

THE LORD LEADING—DAVID FOLLOWING

NO. 2348

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1894.
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,
 ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 14, 1889.

In anticipation of an Evangelistic Mission to be conducted by Messrs. Fullerton and Smith.

“And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the LORD go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him and smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.”
2 Samuel 5:24, 25.

DAVID'S life was a life of war. The Christian life wears other aspects, but still, in very deed and in truth, spiritually, it, also, is a life of war. Our Lord spoke the Truth when He said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” The end of all His great work will be universal peace and the lion shall lie down with the lamb, but, for the present, men fight against the principles which Christ brought into the world and all who become the followers of Christ must expect to be soldiers of One whose life was one great conflict and who died upon the battlefield, yes, and was crowned upon the battlefield, too! Expect, then, to war a good warfare as long as you are here.

David had won one great victory over the Philistines, but he was not permitted to sit down and congratulate himself upon his triumph. The Philistines were upon him again. Those Philistines took a great deal of beating, but the powers of evil are not content anywhere with being defeated once or twice. They are up and at us again—they challenge us afresh, they hope to overthrow us sooner or later! And again and again we must be ready to resist them with this as our warcry, “They compassed me about; yes, they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.” There must be war even *after* victory—and we must stand prepared for it.

Note well, however, that before David went to war, in each case, he waited upon God—“David enquired of the Lord.” Whenever we have any enterprise on hand, it is wise to wait upon God for direction and for help. David had received Divine Guidance before, but counsel in one dilemma is not guidance for another. Though David had been led of God the first time to fight the Philistines, he did not consider that the direction then given would apply again, so he went a second time. And it is written, “David enquired of the Lord.” The answers which David received on these two occasions were different. The first time, the Lord said, “Go up.” The second time, he said, “You shall not go up.” Had David been content with his former waiting upon God, he would have made a great mistake. What you have to do, today, you may not have to do tomorrow. And what you did yesterday may have been right enough for yesterday, but it may be as wrong as possible for today! Wait more continually upon God, dear Friends. Be not satisfied with what you have received of direction and support, but go to God again and again. If you go to Him daily for manna, you may well go to Him daily for counsel. David did this and he acted wisely.

I am afraid, dear Friends, that many Christians go carelessly blundering on, as we say, “neck or nothing.” They do the first thing that comes to hand and do not wait, and pause, and consider as they ought. I know some friends who seem to me to enter into great speculations which they had much better let alone, and who venture into various schemes which they would be much wiser to leave to other people. If they would only wait upon God, they would find themselves restrained from many things which now they attempt and, impelled to other things which now they neglect. The old proverb says that “kneeling does not spoil silk stockings.” I am not so sure about that. The silk stockings do not matter, but we may say that kneeling does not hurt a man's knees! Kneeling makes him strong in the feet, brave in the heart and often clear in the brain. If a man will only wait upon God, it will help his own mind to form a correct judgment and, besides that, the Lord

will give him guidance of which he never dreamed. He may have a token which shall be to him the very “clue of the maze.” He may get a word from God which will make him wiser than the ancients and it shall be as though the Urim and the Thummim still spoke out of the sanctuary to guide the saints of the Most High!

Tonight I shall speak about David’s experience, as recorded in this remarkable verse, in the following way. There is, first, *a prime necessity promised*. God promises that He will be with David. No, that He will go before him in this holy war! “Then shall the Lord go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines.” But, secondly, here is *a consequent action commanded*. “Then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you.” *Thirdly, here is a hopeful sign afforded*. “When you hear the sound of a going (or marching) in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself.” And, lastly, but very briefly, there is *a sure result following*—“And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him and smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.”

I. Well now, to begin with, here is A PRIME NECESSITY PROMISED—“Then shall the Lord go out before you.”

This was a necessity to David, for he had long ago learned that all his dependence must be upon God. It is also a necessity to *us*, for if we are to have a single soul converted, it must be the work of God. Yes, and if a single holy thought is begotten in this place, or any other, and fires the heart of any saint, and leads to holy service, it must be the work of God’s Grace! Without Him we can *do* nothing and we shall *be* nothing. What we especially need, just now, is for the Lord to go before us in our contemplated mission. In what way?

