

FAITH'S FIRM PRONOUNCEMENT

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

After he had grown old David wrote this psalm. It was not written to men concerning God, but it was addressed to God Himself, who was David's dearest friend. Because David had long been with his God, he was ready for anything.

In his later days, this grand old man was exposed to enemies as fierce as those which he had to encounter in his earlier days; but instead of gathering his friends together, and conversing with them, and seeking their counsel, 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. Trusting alone in God makes us greatly independent toward men. David continued, "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."

These are the choicest joys we know -- these periods of communion with our God. The room where we are alone with God is the nearest to heaven of any place between here and there. One could wish that we could enjoy more often communion with the Lord behind closed doors. When we are with God, we have the All-in-all for company, and He fills our minds better than a thousand finite beings could do.

It is also good to come here and mingle with God's people in public worship. Many times have the saints of God come in here burdened and gone away lightened because God has met with them. But there is something closer even in our private meetings with God. Therefore, I appeal to you to make many secret appointments with your Lord and keep them. I am certain that it will be imperative for you to meet Him when you are in sore trouble -- your senses of need will drive you to it. 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. Then it was that he said --

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

Jacob was a greater gainer by that fright than if he had never heard a whisper of opposition. It was well for him that he had an Esau with armed men to drive him to God. He could say afterwards. "It was good for me to have been afflicted." Anything that brings us into close fellowship with God works for our good.

In my imagination I can see David sitting there. He was an old man, compassed with infirmities, bowed down with troubles, and full of sorrow; 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 shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." Psalm 71:17-18. While in the conscious presence of his God, David's troubles subsided. Then he began to speak very hopefully and finally rose to a joyful confidence, 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 in his mouth.

I. David's Resolution.

"I will go." From this we learn that he would not sit still. He had already come a long way, and was getting weary and faint, and the flesh suggested to him that he had had enough of it. Satan also suggested to him that he had done too much already, and that the best thing he could do was to give up struggling and contending, and just sit down and let things come as they may.

I can visualize the brave old man as he gets up and says, "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 Master. I shall not quit the pilgrimage. I will go, even though it be with tottering footsteps." So he girds himself once again to follow the Lord, and he goes forth as bravely as when he first started on his pilgrim way.

When he wanted to go to battle again, did they not say to him, "Thou art worth ten thousand of us?" 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 when he became an old man, and he still said, "I will go." When he could not literally go to any physical conflict, you can see that, to the end, he fought for God and for truth by his laws, his governments, his influence, and his prayers.

When he could not do one thing he did another. David resolved that he would administer justice and support the cause of God in Israel as long as he lived.

His resolution may be used in many senses, and especially in the sense of making progress in Divine things. 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 present attainments. I will go in for more grace, and eminent holiness and close 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.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God." He would go glorying in the strength which he had already received. He would put on as a coat of mail the secret strength of God which he had verified and demonstrated in his won past career when he slew Goliath, the lion and the bear. What a wonderful thing it is for a child of God to stand clothed with those garments of glory and beauty which are made up of what God has wrought in him and wrought for him! How happy is he to be renewed in might by remembering the strength of God which he has hitherto experienced! This statement of the psalmist reveals that he is confident as to the sufficiency and adaptation of God's strength to every trial or work to which he might be called. The Hebrew being plural hints at this, "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 want physical strength, He can give it to me. If I shall need spiritual power, He can give it to me. If I require courage and firmness of mind in the day of temptation, He can give them to me. Nothing is needed by a believer, but that which the strength of God supplies when it is needed. As our days so shall our strength be. We shall find that the supply is always equal to the demand. If you go in the strength of the Lord God, you will have exactly that which is suited for your perplexing pilgrimage.

Go in the strength of the Lord God. That is the right way to go. If you have nobody else to help you go in His strength. 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 had nobody to trust to but God." She said it in that kind of style too. "Nobody to trust to but God." And whom do you want to trust except God?

III. David's Restriction.

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

Bear your testimony to the righteousness of God in providence. Stand to it that the Lord never does wrong. He is never mistaken, and what ever He ordains is unquestionably right. 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 what was due to human sin. Go on, then, to tell everybody that the righteousness which saves you is the righteousness of God, and not you own. There is no such thing as human righteousness: the two words make up a contradiction. Any righteousness which you could gain by your own works would be filthy rags at the best, and filthy rags are not righteousness. We have no personal merit but we are justified by imputed righteousness. Filthy rags are best hidden and left unmentioned.

Talk of the righteousness of God to show men the way of salvation. The point convinced sinners to 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 our sojourn here below.