on neutral ground in the hours of the crisis of our nation.

The rank and file of our convention is being probed as of today for weak spots. There are those who would like to divert us from our course and set our sails in a new direction, but like song of old, "We have come so far by faith, leaning on the Lord." he has never failed us yet.

So we cannot turn around because we are leaning and depending on the Lord.

What It Takes To Do The Job

And Moses said unto God, who am I that I should go ...? Exodus 4:11

This is the story of a man whose modesty reached the point of craven surrender. He had been called to a great social task by the Most High. He did not doubt the reality of the commanding voice. But he did doubt himself.

The reasons Moses gave for wanting to be excused were good reasons - they usually are. But the good can so easily become the enemy of the best. So with Moses. Look at the reasons for his timidity.

(1) There was his own self distrust. Moses was afraid that he was not the right person to undertake this task. How many people are like Moses. God wanted him, God had called him. The people needed him, and here he stands afraid because he was too timid, too much self-distrust. Who am I, that I should go?

God did not even bother to answer this question, but what God did say next was "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be a token unto you, that I have sent you. Your assurance of success lies in the fact that I have sent you. The reason for your success does not lie in your ability, it lies in the fact that I have sent you.

You see the one who had called Moses did not try to explain Moses's own personality to him. He did not try to give him any self confidence. But he did promise divine interest, compassion, and strength: "Certainly I will be with you.

(2) There was the incredulity, the doubt, of the people. What shall I say unto them?(verse 13). How can I give them the assurance that I am commissioned of the Eternal to lead them out of injustice and oppression? God said, in so many words you just give them my word.

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(3) Then greater yet than the opposition of vested interests represented by Pharaoh and greater than the incredulity, the doubts of the people, was the apathy of the people....they will not believe me, nor harken unto my voice. This apathetic attitude on the part of those who need freedom is more difficult to contend with than the opposition of those who would prevent it.

The biggest and toughest job that Moses had in bringing the people out of Egypt was the like of interest of the people themselves in the project of freedom. That was not only true then, it is true now. They will not believe me nor harken unto my word. All of the kicking and fighting and attempts to discourage, comes from among the people that are to benefit most.

The same problem prevailed with Jesus. The people that he was trying to help were the ones that did the most complaining. If you really want to be talked about, try to help people better themselves, and many of them will hate you for no reason at all.

(4) Perhaps Moses's basic objection was...Lord I am not eloquent...I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. (4:10) Eloquence does not belong to speech only, there is an eloquence of silence and an eloquence of deed.

How modern Moses's excuses sounds! Each of us have been made aware of something we are called upon to do; we have a life to live-difficult, high, Christ-like. Humility is a mark of a noble soul, but it can easily degenerate into decaying self-distrust.

In any community there are numbers of well meaning, likeable people who mean to be good christians. Only they have not quite gotten around to it yet. The call comes to them to go to some Pharaoh, to some evil, some deadly influence in their lives, and the lives of others, and lead the best out. But too often the response is the timid, "who am I?" They see the church with an honorable history of service to the community, endeavoring to keep its light shining thru the mist and darkness, and needing

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the support of devoted and generous folk. They believe in it, but they have not begun to help-yet. Here is a great social cause-the emancipation of a community from the enslavement of various forms of evil-but like Moses, like many others down through the ages, the barriers looms bigger than their strength.

What can be done about it? Scolding, exhorting, condemning, are not only wearisome but usually ineffective. What timid folk need- what we all require at many points from Egypt to our land of fulfillment-is to appropriate the evangel vitalized life. It is found in God's answer to Moses certainly I will be with thee. It is the high Faith that He who placed us here will see us through. It is the highest working philosophy of life.

This gospel is good news for the lost. A man may not eat with the swine to be lost. Like the lost coin, and the lost sheep in the master's stories-a lost man is often a good man misplaced out of harmony, living too much in the shadows cast by a sense of inadequacy.

How does a man find himself? We cease saying with Moses, O Lord I am not...And began affirming with St. Paul, I can do all things through Christ who strength me.

I will present to you four ways a person may find himself:

(1) Subjective Analysis can lead into the depth of morbid despair, but a little of it is healthy. It means knowing one's self, and accepting one's limitations and assets. Be more interested in appropriating beauty than ferreting out ugliness.

Then this self knowledge must find expression in objective interest. What do you like doing not for a moment, an hour, but what gives you durable satisfaction? What do you love to remember? These interests are probably in line with your highest and best destiny. Discover and uncover that, and you and I are ready to say I will arise and go.

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Activity was what lifted Moses out of a sense of inadequacy, gave him healthy self-confidence, and made him the famous leader of his race.

Thomas Carlyle said, "Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action." Do the duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a duty. The second duty will already have become clear. Act, arise and go.

The experience of achievement means that we learn by trying. It is better to try and fail than to escape failure by never trying. We live by doing. We move out of the dungeon of self pity into God's clear air of living. Who am I, that I should go? Who am I that I should lead in some worthy enterprise? And he said, Certainly I will be with thee. Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves (James 1:22). Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

"Him that over cometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the Name of my God, to indicate what sort of stuff he is, and the name of the City of my God, to indicate where he is to dwell...and I will write upon him my new name." Rev. 3:12

The Musician and song writer spells
out our duty for us:

I can hear my Saviour calling
I can hear my Saviour calling
I can hear my Saviour calling
Take thy cross and follow me
Where he leads me I will follow
Where he leads me I will follow
Where he leads me I will follow
I'll go with Him, I'll go with Him
I'll go with Him, all the way

