

Chapel Flock



# ~ Thought For The Day ~

~gathering from the 4 winds~

"come just as you are"

Refresh, Restore, Rebuild = Healing

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## Worship Music

[Take You Away-](#)  
[Kerrie Roberts](#)

[Outcast-Kerrie Roberts](#)

[Beleve-Kerrie boberts](#)

## Prayer

Lord, I ask You to forgive me for not spending enough time with my wife/husband. I know thatHe/ she needs me and that I haven't done what I should do to show her/him the love and attention she/he deserves. He/She does so much for me. She loves me and our children and serves us with her whole heart. I am so sorry I've been so selfish and haven't been the husband I need to be for my wife. I repent for my self-centeredness, and I make the decision today to reverse my actions. I want to love her/him as I should and to do everything I can to communicate that love. Please help me, Lord, to become all I need to be for my wife/ husband.

Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

## Video's / New Information/ Prayer Requests

Matthew 24:36 (AMP)

36 But of that [exact] day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

## "Daily Devotional"

Charles Stanley

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Chapel Flock.....text a prayer..... request telephone number.....

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Or----

If you have a prayer request...please e-mail it to us so we can pray for you...or a person.....

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1 ELIHU PROCEEDED and said, 2 Bear with me and wait a little longer, and I will show you, for I have something still to say on God's behalf. 3 I will bring my knowledge from afar and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker. 4 For truly my words shall not be false; He Who is perfect in knowledge is with you. 5 Behold! God is mighty, and yet despises no one nor regards anything as trivial; He is mighty in power of understanding and heart. 6 He does not prolong the life of the wicked, but gives the needy and afflicted their right. 7 He withdraws not His eyes from the righteous (the upright in right standing with God); but He sets them forever with kings upon the throne, and they are exalted. 8 And if they are bound in fetters [of adversity] and held by cords of affliction, 9 Then He shows to them [the true character of] their deeds and their transgressions, that they have acted arrogantly [with presumption and self-sufficiency]. 10 He also opens their ears to instruction and discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity. 11 If they obey and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasantness and joy. 12 But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword [of God's destructive judgments], and they shall die in ignorance of true knowledge. 13 But the godless and profane in heart heap up anger [at the divine discipline]; they do not cry to Him when He binds them [with cords of affliction]. 14 They die in youth, and their life perishes among the unclean (those who are sodomites). 15 He delivers the afflicted in their affliction and opens their ears [to His voice] in adversity. 16 Indeed, God would have allured you out of the mouth of distress into a broad place where there is no situation of perplexity or privation; and that which would be set on your table would be full of fatness. 17 But if you [Job] are filled with the judgment of the wicked, judgment and justice will keep hold on you. 18 For let not wrath entice you into scorning chastisements; and let not the greatness of the ransom [the suffering, if rightly endured] turn you aside. 19 Will your cry be sufficient to keep you from distress, or will all the force of your strength do it? 20 Desire not the night, when peoples are cut off from their places; 21 Take heed, turn not to iniquity, for this [the iniquity of complaining against God] you have chosen rather than [submission in] affliction. 22 Behold, God exalts and does loftily in His power; who is a ruler or a teacher like Him? 23 Who has appointed God His way? Or who can say, You have done unrighteousness? 24 Remember that [by submission] you magnify God's work, of which men have sung. 25 All men have looked upon God's work; man may behold it afar off. 26 Behold, God is great, and we know Him not! The number of His years is unsearchable. 27 For He draws up the drops of water, which distil as rain from His vapor, 28 Which the skies pour down and drop abundantly upon [the multitudes of] mankind. 29 Not only that, but can anyone understand the spreadings of the clouds or the thunderings of His pavilion? 30 Behold, He spreads His lightning against the dark clouds and covers the roots of the sea. 31 For by [His clouds] God executes judgment upon the peoples; He gives food in abundance. 32 He covers His hands with the lightning and commands it to strike the mark. 33 His thunderings speak [awesomely] concerning Him; the cattle are told of His coming storm.

## Chapter 36

Elihu continued (Job 36:1),

He's really taking him on.

Just allow me a little more, and I'm going to show you what I have to speak on God's behalf. I'm going to fetch my knowledge from far off, I'm going to ascribe righteousness to my Maker. For truly my words shall not be false: he that is perfect in knowledge is with thee (Job 36:2-4)

"Here I am, folks." This young guy is really getting carried away. "He that is perfect in knowledge is with thee."

Behold, [he said,] God is mighty, and despises not any: he is mighty in strength and wisdom. He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor. He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings are they on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted. And if they be bound in fetters, and be held in cords of affliction; Then he shows them their work and transgressions where they have exceeded. He opens also their ear to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and shall die without knowledge. But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he binds them (Job 36:5-13).

Now he's talking really about Job making a direct application because Job is saying, "I'm innocent. I haven't done anything." So this is ascribing now to Job as a hypocrite in his heart. He heaps up God's wrath. He doesn't cry when God has bound him.

They die in youth, their life is among the unclean. He delivers the poor in his affliction, and opens the ears in oppression. Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table should be full of fatness (Job 36:14-16).

If you'd only have repented, if you'd only asked for forgiveness, God would have taken you out of these straits.

But you have fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice have taken hold on thee. Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke: and a great ransom cannot deliver thee. Will he esteem your riches? no, not gold, nor the forces of strength. Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place. Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this has been chosen rather than affliction. Behold, God exalts by his power: who teaches like him? Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity? Remember that thou magnify his work, which men behold. Every man may see it; man may behold it afar off. Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. For he makes small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof (Job 36:17-27); Now, evidently as Elihu is talking, this storm is moving in. And so the kid is so busy talking, he starts now using some of the rain that starts to fall, as so forth, and he started to weave it into his speech. But he is actually now drawing from the weather as this storm moves in. In a few moments, God is going to speak out of the

storm; out of the whirlwind, God is going to speak. But evidently this storm is building up and the thunder begins and the lightening, and he begins to sort of interweave this into his speech. He said,

For he makes small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof: Which the clouds do drop and distill upon man abundantly. Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle? Behold, he spreads his light upon it, and covers the bottom of the sea. For by them judges he the people; he gives meat in abundance. With clouds he covers the light; and commands it not to shine and by the cloud that cometh between. The noise thereof showeth concerning it, and the cattle also concerning the vapor (Job 36:27-33). . (Through The Bible c 2000 Series; Chuck Smith; Bible commentaries,1979-1986)

 The Life and Times of David; the life of faith; C. H. Mackintosh – Index

## Introduction

The steps which led to the setting up of a king in Israel are easily traced, and easily accounted for, by all who have studied with any attention the humbling history of the human heart, either as presented in themselves or in others.

In the opening chapters of First Samuel we are furnished with a most instructive and solemn picture of Israel's condition. The house of Elkanah is taken up by the sacred penman as a striking illustration of Israel after the flesh, and Israel after the Spirit. "He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah; and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children."

Thus we have in the domestic circle of this Ephrathite the early scenes of Sarah and Hagar enacted over again. Hannah was the barren woman — and she was made to feel it deeply, for "her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb."

The barren woman is in Scripture the type of nature's ruined and helpless condition. There is no ability to do anything for God — no power to bring forth any fruit to Him; all is death and barrenness. Such is the real condition of every child of Adam. He can neither do anything for God nor for himself, as regards his eternal destiny. He is emphatically "without strength"; he is "a dry tree," "a heath in the desert." Such is the lesson taught us by the barren woman.

However, the Lord caused His grace to abound over all Hannah's weakness and need, and put a song of praise into her mouth. He enabled her to say, "My horn is exalted in the Lord; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in Thy salvation." It is the Lord's special province to make the barren woman rejoice. He alone can say, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord" (Isa. 54:1).

Hannah realized this, and widowed Israel will ere long realize it also, "for her Maker is her husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name; and her Redeemer the Holy One of Israel." The beautiful song of Hannah is the soul's thankful acknowledgement of God's actings in reference to Israel. "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory." All this will be most fully exemplified in Israel in the latter day; and it is now exemplified in the person of every one who through grace is raised from his ruined condition in nature to blessedness and peace in Jesus.

The birth of Samuel filled up a great blank, not only in the heart of Hannah, but doubtless in the heart of every faithful Israelite who sighed for the true interests of the Lord's house and the purity of the Lord's offering, both of which were alike disregarded and trampled upon by the unholy sons of Eli. In Hannah's desire for "a man child," we perceive not merely the development of the heart of a mother, but that of an Israelite. She had, no doubt, beheld and mourned over the ruin of everything connected with the temple of the Lord. The dimmed eye of Eli — the vile actings of Hophni and Phinehas — the fading lamp — the desecrated temple — the despised sacrifice — all conspired to tell Hannah that there was a real want, which want could alone be supplied by the precious gift of a man-child from the Lord. Hence she says to her husband, "I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide forever."

