

DAVID AND HIS VOLUNTEERS

NO. 3297

A SERMON
 PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 1912
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains; Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh. These were of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west.”
1 Chronicles 12:8-15

DAVID, compelled to flee from his own country, and to hide himself from the malice of Saul, was eminently a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, in the days when He dwelt here among men, was despised and rejected of men. And at this moment it is well known to the true church of God, and it becomes palpably evident to every earnest believer in the Gospel, that Jesus, the Son of David, is not received, acknowledged, or tolerated in this present evil world. He has gone forth without the camp. All who would repair to Him must go forth likewise, bearing His reproach.

These eleven Gadites—all of them remarkable men—espoused the cause of David when he was in his very worst condition, they left the ease and comfort, the honors and elements, of their own homes to associate themselves with him when he was regarded as an outlaw under the ban of society. And to this day, every Christian who is faithful to his profession must separate himself from his fellow men to be a follower of the despised Jesus. In that way, and with that faith which men still count heresy, must he join himself with that sect which is everywhere spoken against, running the gauntlet of the age, if he would espouse the cause of the Lord’s anointed.

In tracing out the parallel, let me now draw your attention, first to *the leader* who commanded the voluntary homage of good and valiant men, and then to *the recruits* who joined themselves to him, of whom we find a graphic description in our text.

I. THE LEADER, whom we regard as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ, was David, the son of Jesse, and in tracing out some points of analogy, we begin by noticing that like David, *our Lord was anointed of God to be the Leader of His people.*

Hence the words of prophecy concerning Him, “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a Witness to the people, a Leader and Commander to the people.” The Spirit of God is upon Jesus of Nazareth, for Him has God the Father anointed. “Unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” We may well be ready to follow a Leader whom God has appointed and commended to us with such high praise. “I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.”

The Lord, in His own sovereignty, with wisdom and prudence, has been pleased to fix His choice upon the man Christ Jesus to be our federal Head, our King, and our Commander. What other justification do we need for following Christ than that God Himself thus sets Him forth? To this choice of God our soul agrees. Never be afraid, young man, of acknowledging Christ. Never let any of us blush

to own the blessed impeachment that we are followers of the Lamb. It is an honor to follow One who has the highest sanction of heaven in taking the command and exercising the authority that pertains to Him.

Jesus was like David too, in that *He was personally fit to be a Leader*. David, alike by his character and his deeds of prowess, had become the foremost man of his times. So our blessed Lord, as to His person, is just such a King as one might desire to obey, and as for His achievements, O tell what His arm has done—what spoils from death His right hand won! Let His fame be spread over all the earth! He stood in the gap when there was none to help. He vanquished the foe who threatened our destruction. He set His people free. He led their captivity captive. In point of courage and in feats of war He so outstripped David that I may safely say, “David has slain his thousands, but Jesus His tens of thousands. He is a man of war. The LORD is His name.”

He has defeated all the principalities and powers, and put to rout all the hosts of hell that came against His people. Therefore let Him be acknowledged as King. Who else should be exalted among the people but He who has done such wonderful things for the people? It is no marvel that the men of Israel gathered around David with a glowing enthusiasm, and proved their patriotism by their allegiance to his sovereignty. Nor need we wonder that the children of God should shout—

***“All hail the power of Jesus’ name,
Let angels prostrate fall,
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.”***

Right well does He deserve all the homage we can ever ascribe to Him.

But our Lord, though anointed of God, and meriting the distinction which He gained, was nevertheless, like David, *rejected of men*. Poor David! Saul thirsted for his blood, and put him upon dangerous enterprises, in the hope that he might die, and when he saw that God was with him, he hated him yet the more, till he hunted him like a partridge upon the mountains. He could find shelter nowhere. If he went to the priests of Nob, the king sent and slew all the inhabitants of the city, or if he went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and saved the inhabitants of Keilah, yet by and by they were willing to give him up to his enemies. He was safe nowhere.

Now, our Lord Jesus Christ here upon earth was in the same manner despised and rejected of men, nor has the offense of His cross ceased to this day. You may be a nominal Christian, and have the good esteem of all men, but if you are a true disciple of Jesus, obeying Him from the heart, openly avowing His cause, and diligently testifying His truth, you will meet with bitter hostility in all sorts of places and among all sorts of people.

