

No.
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"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

I S A M U E L XVII.

An Address (revised) at

61, Upton Lane, Forest Gate.

10th October, 1920.

by

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An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

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The history of David in this chapter is peculiarly interesting and encouraging. At the outset he met with difficulties, but the soft answer was, indeed, a beautiful and loving effort to turn away wrath; and he went on further, and when he stood before the king he was able to say, not that he LEFT those few sheep in the wilderness, but that he KEPT his father's sheep, and when there came a lion and a bear, he dealt with the case. He was not a hero BEFORE the lion and the bear came. There are some people who seek for opportunities to show what they can do, and THEN fail! But WHEN the lion came David trusted God. There are some people who like difficulties till they arrive, and who tell us what they WILL do with them when they encompass. But David was not of that character. He did not seek difficulties to parade what he would do. He came down to "see the battle", said Eliab. There was another battle once, - he had nobody to see him except a few sheep, who looked on, but he was just as faithful THERE as when there was a "battle" in which myriads could see the deed of valour. His work was for God, and he

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was faithful when "a few sheep" were the only onlookers. He was faithful then, and God tested him, as He tested Moses in the desert. We need background preparation. Moses was trained in the desert, and so was John the baptist, and when Philip was sent forth into prominent service he had to go south to a desert to receive a further lesson in order that he might be equipped for other service. We have to meet a lion and a bear before we can meet the Philistine giant. God suits difficulties to our strength. If we fail when we have a few sheep, we can hardly expect to stand before Goliath. The difficulties that come to-day are to prepare us for the difficulties of to-morrow, and the trials of last week are with a view to further trials this week. GOD HAS HIS PLAN, and God works out His plan. The sheep was actually taken by the lion, but David delivered it out of his MOUTH. It was a wonderful deliverance. Paul knew something of the meaning of this in a parallel:- "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion". It needs a work of God to deliver out of the mouth of the lion, and David gave all the glory to God. "The Lord delivered me out of the hand of the lion". The sheep was in its mouth, and I was in its hand, and the Lord delivered me, though in its hand, in order that I might deliver the sheep out of its mouth! God does strange things to take all glory from men. Saul cannot answer this argument. He says, "Go, and the Lord be with thee", and he armed David. The first

thought is "Go". "The Lord be with thee" comes SECOND, - that is not quite satisfactory. The third thought is, "And he armed David". WITHOUT seeking God's advice he armed David. He armed David with HIS armour, clothed him with his clothes (margin), we are told how that Eliab was a fine, tall man, - "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him", - so said Samuel. Evidently he was Saul's counterpart, and so, when Saul was rejected, Samuel made sure this was the new king. Eliab could have worn Saul's clothes appropriately but how could David, a youth? Possible he was taller than we often think, nevertheless, in the spiritual parallel the clothes would not FIT him. Here was a poor attempt to clothe him with the clothes of Saul. A helmet of brass was upon David's head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and he girded his sword, - it was HIS sword and HIS armour for the time being, but not for very long. He soon found the word "his" must be transferred. Instead of his sword upon his armour he would have HIS staff in HIS hand. He knew more what it was to trust God with a staff in a hand than to have a sword and armour. The Lord changed the "his".

But, at the outset, David attempted to go when he had not proved the weapons. Herein is a great snare, a great snare of being affected by the advice of others when they want us to be like the world, the great snare of being influenced by what people think and suggest and propose. Saul was quite a natural man, very reasonable. He would

not like David to go out to meet the Philistine unarmed. He would feel responsible for the difficulties and the problems, and so he acted in a most "reasonable" way. But there is a grave danger of being "reasonable". There is a grave danger of being so "reasonable" that one forgets God. If we are governed by customs, habits and opinions, there is little communion with God. When God has appointed certain actions and stamped them upon nature, it is possible the world may copy them, but then WE have them because He appointed them; but customs and habits that are of man's arrangement are a peculiarly dangerous trap. David, therefore, is at first assaying to go in the usual way, - very reasonable, and he assays to go when he has not proved the man-approved means of success. Ah, dear friends, this leads us to the second thought. It is not only important to realise there is a danger if we fall in with the world, there is a danger in untested methods. If we are to be faithful to the Lord in great difficulties, we must be faithful to the Lord in little difficulties first. We must test faith and methods there. Confidence in God must be tested in tiny things, and it will be tested in larger things. David had not tested, he had not tried Saul's method. When the lion and bear came, he had not time to get some armour and put it on. He could not make arrangements for armour. He was brought to the emergency of trusting in the living God. That became his tested method. But for a brief while,

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an untested method is before David. It is most important that we should be aware of that which is untested. This thought applies in several ways. It is a mercy if we have not tested Saul's armour. Let us never learn to test it. But we MUST test the power of faith if we are to exercise it. It is a great mistake to wear Saul's armour, but it is an equally great mistake to wear David's faith. It must be OUR OWN tested faith. David's faith was a beautiful clothing, but you and I must not wear it as David's, it must be our own. It must be tested first in smaller things before it can be used in larger. The peril of untested methods applies spiritually as well as in copying Saul. "Practise" faith in tiny things if you would use it in larger. It is so easy to say what we would do in emergencies, but every moment is a practice-ground for an emergency, and thus the Holy Spirit works.