"Abide forever!" Nothing short of this could satisfy the longing soul of Hannah. It was not the mere matter of wiping away her own reproach that rendered Samuel so precious in her eyes. No! she longed to see "a faithful priest" standing before the Lord; and by faith her eye rested on one who was to abide there forever. Precious, elevating faith — that holy principle which lifts the soul above the depressing influence of things seen and temporal, into the light of things unseen and eternal!

In chapter 3 we have the prediction of the terrible downfall of Eli's house. "And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the Lord called Samuel. " This was very expressive — solemnly expressive. Eli's eyes "dim," and the Lord's call to Samuel: in other words, Eli's house is passing away, and the faithful priest is about to enter upon the scene. Samuel runs to Eli, but, alas, all the latter could say was, "Lie down again." He had no message for the child. Hoary and dim, he could spend his time in sleep and darkness, while the Lord's voice was sounding so very near him. Solemn, most solemn warning!

Eli was a priest of the Lord, but he failed to walk watchfully, failed to order his house according to the testimonies of God, failed to restrain his sons; hence we see the sad end to which he came. "And the Lord said to Samuel Behold, I will do a thing in Israel at which

both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not" (1 Sam. 3:11-13)

"Whatsoever a man soweth," says the apostle, "that shall he also reap." How true is this in the history of every child of Adam! — how peculiarly true in the history of every child of God! According to our sowing shall be our reaping. So Eli was made to feel; and so shall the writer and the reader of this. There is much more of solemn, practical reality in this divine statement than many are apt to imagine. If we indulge in a wrong current of thought, if we adopt a wrong habit of conversation, if we pursue a wrong line of acting, we must inevitably reap the fruits of it sooner or later.\* May this reflection lead us to more holy watchfulness in our ways; may we be more careful to "sow to the Spirit," that so, of the Spirit, we may "reap life everlasting"!

{\*The statement in the text, I need hardly say, does not by any means interfere with the eternal stability of divine grace and the perfect acceptance of the believer in all the acceptableness of Christ before God. This is a great foundation truth. Christ is the believer's life, and Christ is his righteousness — the ground of his peace with God. He may lose the enjoyment of it, but the thing itself God has established upon an indestructible basis, and before ever it can be touched the fact of Christ's resurrection must be called in question, for clearly He could not be where He is if the believer's peace were not perfectly settled. In order to have perfect peace, I must know my perfect justification: and in order to know my perfect justification, I must know, by faith in God's Word, that Christ has made a perfect atonement. This is the divine order — perfect atonement as the ground of my perfect justification; and perfect justification as the ground of my perfect peace. God has joined those three together, and let not man's unbelieving heart put them asunder.

Hence, therefore, the statement in the text will not, I trust, be misunderstood or misapplied. The principle contained therein may be thus illustrated: If my child does wrong, he may injure himself and grieve and displease me; but he is my child all the while. The apostolic statement is as broad as possible — "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." He does not say whether it is a converted or an unconverted man, and therefore the passage should have its full application. It could not possibly touch the question of pure and absolute grace.}

In 1 Sam. 4 a humiliating picture of Israel's condition in connection with the declining house of Eli is presented. "Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men." Here Israel was being made to realize the curse of a broken law. See Deut. 28:25. They could not stand before their enemies, being weak and powerless by reason of their disobedience.

And observe the nature and ground of their confidence, in this their time of need and pressure: "And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." Alas, what a miserable ground of confidence! Not a word about the Lord Himself. They thought not of Him as the source of their strength; they made not Him their shield and buckler. No! they trusted in the ark; they vainly imagined that it could save them. How vain! How could it avail them aught when unaccompanied by the presence of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel? Impossible! But He was no longer there; He had been grieved away by their unconfessed and unjudged sin; nor could any symbol or ordinance ever supply His place.

However, Israel vainly imagined that the ark would do all for them; and great was their joy, though not well founded, when it made its appearance among them, accompanied, not by Jehovah, but by the wicked priests Hophni and Phinehas. "And when the ark of the covenant of the Lord came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." All this was very imposing; but, ah, it was hollow; their triumph was as baseless as it was unbecoming; they ought to have known themselves much better than to make such an empty display. Their shout of triumph harmonised badly with their low moral condition in the sight of God; and yet it will ever be found that those who know least of themselves set up the highest pretensions, and assume the highest position.

The Pharisee in the Gospel looked down with an air of proud indifference on the self-abased publican; he imagined himself very high up and the publican very low down in the scale; yet how different were God's thoughts about the two! Thus it is the broken and contrite heart will ever be the dwelling-place of God, who, blessed be His name, knows how to lift up and comfort every such heart as none else can do. Such is His peculiar work — the work in which He delights.

But the men of this world will always attach importance to high pretensions. They like them, and, generally speaking, give a high place in their thoughts to those who assume to be somewhat; while, on the other hand, they will seek to put the really self-abased man still lower. Thus, in the instructive scene before us in this chapter, the Philistines attached no small importance to the shout of the men of Israel. It was like themselves, and therefore they could apprehend and appreciate it.

"And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the Lord was come into the camp. And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp," etc. They naturally supposed that the shout of triumph was based on a reality: they saw not what was beneath the surface; they understood not the meaning of a defiled priesthood, a despised sacrifice, a desecrated temple. They beheld the outward symbol, and imagined that power accompanied it; hence their fear. How little did they know that their fear and Israel's triumph were alike groundless. "Be strong," said they, "and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants to the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight."

Here was the resource of the Philistines — "quit yourselves like men." Israel could not do this. If prevented by sin from bringing the resources of God to bear upon their circumstances, they were weaker than other men; Israel's only hope was in God; and if God were

not there, if it were a mere conflict between man and man, an Israelite was no match for a Philistine. The truth of this was most fully established on the occasion to which we are referring. "The Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten." How else could it be? Israel could but be smitten and fly when their shield and buckler, even God Himself, was not in their midst. They were smitten; the glory departed from them; the ark was taken: they were shorn of their strength; their shout of triumph was exchanged for the piercing cry of sorrow; their portion was defeat and shame; and the aged Eli, whom we may regard as the representative of the existing system of things, fell with that system, and was buried in its ruins.

1 Sam. 5 and 1 Sam. 6 embrace the period during which "Ichabod" was written upon the nation of Israel. During this time God ceased to act publicly for Israel, and the ark of His presence was carried about from city to city of the uncircumcised Philistines. This period is full of instruction. The ark of God amongst strangers, and Israel for the time being set aside, are circumstances which cannot fail to interest the mind and fix the attention of the intelligent and thoughtful student of Scripture.

"And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer to Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon." Here we are presented with the sad and humiliating result of Israel's unfaithfulness. With what a careless hand and faithless heart had they kept the ark of God when it could ever be brought to find a lodging-place in the temple of Dagon! How deeply Israel had failed! They had let go everything; they had given up that which was most sacred, to be profaned and blasphemed by the uncircumcised.

And observe the house of Dagon was deemed sufficiently sacred for the ark of Jehovah, which belonged to the holiest of all. The shadow of Dagon was to be substituted for the wings of the cherubim and the beams of the divine glory. Such were the thoughts of the lords of the Philistines; but not so God's thoughts. Israel, on the one hand, had failed in defending the ark; they had failed to recognize the great truth that it should ever have been connected with the presence of God among them.

All this might be true, and moreover, the lords of the Philistines might presume to insult the sacred symbol of the divine presence by impiously associating it with Dagon their god. In a word, the Israelites might prove faithless, and the Philistines profane, but the God of Israel must ever be true to Himself, ever true to His own holiness, and Dagon must fall prostrate before the ark of His presence. "And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold: only the stump of Dagon was left to him" (1 Sam. 5:3-4)

Now we can hardly conceive anything more depressing and humiliating, to all appearances than the condition of things at this crisis in Israel's history. They beheld the ark snatched from their midst; they had proved themselves unfit and unable to occupy the place of God's witnesses in the view of the nations around them; and as to the grounds of triumph by the enemies of the truth, it was enough to say, "The ark is in the house of Dagon." This was truly terrible, when looked at from one point of view; but oh, how ineffably glorious when looked at from another! Israel had failed, and had let go everything that was sacred and precious; they had allowed the enemy to lay their honour in the dust, and trample on their glory; yet God was above all, beyond all; beneath all.

Here was the deep source of consolation to every faithful heart. Truly God was there, and showed Himself in wondrous power and glory. If Israel would not act in defence of God's truth, He must act Himself; and so He did. The lords of the Philistines had vanquished Israel; but the gods of the Philistines must fall prostrate before that ark which of old had driven back the waters of Jordan. Here was divine triumph. In the darkness and solitude of the house of Dagon where there was no eye to see, no ear to hear — the God of Israel was acting in defence of those great principles of truth which His Israel had so failed to maintain. Dagon fell, and in his fall proclaimed the honour of the God of Israel. The darkness of the moment only afforded an opportunity for the divine glory to shine out with brilliancy. The scene was so thoroughly emptied of the creature that the Creator could show Himself in His own proper character. "Man's extremity was God's opportunity." His failure made room for the divine faithfulness. The Philistines had proved stronger than Israel; but Jehovah was stronger than Dagon.