Rest assured that until Christ comes again, it will be true that, if ye were of the world, the world would love its own, but because ye are not of the world, but Christ hath chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

There may be Christians placed in such sheltered nooks, and living among such godly families, that they do not come into collision with the outside world, but if you do come into connection with the world in any way, you will be sure to prove its enmity. As it is in rebellion against God, and hostile to Christ, it will be intolerant of you. So Ishmael persecuted Isaac even in Abraham’s own household. So the seed of the serpent hates the seed of the woman. So too, those that are under the law own no kindred with those that are the children of the promise.

Marvel not then, it scarcely becomes you to murmur, though it sometimes appears to you a hard lot. Jesus Christ is still as a root out of a dry ground, without form or comeliness to the mass of mankind. True religion is not to be found in fashionable circles, it finds little favor among the great and mighty, though today it does not hide its head in the clefts and caves of the rocks. While the violence of persecution is abated in its outward manifestations of terror, the malice out of which it grew still

survives, and the people of God are harassed by it in a thousand ways. The iron is made to enter into their soul. Thus the cruel jealousy and the galling animosity with which David was driven forth, and hunted from place to place, find a counterpart in the treatment that Christ Himself received, and that all His faithful followers have in their measure to endure.

But notwithstanding the pains and penalties they incurred in those dark days, the really good and pious people in Israel rallied to the standard of David. I know it is said that those who were in debt, and those who were in distress, and those who were discontented came to David. That is quite true, and well it typifies the abject condition of those poor sinners who come to Christ for refuge, but many of those Israelites were reduced in circumstances and brought into debt through the bad government of Saul.

Probably the very best people in the country were to be found among those who gathered around David, and certainly there was with David, Abiathar the priest. He came to David as the representative of the godly, the Puritan Party. With David likewise there was Gad the prophet. And you know how, in the early days of David's persecution, he resided with Samuel the prophet of the Lord, so that the gracious party was always on David's side.

Does not the like thing happen among those who ally themselves with the Son of David at this day? Although He whom we worship is despised and rejected of men, yet unto you who believe He is precious. They that fear the Lord love Christ, and embrace His Gospel. Those that have a new heart and a right spirit are not at all dubious which side to take. They have lifted up their hands to the crucified One, and they are sworn to do battle for His cause as long as they live.

We need not be ashamed to side with Jesus, for we shall be in good company, not in the company of the nobles of the earth, those who bear its titles, own its wealth, or enjoy its empty fame, but in the company of the pure in heart, of the heirs of the promises, of those to whom God has been pleased to reveal Himself, yea, of the babes out of whose mouths He has perfected praise.

Oh, we may well be content to cast in our lot with God's elect, be they who they may in the world's esteem, or be their lot what it may in their pilgrimage to the better country! With them would we be numbered, with them would we be associated, with them would we go. Let Christ's people be our people. Where they toil we would toil, with them would we live, with them would we die, with them would we be buried, in the glad hope that with them we shall rise again, to live forever in the fellowship of the saints.

Mark one thing more. Despised as David was among men, yet, being anointed of God, *his cause in the end was successful*. He did come to the throne, and so it is with our Lord Jesus Christ. Notwithstanding all the opposition that still rages against His cause, it must prosper and prevail. "He shall see his seed; he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

Well may the enmity of the wicked provoke the irony of heaven. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the LORD shall have them in derision." It is JEHOVAH Himself who says it, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." God's decree has placed Him there. Shall the conspiracy, think you, of kings and rulers can unseat Him? Nay, there must He sit till all His enemies are beneath His feet.

Oh, it is good to be with Christ today, for then we shall be with Him tomorrow! It is good to be with Him in the pillory, for if we can bear the reproach we shall one day be with Him on His throne to share the glory. If you will walk with Christ through the mire when He goes barefoot, you shall be with Him in the golden streets when He puts on the golden sandals, and the angels fall down and worship Him. If you can foot it with Him in His deeds of service, when He grows weary and footsore, you shall ride with Him when He rides on His white horse of victory, when all the armies of heaven shall follow Him in His great achievements. If you are with Him in His humiliation, you shall be with Him in His triumph.

I think I have told you before a little parable which I will venture to repeat in this place. There was a certain king, whose son was sent upon an errand to a far country, and when he came into that country, although he was the lawful prince of it, he found that the citizens would not acknowledge him. They

mocked at him, jested at him, and took him and set him in the pillory, and there they scoffed at him and pelted him with filth.

