

ZIKLAG—OR DAVID
ENCOURAGING HIMSELF IN GOD
NO. 1606

A SERMON
 DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 26, 1881,
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And David was greatly distressed; for the people spoke of stoning him because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters. But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.”

“And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them and without fail recover all.”

1 Samuel 30:6, 8.

WE ought to be deeply grateful to God for the inspired history of the life of His servant, David. It was a great life, a vigorous life, a life spent in many positions and conditions. I almost rejoice that it was not a faultless life, for its failings and errors are instructive. It is the life of a man after God's own heart but still, the life of one who went astray, like a lost sheep and was recovered by the great Shepherd's divine grace. By this fact he comes all the nearer to us poor, faulty men and women. I would venture to apply to David the description which has been applied to the world's own poet—

*“A man so various, that
 He seemed to be
 Not one, but all mankind's epitome.”*

Each one may find something like himself in the long, eventful and checkered life of the son of Jesse. Among other things we learn this, that where there is faith there is sure to be trial, for David, though he trusted God so heartily, had good need of all the faith he possessed. In his early days he was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains by Saul and was constantly in jeopardy of his life. He had so choice a treasure of faith about him that Satan was forever trying to plunder him of it. Still, the worst trials that David suffered arose not out of his faith, but out of his *lack* of it. That which he did to avoid trouble brought him into deeper distress than ordinary providences ever caused him. He left the country where he was so ill at ease, which was, nevertheless, Your land, O Emmanuel, and he went away into the land of the Philistines, there expecting to escape from further turmoil. In so doing he transgressed and fresh trials came upon him—trials of a worse kind than those which had happened to him from the hand of Saul!

Brothers and sisters, the poet said—

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
 Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown,”*

and he spoke the truth, for, “in the world you shall have tribulation.” If you have faith, it must be tried and should that faith fail, you must be tried still more! There is no discharge from this war—difficulties must be faced. This is the day of battle and you must fight if you would reign. You are like men thrown into the sea—you must swim or drown! It is useless to expect ease where your Lord had none! If you adopt the paltry shifts suggested by unbelief, not even, then, shall you avoid affliction! The probabilities are that you will be taken among the thorns and scourged with the briars of the wilderness. However rough the king's highway may be, the by-paths are far worse! Therefore keep the way of the commandment and bravely face its trials.

Another lesson is this—though we shall be tried, yet faith in God is an available resource at all times. Faith is a shield which you may use for warding off every kind of arrow; yes, even the fiery darts of the great enemy, for this shield cannot be penetrated even by javelins of fire. You cannot be cast into a condition in which faith shall not help you! There is a promise of God suitable for every state, and God has wisdom and skill, and love and faithfulness to deliver you out of every possible danger! Therefore you have only to confide in God and deliverance is sure to come. Mainly note this, that even when your

trouble has been brought upon you by your own fault, faith is still available. When your affliction is evidently a chastisement for grievous transgression, still trust in the Lord; the Lord Jesus prayed for erring Peter that his faith might not fail him. His hope of recovery lay there, yet faith under a sense of guilt is one of those noble kinds of faith at which some are staggered. To my mind the faith of a saint is comparatively easy. It is the faith of a *sinner* that is difficult. When you know that you have walked uprightly before God and have not stained your garments, then you can trust Him without difficulty. But, oh, when you have stepped aside and when, at last, the heavenly Father makes you smart under His rod—to cast yourself upon Him, then, is faith, indeed! Do not fail to exercise it, for this is the faith which saves.

What faith is that which, first of all, brings men into possession of a good hope but the faith of a sinner? Often in life, when our sinnership becomes more manifest to us than usual, we shall be driven to that first sort of faith in which, being unworthy, we trust entirely in pardoning grace. It would be always wise to live by this same faith! If any of you at this time are in great distress and are conscious that you richly deserve all your troubles because of your folly, still trust in the mercy of the Lord! Do not doubt the Lord your Savior, for He invites His backsliding children to return to Him! Though you have fallen by your iniquity, yet take with you words and return unto the Lord. May the Holy Spirit give you renewed trust in the Lord who forgives iniquity, transgression, sin and retains not His anger forever because He delights in mercy!