Now all this is replete with instruction and encouragement at a time like the present, when the people of God are so sadly declining from that deep tone of devotedness and separation which ought to characterise them. We should bless the Lord for the full assurance of His faithfulness — "He cannot deny Himself"; "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His, and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Hence, in darkest times He will maintain His truth and raise up a witness for Himself, even though it should be in the house of Dagon. Christians may depart from God's principles, but the principles remain the same: their purity, their power, their heavenly virtue, are in no wise affected by the fickleness and inconsistency of faithless professors, and in the end truth will triumph.

However, the effort of the Philistines to keep the ark of God among them proved a complete failure. They could not make Dagon and Jehovah dwell together — how blasphemous the attempt! "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" None! The standard of God can never be lowered so as to accommodate itself to the principles which govern the men of this world; and the attempt to hold Christ with one hand and the world with the other must issue in shame and confusion of face. Yet how many are making that effort! How many are there who seem to make it the great question, how much of the world they can retain without sacrificing the name and privileges of Christians! This is a deadly evil, a fearful snare of Satan, and it may with strict propriety be denominated the most refined selfishness. It is bad enough for men to walk in the lawlessness and corruption of their own hearts; but to connect evil with the holy name of Christ is the climax of guilt.

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel .... Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand

before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" (Jer. 7:3, 8-10) Again, we read, as one of the special characteristics of the last days, that men shall have "a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof."

The form suits the worldly heart, because it serves to keep the conscience at ease, while the heart enjoys the world in all its attractiveness. What a delusion! How needful the apostolic admonition, "From such turn away"! Satan's masterpiece is the amalgamation of things apparently Christian with things decidedly unholy. He deceives more effectually by this scheme than any other, and we need more spiritual perception to detect it in consequence. The Lord grant us this, for He knows how much we need it.

1 Sam. 7. Passing over much that is valuable in chapters 5 and 6 we must dwell a little upon Israel's happy restoration, in connection with the ministry of "the faithful priest."

Israel had been allowed to mourn for many a day the absence of the ark; their spirits drooped under the withering influence of idolatry; and at length their affections began to go out after the Lord. But in this revival we learn how deeply they had been sunk in death. This is always the case.

When Jacob of old was called upon to go up to Bethel from amid the defilement of Shechem, he had but little idea of how he and his family had become entangled in the meshes of idolatry. But the call to "go up to Bethel" roused his dormant energies, quickened his conscience, and sharpened his moral perception. Hence he says to his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments." The very idea of Bethel, where God had appeared to him, exerted a reviving influence on the soul of Jacob; and he being revived himself was enabled to lead others also in fresh power.

Thus it is with Jacob's seed in this chapter. "And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve Him only; and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines." We observe here what a downward course Israel had been pursuing in connection with the house of Eli. The first step in evil is to place confidence in a form apart from God; apart too from those principles which make the form valuable. The next step is to set up an idol. Hence we find Israel saying of the ark, "That it may save us." But now the word of the prophet is, "Put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you."

Reader, is there not a solemn admonition in all this for the professing Church? Truly there is. The present is pre-eminently a day of form without power. The spirit of cold and uninfluential formalism is moving upon the face of Christendom's troubled waters, and soon all will settle down in the deathlike calm of false profession, which will be broken in upon only by "the shout of the archangel and the trump of God."

However, the attitude assumed by Israel in 1 Sam. 7 forms a perfect contrast to the scene in 1 Sam. 4: "And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the Lord. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord" (an expression of their weak, helpless condition) "and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord." This was real work, and we can say, God is here now. There is no confidence in a mere symbol or lifeless form; there is no empty pretension or vain assumption, no shout or baseless vaunting; all is deep and solemn reality. The earnest cry, the water poured out, the fast, the confession — all tell out the mighty change which had taken place in Israel's moral condition.

They now betake themselves to the faithful priest, and through him to the Lord Himself. They speak not now of fetching the ark. No; their word is, "Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking-lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the Lord; and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him." Here was the source of Israel's power. The sucking-lamb — God's gracious providing in tender remembrance of their need — gave a new aspect to their circumstances; it was the turning-point in their history on this occasion.

And observe, the Philistines seem to have been in total ignorance of all that was going on between Jehovah and Israel. They doubtless imagined that, inasmuch as they heard no shout of triumph, the Israelites were, if possible, in a more impoverished condition than before. They do not make the earth to ring again, as in 1 Sam. 4; but ah, there was a silent work going on which a Philistine's eye could not see, nor a Philistine's heart appreciate! What could a Philistine know about the penitential cry, the water poured out, or the sucking-lamb offered up? Nothing.

The men of this world can only take cognisance of that which lies on the surface. The outward show, the pomp and glare, the assumption of strength and greatness in the flesh, are well understood by the world; but they know nothing of the reality of a soul exercised before God. And yet this latter is what the Christian should most earnestly seek after. An exercised soul is most precious in the sight of God; He can dwell with such at all times. Let us not assume to be anything, but simply take our proper place in the sight of God, and He will surely be our spring of power and energy, according to the measure of our need.

"And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them, and they were smitten before Israel." Such were the happy results of simple dependence upon the God of the armies of Israel: it was somewhat like the glorious display of Jehovah's power on the shores of the Red Sea.

"The Lord is a man of war" when His people need Him, and their faith can count on Him as their present help in time of need. Whenever Israel truly turned to Jehovah, He was ever ready to appear in their behalf; but the glory must be ad His own. Israel's shout of empty triumph must be hushed, in order that the voice of Jehovah may be distinctly heard. And how blessed to be silent, and let Jehovah speak! What power in His voice to bring peace to His people, and to strike terror into the hearts of His enemies! "

**Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?"**

**1 Sam. 8.** In this chapter we have a very marked step towards the setting up of a king in Israel. "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.... And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgement." Sad picture! How like man in every age! Man corrupts himself and all committed to him at the first opportunity. Moses and Joshua foresaw Israel's turning away after their departure (Deut. 31:29; Joshua 23:15-16); and Paul could say to the Ephesian elders: "I know that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." So here; Israel no sooner recovers from the effects of the immorality of Eli's sons than they are made to feel the direful effects of the avarice of Samuel's sons, and thus are they hurried along the path which ended in the rejection of Jehovah and the setting up of Saul.

"When Samuel was old, he made his sons judges." But this was a very different thing indeed from God's appointment. The faithfulness of Samuel was no guarantee for his sons; just as we find in the boasted theory of apostolic succession. What kind of successors have we seen? How far have they resembled their predecessors? Paul could say, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold": can the so-called successors say so? Samuel could say, "Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith?" But alas, Samuel's sons and successors could not say this! To them "filthy lucre" was the leading spring of action.

Now we find in this chapter that Israel makes this evil of Samuel's sons the ostensible reason for asking a king. "Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like ad the nations." Fearful declension! Israel satisfied to come down to the level of the nations around! and all because Samuel was old and his sons covetous. The Lord is shut out. Had they looked up to Him, they would have had no reason for seeking to put themselves under the guardianship of a poor mortal like themselves.

But ah, the Lord's ability to guide and keep them was little thought of in all this scene! They cannot see beyond Samuel and his sons: if no help can be found from them, they must at once step down from their high elevation of having Jehovah as their King and make to themselves a human head like the nations around them. The attitude of faith and dependence on God is too difficult to be long maintained by the natural man. In 1 Sam. 7 God had been owned as their King, but now it is not so: God is shut out and a king is the all engrossing object. We shall soon see the sad result of all this.

**1 Sam. 9 - 1 Sam. 13.** These chapters furnish us with the character of Saul, together with his anointing and the opening of his rule. I shall not dwell upon it in this introduction, being merely desirous to call the reader's attention to the steps which led to the setting up of a king in Israel.

Saul was emphatically the man after Israel's heart: he had all that the flesh could desire — "a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people." This was all very imposing to those who could only look upon the outward appearance; but what lay beneath this attractive exterior! Saul's whole course is marked with selfishness and pride, under the cloak of humility. True, the Spirit came upon him as one set apart to be an office-bearer among the people of God;\* but he was throughout a self-seeker, and he only used the name of God for his own ends, and the things of God as a pedestal on which to set forth his own glory.