Well, first, *the Holy Spirit must go before us to prepare the minds of the people*. When our Lord came into the world, the world was prepared for His coming. There had been certain things done, all over the globe, that made the time of His coming the best time at which He could come. But it has also been noticed by our missionaries, especially in the South Sea islands, that before they arrived, certain changes had taken place and certain movements in the minds of the people, that made the missionaries feel that they had come just in the nick of time. God had gone before them in Providence and in Grace, making ready a people prepared for the Word. Now, I want you to pray the Lord to do so with all the congregations that shall be gathered in this place and, indeed, with all congregations. What can a preacher do if his hearers should come and God has left them to themselves? He would have to plow an iron soil that would break his plowshare and break his heart. How different it is where God has been at work with the hearers! A child has been taken to Heaven. The mother’s heart is breaking with sorrow and she is tender and ready to hear of Jesus and the Heaven to which her babe has gone. Then a man has been ill. He had been a thoughtless, careless man, but in his sickness he has peered into eternity and he is now thoughtful and prepared for the preacher’s message. Often have I said to myself, as I have come along to this place, “I shall have a picked congregation.” The Lord has an election of Grace and He has also an election of hearers!

You cannot tell, dear Friends, how much the conversion of sinners is due to antecedent action on the part of God before the saving moment came. There is a fire and you say that the fire was made when the match was struck and applied to the wood. Well, that is true, but long before that moment, he who split the wood and he who made the match had something to do with preparing for the fire, had they not? Where had been your fire if the wood had not been dried and ready for the kindling and deftly laid in its place? And where had been your light if it had not been for the phosphorus and all else that was used to make the match? So does the Lord prepare for the fire of holy service. God is at work, dear Friends, in London as well as elsewhere. Sad is the poverty in this great Babylon, but, oh, if men could all be rich and wicked, how would they ever be saved? Grievous is the disease that follows sin, but if men could sin and never smart for it, what evil we should see! God is at work in Providence and, with tender touches, here and there, He is making men thoughtful, constraining them to feel, in a word, making them ready before the time of the preaching!

And then *the Holy Spirit must go before us to prepare the preacher*. Preachers may think themselves thoroughly prepared for their work, but the smallest thing may put them out—some little disarrangement of their dress, something in the pulpit not quite right, or somebody dropping an umbrella in the aisle—(as is so common, here, on Thursday nights), or some person in the congregation who does not seem in the least bit impressed. Oh, shame upon us that we, who have such a message to deliver, should be affected by such very little things! Yet preachers are so affected and often they cannot help it. Even before the preacher enters his pulpit, he may get out of order for preaching. Poor man that he is, something may happen to him that may quite put him out of harmony with the Truth of God he has to deliver. Pray God to make our Brothers, Fullerton and Smith, preachers fit for their work—and the best preparation will be the Lord going before them! May the prophet have his vision before he speaks! May the hand of the Lord press heavily upon him before he lifts up his hand to

point men to the Lamb of God! May his lips be blistered with the live coal from off God's altar before he opens his mouth to speak words of flame in the name of the Lord!

Pray, Brothers and Sisters, pray! Pray much that the Lord may go before to prepare the hearers, but equally that He may go before to prepare the preachers!

I will suppose that the hearers are present. In doing so, I only anticipate a few days. I hope that this house will be very full. The speakers are also here and ready for their work. They have come forward attended by your prayers. Now is the moment when *we need the Spirit of God to go before us to deal with men*. A single word, spoken in the strength of God, will effect far more than ten thousand words uttered in the power of mere reasoning, or eloquence, or even earnestness. When God goes before us, wonders are accomplished by sentences that seem very simple and trite—you have heard them many times, before, but *now* you hear them in a very different way! They fell, before, like flakes of snow. But now they come like flashes of fire! They burn into your bosom. They set your heart on fire!