Let this stand as our preface and the whole of the sermon will tend to illustrate it. We notice first—David’s distress—“David was greatly distressed.” Secondly, David’s encouragement—“David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.” Thirdly, David’s inquiry—“And David inquired of the Lord.” And then, fourthly, David’s answer of peace—the Lord said, “Pursue, for you shall surely overtake them, and without fail recover all.”

I. First, then, let us look at DAVID’S DISTRESS—“David was greatly distressed.” His city was burnt, his wives were gone, the sons and daughters of his comrades were all captive and little Ziklag, where they had made a home, smoked before them in blackened ruins. The men of war, wounded in heart, mutinied against their leader and were ready to stone him. David’s fortunes were at their lowest ebb. To understand his position we must go a little farther back in his history. David was greatly distressed for he had been acting without consulting his God. It was his general habit to wait upon the Lord for direction, for even as a shepherd lad it was his joy to sing, “He leads me.” But for once David had gone without leading and had chosen a bad road. Worn out by the persecution of Saul, in an evil moment his heart failed him and he said, “I shall surely fall one day by the hands of Saul.” This was a dangerous mood. Always be afraid of being afraid! Failing faith means failing strength. Do not regard dependency as merely a loss of joy—view it as draining away your spiritual life. Struggle against it, for it often happens that when faith ebbs, sin comes to the flood. He who does not comfortably trust God will soon seek after comfort somewhere else and David did so. Without asking divine direction, he fled to the court of the Philistine chieftain, Achish, hoping to be quiet there. See what came of it! When he stood among the ashes of Ziklag he began to understand what an evil and bitter thing it is to lean to our own understanding, to forget God who guides us and to become a law unto ourselves.

Perhaps some of you are in distress in the same way—you have chosen your own path and now you are caught in the tangled bushes which tear your flesh. You have carved for yourselves and you have cut your own fingers. You have obtained your heart’s desire and while the meat is yet in your mouth, a curse has come with it. You say you “did it for the best.” Yes, but it has turned out to be for the worst! David never made a heavier rod for himself than when he thought to avoid all further discomfort by leaving his true place. Worse than this, if worse can be, David had also followed policy instead of truth. The Oriental mind was and probably still is, given to lying. Easterners do not think it wrong to tell an untruth—many do it habitually. Just as an upright merchant in this country would not be suspected of a falsehood, so you would not in the olden time have suspected the average Oriental of *ever* speaking the *truth* if he could help it because he felt that everybody else would deceive *him* and so *he* must practice great cunning. The golden rule in David’s day was, “Do others, for others will certainly do you.” David, in his early days, was not without the taint of his times. He became the commander of the bodyguard of Achish, king of Gath, and he lived in the royal city. As he found himself rather awkwardly situated in that idolatrous town, he said to the king, “If I have now found favor in your eyes, let them give me a

place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there, for should your servant dwell in the royal city with you?” Achish appears to have been almost a convert to the worship of Jehovah and certainly shines brilliantly in the narrative before us. At David’s request, he gave him the town of Ziklag. David and his men warred with the various tribes of Canaanites who dwelt in the south of Palestine and took from them great spoil. But he greatly erred in making Achish believe that he was fighting against Judah. We read, “And Achish believed David, saying, he has made his people, Israel, to utterly abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant forever.” This was the result of David’s acted and uttered lies, and lest the falsehood should be found out, David spared none of those whom he conquered, saying, “Lest they should tell on us, saying, David did this.”

So beginning with policy, he went on to falsehood and from one falsehood he was driven to another. And so his course became far other than that which a man of God should have pursued. How different was such false conduct from the usual character of the man who said, “He that works deceit shall not dwell within my house. He that tells lies shall not tarry in my sight.” See the fruit of his falsehood! Ziklag is burned with fire. His wives are captives and his men speak of stoning him! If you and I ever get away from living by straightforward truth, we shall wander into a maze from which it will be hard to extricate ourselves! We would each feel that we can *die* but we *cannot* lie—we can starve but we cannot cheat—we can be ground into the dust but we cannot do an unrighteous thing. If it is so, we may count upon the help of God and may go bravely on under every difficulty. David had left the highway of righteousness and was stumbling among the dark mountains of craft and deceit. He was plotting and scheming like the worst of worldlings and he must be made to see his error and taught to abhor the way of lying. Therefore, in one moment, the Lord launches at him bereavement, plunder, mutiny, and danger of life—that he might be driven to his God and made to hate the way of cunning. What wonder that David was greatly distressed? Yet was his distress the more severe on another account, for David had sided with the enemies of the Lord’s people! He had gone to the Philistines and their prince had said to him, “I will make you keeper of my head, forever.” Think of David protecting the head of a *Philistine*!

