

PLAIN SPEECH

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“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12)

By Scott Parker

GONE WITH THE WIND

Come with me to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: July 3, 1863.

Robert E. Lee was in big trouble.

Lee had been out maneuvered by his opponent. Lee’s troops were exhausted, bloodied and battle-weary. He had been engaging the Union Army for the previous two days. Forty-eight hours of intense conflict transpired, yet gray had made little headway against blue.

The battle was not supposed to have gone the way it had. It was not supposed to go the way it had at all. Lee knew things had gone awry. He needed a little help. To whom would he turn?

Although his most trusted companion, “Stonewall” Jackson, was not at Gettysburg (killed earlier that year), Lee still had many able military men to whom he could turn to for help and support. Of this group were such fellows as: James Longstreet, A.P. Hill, and James Ewell Brown (Jeb) Stuart – the Commander of the Confederate Cavalry.

It is upon this last soldier that I want to zero in on for a moment.

According to civil war historians, Stuart often promised great things to General Lee. He often spoke great, swelling words of courage and bravado. Yes, Stuart was supremely sure of his loyalty to Lee. In fact, I understand that each time Stuart wrote a letter to Lee he closed with these words: “*Yours to count on, Jeb Stuart.*”

I’m told that Stuart generally upheld his words. Yet, it was at Gettysburg, when Lee needed him the very most, that Stuart failed to make good on his promise. In the book, Robert E. Lee: A Biography, it is recorded: “*At Gettysburg, Stuart rode off into nowhere and left Lee blind in the presence of his enemies.*”

The Federal Army ended up routing the Confederate troops at Gettysburg. Yes, many lived to fight another day, but things never would be the same for the Confederate war machine. The tide of the war had been forever turned in favor of the Union.

So you’re asking, “*What’s the point in all this, Scott?*” The answer is simple: We must keep our word, brethren!

God is crystal clear in this regard (cf. **Ps. 15:4; Ecc. 5:2; Matt. 5:37, et al**). Ask yourself: “*Do I always follow through with what I say I will do?*”

I’m afraid that sometimes, like Jeb Stuart, many of us make grandiose claims about things we think we are willing to do. However, when the firestorm comes or the distractions arise, we fade away into the recesses of our own agendas or take shelter in our fortress of self-preservation.

King Ahab said on one occasion: “*Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off*” (**1 Kings 20:11**). Although he was an extremely weak and wicked king, Ahab taught at least one lesson worth remembering.

Isn’t it amazing that even stupid Ahab knew bragging about what one plans to accomplish is so very, very easy, yet, taking the necessary action to bring the plans to fruition is something else again?

Let’s not be known as a congregation that talks a great game, but plays a poor one.

No sir! Instead, let each of us commit, here and now, to forevermore keep our commitments despite the consequences we may incur for so doing. Let’s determine to always keep our word. Let’s resolve to refuse to leave folks in the lurch as we, like Jeb Stuart, ride off into the sunset to temporal safety.

In short, if we say we are going to do something, then so long as said thing is authorized, let’s do it (**Js. 2:14-20; Ecc. 5:4-5**).

“In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.”

(Prv 14:23)