What is the secret of this power? God is in it! God is working with it! He is proving His Presence with His people. It is a strange thing, but it is strangely true, that by the foolishness of preaching it pleases God to save them that believe. And, while His power is never promised to go with the most gorgeous ceremonies, or with the most beautifully artistic effect, it *is* pledged to go with the simple declaration of the Gospel of Christ and the preaching of His Holy Word! It is the Gospel of Christ that is “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” Though I have said this ten thousand times, before, and you are always hearing it, and do not doubt it, yet for that very reason I say it, again, with all the emphasis with which I can—the prime necessity for every holy work is for God to go before—for the Lord to make bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the people! And if we have not that Divine Leader, we have nothing at all that is of real service in holy work.

II. Secondly, there is, in the text, A CONSEQUENT ACTION COMMANDED—“Then you shall bestir yourself: for then shall the Lord go out before you.”

God could do without us if He chose to do so, but *God is pleased not to do without us*. What a mercy it is that God deigns to use us! What a happiness for us! God might have gone forth with thunder and lightning against the Philistines and scattered them in a moment—but that was not His way of winning the victory. It was to be a fight between David and the Philistines and, therefore, God went before him to be the Source of David's strength.

But David must *follow*. When will some of our Brothers and Sisters learn the fact that *God's working is not a reason for our sitting still*? It is not written, “The Lord will go before you and then you shall rest,” or, “The Lord shall go before you and then you shall sit still and be grateful.” No, no! “Then you shall bestir yourself.” Now, David, if you ever did move quickly, bestir yourself, now that God has gone before you! If you ever did use a sword with all your heart, soul and strength, do it now! “Then you shall bestir yourself.” “Look sharp.” That would be a very good translation, indeed. “Then you shall be all awake, and all alive. Then you shall rush upon the Philistines and destroy them. God has gone before you. Will you not follow?” What a mercy, what a privilege, what a blessing God confers on His people that though He could do very well without them, He does not please to do so. But where He goes as the Leader, He bids them at once heartily and earnestly follow Him!

Now, the doctrine that “Salvation is of the Lord”—that glorious doctrine which I believe with all my heart and which I desire to preach all my days—the doctrine that salvation is of God and God alone, from first to last, in every point of the compass, was never intended to be a soporific and to discourage the action of man. *The fact that God goes before us does not encourage us in sloth*. Yet some talk as if it did. Take the doctrine of Election, for instance. “God has a chosen people, therefore I need not preach to them.” No, no, Sir! God has a *chosen people*—therefore I preach to them! It would not be of any use for me to preach if He had not ordained any unto eternal life. But as He has a people who shall assuredly be saved, I will thrust the Gospel magnet in among the mass—and those people whom the Lord has chosen shall be attracted by it! “The Lord Jesus Christ will not die in vain.” Precisely so and, therefore, I need not preach Him, I suppose? But the very reason why I *do* preach Him is because He did not die in vain! The death of Christ that does not effect its purpose is not worth preaching. But the death of Christ that is effectual for the end for which it was designed *is* worth preaching—and more and more do we rejoice to preach it! The grand doctrines of the Gospel are not doctrines that lead men to slumber!

There are some who pervert them, as they do the other Scriptures, and it will be so throughout all time, for men will turn the holiest things into reasons for sloth and sin. We cannot help that, but there is nothing in the Truths, themselves, that should produce such effects. Our forefathers of the olden times who went everywhere preaching the Word, the Calvinists of France who, in the desert and wherever they went, hazarded their lives unto the death—the Huguenots, who could bravely do and dare and die for Christ—were, to a man, believers in these principles which are supposed by some to send men to sleep! The most energetic Christianity that ever was upon the face of the earth has been just this form of Christianity and, therefore, it cannot possibly be that the doctrine rightly used will encourage idleness or sloth! How can it? If you, yourself, were told, tonight, “Proceed on such an errand and your God will go with you,” would that be a reason why you should *not* go? If you were bid to fight a battle and you were told, “God will be with you in the battle,” would the fact that God would be with you and would win the victory, be a reason why you should not fight? You must be made of strange material if that were to be the result of the promise of victory and the assurance of the Divine Presence! Nothing makes man labor so energetically as the expectation of success! And the certainty of succeeding because God is with them nerves their arms and makes them do what otherwise would be impossible!