Now, there was one in that country who knew the prince, and he alone stood up for him when all the mob was in tumult raging against him. And when they set him on high as an object of scorn, this man stood side by side with him to wipe the filth from that dear royal face, and when from cruel hands missiles were thrown in scorn, this man took his full share of them, and whenever he could, he thrust himself before the prince to ward off the blows from him if possible, and to bear the scorn instead of him.

Now it came to pass that after a while, the prince went on his way, and in due season the man who had been the prince's friend was called to the king's palace, and on a day when all the princes of the court were round about, and the peers and nobles of the land were sitting in their places, the king came to his throne, and he called for that man, and said, "Make way, princes and nobles! Make way! Here is a man more noble than you all, for he stood boldly forth with my son when he was scorned and scoffed at!

Make way, I say, each one of you, for he shall sit at my right hand with my own son. As he took a share of his scorn, he shall now take a share of his honor." And there sat princes and nobles who wished that they had been there, ay! envied the man who had been privileged to endure scorn and scoffing for the prince's sake.

You need not that I interpret the parable. May you make angels envious of you, if envy can ever pierce their holy minds! You can submit for Christ's sake to sufferings which it is not possible for seraphim or cherubim to endure.

II. Having thus drawn your attention to the Leader, whom David the son of Jesse prefigured, let me turn now to speak a little OF THOSE WHO GATHERED ROUND HIM, AND ENLISTED IN HIS SERVICE. The recruits who came to David were eleven in number.

The first characteristic we read about them is that *they were separated*, "Of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David" eleven persons. Observe that they separated themselves. They seem to have been captains of the militia of their tribe. The very least among them was over a hundred, and the greatest over a thousand, but they separated themselves from their commands over their tribes—separated themselves from their brethren and their kinsfolk.

I daresay many of their friends said to them, "Why, what fools you are! You must be mad to espouse the cause of a fellow like David!" And then they would call David all manner of foul, opprobrious names. "Are you going to be among those who associate with him—a troop of banditti—that ragged regiment?" I'll be bound to say they had terms for David and his men which, in ears polite, it would not be meet to quote. It is a mercy that the language of those men of Belial has not been recorded.

But these men all said, "Yes, we will separate ourselves." And for the matter of that, they did not merely tear themselves away from their friends, but from their kinsfolk too. David wanted their right arms, and he should have them. He wanted valiant men, and they would go and fight for David, whatever fond connection should be sundered thereby.

Dear friends, in these times it is most important that everyone who is a Christian should understand that he must separate himself from the world. You cannot serve Christ and the world too. You cannot be of the world and of Christ's church. You may be nominally of the church and really of the world, but really of the world and really of the church you cannot possibly be.

The Christian must differ from the world in many things. His language must not be the speech of Babylon, but the chaste, pure language which Christians use. His actions, his customs, his manners, his habits, must not be like those of other men. He is not to be full of affectation and eccentricity. He need not adopt a peculiar garb, or discourse in quaint phrases, or speak with an unnatural twang. All that may be mere formalism.

Still, there is ample room for separateness in that which meets the eye and addresses the ear of the observer. We need not display vanity in our attire. In dress, Christians will be simple and chaste, not ornate and gaudy. In their speech too, the children of God will certainly never use an oath, or lend their

tongue to the semblance of a lie, from foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient, they will rigidly abstain. But the tongue of a believer, my brethren, ought to be as a fountain which sends forth sweet water, in his conversation there should be the meekness of wisdom, and when he cannot speak to profit, his silence may bear witness to his sincerity.

But it is in his intercourse with the world that the Christian shows the moral force of his character. There it comes out because it cannot be hid. If his trade has become used to tricks and stratagems which will not bear the light, he cannot conform to them, he will shrink from them with abhorrence, he must keep a clean conscience.

Other men may do the thing without compunction. It may have become “the custom.” But no antiquity or universality of custom will authorize that which is obviously wrong, so he cannot do it, and will not do it, for he is a Christian. He counts that a higher morality is required of him than of an ordinary man, and after this higher morality he seeks.

From the world’s religion the man of God will likewise stand aloof. He never asks himself, “What kind of religion does the present age consider most expedient?” Nor does he wish to find out the fashionable taste in doctrine, or the order of devotion which is most agreeable to the undevout, but he seeks after God, he diligently inquires for God’s truth, he joins himself to God’s church, and earnestly promotes its welfare. Moreover, he loves God’s ways and desires to be under the power of God’s Spirit. After this manner he separates himself.

