

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SOME MARKS OF GOD'S PEOPLE.

A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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"Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."—Psalm lxxviii. 28.

DEAR friends, at this time there is a special stir among the people. I know, from what I have seen and heard, that many are beginning to seek the Lord; and others, who are not yet actually turning unto the Lord, are at least resolved to break off certain grosser sins, and seek after something better. Well, there is something to be thankful for even in the gripes of hunger which the prodigal feels before he says, "I will arise and go to my Father;" I value even the pangs he has to endure when he fain would fill his belly with the husks that the swine eat. Before we can pronounce anyone's experience to be a proof of the working of God's grace, we are glad if we see any signs of what usually comes when grace enters the heart. So I am thankful when an ungodly man says, "It is time I changed my course;" for I trust that this is the first chipping upon the marble block, and that the great Sculptor, who fashions us in his own glorious image, will carry on the work, and complete it to his own praise.

Just now, when I see these signs of a stir among the people, I think it is my business to repeat the exhortation I have often given, "Make sure work of the change you are contemplating; make sure work for eternity. Do not put up with anything that will fail you at the last. If you are looking out for something better than you already possess, mind that you get the best that is to be had." Nay, more, I would bid you give heed to our Lord's own words, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." Mind that you buy all these things of Christ, for the terms on which you may have them are "without money and without price," and you cannot get them anywhere else. I hope I am now addressing some who are saying, "We shall be glad and grateful if you will help us to judge as to our true condition, and

aid us to see whether we are Christians or not." That is what I am going to try to do to-night.

The verse before my text describes God's ancient people when they were assembled in the order of their tribes: "There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali." They belonged to various tribes of the children of Israel, but they were all numbered among the Lord's people; and it is said of the whole of them, as if they were but one, "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." These words apply to all the armies of Israel; so you and I, dear friends, had better consider and see whether we belong to his armies or not.

I. From our text, I learn that the first mark of the people of God is, that **THE LORD IS THEIR GOD.**

Notice the first two words: "Thy God." This proves that they have a God. We cannot be God's people unless we know his name, and know that he is the living and true God, and that all the rest of the so-called gods are but fictions or idols of the heathen. There is one God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is. There is one God, who has made us, and from whom the breath in our nostrils has come. There is one God who has ruled in all past history, and who still is the God of providence, the Preserver, and Director of his chosen people, the one God who, in the fulness of time, sent his only-begotten Son, who was equal with himself, but who lived and died that the guilty sons of men might have their sins pardoned, and their wandering feet directed back to the great Father's house. The God of the Old Testament and the God of the New, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, "this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death."

First, *God's people believe in this God.* If any do not believe in him, they may call themselves what they please, but they are not the people of the living God. They may be the people of philosophy; they may be the people of the many dreams which men dream, nowadays, instead of believing in God; but they are not his people. I hope, beloved, that we have no question about this matter, and that we can say, without the slightest hesitation, "Yes, Jehovah, he is the God; Jehovah, he is the God."

He becomes our God, then, first, by our belief in him, and, next, *by our reliance upon him.* This God is not merely an influence; certainly, he is not a fiction. He is a real Person, with whom we may speak, and who will hear us, and answer us according to his wisdom and goodness. The apostle truly wrote, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son; and he is speaking to us still, through him, words of grace, and love, and kindness. And he becomes our God, I repeat, when, believing in him, we come and rely upon him; implicitly trusting him, that, seeing we are sinful, he may cleanse us,—that, seeing we are ignorant, he may teach us,—that, seeing we are feeble, we may lay hold upon his strength, and may thereby be preserved unto everlasting life.

Let me ask all of you whom I am addressing,—Are you trusting

the living God? You know what it is, as a child, to trust your parent,—as a friend, to trust a friend; are you dealing just in that way with God? Then, are you relying upon him, depending upon him,—especially relying upon him as he is revealed in Jesus Christ his Son, the sin-atoning Saviour? If you are, you are his people. If you are not,—whatever you may do, or be, or say, or think,—you are not numbered among the people of God. Faith is the distinguishing mark of his elect. Where it is present, there is grace and truth. Where it is absent, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins.