No, dear Friends, we are not among these who say, “God will have His own and, therefore, I shall not pray or do anything.” Listen, Friend, if that is your language—God *will* have His own, but He will never have *you*, for you are clearly not one of them! God’s own never talk in such a style as that. God’s own have a very different kind of voice. You are not of His sheep, for you do not follow Him. The Christ—to what did He go? To slumber and idleness? No, but to incessant *service*—

*“Cold mountain, and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of His prayer.”*

He knew that the Lord would give Him the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession and, therefore, He prayed for all who had been given to Him by His Father! His life was a consecrated one spent in burning zeal and constant devotion to His great Father’s cause. And if you are one of the Lord’s own, it will be your mission to follow the Christ in this and, as He was, so will you be in this world. Come, Brothers, God is going to bless you! Do you draw back because of that fact? If so, surely there are two more lunatics than those in Bethlehem Hospital. No, no! Because God is going to be with you, therefore every man says, “I will follow where God leads. I will take my share in this grand fight, since the Lord, Himself loads the van.”

III. Well now, thirdly, in our text there is A HOPEFUL SIGN AFFORDED—“When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself.”

Whether these were mulberry trees or balsams, I do not know. It is very difficult to discover what trees they were. It does not matter, much, but David was to get round to the back of the Philistines instead of attacking them in front and he was to lie quietly in ambush till he heard a rustling in the tops of the trees when there was no wind, as though they were trodden by the foot of angels and God’s host was hurrying to the fray. Perhaps this sign, while it was intended to encourage David and his people, was meant to intimidate the Philistines. They would say, one to another, “What is that noise? What is that rustling? There is a sound of something traveling along the tops of yonder trees! There is not a breath of wind, but you can hear the leaves moving. Listen to the rustling! Something strange is happening.” The Philistines were most superstitious and would be ready to take to their hoofs very speedily! However, whatever it was to *them*, to David it was to be the signal for attacking them. “Now, up and at them, with sword and spear, and bow and arrow. Smite the Philistines when you hear the sound of the mysterious marching in the tops of the mulberry trees.”

Now, what are our signs that we ought to be up and doing for Christ? Well, we ought to be up and doing for Him *without any signs*. Every minute men are dying—every hour their souls are passing into eternity unsaved—every day Christ is pleading that He may be recompensed for His passion. Christians should always be smiting the Philistines of sin, but there are certain times that call us to unusual action. And what are they?

To me they are, first, *when we see earnestness among God’s people*. When we hear them say, one to another, “Oh, I wish we had a great blessing!” When we hear them talk, as one did to me the other day, “God is with us. We do have souls converted, but we do not see the great work that we long for, the hundreds of thousands brought in, the whole nation struck to the heart by a sight of the power of God. Oh, that we could see better days, brighter days!” I know many here whom I

am now looking upon and I remember what they have said to me of their own groaning before God for a greater display of His saving power. That is to me the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees!

Again, it is a hopeful sign, *when God gives us useful preachers*. Oh, what a blessing a true Gospel minister is! A man whom God has made for Himself is one of the Ascension gifts of Christ. And when you see, as you do in our two Brothers, Evangelists Fullerton and Smith, men who seem made by God on purpose for their work, suiting each other exactly and during those many years God has made them to be like a great cloud scattering showers of blessing wherever they go, I think, when I see these good men and others being prepared by the Lord, my heart says, “That is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees. God is going to bless us.”

There was no better proof of the Reformation having begun than when Luther began to speak out against the abominations of Rome, and Zwingli lifted up his voice, and Farel proclaimed the old faith, and Calvin came forth to declare the Truth of God, and Beza and multitudes of others gave their testimony. Those were the birds that sang because the sun was rising! And when God gives us useful preachers, they are among the signs that He is coming near us to bless the people!