When Achish gathered the Philistine army to battle with Israel, we read with shame, “And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds, and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the rear with Achish.” How dreadfully troubled David must have felt in this false position! Think of David, who was ordained to be *king of Israel*, marching his armed band to fight his own countrymen. How gracious was the Lord in bringing him out of that perilous position! The Philistine princes suspected him, as well they might, and said to Achish, “Why are these Hebrews here?” They were jealous of the high office to which David had been promoted and fearful of his turning against them during the fight. “And the princes of the Philistines were angry with Achish; and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go, again, to his place which you have appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he become an adversary to us: for with what should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sang, one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?” Though the Philistine king, like the true man that he was, smoothed it down, he was forced to send David away. What a relief David must have felt! Well might he pen the words of the 124th Psalm, “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken and we are escaped.”

What a horror would have been upon him if he had actually gone with the Philistines to the battle in which Saul and Jonathan were slain! It would have been a stain upon David all his life. The Lord delivered him, but He made David feel His rod at the same time, for no sooner had David reached Ziklag than he saw that the hand of the Lord was gone out against him—desolation smoked around him and we do not marvel that David was greatly distressed! Picture the position of David, in the center of his army. He has been driven away by the Philistine lords with words of contempt. His men have been sneered at—“Why are these *Hebrews* here? Is not this David?” When David walked with God, he was like a prince and no man dared to sneer at him, but now he has been flouted by the uncircumcised Philistines and has been glad to sneak back to his little city, ashamed of himself! It is terrible when a man of God falls into such a position that he gives the enemy opportunity to blaspheme God and to despise His servant. It is terrible when even *worldlings* tout the inconsistency of the professed follower of Jesus. “Why are these Hebrews here?” is the sarcastic question of the world. “Why is a professing Christian acting as *we* do?”

Look, He is trying to cultivate *our* acquaintance and pass for one of *us* and yet he calls himself a servant of God!" They begin to point, as they did at Peter—"You, also, were with Jesus of Nazareth, for your speech betrays you." "What are you doing here, Elijah?" is the voice which comes from God's mouth and the lips of his adversaries repeat it. When the child of God feels that he is in that predicament and in great trouble, too, it is not strange that he is greatly distressed. At the back of this came bereavement. His wives were gone. He was a man of a large, affectionate, tender heart—what grief it must have been to him! Nor was he a solitary mourner, but all those brave fellows who were joined with him were bereaved, too. Listen to the common chorus of grief as they weep until they have no more power to weep! It must have been a dreadful day for their leader to feel his personal sorrow merged and drowned in the flood of grief which swept over his companions.

As for his worldly possessions, he was now as poor as he possibly could be, for all that he had was taken away and his habitation was burnt with fire—and the rovers were gone, he knew not where. Worst of all, he was now forsaken by his followers. Those who had been with him in his worst fortunes now upbraided him with their calamity. Why did he leave the city to go off to help these enemies of the Lord, the uncircumcised Philistines? He should have known better and they grew indignant until, at last, one said, "Let us stone him!" To which others answered, "Let us do it at once." They were evidently in a great rage. David stands there faint with weeping, a friendless, forsaken man—with his very life in danger from furious mutineers! Do you wonder that it is written, "And David was greatly distressed"? He is surrounded with sorrow, but he has no need to gather ashes as the emblems of his woe, for ashes are everywhere about him! The whole place is smoking! He mourns greatly for his wives and his soldiers mourn for their children, for they are as if they were slain with the sword. It is a case of deep distress—with this added sting—David had brought it upon himself! There is the picture before you. Now let us see a fairer scene as we observe what David did under the circumstances. When he was at his worst, by God's grace, he was seen at his best!