How does God yet further become my God? *By my love to him.* As the result of having trusted him, I find myself peaceful, happy, restful; I receive at his hands pardon, and I know it is mine; I get from him love, and I feel it; and I love him in return. This is another of the marks of the Lord's people. The true child of God loves God. There are many men who are, to a certain extent, religious, because they feel bound to be so by a law which they cannot resist. Ah! but we are not under law; we are under grace, and we obey the commands of God because we love to do so. No man, who takes pleasure in sin, is a child of God, for the new nature hates sin; and though, alas! through the influence of the old nature which still remains within us, we are imperfect, and often transgress the law of the Lord, yet it is not our delight, and we grieve that it should ever be the case with us. If a child of God falls into sin, he is like a sheep in the mire, up again directly; but he who is still ungodly is like the sow that falls in the mud, and wallows in it, for he is in his element, and he delights in it.

There is a very important thing to be observed in connection with this point; that is, that our love to God is one of the chief qualifications for serving him acceptably. He who serves God, out of love to him, is the one who really and truly serves him. The Lord of love, the great King eternal, immortal, invisible, needs no slaves to grace his throne. He wants those to do his bidding who serve him with delight and pleasure. There is such a thing as self-denial ceasing to be self-denial, when a man takes such pleasure in denying himself, for Christ's sake, that the self-denial is a greater source of joy to him than the indulgence would have been; and that is just what true service for God is. Have I come here to-night because I am paid to do it? Or do I preach the gospel with regret and loathing? Ah, no! The gospel is as much my element as the sea is the element of the fish. What could I preach beside? Silent be this tongue for ever sooner than I should have aught to teach concerning the way of salvation save Jesus Christ and him crucified, and his mighty mercy received by faith. Do not many of you, beloved, feel just the same as I do? We know that we are children of God, and that he is our God, because we love him; and that love has put a new mainspring within us, which moves our hands, and all the wheels of our nature as they ought to be moved.

How, next, does he become our God still more clearly? *By our avowal of him,* when we come forward, and say, "Let others do what they will, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord,"—when we say, "God has set forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the Saviour

of sinners, we accept him as our Saviour, and with our mouth we confess that we have done so. Let men hear it, let angels hear it, let devils hear it, it matters not to us how many hear our confession that we are set apart for God and for his Christ." Our Christian profession is not a profession of perfection. Nay, nay; it is not a profession that we are, in and of ourselves, any better than other people; but it means that we have believed in Jesus Christ unto the renewal of our nature and the salvation of our souls. He who has had that great work of grace done in him and for him ought to say,—and say at once,—“This God is my God for ever and ever; he shall be my guide even unto death.” Let us be branded with the name of God. Let us, beloved, who have believed in Jesus, be God’s men, and God’s alone; and on all suitable occasions let us confess the blessed impeachment that we are not our own, for we are “bought with a price,”—that price being more than we can ever calculate, even the precious blood of Jesus, God’s dear Son.

Genuine people of God, then, have the Lord to be their God, according to the first two words of our text, “Thy God.” And, oh! beloved, I have scarcely time to tell you in what a sweet way we get *personal possession of God*. After having trusted him, and relied upon him, and loved him, and confessed that we belong to him, we get to be as conscious of his presence as we are of the air we breathe. We are able freely to converse with him, and feel within our spirit that he is listening to what we say to him, and that he is speaking back to us. “Oh!” says someone, “I do not believe that is possible.” Friend, you may do as you like about believing what I say; but, at any rate, if you have never enjoyed this experience, that does not prove that there is no such thing. We are as honest as you are, and we have as much right to be believed as you have. If we were before a jury, we should be as good witnesses as ever you would be. We are not liars, and we do solemnly declare that God’s presence is so consciously realized by us that we are certain that “in him we live, and move, and have our being,” and that spiritual communications—communications from the Holy Spirit—are frequent with us, checking us when we might fall into sin, stimulating us when we would be laggard, enlightening us when we are in difficulty, and sometimes bearing us upward, as on eagles’ wings, till we seem to get into the very vestibule of heaven, and could scarcely be happier than we are, or else, methinks, we must die. Oh, yes! there is a God, we who believe in Jesus have this God as ours, and we will rejoice in him.