Well, when the preachers are there, with a praying people at their back, then, *when you see crowds come together to hear the Word*, do you not think that there is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees? Oh, what would some preachers do to get the people to hear them at all? Ah, what are they *not* doing, dear Friends? As things now go, I would not wonder at all if we were to have, in some of our places of worship, a part of Mr. Barnum’s circus in order to attract a congregation! We have all kinds of fiddling, tinkering and I know not what, going on to get people to come and hear what is called the Gospel. “Oh,” said one, “but he brought so many to the place!” Yes, if they had had a clown out of the theater, he would, no doubt have brought still more. If that is all that you need—simply to gather together a crowd—it is not so very difficult if you are not squeamish about the means you employ. But, oh, when God sends the people to hear the Gospel and nothing else—and they come and listen to what a man has to say to them about Heaven and Hell, life and death, the Cross of Christ and the way of salvation—that is the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees!

And, Beloved, we may say the same *as soon as there is interest felt in the Lord’s work*, as soon as people begin to talk about it and say, one to another, “What did you hear, there?” or, “What did the preacher say about the way of salvation?” Better still, when some begin to be impressed, when you find, after the meeting, some in tears who do not know much about the Gospel, yet, but who want to know. And when, here and there, you see signs of deep repentance for sin and a humble trembling, about which, perhaps, you hardly dare say much, but you rejoice that it is there—all these are tokens for good! What a comfort it is to see, in boys and girls, even in little children, some desire towards God! This is the going in the tops, the green shoots of the trees, this is the treading of angel’s footsteps where one would think footsteps could never be! This is what we need and as we have seen a good deal of it of late, we are looking for more of it!

And whenever you Christian people begin to see that there is some impression made upon the person sitting with you in the pew, edge up to that individual and begin to speak to him quietly but earnestly about his soul. Do not let anybody go away from the services without having a personal application of the Truth of God made to them. Here I stand in the pulpit and fire my guns, yet the shot may hit nobody. But if each one of you would carry his own private pocket-pistol and just apply it to the ear of every hearer before he goes away, there would be a good deal more execution done! There is many a man who is not startled by the firing of the Woolwich Infant, one of the biggest guns in the world, but he would be very much astonished if he had that kind of private, personal dealing with his own soul, here, from you, man to man, and hand to hand! Try that plan during the special services—ask the Lord to enable you to summon up courage enough to do it.

And you, good Sisters, who are too timid, as, yet to attempt that good work, break the ice, once, and there will not be much difficulty after that. You will find it to be a happy thing to speak about Jesus to souls that come in your way. “When you hear the sound of a going, then you shall bestir yourself.” My aged Brother, you have been attending here for many years and you are rather an old saint, but you are also rather an old sinner for never having spoken to other people about their souls! I want to urge even *you* to begin, you who know most and say most, you who actually have had a long experience of the things of God, but have pocketed it and kept it to yourself. Now I earnestly say to you, as God did to David, “When you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall bestir yourself.”

“That is right, Mr. Spurgeon,” says one, “stir them up.” I did not say “*them*.” I said, and my text says, “Then *you shall bestir yourself*.” Dear Friends, it is all very well to say, “I like to see an earnest Church.” So do I, but it is better to have every member zealously seeking the souls of others, for *that* is the way to have an earnest Church, and that is the way

the blessing comes. David, you must bestir yourself! Then the soldiers who are with you will catch the fire from their leader and they will bestir *themselves*.

IV. Now I finish by saying just a little, in the fourth place, about A SURE RESULT FOLLOWING—“And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him,” and “smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.”

The result was all that David could have expected and more. *Obedient action secured it.* David simply “did so, as the Lord had commanded him,” but he, “smote the Philistines from Geba till you come to Gazer.” They could not stand before him—he won an overwhelming victory and you do not hear much more about the Philistines after this. That final stroke had crushed them down. So, Beloved, may the Lord send us a great victory this next week if so it pleases Him! Cry to Him for it, pray for it believingly and it *must* be granted to us!

“David did so, as the Lord had commanded him.” I wonder of how many of my dear friends it may be said as of David, “he did so, as the Lord had commanded him.” I know that it will be said of many, that you have *thought* about it. But David *did* so, not merely thought about it! He probably thought, but he also “did so.” He came to the practical point. “I shall try and do a little something to help the mission,” says someone. “I did give away one handbill the other night.” Yes, yes, that is all right, but, “David did so,” that is, he did bestir himself and he did bestir himself most when he saw the signs and tokens of the Divine Power being put forth. “David did so, as the Lord had commanded him.”

