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Email: info@austin-sparks.net

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A Good Man in Danger

by T. Austin-Sparks

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It was no small thing that Jesus should have said of a man "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile", thus marking him out as one apart from the majority of his nation, as being more spiritual than fleshly or carnal: a son of Israel rather than of Jacob. Further, it was no small thing that this man came to a fuller revelation and apprehension of who Jesus was, and was thereby able to exclaim "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." And yet again, it was no small thing that he should have received from the Lord this word of assurance, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." That son of Israel went far beyond Jacob and saw all the spiritual side of Jacob's typical dream. If we knew all that these things meant for Nathanael we should undoubtedly be convinced of the greatness of the blessing that came to him on that day when Philip found him and bore his testimony. And yet Nathanael was in danger at one point of missing it all, and the reason was a foolish prejudice.

Nazareth had a bad name, and up and down the country when Nazareth was mentioned people just passed off as a bad lot everything and everyone in the town. So whatever good there may have been suffered under the general prejudice. Thus to suggest that Nazareth could produce any good thing was pooh-poohed, and a cynical rejoinder was made "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The Devil was always seeking to prejudice the chances of Christ getting a following, and he would not stop at corrupting a whole town in the minds of men to destroy the eternal and Divine values of one of its members.

Nathanael had taken up the popular prejudice and epithet, and just for a brief moment that prejudice stood to shatter and ruin that glorious prospect. Everything for him trembled for that moment in the balances. Would the prejudice win, or would the bigger and finer element rise and waive the prejudice aside? How thankful he must have been afterward that he decided to suspend

the prejudice while he put Philip's testimony to the test, while he set aside the widespread and popular belief about Nazareth, and proved the matter for himself!

What a tremendous blow to prejudice was his "proving of all things"! What warning he was ever able to give to others as to the infinite peril and possibility of loss through being influenced by popular opinion, even when accepted by the religious world.

Nathanael was tested by this prejudice, and a prejudice is a test of every man's quality. In the presence of something very generally accepted and believed, although unproved, opportunity is given for many personal interests to arise and govern the course to be taken; reputation, future prospects, loss of friends and esteem, and many such like considerations.

It is a matter of comparative values. Nathanael may have lost much, but ask him whether he made a mistake! However, the lie was very definitely given to that report, and the Devil was found to be behind it. The greatest good possible to man came out of Nazareth!

So, while Satan works to prejudice the Lord's interests, God only uses the prejudice as a means to test the reality of those concerned, and the prejudice is used as a safeguard against mixture and unreality in those who will have God's best.