That, then, is the first mark of the Lord’s people, the Lord is their God.

II. A second mark of the Lord’s people is given in our text; read the whole of the first sentence, and you will see that he who feels that God has called upon him to serve him with all his strength is one of the Lord’s servants: “Thy God hath commanded thy strength.” That is to say, **ALL THE STRENGTH OF A CHRISTIAN—physically, mentally, morally, spiritually,—IS AT GOD’S DISPOSAL.**

A true Christian owns that all he has, and the best of all that he has, should always be consecrated and dedicated to his Lord. First, *we are heartily to obey God’s commands.* There is no part of our

strength that we may reserve for ourselves, it all belongs to our Lord. We are to be like a soldier, who, when he goes to the war, thinks of nothing but how he shall discharge his duties so as to please his commanding officer. Now, my dear hearer, is that the case with thee? Has God commanded thy strength? "Well, sir, I go to church; I go to chapel; I profess to be a Christian." Yes, yes, yes, but there may be nothing in all that; has God the absolute and sole command of you? Is he your Commander-in-chief? Has he come and taken possession of that strong will of yours, and made it subject to his will? And if he has made you to be a man strong in faith, fervent in love, brave in holy daring, and great in patience, do you desire to have all those forces used for his glory, and his glory alone? If not, you are not one of God's people; but, if you do hold all your powers at his disposal, that is one of the marks of his people; and the more clear it is, the better. Beloved, God is to be served by us with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul, and with all our strength.

After this fashion, also, *we should pray to him fervently*. Oh, what poor prayers some people pray, when they bow their heads for a moment as they come into the house of God! Often, there is no prayer at all in it; and it is the same when they kneel down by their bedside, nearly asleep, or when they get up in the morning rather late, and the bell is ringing for breakfast, and they hurry down; yet they call that prayer. Listen to the text, my friend: "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." Take the pick of the day for prayer if you can. If you are half asleep at other things, be wide awake then. It is the best time for trading that you ever have; see that you make good use of it. This is the noblest exercise, except one, in which you can be engaged; get all the good that you can out of it. When you go up to the mount, like Elias on the top of Carmel, bring all the powers of your heart, and mind, and soul, to bear upon this privileged occupation, and cry mightily unto God. Half-hearted prayers ask for a denial, and usually get it. Pray as if you meant to be heard. Pray as he, who is starving, asks for bread, or for a drink of water if he is dying of thirst. Plead as he does who pleads for his life, for this is the way to prevail with God. Effectual fervent prayers bombard the gates of pearl, and the kingdom of heaven is carried by the violence of that importunity which will not take a denial. "Thy God hath commanded thy strength." Oh, for more of this kind of prayer!

And the same strength ought to go out *when we praise God*. Never ought our heart to be more energetic than when we say, "Blessed be his holy name!" And when we are singing in company with others, then also should we praise the Lord with joyous heartiness. I love to hear the bright, gladsome songs of people who really sing with their souls as well as with their voices. I have been in some congregations where, during the hymns, I have thought I needed a microphone to enable me to hear what they were singing, for they sang so very softly. Pull out the stops of your organ, and let the music fly abroad, for "thy God hath commanded thy strength."