If I habitually look after others and speak individually to them about their souls, and if I bring the Gospel before them, either in a printed form or *voice*—if I keep on testifying of Christ to everybody who will give me a hearing—I shall have conversions as surely as I am a living man. It cannot be otherwise. If you continue looking to God to go before you and follow after Him with that part of the work which He has put into your hands, and which is a great privilege to be engaged in, you shall not labor in vain, nor spend your strength for nothing!

“Paul planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” How many times I have heard that text mangled and destroyed by being misquoted, “Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but except God give the increase, all the labor is in vain.” There is no such text in the Bible, although the statement happens to be true for all that! The other Truth of God, *which is in the Bible*, is Paul’s declaration, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” You, Paul, go on planting. You, Apollos, go on watering. And if God does not give the increase, let us know. What will we do when we hear it? Why, we will seek to learn the reason why and we will go to His Throne with tears and cries and say, “Lord, You have changed the whole business! It used to be, ‘Paul planted, Apollos watered; and God gave the increase,’ but now Paul plants, and Apollos waters, and there is no increase! Lord, what hinders the blessing?” And we will keep on crying to Him and never let Him go until He blesses us.

My dear Hearers, you who are unconverted, if you feel any spiritual emotions in your hearts, if you feel any desires towards God, if you feel any softening, if you feel any quickening, then bestir yourselves! And if ever, on brighter days than usual, you get just a little hope of salvation, then bestir yourselves! Oh, I pray you, you who are seeking the Lord, when there is any encouragement given to you—and how often encouragement does come—do not miss it! Take the tide at the flood. Come to Jesus just as you are. Trust Him and find in Him eternal life. May his blessing be with you all for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

Psalm 144; 2 Samuel 5:17-25.

Psalm 144. *A Psalm of David.* No doubt written after some great victory and also before another severe struggle. The Christian man seldom escapes from one difficulty without falling into another. Thanks be unto God, He that is with us in six troubles will not forsake us in the seventh!

Verse 1. *Blessed is the LORD my strength, which teaches my hand to war, and my fingers to fight.* David does not ascribe any honor to himself. Human strength is from within, from the nerves, sinews and muscles, but the Believer’s strength is from without—“Blessed is Jehovah my strength.” Now, if Jehovah is our strength, then nothing can be too difficult for us, for he whose strength is the Omnipotence of God can do all things. “Which teaches my hands to war.” Just as the young soldier was, as it were, bound apprentice to the old warrior, went out to learn the drill and, afterwards, was taken by him into the battle, so does the Lord by Providence and by experience train His people’s hands to war and their fingers to fight.

2. *My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and He in whom I trust.* Here are six names, or rather, five titles of God and then an inference from them—“He in whom I trust.” Oh, I know, you people of God, you can say of Jehovah, “He is the One in whom I trust.” Rely upon anyone else and your hopes are doomed to disappointment—as a bowing wall shall he be—and as a tottering fence. Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his refuge! Mind that you stand to this and never depart from it.

2. *Who subdues my people under me.* Probably this Psalm was written after the crushing out of the great revolt under Absalom, and well might David ascribe to the Divine hand his deliverance from that trial. It seemed as if the kingdom had gone from him—his ungrateful son had stolen the people’s hearts and yet God was pleased to give him back his kingdom—and to set him upon his throne yet more firmly than before. “Who subdues my people under me.” Christian, say that it is God who subdues your troubles, God who conquers your sins, God who enlightens your darkness, God who does all things for you! Give Him all the praise for every deliverance!

3. *LORD, what is man that You take knowledge of him! Or the son of man, that You make account of him!* Have you not often felt like this? You have said, “Lord, how could You have bestowed such favors upon me, so utterly unworthy, so insignificant, so unknown, so worthless?” “What is man, that You take knowledge of him?”