{\*My reader should accurately distinguish between the Holy Ghost coming upon people and the Holy Ghost dwelling and acting in them. The statement in 1 Sam. 10:6 may present a difficulty to some minds. "The Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man." This is not the Spirit producing the new birth, but merely fitting Saul to be an office-bearer. Were it regeneration, it would not merely be the Spirit coming upon, but acting in, a man. Saul the office-bearer and Saul the man are quite distinct, and this distinction must be maintained in reference to many of the characters both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

An all important difference is to be observed between the operations of the Spirit previous and subsequent to Christ's resurrection.}

The scene at Gilgal is truly characteristic, and develops much of Saul's principle of action. Impatient to wait for God's time, he "forces himself," and offers a burnt-offering, and has to hear from the lips of Samuel these solemn words: "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people, because thou hast not kept that which the Lord commanded thee."

This is just the sum of the matter, so far as Saul is concerned. "Thou hast done foolishly; thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord; thy kingdom shall not continue." Solemn verities! Saul, the man after man's heart, is set aside, to make room for the man after God's heart. The children of Israel had abundant opportunity of testing the character of the man whom they had chosen to lead them forth, and fight their battles. The reed on which they had so earnestly desired to lean had broken, and was about to pierce their hand.

Man's king, alas, what was he? Set him in an emergency, and how does he carry himself? Bustling self-importance marks all his actings. No dignity, no holy confidence in God, no acting on the broad principles of truth. Self, self, and that, too, in the most solemn scenes, and while apparently acting for God and His people. Such was man's king.

**1 Sam. 14.** This beautiful chapter furnishes a striking contrast between the efficacy of Israel's expedient, and that of the old principle of simple faith in God. Saul sits beneath a pomegranate tree, in display of empty pomp without any real power; while

Jonathan, acting in the spirit of faith, is made the happy instrument of working salvation for Israel. — Israel, in unbelief, had asked for a king to fight their battles, and doubtless they imagined that, when blessed with a king, no enemy could stand before them: but was it so? One word in 1 Sam. 13 gives the reply: "All the people followed him trembling." What a change! How different from the mighty host who, of old, had followed Joshua into the strongholds of Canaan! And yet they now had their longed-for king before them; but, God was not there, and hence their trembling.

Let man have the fairest, the most imposing ordinance, without the sense of God's presence, and he is weakness itself. Let him have the presence of God in power, and nothing can resist him. Moses had, of old, done wonders with a simple rod in his hand; but now, Israel, with the man after their own heart full in their view, could do nought but tremble before their enemies. "All the people followed him trembling." How truly humiliating! "Nay; but we will have a king over us . . . that our king may judge us, and go out before us and fight our battles." Truly "it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes." Jonathan proved this, most blessedly. He goes up against the Philistines in the power of that word, "There is no restraint with the Lord to save by many or by few." It was "the Lord" who filled his soul, and having Him, "many or few" made no difference. Faith does not reckon on circumstances, but on God.

And mark the change upon Israel the moment that faith begins to act amongst them. The trembling was transferred from Israel to the Philistines; "and there was a trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison and the spoilers, they also trembled; and the earth quaked; so it was a very great trembling." Israel's star was now decidedly in the ascendant, simply because Israel was acting upon the principle of faith. Jonathan looked not to his father Saul for deliverance, but to Jehovah; he knew that He was a man of war, and on Him he leaned for the deliverance of Israel in the day of trouble. Blessed dependence! None like it.

Human ordinances perish — human resources vanish away; but "they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever." "It was a very great trembling," for God was putting His terror into their hearts, and filling Israel with joy and triumph. Jonathan's faith was owned of God in the establishment of those who had previously fled from the field of conflict into the mountains. Thus it is ever; one can never walk in the power of faith without giving an impetus to others; and, on the other hand, one coward heart is sufficient to deter a great many. Moreover, unbelief always drives one from the field of service or conflict, while faith, as surely, leads one into it.

But what of Saul in all this? How did he co-operate with the man of faith? He was perfectly incapable of any such acting. He sat under the pomegranate tree, unable to inspire courage into the hearts of those who had chosen him to be their captain; and when he did venture to move, or rather to bustle forth, he could do nought but hinder the precious results of faith by his rashness and folly. But we must hasten on to the close of these introductory remarks.

1 Sam. 15 presents us with the final testing and setting aside of man's king. "Go, smite Amalek." This is the test which really made manifest the moral condition of Saul's heart. Had he been right before God, he would have executed God's judgement upon Amalek. But the issue proved that Saul had too much in common with Amalek to carry out the divine will in his destruction. What had Amalek done? "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt." In a word, Amalek stands before the spiritual mind as the first great obstacle to the progress of the redeemed from Egypt to Canaan; and we know what it is which fills a similar place in reference to those who now set out to follow the Lord Jesus.

Now, Saul had been just showing himself as a most decided obstacle in the way of the man of faith; indeed, his entire course was one of hostility to the principles of God. How, then, could he destroy Amalek? Impossible. "He spared Agag." Just so. Saul and Agag suited each other but too well, nor had he power to execute the judgement of God on this great enemy of His people. And mark the ignorance and self-complacency of this unhappy man. "And Samuel came to Saul; and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the Lord: I have performed the commandment of the Lord." Performed the commandment of the Lord, while Agag, king of the Amalekites, was yet alive! Oh, to what lengths of vain delusion will one go when not walking uprightly before God!

"What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in my ears?" Solemn, heart-searching inquiry! In vain is recourse had to the plausible matter of "sacrifice unto the Lord." Miserable resource for disobedient hearts! As if the Lord would accept a sacrifice from one walking in positive rebellion against His commandment. How many since Saul's day have sought to cover a disobedient spirit with the plausible mantle of "sacrifice unto the Lord." Samuel's answer to Saul is of universal application, viz.: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." The Lord seeks not, offerings, but obedience: the subject heart and acquiescent spirit will glorify Him more than the cattle upon a thousand hills.

How important to have this great principle pressed home upon the conscience, when so many are cloaking all sorts of disobedience with the word, sacrifice, sacrifice! "To obey is better than sacrifice." It is far better to have the will in subjection to God than to load His altar with the costliest sacrifices. When the will is in subjection, everything else will take its due place; but for one whose will is in rebellion against God to talk of sacrificing to Him is nothing but deadly delusion. God looks not at the amount of the sacrifice, but at the spirit from which it springs. Moreover, it will be found that all who, in Saul's spirit, speak of sacrificing unto the Lord, have concealed — beneath some selfish object — some Agag or other — the best of the sheep — or something attractive to the flesh, which is more influential than the service or worship of the blessed God.

May all who read these pages seek to know the real blessedness of a will entirely subject to God, for in it will be found that blessed rest which the meek and lowly Jesus promised to all who were heavy laden — the rest which He Himself found in being able to say, "I thank Thee, O Father . . . for so it seemed good in Thy sight." God had desired Saul to destroy Amalek, but his heart desired to spare something which to him, at least, seemed good and desirable; he was ready to carry out the will of God in reference to all that was "vile and refuse," but he thought

he might make some exceptions, as if the line of distinction between that which was "refuse" and that which was "good" was to be drawn by his judgement, and not by the unerring judgement of Him who looked at Amalek from a true point of view, and saw in Agag one who, with all his delicacy, would resist Israel as strongly as ever, and this was His ground of controversy with Amalek, which Saul was unable to understand or appreciate.

The close of this chapter shows us, but too plainly, the current in which Saul's thoughts and desires were flowing. He had just heard the solemn appeal of Samuel, and the denunciations of God against him, concluded with these solemn words, "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou." These stunning words had just fallen upon his ear; yet so full was he of self, that he could say, "Honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel."

This was Saul. "The people," said he, "spared what should have been destroyed" — it was their fault, but "honour me." Alas, what vanity! A heart steeped in iniquity seeking honour from his fellow-worms. Rejected of God as an office-bearer, he clings to the thought of human honour. It seems that, provided he could maintain his place in the estimation of his people, he cared but little what God thought of him. But he was rejected of God, and the kingdom torn from him; nor did it avail him much that Samuel turned again, and stood by, while Saul went through the form of worshipping the Lord, in order that he might not forfeit his place and influence amongst his people.

"Then said Samuel, Bring hither to me Agag, the king of the Amalekites; and Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless, among women. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." Agag's delicacy could not deceive one who was taught of God. How remarkable to find him hewing Agag in pieces at Gilgal! Gilgal was the place where the reproach of Egypt was rolled away from Israel; and, in tracing their history, we find it associated with much power over evil. Here it was, then, that this Amalekite came to his end by the hand of righteous Samuel.

This is most instructive. When the soul is blessed with the realization of its full deliverance from Egypt, by the power of death and resurrection, it is in the best position for obtaining victory over evil. Had Saul known anything of the spirit and principle of Gilgal, he would not have spared Agag. He was ready enough to go thither to "renew the kingdom," but by no means so to crush and set aside all that savoured of the flesh. But Samuel, acting in the energy of the Spirit of God, dealt with Agag according to the principles of truth; for it is written, "The Lord hath sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." The king of Israel ought to have known this.

