

## "IN THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD"

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." Psalm 71:16.

This seventy-first psalm was written by David after he had grown old. It was not written to men concerning God, but it was addressed to God Himself, Who was David's dearest friend. Having been with God so long, it appeared that David was ready for anything.

Beset as we are with multitudinous perils on every hand, it is natural for us to think that we are living in the most dangerous days in history. But, the Psalmist has reminded us that for him the highway of life was extremely dangerous also. He referred to the adversaries of his soul, the enemies who had set a trap for him, and the perils of every kind which surrounded him, and then he added that it was a dangerous thing to try to live.

Even in his late years this grand old man was exposed to enemies as fierce as those which he had encountered in his earlier years. Instead of gathering his friends together and seeking their counsel about the important matters which he confronted, he got alone with God and cried, "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion" (Psalm 71:1). Although David possessed superior powers of body and mind, and had a very active life, he relied on divine assistance in the performance of his duties and signal exploits. He not only went in the strength of the Lord when he slew Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, but also when he performed the duties of much less difficulty and importance.

David continued with the words, "Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress" (Psalm 71:3). He poured out his soul to God saying, "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength fails. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,....O God, be not far from me: O God, make haste for my help" (Psalm 71:9-10, 12). Thus David talked with God "as a man talketh with his friend." Periods of communion with God afford the choicest joys in life. The room in which we are alone with God is the nearest to heaven of any place between here and there. One could wish that we would spend more time behind closed doors in communion with God. When we are in His company He fills our minds better than a thousand finite beings could do so.

It is also good to assemble in God's house and worship with His people. Many times have the children of God entered this place burdened and gone away lightened because God has met with them. But there is something even more close and precious in our private meetings with God. That is why we should make secret appointments with God and keep them. It will be imperative for you to meet Him when you are in sore trouble. Your consciousness of need will drive you to do that. So far as I know, Jacob never spent a whole night with God until he was about to meet his brother, Esau, and was in great fear of what might happen to him. Then it was that he said:

"With thee all night I mean to stay  
And wrestle 'til the break of day."

Jacob was a far greater gainer because of that fright than if he had never heard a whisper of opposition. It was well for him then that he had an Esau with armed men to drive him to God. Afterwards he was able to say, "It was good for me to have been afflicted." Anything that brings us into closer fellowship with God works to our advantage and for our good.

Visualize David sitting there. He was an old man, encompassed with infirmities, bowed down with troubles and full of sorrow; and yet he was rejoicing in the faithfulness of God, of Whom he said, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have showed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come" (Psalm 71:17-18). In the presence of God David's troubles subsided. Then he began to speak very hopefully, and before his hallowed interview was over he had reached such a happy state of mind that he said, "My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee" (Psalm 71:23). He who meets God with tears in his eyes comes forth from the holy solitude with songs on his lips.

#### I. David's Resolution.

He expressed his determination in the words, "I will go." He would not sit still. David had come a long way already, and was getting weary and faint, so his flesh suggested to him that he had experienced enough. Satan also suggested to him that he had done too much, so the best thing he could do was to give up contending and struggling, and just sit down and let things take their course as they would.

Whatever its position or outlook, life is essentially a going. The present is always becoming the past. Man is going on according to the determination of his own will. All of us are going, even though some of us may wish that we did not have to do so.

Visualize the brave old man as he got up and said, "No, I will go. I will not sit still. I will not give it up. I have not finished my work. I have further testimony to bear to my God. I shall not quit the pilgrimage. I will go, even though it be with tottering footsteps." So David girded himself once again to follow the Lord, and went forth as bravely as when he first started on his pilgrim way.

When David wanted to go to battle again they said to him, "Thou art worth ten thousand of us." They meant that, if he were to fall, the very light of Israel would be quenched. But there was "fight" in him until the very last. The same spirit that made him go as a boy to fight with Goliath still burned in him after he had become an old man, so he still said, "I will go." After he could not go literally to any physical conflict, to the very end he fought for God and forthrightly with his prayers and his influence. If he could not fight for God in one way, he resolved that he would administer justice and support the cause of God in Israel as long as he lived.

David's resolution may be adopted by us in the sense of our making progress in divine things. You and I can say, "I will go on studying the Word of God. I will go forward pleading with the Lord. I will go on subduing evil habits. I will continue to oppose the world, the flesh and the devil. I will not be content with my attainments. I will go on striving for more grace, holiness and conformity to Christ.