4. *Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passes away.* You know that a shadow is nothing. It is rather the absence of something than anything in itself. Shadow is the absence of light and what is man but, as it were, the absence of light, the absence of anything that is substantial? He is but the fleeting shadow of some earthly object which soon passes away. Having thus magnified God for the past and marveled at His loving kindness, the Psalmist now turns to prayer—

5. *Bow Your heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.* God did but set one foot upon Mount Sinai and it became altogether on a smoke. “The hills melted like wax at the Presence of the Lord.” Well, Believer, you have many mountains, but you can ask God to “touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.” No matter what the mountains may be—high as the heavens your troubles may ascend, till they even seem to block up your pathway to the skies—yet one touch of the Divine finger shall make them melt away like wax before the fire—and you shall march on triumphantly to your God.

6, 7. *Cast forth lightning and scatter them: shoot out Your arrows, and destroy them. Send Your hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children.* Moses, you know, was called, “one drawn out of the water,” so are all Gods people—they are drawn out of floods of tribulation. They are surrounded by those floods as though deserted and left there to perish, but keen is the eye that watches over them, strong is the hand that preserves them and sure is the arm that delivers them!

8. *Whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* They swear, but they perjure themselves. They lift up the right hand but they lie all the while. Rid me, O God, from such men, for, of all enemies, those that can lie are the worst, for you never know where you are with such people. Snakes in the grass are the most dangerous reptiles and enemies who will do any evil thing in order to ruin you, and who will tell any lie in the world in order to injure you, are the hardest to overthrow.

9-11. *I will sing a new song unto You, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto You. It is He that gives salvation unto kings: who delivers David, His servant, from the hurtful sword. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.* You see, good men sometimes repeat their prayers—they present the same petition over, again, and they thus follow the example of Christ, who prayed three times, “saying the same words.”

12. *That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth, that our daughters may be as cornerstones, polished after the similitude of a palace.* Or, rather, “of a temple.” This should be the prayer of every parent, that his sons may be bringing forth fruit unto God, that his daughters may be fixed as polished stones in the Church of God to form a part of the great spiritual temple.

13. *That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store.* When this is the case, spiritually—when there is milk for babes, meat for strong men and not a little of each, but more than enough for all—then are we very happy.

13. *That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets.* Spiritual fertility is a blessed thing, when each Christian, each of the Lord’s sheep, becomes prolific in increasing Christ’s flock.

14. *That our oxen may be strong to labor.* That the ministers of God may be mighty. That Sunday school teachers and all earnest laborers may have strength given to them.

14. *That there is no breaking in, nor going out.* That there are no wolves to destroy by breaking in and that there are no sheep to suffer injury by going astray.

14, 15. *That there is no complaining in our streets. Happy are the people who are in such a case: yes, happy are the people whose God is the LORD.* May this be our case! And if it is our case, then the Lord is our God even at this day!

Now let us read about two interesting incidents in David's warrior life.

2 Samuel 5:17. *But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David.* To thrust him down and kill him if they could—and so put an end to his prosperous reign!

17-20. *And David heard of it, and went down to the hold. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? Will You deliver them into my hands? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into your hands. And David came to Baal-Perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD has broken forth upon my enemies before me, as the breach of waters. As a flood breaks forth and carries all before it!*

20, 21. *Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-Perazim. And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them.* The Philistines brought their gods with them, in the hope of being, thereby, defended. But, "David and his men burned them." That was the very best thing to do with them. What a pity they did not save them for aesthetic purposes! Thus do men with fine old works of art, like pictures of the Virgin Mary. No, no, burn them! That is the very best thing to do with anything that ever has been worshipped by mortal man. If they have ever been set up in the place of God, they are cursed from that moment—let them be burned, or dashed in pieces—or in some way destroyed. "There they left their images and David and his men burned them."

22-24. *And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David enquired of the LORD, He said, You shall not go up; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees. And let it be, when you hear the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then you shall bestir yourself. Or be sharp and go at them!*

24, 25. *For then shall the LORD go out before you, to smite the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him.* I hope that may be said of you and me all our lives!

25. *And smote the Philistines from Geba until you come to Gazer.* That is, he utterly overthrew them and drove them away.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—450, 298, 45 (VERSION 1).

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307