#### Part 1 DAVID ANOINTED

We now come to our theme — our rich and varied theme — the life and times of David, king of Israel. In looking through Scripture, we observe how wonderfully the blessed God has ever brought good out of evil. It was Israel's sin to reject their King, Jehovah, and seek to set up a man over them; and in that man, who first wielded the sceptre over them, they had learnt how vain was the help of man. The Lord was now about to bring blessing to His people out of all their evil and folly.

Saul had been set aside, in the government of God; he had been weighed in the balance, and found wanting, his kingdom was to pass away from under his hand, and a man after God's own heart was about to be set upon the throne, to the glory of God, and the blessing of His people. "And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?"

These words let us into the secret of Samuel's sorrow in reference to Saul, during the long period of his separation from him. In the last verse of 1 Sam. 15 we read, "And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul." This was natural. There was much that was affecting — deeply affecting to the heart in the melancholy fall of this unhappy man. He had once elicited from Israel the shout of "God save the king." Many an eye, full of enthusiasm, had doubtless rested upon "the choice young man and the goodly," and now all this was gone; Saul was rejected, and Samuel felt constrained to take a position of entire separation from him as one whom God had set aside.

This was the second office-bearer whom it had been Samuel's lot to see stripped of his robes of office; he had been the bearer of heavy tidings to Eli, at the opening of his career; and now, at the close of it, he was called upon to deliver, in the ear of Saul, the announcement of the judgement of Heaven against his course.

However, Samuel was called to enter into the thoughts of God in reference to Saul. "How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him?" Communion with God will ever lead us to acquiesce in His ways. Sentimentalism may weep over fallen greatness, but faith grasps the great truth that God's unerring counsel shall stand, and He will do all His pleasure. Faith could not shed a tear over Agag, when hewed in pieces before the Lord, neither would it continue over a rejected Saul, because it ever flows in harmony with God, in His ways. But there is a wide difference between nature and faith; while the former sits down to weep, the latter arises and fills the horn with oil.

It is well to ponder this contrast. We are all too apt to be carried away by mere sentiment, which is often truly dangerous. Indeed, inasmuch as it is of nature, it must flow in a current different from the thoughts of the Spirit of God. Now, the most effectual remedy against the working of mere sentiment is a strong, deep, thorough, abiding conviction of the reality of the purpose of God. In the view of this, sentimentality withers and dies, while, on the other hand, faith lives and flourishes in the atmosphere of the purpose of God. This is impressively taught in the first verse of 1 Sam. 16: "How long wilt thou mourn? . . . Fill thy horn with oil, and go: I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided Me a king among his sons."

This is a rare blessing; it is difficult to get completely above the region of human thought and feeling. Even a Samuel is found replying to the divine command, and manifesting a slowness to run in the way of simple obedience. The Lord said, "Go;" but Samuel said, "How can I go?" Strange inquiry! yet how fully it develops the moral condition of the human heart. Samuel had been mourning for Saul, and now, when told to go and anoint one to fill his place, his reply is, "How can I?" Now we may be quite sure that faith never says this. There is no such word as "how" in the vocabulary of faith. No; the divine command no sooner marks out the path, than faith takes it up in willing obedience, not counting the difficulties.

However, the Lord, in tender mercy, meets His servant in his difficulty. "And the Lord said, Take a heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord." Thus with a full horn and a sacrifice he sets off to the city of David, where an obscure and unthought of youth tended a few sheep in the wilderness.

Amongst the sons of Jesse, there would seem to have been some very fair specimens of nature — some whom Samuel, if left to the exercise of his own judgement, would have fixed upon to succeed to the crown of Israel. "And it came to pass when they were come, that he looked upon Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." But it was not so. Natural attraction had nothing to do with the Lord's election. He looks beneath the gilded surface of men and things, and judges according to His own unerring principles. We learn something of Eliab's haughty and self-sufficient spirit in 1 Sam. 17. But the Lord puts no confidence in the legs of a man, and thus Eliab was not His chosen vessel.

It is very remarkable to find Samuel so much and so often astray in this chapter. His mourning for Saul, his hesitation to go and anoint David, his mistake about Eliab, all shows how much astray he was as to the ways of God. How solemn is the Lord's word, "Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." This is the great difference; the outward appearance, and "the heart." Even Samuel was well nigh snared by the former, had not the Lord graciously interfered to teach him the value of the latter. "Look not on his countenance." Memorable words!

"Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by. And he said, Neither hath the Lord chosen this. Again, Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel. And Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these." Thus the perfection, as it were, of nature passed before the prophet, but all in vain; nature could produce nought for God or His people.

And, what is still more remarkable, Jesse thought not of David in all this! The ruddy youth was in the solitude of the wilderness, with the sheep, and came not into mind in this review of nature's offspring. But, ah, the eye of Jehovah was resting upon this despised youth, and beholding in him the one who was to stand in the line through which, according to the flesh, Christ should come, to occupy the throne of David, and rule over the house of Israel for ever. Truly "God seeth not as man seeth," for He "hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen — yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence" (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

If Eliab, or Shammah, or Abinadab, or any one of the "seven sons" of Jesse had had the anointing oil poured upon his head, flesh might have gloried in the presence of God; but the moment David — the forgotten David — appears on the scene, we recognize in him one who would give all the glory to Him who was about to put the sceptre into his hand. In a word, David stands before us as the marked type of the Lord Jesus, who, when He appeared amongst men, was despised, overlooked, and forgotten. And I may just add here, that we shall find, in ranging through David's instructive history, how strikingly he shadowed forth the true beloved of God.

"And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look at. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he." "There remaineth yet the youngest." Surely he could not be the elect one, thought Jesse. Man cannot understand the ways of God. The very instrument which God is about to make use of is overlooked or despised by man. "Arise, anoint him: for this is he," is God's perfect reply to the thoughts of Jesse and Samuel.

And how happy it is to note David's occupation. "Behold, he keepeth the sheep." This was afterwards referred to by the Lord, when He said to David, "I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel." Nothing can more sweetly illustrate God's thoughts of the kingly office than the work of a shepherd. Indeed, when it is not executed in the spirit of a shepherd, it fails of its end. King David fully entered into this, as may be seen in those touching words, "These sheep, what have they done?"

The people were the Lord's sheep, and he, as the Lord's shepherd, kept them on the mountains of Israel, just as he had kept his father's sheep in the retirement of Bethlehem. He did not alter his character when he came from the sheep-cote to the throne, and exchanged the crook for the sceptre. No; he was the shepherd still, and he felt himself responsible to protect the Lord's flock from the lions and bears which ever prowled around the fold. The prophetic allusion to the true David is touching and beautiful. "Therefore will I save My flock, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will judge between cattle and cattle. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it" (Ezek. 34:22-24). Our Lord in John 10 presents Himself as the faithful and good Shepherd who loves and cares for His sheep; and, doubtless, in John 6, He had more or less reference to His shepherd character.

"And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." This is a great principle of truth. Independent of His own personal love for the sheep — so wonderfully attested in life and in death — the Lord Jesus, in the above memorable passage, presents Himself as one responsible — voluntarily so, no doubt — to the Father, to keep every member of the loved and valued flock through all the vicissitudes of this life, and present them in resurrection-glory, at the last day.

Such is the Shepherd to whom a Father's hand has committed us; and, oh, how has He provided for us for time and eternity, by placing us in such hands — the hands of an ever-living, ever-loving, all-powerful Shepherd, whose love many waters cannot quench; whose power no enemy can countervail; who holds in His hand the keys of death and hell, and who has established His claim to the guardianship of the flock, by laying down His life for it. Truly we may say, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." How can we want while Jesus feeds us? Impossible. Our foolish hearts may often desire to feed on noxious pasture, and our Shepherd may have to prove His gracious care by denying us the use of such, but one thing is certain, that those whom Jesus feeds shall not want any good thing.

There is something in the shepherd character which would seem to be much in harmony with the divine mind, inasmuch as we find the we find the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, all acting in that character. The twenty-third psalm may be primarily viewed as the experience of Christ delighting in the assurance of His Father's shepherd-care. Then, in John 10, we find the Son presented as the good Shepherd. Lastly, in Acts 20 and 1 Peter 5, we find the Holy Ghost acting in that blessed capacity, by raising up and gifting for the work the subordinate shepherds. It is edifying to mark this. It is like our God to present Himself in the most endearing relationship, and that most calculated to win our confidence and draw out our affections. Blessed be His name forever! His ways are all perfect; there is none like Him.

