

Deacon Lee

“Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm” (Psalm 105:15)

DEACON Lee, who was a kindly, silent, faithful, gracious man, was one day waited upon by a restless, ambitious, worldly, church member, who was labouring to create uneasiness in the church, and especially to drive away the Pastor. The deacon came into meet his visitor, who after the usual greetings, began to lament the low state of religion, and to inquire as to the reason why there had been no conversions for two or three years past.

“Now what do you think is the cause of things being dull here? Do you know?” He persisted in asking. The deacon was not ready to give his opinion, and after a little thought frankly answered “No, I don’t” “Do you thing the churches are alive to the work before them?” “No, I don’t” “Do you think the minister fully realises the solemnity of his work?” “No, I don’t”

A twinkle was now seen in the eye of this trouble of Zion: and taking courage he asked: “Do you think Mr B is a very extraordinary man?” “No, I don’t” “Do you think his sermon on “Their eyes were holden” anything wonderfully great?” “No, I don’t”

Making bold after all this encouragement in monosyllables, he asked: “Then don’t you think we had better dismiss this man and hire another?” The old deacon started as if shot with an arrow, and in a tone louder than his wont, shouted: “NO, I DO NOT!” Why cried the amazed visitor, “You agree with me on all I have said, don’t you?” “No, I don’t”

“You talk so little sir”, replied the guest not a little abashed, “that no can find out what you do mean”

“I talked enough once,” replied the old man, rising to his feet, “for six praying Christians. Thirty

years ago I got my heart humbled and my tongue bridled, and ever since then I have walked softly before God. I then made vows as solemn as eternity, and don’t you tempt me to break them!”

The troubler was startled at the earnestness of the hitherto silent unmovable man, and asked: “What happened to you thirty years ago?”

“Well, sir, I’ll tell you. I was drawn into a scheme just like this of yours, to uproot one of God’s servants from the field in which He had planted him. In my blindness I fancied it a little thing to remove one of the “stars” which Jesus holds in His right hand, if thereby my ear could be tickled, and the pews filled with those who turned away from the simplicity of the gospel. I and the men that led me – for I admit that I was a dupe and a fool – flattered themselves that we were conscientious. We thought that we doing God’s service when we drove that holy pulpit and his work, and said we considered his work ended in B ---, where I then lived.

We groaned because there was no blessing. While we were gossiping about, and criticizing, and crushing, instead of upholding, by our efforts and our prayers, the instrument at whose had we harshly demanded the blessings. Well sir, he could not drag on the chariot of the gospel with half a dozen of us taunting him for his weakness, while we hung as a dead weight to the wheels: he had not the power of the Spirit, and could not convert men; so we hunted him like a deer, till worn and bleeding, he fled into a covert to die.

Scarcely had he gone, when God came among us by His Spirit, to show that He had blessed the labours of his dear rejected servant. Our own hearts were broken, and our wayward children converted; and I resolved, at a convenient season, to visit my

former pastor, and confess my sin, and thank him for his faithfulness to my wayward sons, which, like long buried seed, had now sprung up. But God denied me that relief, that He might teach me a lesson that he who toucheth one of His servants, "toucheth the apple of His eye". I heard my former pastor was ill, and taking my oldest son with me, set out on a twenty-five miles journey to see him.

It was evening when I arrived, and his wife, with a spirit which any woman ought to exhibit towards one who had so deeply wronged her husband denied me admittance to the chamber. She said – and her words were arrows to my soul- "He may be dying and the sight of your face might add to his anguish". "Had it come to this?" I said to myself, that the man whose labours had, through Christ, brought me into His fold; who had consoled my spirit in a terrible bereavement; and who had, until designing men had alienated us, been to me as a brother – that this man could not die in peace with my face before him? God pity me! I cried, "What have I done?" I confessed my sins to that meek woman, and implored her, for Christ's sake to let me kneel before His dying servant, and receive his forgiveness.

As I entered the room of the blessed warrior, whose armour was falling from his limbs, he opened his languid eyes and said, "Brother Lee!", "Brother Lee!" I bent over him and sobbed out, "My Pastor!, My Pastor!" The raising his white hand, he said in a deep impressive voice, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm". I spoke tenderly to him, and told him that I had come to confess my sin and bring some of his fruit to him – calling my son to tell him how he had found Christ. But he was unconscious to all around; the sight of my face had brought the last pang of death to his troubled spirit. I kissed his brow and told him how dear he had been to me. I craved his pardon for my unfaithfulness, and promised to care for his widow and fatherless

little ones; but his only reply, murmured as if in a troubled dream was, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm".

I stayed by him all night, and at daybreak I closed his eyes. I offered his widow a house to live in the remainder of her days, but like a heroine, she said, "I freely forgive you; but my children who entered deeply into their father's anguish, shall never see me so regardless of his memory as to take anything from those who caused it. He has left us all with his covenant God and He will care for us. Well sir, those dying words sounded in my ears from that sarcophagus and from that tomb. When I slept, Christ stood before me in dream, saying, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm". These words followed me until I fully realised the esteem in which Christ holds those men who have given up all for His sake, even if they are not perfect; and since that day, sir, I have talked less than before, and have supported my pastor, even if he is not a very extraordinary man. "My tongue cleave to the roof of mouth" and "my right hand forget her cunning" before I dare to put asunder what God had joined together. When a minister's work is done in a place, I believe God will show it to him. I will not join in, sir, in the scheme that brought you here; moreover if I hear another word from your lips, I shall ask the brethren to deal with you as with those who cause division. I would give all I own to recall what I did thirty years ago. Stop where you are, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you."

This decided reply put an end to the newcomer's efforts. There is often great power in the little word "No!" but sometimes, and in some circumstances, it requires not a little courage to speak it so resolutely as did the silent deacon.