I will draw upon His riches in glory and spend at a royal rate. I will seek the highest and best things that a Christian can know."

## II. David's Reliance.

David said, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God." As he went he was glorying in the strength which he had already received. He desired to put on as a coat of mail the secret strength of God which he had received and demonstrated in his own past career when he slew Goliath, the lion and the bear. What a wonderful thing it is for a child of God when he can stand clothed with those garments of glory and beauty which are made up of what God has wrought in, for and through him! How happy is the Christian to be renewed in might by remembering the strength of God which he has experienced hitherto!

In David's words, "I will go in the strength of the Lord," we see the limitation of self-help. These words are the language of one who has learned something of his own insufficiency, and also has learned something of the divine omnipotence. He has learned that in the past he has failed, and that his character has been unstable and unreliable; but he has also proved that God, when He has been trusted, has never failed. Therefore, he believed that what he had previously enjoyed on different occasions, he might experience at any time in the future. He firmly believed that, if God could help him in one moment, He could meet his needs in ten thousand moments.

David's statement, "I will go in the strength of the Lord," revealed his confidence in the sufficiency and adaptation of God's strength for every work or trial to which he might be called. This is expressed in the plural in the original language and may be translated, "I will go in the strengths of the Lord God." The power of God is expressed in the plural number in order to show the greatness of it, which is as a garrison to the believer. If I shall require mental vigor, God can give it to me. If I shall need spiritual power, He can give it to me. If I require courage and firmness in the day of temptation, He can give them to me. Regardless of what the believer needs, the strength of God is sufficient to meet it. "As thy days, so shall thy strength be" (Deuteronomy 33:25). The supply will always be equal to the demand. If you will go in the strength of the Lord, you will receive exactly that which is suited for your pilgrimage.

The strength which God gives is governed by our personal attitudes towards the duties which He entrusts to us. As we live, so God endues us with strength, and as God endues us with strength, so we live. God does not give His strength to a lazy man, to the one who simply seeks to minister to himself, and does not apply himself to the responsibilities of life. Such an one can never know "the strength of the Lord God." In every call of service, of which God is the Author, there is locked up sufficient strength and grace to perform it. Think of those in Old Testament days who went "in the strength of the Lord God." Called to go into a strange land, Abraham went "in the strength of the Lord God." Sent to be the leader of his people, Moses went "in the strength of the Lord God." David, the shepherd boy, slew Goliath "in the strength of the Lord God." Conscious of his own weakness, Elijah stood before Ahab and all the prophets of Baal "in the strength of the Lord God."

As you go your untrodden way, go in the strength of the Lord. Some years ago a good woman was speaking about Mr. Hudson Taylor. She remarked, "Poor Mr. Hudson Taylor! I do not think that he can depend upon any of the Missionary Societies to help him. He has nobody to trust to but God." Whom do you want to trust except God? Trust Him Who has done so much for you, is continually doing so much in you, and will do so much through you. Lean upon Him for all of the strength which you will need.

### III. David's Restriction.

"I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." The only testimony that David was going to bear for the rest of his life was of the righteousness of the Lord God. That was enough work for a lifetime, and David was one man who was at home in the work.

Bear your testimony to the righteousness of God in providence. Be assured that the Lord will never make a mistake or do anything which is wrong. Whatever He ordains will be right and best. Bear witness to His righteousness in salvation; that He does not save without an atonement; that He does not put away sin without being strictly just; that He does by no means spare the guilty, but has laid on Christ the penalty that was due for human sin. Go on, then, and tell all who may hear you that the righteousness which has saved you is not your own but belongs to God. There is no such thing as human righteousness. The two words constitute a contradiction. Any righteousness which you could gain by your own works would be as filthy rags at the best, and filthy rags are far from righteousness. We have no merit of our own, but we are justified by imputed righteousness. Filthy rags are best hidden and left unmentioned.

Talk of the righteousness of God in order to show others the way of salvation. Then point convicted and convinced sinners to the only place where righteousness is to be had. Talk of that perfect righteousness also for the comfort of believers. Nothing will give them greater joy than to see how they are accounted righteous in the righteousness of Christ, and "accepted in the beloved." Here is a happy vocation for the remainder of your life on this earth.