Next we find that David says "I cannot". This was hardly a favourite word with David. Saul said to him at the first "Thou canst not", - so definite was the king's statement, "Thou art not able" - the same word. And now David himself says "I am not able". Saul says "Thou art not able", but he gives way if only David will put on HIS armour. David says "I am not able" WITH the armour. "I am not able". That which appeared to the man of the world a protection was to the child of God a danger. It is wondrous to see how God workd. David was afraid to go

armed, afraid because he had not "tested". There are graver dangers in human schemes of escaping from dangers than we are apt to think. Human methods of safety may often have written across them - "A vain thing". Yes. "The horse is a vain thing for safety". "Salvation is of the Lord". The perils of unbelief and the perils of presumption stand on each side, and Satan would seek to engulf the believer in one or the other, and it is so easy to be led astray. We need grace to be deeply concerned, for if we are faithful in measure to-day there is no proof that we shall be faithful to-morrow, unless we continue TO WALK WITH GOD. If satisfaction comes in as to to-day's faithfulness, to-morrow will be marked by unfaithfulness. Pride is a necessary stepping stone to unbelief, or to presumption, which are the same thing. David says, "I cannot", and then he comes to the beautiful simplicity of faith. Saul says nothing; and David strips off everything, and takes his staff in his hand, and chooses five smooth stones out of the brook, in the simplicity of faith, for the simplicity of faith has no worldly wise and carnal "reasoning". David's "cannot" is removed as soon as he is ready to go in a way which to men SEEMED impossible. When they said "Thou art not able", he was permitted to say "I am able". When they thought he was equipped to become able, he said "I am not able." Human conception was upside-down; man has a wrong standpoint. The simplicity of faith and its boldness are here marked out.

But next we would notice God's use of inadequate

means . God delights to use inadequate persons and inadequate means. It is to His glory to employ a cake of barley bread, or, in the literal sense, five loaves. If He takes one who is the least in his father's house, there is the thought that no flesh should glory in His presence. God delights to use a work, God delights to employ the tiniest things, that He may have all the glory. Five smooth stones, the shepherd's scrip, the staff. Our memories are helped at once. We have the Staff, the Smooth Stones, the Shepherd's Scrip, and the Sling. On the other hand, we have in verse 45 the Sword, the Spear, the Shield. God DELIGHTS to use little things. His strength is made perfect in weakness. A sense of need is a precious privilege. Faith is cast upon the Lord. The people of Gideon were too many, and God reduced them twice. In His wonderful love He made manifest that He could work with three hundred, and broken pitchers were useful weapons; and we have a treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of ourselves. God delights that His people should realise His might. We remember the message to the Corinthians about the Macedonians, their poverty awakened their liberality, beyond their power;) they were most "unreasonable" before men, because they believed in the living God. Most unreasonable from earth's standpoint, reasonable from heaven's standpoint. How precious it is to be brought to the right standpoint. Beloved friends, we live in a world which has

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many "sauls" in it, as well as many "Eliabs". Eliab will say, "You are NOT to do this". Saul will say "You CANNOT do this", and then he will suggest "Do it in MY way". But the believer needs to be guarded in the power of the Holy Spirit against all snares. He has many difficulties to meet, and God tests first of all in keeping a few sheep. The lion does not come the first day; first there is the keeping, and THEN after a time of continued patient faithfulness in TINY things, a lion comes, and likewise a bear; then Goliath, and then in a future day the Kingdom will arrive, when those who are faithful will reign with the Greater David, because caused to share His glory when He shall soon return. If saved by the precious blood of Christ may we have grace to be faithful, willing to be thought peculiar, determined by grace to prove our gracious God, and then in the proved weapons of confident faith, not to be afraid of evil tidings, but to go forth in the power of the Holy Spirit, among the various circumstances which would oppress us, but which are nothing to Him Who has said "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee". The living God was the answer to Goliath's proud reproaches. The Living God is the answer to His people's needs to-day.