II. Secondly, let us consider DAVID'S ENCOURAGEMENT—"And David encouraged himself." That is well, David! He did not, at first, attempt to encourage anybody else—he encouraged himself. Some of the best talks in the world are those which a man has with himself. He who speaks to everybody except himself is a great fool! I think I hear David say, "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope you in God, for I will yet praise Him." David encouraged himself. But he encouraged himself, "in the Lord his God," namely, in Jehovah. That is the surest way of encouraging yourself! David might have drawn, if he had pleased, a measure of encouragement from those valiant men who joined him just about this particular time, for it happened, according to 1 Chronicles 12:19-20, that many united with his army at that hour. Let us read the passage. "And there fell some of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle, but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to the jeopardy of our heads. As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediael, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh. And they helped David against the army of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valor, and were captains in the host. For at that time day by day there came to David to help him until it was a great host, like the host of God."

These newcomers had not lost their wives and children, for they had not been in Ziklag, but David did not look round to them and beg them to stand by him and put down the mutiny. No, he had, by this time, become sick of men and weary of trusting to himself! God was beginning to cure His servant by a bitter dose of distress and the evidence of the cure was that he did *not* encourage himself by his new friends, or by the hope of others coming, but he encouraged himself in the Lord, his God! Do you not feel a wind from the hills? The air blows strong and fresh from the everlasting mountains now that the man of God is looking to God, alone! Before, David was down there in the valleys with his policy and his craft—in the stagnant atmosphere of self-trust and worldliness—but now he stands in Ziklag, a friendless man, but free and true. How grand he is amid the ruins! He rises to his full height while his fortunes fall! He reminds you of his youthful days when he said, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hands of this Philistine." He is no longer in bondage to craft, but he is a man, again, strong in the strength of God, for he casts

himself away from all earthly trusts and encourages himself in the Lord! He did not sit down in sullen despair, nor did he think, as Saul did, of resorting to wrong means for help. No, he went, sinner as he was, confessing all his wrong doings, straight away to his God and asked for the priest to come that he might speak with him in the name of the Most High.

Brothers and sisters, if you are in trouble, and your trouble is mixed with sin; if you have afflicted yourselves by your backsliding and perversities, nevertheless I pray you look nowhere else for help but to the God whom you have offended! When He lifts His arm, as it were, to execute vengeance, lay hold upon it and He will spare you. Does He not, Himself, say, “Let Him lay hold on My strength”? I remember old Master Quarles has a strange picture of one trying to strike another with a flail and how does the other escape? Why, he runs in and keeps close! And so he is not struck. It is the very thing to do! Close in with God! Cling to Him by faith! Hold fast to Him in hope! Say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” Resolve, “I will not let You go.” Guilty as you are, it is good for you to draw near to God!

Let us try to conceive of the way in which David would encourage himself in the Lord, his God. Standing amidst those ruins, he would say, “Yet the Lord does love me and I love Him. Though I have wandered, yet my heart cannot rest without Him. Though I have had but little fellowship with Him of late, yet He has not forgotten to be gracious, nor has He, in anger, shut up His heart of compassion.” He would look back upon those happy days when he kept sheep and sang psalms unto the Lord his God amid the pastures of the wilderness. He would remember those peaceful hours of happiest communion and long to have them again. His own psalms would tend to comfort him as he saw how his heart had once been glad. He would say to himself, “My experience of divine love is not a dream; I know it is not a myth or a delusion. I have known the Lord and I have had near and dear communion with Him. And I know that He changes not and, therefore, He will help me. His mercy endures forever. He will put away my transgression.” Thus he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Then he went further and argued, “Has not the Lord chosen me? Has He not ordained me to be king in Israel? Did He not send His prophet, Samuel, who poured oil upon my head and said, ‘This is he’? Surely the Lord will not change His appointment, or suffer His word to fail! I have been separated from my kinsfolk, hunted by Saul, driven from rock to cave and from cave to wilderness and I have known no rest—and all because I was ordained to be king in Saul’s place—surely the Lord will carry out His purpose and will set me on the throne. He has not chosen, ordained and anointed me in mockery.”