I would just direct the reader's attention to the contrast between the circumstances in which Samuel found David, and those in which he found Saul. Remember that Saul was in pursuit of his father's asses, when he came in contact with Samuel. I do not interpret this fact, I merely refer to it. I believe it is expressive, in the way of evil, just as David's occupation, in the sheep-cote, was expressive of his future career, as the shepherd of Israel.\* When we see David tending his father's sheep in the wilderness, overlooked, or thought little of in the circle of his brethren, we are led to look for something corresponding in his after-course; nor are we disappointed. Just so, when we see Saul in search of his father's asses, we are led to look for something corresponding in his character and habits afterwards.

Trifling circumstances often teach a great deal. David's affectionate and tender solicitude for the Lord's flock and forgetfulness of self, may all be traced in the circumstances in which he is introduced to our notice; and, on the other hand, Saul's ambitious, self-seeking spirit may be traced in the object of his pursuit when he came in contact with Samuel. However, I simply leave the suggestion with the reader to use as the Lord may lead him, only reminding him that nothing can be insignificant which the Spirit has recorded concerning men who appear throughout in such marked contrast, and who each, in his way, occupied such an important place in the history of the people of God.

One can only say, Blessed be the grace which took up one to be ruler over His people, who manifested those traits of character which were most blessedly adapted to his work. "Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." Thus, then, David is fully before us as the Lord's anointed, and we have now to trace him in all his wanderings and vicissitudes, while rejected of man, and waiting for the kingdom.

## Part 2 THE VALLEY OF ELAH

No sooner had the anointing oil of the Lord been poured upon David, than he was called forth from his retirement to stand before king Saul, now forsaken of God, and troubled with an evil spirit. This unhappy man needed the soothing notes of David's harp to dispel the horrid influence of that spirit which now haunted him from day to day. Wretched man! sad monument of the results of a self-seeking course!

David, however, did not hesitate to take his place as a servant, even in the house of one who was afterwards to prove his most bitter enemy. It was quite the same to him where he served or what he did; he would protect his father's flocks from lions and bears, or dispel an evil spirit from Saul. In fact, from the moment David's history opens, he is seen as a servant, ready for every kind of work, and the valley of Elah furnishes a most striking manifestation of his servant character.

Saul would seem to have had little idea of who it was that stood before him, and whose music refreshed his troubled spirit; he knew not that he had in his presence the future king of Israel. "He loved him greatly; and he became his armour-bearer." The selfish Saul would gladly use the services of David in his need, though ready to shed his blood when he understood who and what he was.

But let us turn our thoughts to the deeply interesting scenes in the valley of Elah.

"Now the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle." Here now we come to something calculated to bring out the true character and worth of Saul and David, the man of form and the man of power. It is trial that brings out the reality of a man's resources. Saul had already been proved, for "all the people had followed him trembling," nor was he likely to prove a more soul-stirring leader on this occasion. A man forsaken of God, and plagued by an evil spirit, was but little adapted to lead on an army to battle, and still less to meet, single-handed, the powerful giant of Gath.

The struggle in the valley of Elah was rendered exceedingly peculiar by the challenge, on the part of Goliath, to decide the matter by single combat; it was the very method in which an individual might be signalled. It was not, as in ordinary cases, army against army,

but it was a question of who, throughout all the host of Israel, would venture to stand before the terrific uncircumcised foe. In fact, it is plain that the blessed God was about to make manifest again to Israel that, as a people, they were utterly powerless, and that their only deliverance, as of old, was the arm of Jehovah, who was still ready to act in His wondrous character of "a man of war," whenever faith addressed Him as such.

For forty successive days did the Philistine draw near and present himself in the view of the unhappy Saul and his awe-struck army. And observe his bitter taunt — "Am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul?" Alas! it was but too true; they had come down from their high elevation as servants to Jehovah to become mere servants to Saul. Samuel had forewarned them of all this — he had told them that they would become footmen, bakers, cooks, and confectioners to their self-chosen master; and all this, as their choice, instead of having the Lord God of Israel as their sole master and King. Nothing will teach man, however, save bitter experience; and the cutting taunts of Goliath would, no doubt, teach Israel afresh the real nature of their condition under the crushing rule of the Philistines. "Choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me," said the giant. How little did he know who was about to be his antagonist. He, in all his boasted fleshly strength, vainly imagined that no Israelite could stand before him.

And here we may inquire, what of Jonathan in all this scene? He who had acted in such simple faith and energy in 1 Sam. 14, why was he not now ready to go forth against this champion? I doubt not if we look particularly at his actings, we shall find that his faith was not of that simple, independent character which would carry a man through all kinds of difficulties. The defect in his faith appears in the words, if they say thus," etc. Faith never says "if"; it has to do only with God. When Jonathan said "There is no restraint to the Lord," he uttered a fine principle of truth, and one which should have carried him on without an "if." Had Jonathan's soul been reposing simply in the ability of God, he would not have sought for a sign. True, the Lord graciously gave him the sign, just as He had given one to Gideon before, for He ever meets His servants in all their needs. However, Jonathan does not make his appearance in the valley of Elah; he had, it seems, done his work, and acted according to his measure; but, in the scene now before us, there was a demand for something far deeper than anything Jonathan had known.

But the Lord was secretly preparing an instrument for this new and more difficult work. And may we not say it is ever thus that the blessed God acts? He trains in secret those whom He is about to use in public. He makes His servants acquainted with Himself in the secret solemnity of His sanctuary, and causes His greatness to pass in review before them, that thus they may be able to look with a steady gaze at the difficulties of their path.

Thus it was with David. He had been alone with God while keeping the sheep in the wilderness; his soul had become filled with the thought of God's power; and now he makes his appearance in the valley of Elah, in all the simplicity and self-renouncing dignity of a man of faith. The emptiness of man had been fully proved by the forty days of Goliath's haughty boasting. Saul could avail nothing; Jesse's three eldest sons could avail nothing; yea, even Jonathan could avail nothing; all was lost, or seemed to be, when the stripling David entered the scene, clothed in the strength of Him who was about to lay in the dust the pomp and glory of the proud Philistine.

The words of Goliath were reported to David, and in them he at once recognized a blasphemous defiance of the living God. "Who," said he, "is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?" David's faith recognized in the trembling host before him the army of the living God, and he at once made it a question between Jehovah and the Philistine.

This is most instructive: for no change of circumstances can ever rob the people of God of their dignity in the eye of faith. They may be brought low in the view of man, as in Israel's case on the present occasion, but faith ever recognises what God has imparted; and hence David, as he beheld his poor brethren fainting in the view of their terrible enemy, was enabled to acknowledge those with whom the living God had identified Himself, and who ought not therefore to be defied by an uncircumcised Philistine.

When faith is in exercise, it brings the soul into direct connection with the grace and faithfulness of God and His purposes toward His people. True, Israel had brought all this sorrow and humiliation upon themselves by their unfaithfulness; it was not of the Lord that they should quail in the presence of an enemy; it was the fruit of their own doing, and faith would ever apprehend and acknowledge this. Still, the question is, "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?"

This is the inquiry of faith. It was not the army of Saul that the man of faith beheld. No; it was the army of the living God — an army under the command of the same Captain that had led His hosts through the Red Sea, through the terrible wilderness, and through Jordan. Nothing less, nothing lower than this, could satisfy faith.

But then, how little are the judgement and the actings of faith understood or valued when things get low amongst the people of God! This is very apparent on every page of Israel's history, and, we may say, on every page of the Church's history also. The path of simple, childlike faith is far removed from human sight; and if the Lord's people sink into a low, carnal state, they can never understand the principle of power in the soul of one really acting by faith. He will be misunderstood in various ways, and have wrong motives attributed to him; he will be accused of setting himself up, or acting wilfully, independently. All these things must be expected by one who stands in the breach, at a time when things are low. Through lack of faith in the majority, a man is left alone, and then, when he is led to act for God, he will be misinterpreted .

Thus it was in David's case. Not only was he left alone in the time of difficulty, but he had to endure the taunt of the flesh, administered by Eliab, his eldest brother. "And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why comest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thy heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle" (1 Sam. 17:28). This was the judgement of Eliab, in reference to the actings of David. "And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?"

David was borne onward by an energy quite unknown to Eliab, nor was he careful to enter upon a defence of his course to his haughty brother. Why had not Eliab acted himself for the defence of his brethren? Why had not Abinadab or Shammah acted? Because they were faithless; simply this. Not only had those three men remained powerless, but the whole congregation had remained terror-stricken in the presence of the enemy, and now, when one appeared in their midst whom God was about to use marvellously, not one could understand him.

"And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Precious faith! no difficulty deters it — nothing stands in its way. What was the Philistine to David? Nothing. His tremendous height, his formidable armour, were mere circumstances; and faith never looks at circumstances, but looks straight to God. Had not David's soul been buoyed up by faith, he could not have uttered the words, "Thy servant will go"; for, harken to the words of him who ought to have been the first to face Israel's dreadful enemy: "And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine." What language for the king of Israel! What a contrast between the man of office and the man of power!