Does not the church in these days need to hear sounded every day, as a thunder clap, that divine commandment, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”? Oh, the shameful conformity of some professors with the world! It degrades the church and it debases themselves. God grant that we may be staunch in our nonconformity to the world! To whatever church we may belong, may we be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.”

But observe that *these people separated themselves unto David*. You may separate yourself and yet not separate yourself unto Christ, and if not, you only change from one form of worldly-mindedness to another. We are not to separate ourselves unto self-righteousness, or unto affectation, or unto a sect, but unto Christ. The people got away from their friends that they might get to David, we are to get away from the world that we may get closer to Christ. We often sing—

“Oh, for a closer walk with God!”

But if our walk is to be close with God, it must be a long way from the world. We must separate ourselves, by divine grace, unto Christ. And then, as you read that they separated themselves unto David in the wilderness, let me entreat you to ask yourselves if you are ready to take part with a rejected, crucified Christ. Tens of thousands would separate themselves to David if he were in Hebron on the throne of Israel. They would go there to crown David in the day of his prosperity, but the thing was to separate themselves unto David in the wilderness. That is the work of real grace in the heart which leads us to take sides with a despised Christ.

It is a blessed thing when God teaches you to say, “I will follow the truth wherever it leads me. I will follow it though some shall say to me, ‘You are inconsistent.’ I do not care about that. Though they shall say, ‘Why, you have landed now in fanaticism.’ I do not care about that. I will be a fanatic. If the truth leads me there, I will separate myself unto Christ in the wilderness.” Though they should tauntingly say, “You only go to some ‘Little Bethel’ which is frequented by a few ignorant and vulgar people,” be it so. If Christ goes there, what matters that to us? If the truth should lead us down into a hovel where we could only associate with the very lowest of the low, if they were the Lord’s people, they should be our delight.

I wish this spirit were in all Christians, that they would be loyal to truth, and not pander to the world. Do not be continually asking yourselves, “What will So-and-so think? and what will So-and-so say?” Do the right, and fear not. Believe the truth, let what will come of it. Follow the straight line, and do not trim your way. Go not round about for the sake of policy, but take sides with Jesus Christ in the day of scoffing, on the ground of principle.

Do I speak to some men here who work in factories? Oh, own Christ when other men laugh at Him! Stand up for Jesus when the whole shop is full of jesting and jeering against religion. If your religion is worth having, it is worthwhile enduring a little banter for it. He that is a friend must be a friend in need. If you would be a friend of Jesus, you will defend His name when it wants a defender, and everybody is raging at Him.

To come to the Tabernacle and join your fellow Christians in praising Jesus is very easy, and involves no self-denial, but the thing is, you merchants, to praise Jesus among your fellow merchants who are ungodly—to bear witness, you working men, among others who fear not the Lord—to separate yourselves unto David in the wilderness, to cleave to Christ where He is scoffed at and despised. That is a true Christian.

I beseech you, test yourselves by this, for if you are ashamed of Him in this evil generation, He will be ashamed of you when He comes in His glory. But if you, out of a pure heart, can confess Him before a godless world, He will acknowledge you in the day when He comes in the glory of His Father, and all His holy angels with Him. Oh, for grace to be separated unto Christ in this way!

Note, next, about these men that *they were men of might*. It is said of them that they were “men of might...whose faces were like the faces of lions, and they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains.” All who came to David were not like that. David had some women and children to protect, but he was glad to receive others who were men of might.

Now there came to Jesus, the greater David, in His day, the weak ones of the flock, and He never rejected them. He was glad to receive even the feeblest, but there also came to our Lord and Master eleven men who, by His grace, were like these Gadites. Truly, I may say of His apostles, after our divine Lord had filled them with His Spirit, that they had faces like lions and feet like hinds’ feet, so swift were they for service and so strong for combat.

How wondrously they ran to and fro to the very ends of the earth, like the roes of the mountains, and how bravely they faced persecution and opposition, like lions that could not flinch from their prey, and what grand works they did for Jesus! Would to God that we were like them, beloved! The grace God can make us like them.

The grace of God can make us brave as lions, so that wherever we are, we can hold our own, or rather can hold our Lord’s truth, and never blush nor be ashamed to speak a good word for Him at all times. He can make us quick and active too, so that we shall be like the roes upon the mountains. I am afraid that, often, we are like the ass that couches down. We need the whip and the spur to make us move. We are like bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke of service.