In a similar fashion, we should *labour for the Lord earnestly*. In

the great warfare which we have now to wage against the world, the flesh, and the devil, let us give to God the whole of our strength. Some people are said to work so hard for Christ that they wear themselves out. What a blessed consummation that must be! To wear ourselves away in our Master's service, to let the zeal of God's house eat us up, is the very best thing that can happen to us. I am sorry to say that I do not meet with many people who are too zealous. Some are so, because they have not much brain, and what little they have easily catches fire. Very well, my brother, if that is your case, burn away. There are some, however, who have more brains, but they seem to keep them very damp, so they never get thoroughly alight; but he who serves God aright should burn if he does not blaze, though it is better to be a burning and a shining light, as John the Baptist was. There should be a red, ruby-like heat in the very centre of our soul. If there are no sparks and flames, yet should our heart be on fire for God. God never meant us to do his work half-heartedly; but he does wish each of his people to feel and say, "My God hath commanded my strength, and he shall have it."

And, lastly under this head, let us give God our strength by *living wholly to him in our ordinary life*. It is a great mistake to make a division between that which is "sacred" and that which is "secular" in a Christian's life. You are not only to serve God when you worship him in the Tabernacle or in some other house of prayer; you are equally to serve him to-morrow morning when you take the shutters down from your shop-windows. Pray to God, as you do so, "O Lord, take my shutters down, and enlighten my darkness! I know that, this day, I cannot prosper without thy blessing. I mean to work hard at my business; but it is vain to rise early, and to sit up late, unless thou dost bless my effort. Lord, be with thy servant all the day long!" Here comes the first customer. Now pray the Lord that you may not say anything to him but what is right, and ask God to give you an opportunity of saying a good word to him about the Lord Jesus Christ. Here come half a dozen customers all at once; now, you young men, pray the Lord to enable you to attend to your business as you ought to do it so as really to serve those who employ you; "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart," even while you are serving your earthly employer. All the day long, there are opportunities for glorifying God if a man really wishes to do it. If the Spirit of God be with you all the day, you will feel, and say to yourself, "I will give to God all my strength. These things down here—this measuring out, either by yards or by bushels,—this buying and this selling,—must be done by somebody; and I must, by some means, earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, or the sweat of my brain; and as this is what God has given me to do, I will do it thoroughly, with a single eye to his glory, so that no one shall ever be able truthfully to say that Christianity makes me, in any respect, a worse man than I was before I knew the Lord." "Thy God hath commanded thy strength;" so live unto God in everything. Let your meals be sacraments, let your garments be vestments, let your

common utterances be a part of a great life-psalm, and let your whole being be as a burnt-offering ascending unto the Most High, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Oh, for the power of the Spirit of God to help you to do this!

III. The next part of the verse will show you, dear friends, that God's people are known by this sign, **THEY ASCRIBE TO HIM ALL THAT IS GOOD IN THEM, AND IN THEIR FELLOW-MEN.** Let me read you the latter part of the text: "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought in us."

This applies, first, to the steps which lead to conversion: "That which Thou hast wrought for us." There is no prayer here about what we have wrought for ourselves, for that is all mischief and evil, which needs to be forgiven and undone. The sooner all that nature spins is unravelled, the better. What God works is worth having wrought for us and in us. There are some people who have very crude and false ideas about what the work of grace is in the soul. I heard one say that the sinner is to take the first step towards salvation, and then God will do the rest; but I have often said, and now say it again, that the first step is the one point of difficulty. You know the French story about Saint Denis, whose head was cut off, and then it was said that he picked it up, and carried it in his hands for a thousand miles. That was what the priests of the Church of Rome declared; but one of Voltaire's followers very wittily remarked that, as for the thousand miles, there was no difficulty in that; it was only the first step that had any difficulty in it. If the saint could manage that part, the rest would be easy enough; and it is just so in the matter of salvation. If the dead man can pick his own head up,—if the dead sinner can make himself alive,—why, then he can do very well without God all the rest of the way to heaven. But that can never be, for Jesus Christ is Alpha as well as Omega, the first as well as the last in the sinner's salvation; and we may constantly say to him,—