Surely Saul ought to have gone forth in the defence of the flock which had been entrusted to his care; but, ah! Saul cared not for Israel, unless so far as Israel was connected with himself, and hence his exposing his person on their behalf never, we may safely say, entered his selfish heart; and not only was he unable and unwilling to act himself, but would fain clog the energies of one who, even now, was putting forth the precious fruits of that divine principle implanted within him, and which was about to prove him so fit for the high office which the purpose of God had assigned to him, and to which His anointing oil had dedicated him.

"Thou art not able." True, but Jehovah was; and David was leaning simply upon the strength of His arm. His faith laid hold of the ability of Him who had appeared to Joshua beneath the walls of Jericho, with a sword drawn in His hand, as "Captain of the host of the Lord." David felt that Israel had not ceased to be the Lord's host, though so far sunk from what they were in Joshua's day. No; they were still the army of the Lord, and the battle was just as much the Lord's battle as when the sun and the moon were arrested in their course in order that Joshua might execute the judgement of God upon the Canaanites. Simple faith in God sustained the spirit of David, though Eliab might accuse him of pride, and Saul might talk of his want of ability.

There is nothing that can possibly give such energy and persevering power as the consciousness of acting for God, and that God is acting with us. This removes every obstacle; it lifts the soul above all human influence, and brings it into the very region of power omnipotent. Let us only be fully assured that we are on the Lord's side, and that His hand is acting with us, and nothing can drive us from the path of service and testimony — conduct us whither it may. "I can do all things," said the apostle, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." And again, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The very weakest saint can do all things through Christ. But if man's eye rests on this weak saint, it seems like presumption to talk of "doing all things."

Thus, when Saul looked upon David, and compared him with Goliath, he judged rightly when he said, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." It was a comparison of flesh with flesh, and, as such, it was quite correct. To compare a stripling with a giant would leave little room for hesitation as to the issue of the conflict; but he ought to have compared the strength of Goliath with that of the God of the armies of Israel. This was what David did.

"And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God." This was the argument of faith. The hand that had delivered from one difficulty would deliver from another. There is no "if in all this. David did not wait for a sign; he simply said, "Thy servant will go." David had felt the power of God's presence with him in secret before he came forth to present himself in public as the servant of God and of Israel.

As another has remarked, David had not boasted of his triumph over the lion and the bear; no one seemed to have heard of it before; nor would he probably have spoken of it, had it not been for the purpose of showing what a solid ground of confidence he had in reference to the great work on which he was about to enter. He would fain show that it was not in his own strength he was going forth. So was it in the matter of Paul's rapture to the third Heaven: for fourteen years had that circumstance remained buried as a secret with the apostle, nor would he have divulged it, had not the carnal reasonings of the Corinthians compelled him to do so.

Now, both these cases are full of practical instruction for us. With the majority of us, alas, there is too great a readiness to talk of our doings, or, at least, to think much of them. The flesh is prone to glory in anything that might exalt self; and if the Lord, despite of the evil in us, has accomplished any little service by our instrumentality, how speedily is it communicated in a spirit of pride and self-complacency. It is all right to speak of the Lord's grace, and to have our hearts filled with thankful adoration because of it; but this is very different from boasting of things connected with self.

David, however, kept the secret of his triumph over the lion and the bear concealed in his own bosom, and did not bring it forth until the fitting occasion; nor does he, even then, speak of himself as having achieved aught, but he simply says, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." Precious, self-renouncing faith! — faith that counts on God for everything, and trusts the flesh in nothing — faith which brings God into every difficulty, and leads us, with deepest thankfulness, to hide self, and give Him all the glory. May our souls know more and more of this blessed faith.

But it frequently needs much spirituality to detect the vast difference between the language of faith and the language of mere commonplace and formal religiousness. Saul assumed the garb and phraseology of religiousness; we have already seen much of this in his history, and we see it in his interview with David. Mere religiousness and faith here are seen in marked contrast. When David had made the clear and unequivocal statement of faith in the presence and power of Jehovah, Saul added, "Go, and the Lord be with thee." But, ah, how little did he know what was involved in having the Lord with him. He seemed to trust the Lord, but in reality he trusted his armour.

"And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go; for he had not proved it. And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him." Happy deliverance from the trammels of human policy! It has been observed, and most truly so, that David's trial was not when he met the giant, in actual conflict, but when he was tempted to use Saul's armour. Had the enemy succeeded in inducing him to go with that, all was gone; but, through grace, he rejected it, and thus left himself entirely in the Lord's hands, and we know what security he found there. This is faith. It leaves itself in God's hand.

{How often it happens that the child of God or the servant of Christ, harnessed with human devices for his work, finds himself burdened and hampered with these trammels to obedience and faith. Let them be shaken off, through grace, and the soul cast upon God finds at once the joy and liberty for the service and energy of faith. Ed.}

And may we not apply this with much profit to the case of a poor helpless sinner in reference to the forgiveness of his sins? I believe we may. Satan will tempt such an one to seek some addition to the finished work of Christ — something that will detract from the glory of the Son of God as the only Saviour of sinners. Now to such I would say, It matters not what you add to the work of Christ — you make it of no avail. If it might be permitted to add anything, surely circumcision would have been admitted, as being an ordinance of divine institution; yet the apostle says, "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:2-4).

In a word, then, we must have Christ alone; we want no more, we can do with no less. If our works are to be put in with Christ's, then He is not sufficient. We dishonour the sufficiency of His atonement if we seek to connect aught of our own with it, just as David would have dishonoured the Lord by going forth to meet the Philistine champion in Saul's armour. Doubtless many a so-called prudent man would have condemned what seemed to him to be the rashness and foolhardiness of the stripling indeed, the more practised a man was in human warfare, the more likely would he have been to condemn the course adopted by the man of faith. But what of that? David knew in whom he had believed; he knew it was not rashness that was leading him on, but simple faith in God's willingness and ability to meet him in his need.

Few, perhaps, in Saul's army knew the weakness of David as realized by himself in that trying moment. Though all eyes were fastened upon him as one having much self-confidence, yet we know what it was that buoyed up his heart, and gave firmness to his step as he went forth to meet the terrible foe. We know that the power of God was there just as manifestly as when the waters of the sea were divided to make a way for the ransomed to pass over; and when faith brings the power of God into action, nothing can stand in the way for a moment.

Verse 40 shows us David's armour. "And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in a shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip; and his sling was in his hand: and he drew near to the Philistine." So, we see, David did use means; but what means! What contempt does David cast upon the ponderous armour of his enemy! How his sling must have contrasted with Goliath's spear like a weaver's beam! In fact, David could not have inflicted a deeper wound upon the Philistine's pride than by coming against him with such weapons. Goliath felt this. "Am I a dog?" said he. It mattered not, in the judgement of faith, what he was, dog or giant; he was an enemy of the people of God, and David was meeting him with the weapons of faith.

"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand . . . that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.

{For the important distinction between the expressions, "Lord" and "Gods — Jehovah and Elohim — see Notes on the Book of Genesis chap. 2.}

Here we have the true object of the man of faith, viz., that Israel and all the earth might have a glorious testimony to the power and presence of God in the midst of His people. If David had used Saul's armour it would not have been known that the Lord saved not by sword and spear — his warfare would just seem like any other; but the sling and the stone while giving little prominence to him that used it, gave the glory to Him from whom the victory came.

{It is interesting to observe David's address to Goliath. He does not say, "I come to thee with a sling and a stone." No; but, "in the name of the Lord of hosts." With him, it is not the means, but "the Lord of Hosts" on which he fixes his eyes.}

Faith ever honours God, and God ever honours faith. David, as has been already remarked, put himself into the hands of God, and the happy result of so doing was victory — full, glorious victory. "David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine, and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David." Magnificent triumph! Precious fruit of simple faith in God! How should it encourage the heart to cast away from it every carnal confidence, and to cling to the only true source of power.

David was made the happy instrument of delivering his brethren from the galling and terrifying threats of the uncircumcised Philistine; he had come into their midst, from the retirement of a shepherd's life, unknown and despised, though the anointed king of Israel; he had gone forth single-handed to meet the enemy of the congregation; he had laid him prostrate, and made a show of him openly; and all this, be it remembered, as the servant of God, and the servant of Israel, and in the energy of a faith which circumstances could not shake. It was a wondrous deliverance, gained by a single blow — no manoeuvring of armies — no skill of generals — no prowess of soldiers. No; a stone from the brook, slung by a shepherd's hand, settled the whole matter. It was the victory of faith.

"And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled." How vain are those hopes which are based on the perishable

resources of flesh, in its greatest apparent strength and energy! Who that saw the giant and the stripling about to engage in conflict, but would have trembled for the latter? Who would have thought that all the massy armour would come to nothing before a sling and a stone? Yet see the end. The champion of the Philistines fell, and with him all their fondly-cherished hopes. "And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted, and pursued the Philistines." Yes: they might well shout, for God was manifestly gone out before them, to deliver them from the power of their enemies. He had been working powerfully by the hand of one whom they knew not, nor recognized, as their anointed king, but whose moral grace might well attract every heart.