Yet it ought not to be so. Loved as we have been with such great love, and having tasted, as some of us can testify, of such choice favors from our Lord, being indulged with such intimate fellowship with Himself, and sustained as we are now with such joy and peace in Him, we ought to serve Him with celerity and activity, with courage and confidence. We really should out-vie the lion for his bravery, and the hinds and the wild goats of the rock for their swiftness. I pray that it may be so.

May God send to this church men—and women too—of this order, “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might,” to whom the joy of the Lord shall be their strength, who shall go about their Father’s business with all their might—that might which is given them of God—and do great exploits for our greater David while He is in the wilderness, and needs their aid.

But it is worth noticing that *they were men of war, inured to discipline*, “men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler.” Now there are some men of might who do not seem to be good

men of war because they cannot keep rank. What exploits they may do they must needs do alone, for they cannot march with the army.

There are some brethren I know who are most excellent people as individuals, but they seem never to be meant to march in the ranks, they must everyone of them lead—they feel they must, they cannot be second to anybody, neither can they be under any discipline or rule. Instead of taking their place in Christ's church, they seem to consider themselves independent of the church and its organization.

Howbeit, the men Christ wants in the church—and I pray Him to multiply their number in our midst, and enlist all of us among them—are such as can keep step, observe the rule, and preserve order in the march, or in the fight or the service of the Lord. Men who can smite the foe, who can handle the sword and buckler, and ward off the arrows of the enemy, who can use the shield of faith, and withstand the assaults of the adversary, we want these. May God teach us how to keep our places and to do our work!

Some men have swords, but their swords seem to be more dangerous to their friends than to their foes. They are the people one wishes to keep clear of. They are, no doubt, very zealous, but if they had a little love as well as a lot of zeal, and were endowed with a capacity for fellowship, it would greatly improve their character. This, however, seems to be their defeat, they have such an excess of individuality, and they are withal so exclusive, that we can hardly imagine how they could pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven," or recognize anybody else as belonging to the family of the Most High.

May God make us men of might, but may He also make us men of discipline! While we keep our place, and do our own work, may we delight to see others do their share of the work too! When we smite the foe, may we delight to see others use the weapons of Christian warfare with skill and success! Do not shrink from the drill or revolt against discipline, for it is a great trait of a good soldier that he should know how to keep rank.

These Gadites likewise furnish us with *a noble example of strong revolution*. When the eleven men determined to join David, they were living on the other side of a deep river, which at that season of the year had overflowed its banks, so that it was extremely deep and broad. But they were not to be kept from joining David, when he wanted them, by the river. They swam through the river that they might come to David.

Oh, I would like to hold up my Master's banner, and be His recruiting sergeant tonight, if I could entertain the hope that out of this company there would come men of such mettle whose hearts the Lord has touched to join themselves to the Lord, and fight for His cross, whatever might impede and block their way.

Do you stand back and shrink from avowing your attachment to the standard of God's Anointed because it would involve loss of reputation, displeasure of friends, the frowns of your associates in the world, or the heartbreaks of anguish of those you tenderly love? Know then, that our Lord is worthy of all the troubles you incur, and all the risks you run, and be assured that the peace which a soul enjoys that once joins Christ in the hold, and abides with Him in the wilderness, well repays a man for all that he has to part with in getting to his Lord and Master.

We have known some of the rich who have joined Christ's church who have had to swim through overflowing rivers of contumely, the unkindness they have braved has indeed been cold and chilling. We have known many a poor woman who has had to suffer from her husband's brutality, and many a poor man who has had to run the gauntlet of a thousand cruel tongues. But who is afraid of such treatment as that?

Once see the King in His beauty, and your fears will vanish like smoke. Did you ever see His face bestained with spittle, and black and blue with the blows of mailed hands? Did you ever see that head surrounded with the thorn-crown, and mark the painful agony that was upon His visage, more marred than any man's?

And have you not said, "Savior, since You endured all this for me, there is nothing that I will count hard to endure for You. I will count shame for You to be my glory, and Your reproach shall be greater riches to me than all the treasures of Egypt"? Have you not said that? If you have said so from your very

soul, God the Holy Ghost writing it upon your heart, I know you have resolved to endure any pain or shame if you could but get to your Lord, and stand side by side with Him. They swam the river to get to David, so, believer, swim the river to be with Christ!