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee;
Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

Nay, further, not only does God begin it, but *it is he who carries it on.* If ever the work of grace were to stop at a certain point, and the rest of it were to be the work of nature, that linsey-woolsey garment would be unfit for a child of God to wear. Ay, and what is more, the work, which God has begun, *he must finish, too.* If he has left anything to our unaided strength, we shall fail in that particular point, and all of it will become faulty and useless. The true people of God are resting, for the whole of their salvation, upon the Triune Jehovah,—upon the Father's love, upon the Son's redemption, and upon the Spirit's effectual work upon the heart and conscience. It must be all of God, and all of grace, from the first even to the last; and they are the true people of God who feel and know this.

Let me speak to some of you who have been taking the pledge lately. That is a very right thing to do; I wish that all did it, but that will not save you. The salvation of the soul is God's work, and you must come to him for it. "But, supposing I abstain for the

future, will not all be right?" Certainly not; what about the times when you have been drunk? "Oh, well, of course, the pledge will not wipe out that sin." No, it will not. If you are a thief, would you tell the magistrates that they must not punish you because you are not going to thieve again? "No," they would say, "we must punish you for what you have done." There are all your past sins, and only the Lord Jesus Christ can blot them out. Perhaps a man says, "But, if I abstain from sin in the future, will not that do?" No; it will not. You owe your grocer a long bill, do you not? Call upon him, and tell him that you cannot pay a halfpenny of the debt, but that you are not going to get into debt any more. "Oh!" says he, "but that will not do for me; there is a County Court somewhere, and I shall get a summons for you to appear there." So, if you go to God, and say, "I am not going to sin in this way any more," he will not believe you; but if he did, he would say, "What about the past?" "God requireth that which is past." There is the stain of your past sin upon you; how can that be removed? Not by your tears; if you could shed an Atlantic full of tears, yet might the red spot of your sin turn every wave to carmine, and the fatal spot would be upon you still. Nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash you clean; and none are God's people but those who know that, and who come to him for salvation, and cleansing, and everything; and who commit themselves, body, soul, and spirit, unto him.

IV. Now, lastly, the fourth mark of God's people is that **THEY PRAY TO HIM FOR THEIR STABILITY**: "Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us."

What is a man's strength? Some think that their strength lies in their resolution. "Now," says one, "I have said it, and I will keep to it. You know, I am not a man who is easily turned from his purpose; I have made up my mind, and I will do it." Yes, I have known several who have made up their mind, but it did not come to much when they had made it up. And I have known a great many persons promise, and having done that half a dozen times before, and broken their promise every time, it did not come to much when that was done. "Oh!" says one, "do not think that I shall act like that; I pledge myself to act differently." Yes, yes; and when a man has not a halfpenny in his pocket, and he pledges himself that he will be a millionaire, I think to myself, "All right, but he had better not begin spending any of it yet."

A soldier puts on his harness to go out to fight,—he has his helmet on his head, and greaves of brass on his legs, and a breast-plate, and all the rest of the armour. "Am I not a brave fellow?" he asks. When you come back, you may be; but not just yet. Remember Ahab's message to Ben-hadad, "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." I believe in you, my dear friend; you have made a promise, and I believe that you will keep your promise. That is to say, I believe as much in you as I do in the majority of people. "How much is that?" you ask. Well, not too much, for I have seen too many men to place much reliance upon them. I have not yet been fifty years among them, but there are several of them whom I would only trust as far

as I could see them ; there are some whom I would not trust as far as that ; and there are others whom I thought I might trust out of my sight, and I have done so,—and I have got bitten by them. I believe myself bound to give as much credence and confidence to your resolution as your resolution is worth, so please let me see how much it is worth by observing how you go on.