But amidst the many thousands who beheld the victory, we read of one whose whole soul was drawn forth in ardent affection for the victor. The most thoughtless must have been struck with admiration of the victory; and, no doubt, it affected individuals differently. At such times, in a certain sense, "the thoughts of many hearts are revealed." Some would envy, some would admire; some would rest in the victory; some in the instrument; some would have their hearts drawn up to "the God of the armies of Israel" who had again come amongst them with a drawn sword in His hand. But there was one devoted heart who was powerfully attracted to the person of the conqueror, and this was Jonathan.

drawn sword in His hand. But there was one devoted heart who was powerfully attracted to the person of the conqueror, and this was Jonathan.

"And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1.) No doubt Jonathan participated more fully in the joy of all in the triumph of David; but there was more than this in it; it was not merely the triumph, but the person of the triumphant one that drew out the deep and ardent affections of Jonathan's soul. Saul might selfishly seek to retain the valiant David about his person, not because of love for his person, but simply to magnify himself. Not so Jonathan; he loved David. David had removed a load from his spirit, and filled up a great blank in his heart.

The challenge of the giant had, as it was each day repeated, developed the poverty of Israel. The eye might have ranged up and down the ranks in search of one able to meet the urgent need, but in vain. As the giant's vaunting words fell on their ears, all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid." "All," yes; all fled, when they heard his words, and saw his size. Terrible was the blank, therefore, left in the heart on this solemn occasion; and when a beloved one appeared to fill up that blank, what wonder that Jonathan's whole soul was drawn out in genuine affection for that one. And be it remembered, that it was David himself, and not his work only, that touched Jonathan's heart. He admired his victory surely, but his person more. It is well to note this, and trace its striking application to the true David.

That we are warranted in making such application will, surely, not be questioned. The whole scene, from first to last, is too remarkable to admit of a question. In Goliath we behold the power of the enemy by which he held the soul in grievous bondage. From this power there was no means of deliverance within human reach. The challenge might be repeated from day to day — but all in vain. From age to age might the solemn verdict be heard throughout the myriads of Adam's fallen posterity, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement"; and the only response which man could yield was, like Israel's response in the valley of Elah, dismay — deep, deep dismay. "Through fear of death, all our lifetime subject to bondage." This was man's response. The need was felt — the void unfilled. The human heart yearned for something, and yearned in vain. The claims of justice could not be met — death and judgement frowned in the distance, and man could only tremble at the prospect.

But blessed be the God of all grace, a deliverer has appeared — One mighty to save, the Son of God, the true David, the Anointed King of Israel and of all the earth. He has met the need, filled up the blank, satisfied the yearnings of the heart. But how? where? when? By His death on Calvary, in that terrible hour when all creation was made to feel the solemn reality of what was being transacted. Yes, the cross was the field where the battle was fought, and the victory won. There it was that the strong man had all his armour taken from him, and his house spoiled. There, justice had its utmost claims fully satisfied; there, the handwriting of ordinances, which was against us, was nailed to the tree. There, too, the curse of a broken law was forever obliterated by the blood of the Lamb, and the needs of a guilty conscience satisfied by the same.

"The precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," settled everything for the believing soul. The poor trembling sinner may stand by and behold the conflict, and the glorious issue thereof, and behold all the power of the enemy laid low by one stroke of his glorious Deliverer, and feel the heavy burden rolled away from his struggling spirit. The tide of divine peace and joy may flow into his soul, and he may walk abroad in the full power of the emancipation purchased for him by the blood, and proclaimed to him in the gospel.

And shall not one thus delivered love the Person of the deliverer? — not merely the work, but the Person? Ah! how can it be otherwise? Who that has felt the real depth of his need, and groaned beneath the burden of his sins, can fail to love and adore that gracious One who has satisfied the one and removed the other? The work of Jesus is infinitely precious; it meets the sinner's need, and introduces the soul into a position in which it can contemplate the Person of Christ. In a word, then, the work of the Saviour is for the sinner; the Person of the Saviour is for the saint: what He has done, is for the former; what He is, is for the latter.

But there may be a mere formal following of Christ while the heart is cold and remains unacquainted with His person. In the sixth chapter of John, we find a multitude of persons following the Lord Jesus merely on selfish grounds, and He is constrained to tell them so: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled." It was not for what He was they were seeking Him, but for mere carnal advantage; and hence, when He applies to their hearts the searching statement, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, there is no life in you," we read, "Many of His

disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." Now, eating His flesh, and drinking His blood, is, in other words, the soul finding its food, its satisfaction, in the offering of Himself in sacrifice for us.

The whole Gospel of John is a development of the personal glory of the Incarnate Word who is presented to us as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Yet the natural heart could not receive Him thus, and therefore, "many went back, and walked no more with Him." The majority could not bear to have this truth pressed upon them. But harken to the testimony of one taught of God: "Peter answered and said, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Here we have the two things, viz.: what He had for them, what He was to them. He had eternal life to give, and He was the Son of the living God; by the former, the sinner is drawn to Him; by the latter, the saint is bound to Him. He not only meets all our necessities as sinners by His work, but also satisfies our affections and desires as saints by His Person.

This train of thought has been suggested by the deeply interesting and touching interview between David and Jonathan, when the conflict was over. The many thousands of Israel had raised the shout of triumph, and pursued the Philistines to reap the fruits of victory, while Jonathan was delighting himself in the person of the victor. "And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." This was love, pure, simple, unaffected love — undivided occupation with an attractive object. Love strips itself for the sake of its object. David had forgotten himself and put his life in jeopardy for God and the congregation, and now Jonathan would forget himself for David.

David would have served Saul to the end — he honoured him as "the Lord's anointed." If the moving of his finger would have set him on the throne, he would not have taken advantage of it. Of this we have the fullest evidence in his having twice saved Saul's life, when, to all appearance, the Lord had put him in his power. David waited simply upon God. Here was his strength, his elevation — his entire dependence. He could say, "My soul wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

Hence we see that David was carried happily through all the snares and dangers of his path as a servant in the household and army of Saul. The Lord delivered him from every evil work, and preserved him unto that kingdom which He had prepared for him, and to which it was His purpose to raise him "after that he had suffered a while." David had, as it were, but just issued from the place of secret discipline and training, to appear in the battlefield, and, having accomplished his work there, he was called to take his place again on the form, to learn some deeper lessons in the school of Christ.

The Lord's lessons are often painful and difficult, because of the waywardness or indolence of our hearts; but every fresh lesson learned, every fresh principle imbibed, only fits us the more for all that is yet before us. Yet it is blessed to be the disciples of Christ, and to yield ourselves to His gracious discipline and training. The end will unfold to us the blessedness of such a place. Nor need we wait for the end; even now, the soul finds it most happy to be subject, in all things, to the Master. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). There are, we may say, three rests spoken of in Scripture. First, is the rest which, as sinners, we find in the accomplished work of Christ. Secondly, the present rest, which, as saints, we find in being entirely subject to the will of God; this is opposed to restlessness. Third by, the rest that remains for the people of God.

Now, David knew much of the blessedness of the second of these rests, inasmuch as he was entirely subject to the counsel and will of God, in reference to the kingdom. He was prepared to wait for God's time, being assured that it was the best and wisest time. He could say,

My times are in Thy hand;

Father, I wish them there.

This subjection is truly desirable. It saves us from much anxiety of heart and restlessness. When we walk in the habitual conviction that God is making "all things to work together for our good," the spirit is most wonderfully tranquillised. We shall never set about planning for ourselves if we believe that God is planning for us; we shall be satisfied to leave all to Him. But alas, how often is it otherwise with us. How often do we vainly imagine that we can manage matters better than the blessed God. We may not say so in so many words; yet we virtually feel and act as if it were so. The Lord grant unto us a more subdued and confiding spirit. The supremacy of the will of God over that of the creature will characterise the millennial age; but the saint is called now to let the will of God rule him in all things.

It was this subjection of spirit that led David to give way in the matter of the kingdom, and to take his place in the lonely cave of Adullam. He left Saul, and the kingdom, and his own destinies in the hands of God, assured that all would yet be well. And, oh, how happy was it for him to find himself outside the unhealthy atmosphere of Saul's house, and from under the jealous glance of Saul's eye! He could breathe more freely in the cave, however it might seem in man's view, than in the household of Saul. So will it ever be; the place of separation is the freest and the happiest. The Spirit of the Lord was departed from Saul, and this was faith's warrant for

( Amplified Bible; Joyce Meyers; 2006; Faith Words; Scripture; Commentaries; pages 792-794 )

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