

BLOCKED ROADS
by Lester J. Start
Undated

Acts 16:6ff.

The missionary endeavors of Paul were by no means free of opposition; many times his efforts were frustrated, his pathway blocked. The text shows Paul's efforts at doing the work of the Lord blocked by what seems to have been the Lord's own actions. We do not know what Paul's obstacle was in this case, although we do know in others, but Paul's own explanation is understandable and right. Our roads are blocked in life by the workings of an inscrutable fate, if we do not believe in God, or by the hand of the Lord if we have faith in his guidance and care. This way of speaking merely indicates that individually we can not control our fate, or make our environment. Why this is so should not concern us so much as what we can do about it when we find our pathways in life blocked.

An interesting parallel by way of illustration is to be found in the way our roads have been blocked literally in recent weeks by the severe winter. A lot is to be learned by studying the reactions we have to such a situation, and applying them to the more important situations in life when our plans are blocked by forces outside of our control.

1. The ultimate responsibility of this situation of blocked roads is laid to God. Even in the most common situations we make God responsible for the conditions which we can not control.
2. And yet we do not rest in such a situation but try to remove the obstacles.
3. When we can not, as in isolated localities, it does no good to complain about the situation, but it may serve as an occasion for us to take stock of our resources and make a better basis for more independent living.

I. Everyone of us has experienced in one way or another blocked roads in our lives. There is probably no one in this congregation who has arrived at the point today which he had hoped to reach. In spite of planning and working outside circumstances work to frustrate our efforts.

“The best-laid plans of mice and men gang oft go awry.”~

Illustrations: failures to acquire educations; health difficulties; family responsibilities; service men.

Illustrations from the Bible: Paul;[Salmas?]; Joseph; children of Israel in slavery; Jesus. All have their modern parallels; all show the unceasing struggle with the evil which hampers our lives.

II We can let these circumstances defeat us. The blocked path may force us back upon our selves with the result that we become despairing, bitter, defeated, blame God for our misfortunes, and make of our religion a new cult of Futitarianism.

1. The impulse toward regression when we are frustrated. Illustrate by attitude toward war, toward inconveniences of wartime living. The case from the psychiatrists point of view: such a reaction is merely the projection of infantile feelings of inadequacy. Moaning about hard times is another way of confessing one's inability to meet them. Just as an illness makes all of us babies, so a sick world makes us infantile. In the 17th century there were only two years without wars in Europe; in the civil war people expected the world to end, Paul's maxim to put away childish things.

[definition of defeat]

III. Defeat is nothing but education...the first step toward something better. Yet we cannot avoid discouragement unless we find a power which will enable us to overcome the obstacles in our lives. We cannot lift ourselves by our own bootstraps. We need the consciousness that God is at work in our lives, if we let Him, to work together with us to bring about that which is good. God's way is in the sea; He does not desert us when obstacles surmount our paths; it is then that most have found ***Missing Page? ***in a most vital manner. God is by our side when the path is the roughest, guiding us and supporting us until at an unexpected turning we find the way smooth once more. The path we thought would lead to unhappiness and hopelessness will open to the light of day if we but run the course set before us with patience and hope. This is the Christian hope that gives us strength, and enables us to expect great things from God and to dare great things for God. Illustrate with the story of Joseph; "Ye meant it for evil, my captivity, but God meant it for good." So the obstacles in our life turn out for our good. And the greatest obstacles are sometimes miraculously removed, [Moses told them to go forward] as Red Sea opened for the children of Israel.

As in the days of the children of Israel our hope is in the Lord. Jeremiah's vision illustrates this hope in those ancient days, when he saw the almond branch in the dead of winter, and interpreted it as the promise of the Lord: thou hast well seen, for I will hasten my word to perform it.

Behind the cloud the starlight lurks,

Through showers the sunbeams fall;

For God, who leaveth all His works

Has left His Hope with all.

(shakedth - shokedth). The same hope was expressed by Lincoln in the dark days of the Civil War when he said, "There is green grass under the snow". The hope of Jesus; always he had the consciousness of God's constant presence.

This is the essential prerequisite - a real awareness of the actual power and presence of God in our lives. This awareness comes only by our constant seeking, but we have the assurance we will find our quest by the testimony of those whose confidence is in the Lord. And we have the

assurance that God is constantly seeking us; “ye would not seek me unless you had already found me.” The revelation of God in the heart of man gives us the power to overcome.

[Dreams of God]* Hope: walking a dream says Aristotle

As we think of the power of God in our lives which overcomes our obstacles, we must ever be aware that God may put His own barriers in our lives. Straight and narrow is the way of the Lord - those who follow him must turn aside from many paths in life which have an immediate appeal, but which are inimical to the interests of God.

[Praise - ever present, omnipotent

Thou art seeking us. Help us to find values in life, the deeper meanings revelation - How does the song come to the singer?]