Brethren, do you need an interpretation of this parable? Can you not see its application to yourselves? Are you not saying, “The Lord called me, by His grace; He brought me out from my love of the world, and made me a priest and a king unto Himself—and can He leave me? Is not the oil of His Spirit still upon me? Can He cast me off? He separated me to Himself and gave me to know that my destiny was not like that of the ungodly world, but that He had ordained me and chosen me to be His servant forever—will He leave me to perish? Shall His enemy rejoice over me?” Thus may you encourage yourself in God. Then David would go over all the past deliverances which he had experienced. I see the picture which passed like a panorama before David’s eyes. He saw himself when he slew the lion and the bear. Did God deliver him *then* and will He not deliver Him *now*? He pictured himself going out to meet the giant Goliath, with nothing but a sling and a stone—and coming back with the monster’s head in his hand—and he argued, “Will He not rescue me now?” He saw himself in the courts of Saul when the mad king sought to pin him to the wall with a javelin and he barely escaped. He saw himself let down by the kindness of Michal from the window, when her father sought to slay him in his bed. He saw himself in the cave of Engedi and upon the tracks of the wild goats, pursued by his remorseless adversary, but always strangely guarded from his cruel hands. David cheers himself, as one had done before him, with the inference, “If the Lord had meant to destroy me, He would not have showed me such things as these.”

Come, now, dear children of God, take down your diaries and refer to the days when the Lord helped you again and again! How many times has He blessed you? You could not count them, for God has been so gracious and tender that He has aided you 10,000 times already! Has He changed in love, in faithfulness, in power? God forbid that we should indulge such a wicked thought! He is still the same and so let us encourage ourselves in Him. “Alas,” you say, “I have done wrong.” I know you have, but HE has not!

If your confidence were in *yourself*, that wrong of yours might crush your hope. But since your confidence is in God and He has not changed, why should you fear? “Oh, but I am so sinful.” Yes, I know you are and so you were when He first looked upon you in love! If His love had sought to come to you by the way of *merit*, it never would have reached you. But it comes to you by way of free, rich, sovereign grace and, therefore, it will come to you forever! Do you not feel refreshed, this morning, as you think of what the Lord has done? And do you not feel that after doing so much it would be wrong, now, to distrust Him? Will you not even, now, encourage yourself in your God? Perhaps David, at that moment, perceived that this crushing blow was sent in infinite tenderness to clean him right out of the condition into which he had fallen. The Lord seems to say to David, “All that you have ever got of Achish is this village of Ziklag. I have caused it to be burnt up so that you have nothing left to be a tie between you and Philistia. The princes said, ‘I send this fellow away,’ and they have sent you away. And now the town that Achish gave you is utterly destroyed—there is no link left between you and the Philistines—and you have come back to your natural standing.”

The hardest blow that our God ever strikes, if it puts us right, and separates us from self, and sin and carnal policy, is a blow of love! If it ends our life of selfishness and brings us back into the life of trust, it is a blessed blow! When God blesses His people most, it is by terrible things in righteousness. He smote David to heal him. He fetched him out from the snare of the Philistine fowler and delivered him from the noisome pestilence of heathen association by a way that brought the tears into his eyes till he had no more power to weep. Now the servant of the Lord begins to see the wonderful hand of God and he shall yet say, “Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Your word.” I, the preacher of this hour, beg to bear my little witness that the worst days I have ever had have turned out to be my best days! And when God has seemed most cruel to me, He has, then, been most kind! If there is anything in this world for which I would bless Him more than for anything else, it is for pain and affliction. I am sure that in these things the richest, most tender love has been manifested towards me. I pray you, dear friends, if you are, at this time, very low and greatly distressed, encourage yourselves in the abundant faithfulness of the God who hides Himself! Our Father’s wagons rumble most heavily when they are bringing us the richest freight of the bullion of His grace! Love letters from heaven are often sent in black-edged envelopes. The cloud that is black with horror is big with mercy! We may not *ask* for trouble, but if we were wise we would look upon it as the shadow of an unusually great blessing! Dread the calm—it is often treacherous—and beneath its wings the pestilence is lurking. Fear not the storm—it brings healing in its wings and when Jesus is with you in the vessel—the tempest only hastens the ship to its desired haven. Blessed be the Lord, whose way is in the whirlwind and who makes the clouds to be the dust of His feet. May some such thoughts as these help you to encourage yourself in God as David did.