Now, it would appear that after they had got across the river, they were attacked, but we are told that “they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the East, and toward the West.” They were men of such resolution that if they had to fight to be on David’s side, they would fight, and notwithstanding the position of those on the right hand and the opposition of those on the left, still push their way, lion-like men as they were, through all the forces that would impede them.

O you that love our Lord and Master, I beseech you, in this evil day, this day of blasphemy and rebuke, stand not back, be not craven. Cast in your lot with Him and with His people. Come to the front, hide not away like cowards, for this is the day when he shall be accursed that comes not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty! See you not everywhere how the truth is fallen in the street—how the old idols of Rome are once more set up in the high places of this land? The whole nation seems to have gone after the idols which our fathers removed.

O you that love Christ, come out, and separate yourselves from all acquaintance, all association with this evil thing! Come and join yourself unto the Son of God by a holy covenant. If He be your Beloved, and if His grace be in your heart, fear not. What have you to fear? Greater is He that is with you than all they that are against you. Fear not. The battle is not yours, it is the mighty God’s. If truth be with you, you must conquer. If Christ the incarnate truth be with you, you are already more than a conqueror through Him that has loved you. Never be ashamed, never turn aside from Him who gave Himself to you. Be steadfast, immovable. For this steadfastness you need to pray much and often to God, for many are the seductions of the world.

*“Can ye cleave to your Lord, can ye cleave to your Lord,
When the many turn aside?
Can ye witness that He has the living Word,
And none upon earth beside?”*

*Do ye answer, ‘We can;’ do ye answer, ‘We can,
Through His love’s constraining power’?
But do ye remember the flesh is weak,
And will shrink in the trial hour?”*

*Yet yield to His love, who around you now
The bands of a man would cast;
The cords of His love, who was given for you,
To His altar binding you fast.”*

Examine yourselves. Prove your own hearts. Consider what manner of men you ought to be. Let the precepts of the Word admonish you. Let the *esprit de corps* stimulate you. Never let disciples of Christ fall behind followers of David in warmth of attachment, or in order of service. The nearer you get to the person of your Lord, the more you will catch of His Spirit. I think, beloved, you need direction more than exhortation. The more you live under His eye, and the oftener you listen to His voice, the better, truer, nobler men you will prove now, and the happier recognition you will find in the day of His appearing.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 56

*To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam (a golden psalm)
of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.*

Verse 1-2. *Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me. Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.*

David was in such peril from man that he cried to God to come to his rescue. Man was merciless to him, so he prayed, “Be merciful unto me, O God.” His enemies were many and mighty, so he appealed to the One who was almighty, who could destroy them, or put them all to flight.

3. *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

He is a happy man who can trust in God when he is afraid, but he is still happier who can say, “I will trust, and not be afraid.”

4. *In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*

The trusting soul is a singing soul, and it soon becomes a courageous soul. Faith in God drives out the fear of man, “In God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.”

5-6. *Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.*

David had many enemies, Saul, Doeg the Edomite, the Philistines, and some even in his own household, but all their malice and craft were in vain since the Lord was on his side. We too have enemies who wrest our words, whose thoughts against us are evil, who lay traps for us, and lie in ambush to take us unawares, but we need not fear any of them, not even the great adversary himself, if we are trusting in the Lord.

7. *Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.*

They sought to cast him down, so he prayed to the Lord to cast them down, and we know how graciously the Lord answered his supplication.

8. *Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?*

David was such a wanderer at that time that he might not remember all the places where he had hidden away from Saul, but God had a record of them, and even of his tears, “are they not in thy book?” There is nothing that concerns the Lord’s chosen people that is not noted and remembered by Him.

9. *When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.*

David’s confidence in God was not misplaced, he who can truthfully say, “God is for me,” need not fear however many may be against him.

10-11. *In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.*

He repeats the declarations he made in verse four, such holy confidence may rightly be published again and again. It is most pleasing and honoring to the Lord, and it is most likely to lead other tried believers to follow such a worthy example. The praising and trusting man fears not what man can do unto him.

12. *Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.*

David had not forgotten the vows that he had made unto the Lord. Vows should not be lightly made, but once made, they should be sacredly remembered, and faithfully performed.

13. *For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?*

So the psalm ends, as it began, with prayer, a prayer that was most graciously answered, as we can see if we turn to psalm 116:8-9, “Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.