III. And now, thirdly, we have DAVID INQUIRING OF GOD. “And David inquired of the Lord, saying, ‘Shall I pursue after this troop? Shall I overtake them?’” Note well that as soon as David had come to be right with God, he longed to know the Lord’s mind as to his next action. You and I would have said, “Let us hasten after these marauders! Let us not stop an instant—we can pray as we march, or at some other time. Haste! Haste! The lives of our wives and children are at stake.” It was a time for hurry if ever there was, but, as the good proverb says, “Prayer and provender binder no man’s journey,” David wisely stops. “Bring here the ephod,” he cries. And he waits till the oracle answers his inquiries. He will not march till the Lord shall give the word of command. This is well. It is a sweet frame of mind to be in to be brought to feel that you must wait for the Lord’s bidding; that your strength is to sit still till God bids you go forward. Oh that we could always keep up this submission of heart! Oh that we never leaned to our own understanding, but trusted solely in God! Observe that David takes it for granted that his God is going to help him. He only wants to know how it is to be done. “Shall I pursue? Shall I overtake?”

When you, my brother, are inquiring of the Lord, do not approach Him as if He would not help you, or could hardly be expected to aid you. You would not like your children to ask a favor of you as if they were afraid of their lives to speak to you! I am sure you would not like a dear child, whatever wrong he had been doing, to feel a suspicion of your love and doubt your willingness to help—for whatever he has done, he is still your child. David has encouraged himself in his God and he is sure that God is ready to

save him—all that he wants to know is how he is, himself, to act in the business. It is to be remarked, however, that David does not expect that God is going to help him without his doing his part and doing it to the best of his ability. David inquires, “Shall *I* pursue? Shall I overtake?” “He means to be up and doing; sad as he is, and faint as he is, he is ready for action. Many who get into trouble seem to expect an angel to come and lift them up by the hair of their heads. But angels have other matters in hand. The Lord generally helps us by enabling us to help ourselves and it is a way which does us doubly good. It was more for David’s benefit that he should, himself, smite the Amalekites than that God should hurl hailstones out of heaven upon them and destroy them. David will have their spoil for the wages of battle and be rewarded for the forced march and the fight. Brother, you will have to work and labor to extricate yourself from debt and difficulty and so the Lord will hear your prayer. The rule is to trust in God to smite the Amalekites and then to march after them as if it all depended upon *yourself*.

There is a God-reliance which awakens all our self-reliance and yokes it to the chariot of providence, making the man ready for action because God is with him. It is instructive to notice that although David was, thus, ready for action, trusting in God, he greatly distrusted his own wisdom, for he asked, “Shall I pursue them?” That man is wise who counts his own wisdom to be folly. And he who lays his judgment down at Jesus’ feet is a man of sound judgment! He who tarries till the divine Wisdom shall guide him—he shall be expert and prudent in all things. David also distrusted his own strength, though quite ready to use what he had, for he said, “Shall I overtake?” Can my men march fast enough to overtake these robbers? And what a blessed state of heart that is when we have no strength of our own, but seek God! It is good to be insufficient and to find God all-sufficient! I pause here a minute and pray God always to keep you and me in just the condition into which He brought His servant David. I do not care so much about David’s overtaking the robbers and all that—the glory was to have overtaken his God and to be waiting at His feet! He could not be brought to this without his city being burnt; without his being bereaved; robbed and ready to die at the hands of his own warriors! But it was worth all the cost to be brought to rest on the bare arm of God and to wait in childlike dependence at the great Father’s door!

Let the proud lift up their heads, but let me rest mine on Jesus’ bosom! Let the mighty raise their shields on high! As for me, the Lord is my shield and my defense and He alone! When I am weak, then I am strong. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” The old song of Hannah is still true—“He has showed strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.”

IV. We close our sermon with the fourth note, which is a note of jubilation and praise unto God who helped His servant—DAVID’S ANSWER OF PEACE. The Lord heard his supplication! David says, “In my distress I cried unto the Lord and He heard me.” But mark this; he was not delivered without further trial. David marched with his 600 men on foot after the foe with all speed—and the men became so worn and weary that one-third of them could not ford the brook Besor which, though usually dry, was probably, at that time, flowing with a strong stream. Many a leader would have given up the chase with one out of three of his troop in the hospital, but David pursued with his reduced force! When God means to bless us, He often takes away a part of the little strength we thought we had. We did not think our strength equal to the task and the Lord takes away a portion, even, of the little power we had! Our God does not fill, until He has emptied. Two hundred men must be torn away from David’s side before God could give him victory, for He meant to have David’s whole force to be exactly equal to the 400 Amalekites who fled, that he might make the victory the more memorable and renowned. Expect then, O troubled one, that you will be delivered, but realize your sorrow may yet deepen that you may have all the greater joy, by-and-by.

Leaving the 200 men behind, David dashes ahead and, by forced march, overtakes the enemy. He finds them feasting and smites them hip and thigh! He destroys them and takes the spoil, but in such a way that manifestly it was the gift of God. He speaks of the spoil as, “That, which the Lord has given us, who has preserved us and delivered the company that came against us into our hands.” God will help His servants who trust Him, but He will have all the honor of the victory! He will deliver them in such a way that they shall lift their psalms and hymns unto God, alone, and this shall be the strain—“Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. We were unworthy, we were faint, we were distressed, but God has made us more than conquerors through His great love.” David’s victory was *perfect*. We are

told over and over again that David recovered all. “Nothing was lost”—not a piece of money or a garment, not an ox or a sheep, much less a child, or one of womankind—“David recovered all.” How well the Lord works when He once lays His hands to it. “He will perfect that which concerns me.” Salvation is of the Lord and it is an everlastingly complete salvation! Trust you in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength. He will work and work perfectly till He shall say, “It is finished.” The battle is the Lord’s and His saints shall be more than conquerors!

Not only did God give David complete rescue, but He awarded him great spoil. “And they said, this is David’s spoil.” David became rich and able to send presents to his friends—but he was also the better man, the holier man, the stronger man, the more fit to wear that crown which was so soon to adorn his brow. Oh, brothers and sisters, the deeper your trouble, the louder will be your song if you can but trust in God and walk in fellowship with Jesus! Little skiffs that keep near the land carry but small cargoes and their masters see little but the shore. But they that go down to the sea in ships that do business in great waters—these see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep! It is something to be out on the wide ocean in a terrific storm, when the ship is tossed to and fro like a ball—when the heavens are mixed up with the ocean and all is uproar! Then great thunder contends with the roaring of the sea and the lightning flames are quenched by the boiling of the mighty waves! When you reach the shore again, you know a gladness which the landsman cannot feel and you have a tale to tell to your children and your children’s children, of what you have seen in the deep such as lubberly landsmen scarcely can understand! As for those who dwell at ease, what do they see? You who have been in the battle can sing of victory and, pointing to your experience, can exclaim, “This is David’s spoil!” Trust in the Lord your God!

Believe, also, in His Son Jesus! Get rid of sham faith and *really* believe! Get rid of a professional faith and trust in the Lord at all times about everything! “What? Trust Him about pounds, shillings and pence?” Assuredly! I dread the faith that cannot trust God about bread and garments—it is a lying faith! Depend upon it, it is not the solid, practical faith of Abraham who trusted God about his tents and his cattle—and about a wife for his son. That faith which made David trust God about the sons and daughters and the spoil—that is the sort of faith for you and for me! If God cannot be trusted about loaves and fishes, how shall He be trusted about the things of eternity, and the glories which are yet to be revealed? Stay yourself on God with an everyday faith! Faith in God is the exercise of sanctified common sense! Somebody called me, “superstitious,” for trusting God as to His answering prayer, but I reply that he is superstitious who does *not* trust the living God! He who believes in the power of the greatest of all forces and trusts in the surest of all truths is but acting rationally! The purest reason approves reliance upon God! The end shall declare the wisdom of believing God! At the last, when we, with all believers, shall lift up the great hallelujah unto the Lord God of Israel who reigns over all things for His people, it shall be known by all that faith is honorable and unbelief contemptible! God bless you, brothers and sisters, and if any of you have never trusted God at all, nor rested in His dear Son, may you be brought to do so at once! May you see your self-righteousness burned like Ziklag, and all your carnal hopes carried away captive! And may you then encourage yourselves in Christ, for He will recover all for you and give you spoil, besides—and there shall be joy and rejoicing! The Lord be with you. Amen.

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