“ Oh ! ” says one, “ but there is an addition to my resolution ; there is my past experience. I am an experienced person ; I am not like your young chits who are apt to be easily led astray again. ‘ A burnt child dreads the fire. ’ My experience has made me very careful, and steady, and reliable. ” Yes, I know ; you are the man whom I would not trust with a bad farthing, because the very people who have demanded my trust on the ground that they could not be led astray, I have generally found were the men who had already gone far astray. I knew an old friend, who used to attend here, and who was a very curious sort of man, but he had a great deal of common sense. A deacon of a church met him in Smithfield, one morning, and asked him for a loan of fifty pounds. He was going to say, “ Yes, ” for he knew and trusted him ; but the deacon said to him, “ Robert, you know you can safely lend that amount to me. I shall be sure to let you have it on the day that I promise ; at my time of life, I am quite past temptation. ” My old friend stopped, and said, “ I was going to let you have that fifty pounds ; but, as you have arrived at that point, I shall not lend you a halfpenny, for I am quite certain I should never see it again. ” At that very moment, the man knew that he was utterly bankrupt, and he failed, shortly after, for a very large sum, too, yet he said, “ You may safely lend it to me, for I am quite past temptation. ” “ Well, ” says one, “ then you would not have us believe in one another. ” No, unless you want to believe a lie. David said, “ Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. ” “ You are not very complimentary. ” No ; if you want compliments, do not come here, for I do not deal in them, and I do not intend to. God’s Word is what I have to preach, and that contains something better than compliments. Brethren and sisters, your best resolutions and your best experience are as strong as a broken reed. They only want to be touched in a certain way, and they will break again. You have already failed again and again ; it is no use for you to start again as you started then, for you will fail again. The same causes, under the same circumstances, will produce the same results.

Now stop, my friend, while I get a grip of your hand, and say, “ Come, let us pray together, ” and this shall be our prayer, “ Lord, if thou hast wrought any good in us, however little it is, we dare not trust to it, or trust ourselves with it ; but, Lord, do thou strengthen it. If it is only just a consciousness of sin, Lord, strengthen it till it grows into repentance. If it is only a little trembling desire to be right, Lord, strengthen it into a firm and brave resolve. If it is but a little hope in Christ, Lord, strengthen it until I can say, ‘ I know whom I have believed. ’ If I have a little germ of faith, Lord, strengthen it till the mustard seed grows into a tree. O Lord, I have promised to do this and that, but I know that I am as weak as

water; I am apt to slip when I feel that I am standing most safely. Lord, help me; Lord, help me; lend me thy strength!" Some of you have lately taken the pledge: "I promise, by the help of God, to abstain." That is the thing for you, that "help of God" is what you need. I do entreat any of you who are starting on a fresh life, do not start without the help of God. Do not attempt to go on without the help of God. And you, dear friends, who are far advanced in the Christian life, never be so besotted as to think that you have gone so far by God's aid, and now you can traverse the rest of the road without him. You cannot do anything in that way. Have you never noticed that we make our worst blunders over the plainest things? The children of Israel were commanded to slay all the Canaanites, but a company of Gibeonites disguised themselves in a very clever fashion, so the people said, "Their shoes are old and clouted, and their clothes—well, they must have come a long way, for they are dreadfully worn. These men look like travellers who have come from a very far-distant country." They did not make enquiries, for they said, "These are strangers, that is quite evident; so let us make a covenant with them, and let their lives be spared;" yet, all the while, these men were their next-door neighbours, living just close to them. On the plainest point, the Israelites were taken in, and it is often the same with us.

Brethren, never trust in yourselves, even though your strength seems to be more than adequate for the occasion. Trust in God as much when you have a huge "Woolwich infant" to fire against your enemy as if you had nothing but a sling and a stone. When you are full of knowledge, and full of wisdom, and full of grace, yet still be nothing, and let the Lord your God be your All-in-all. Oh! what a blessing it would be if every one of us should get to heaven! I do not see why we should not, the Lord being our Leader. One thing I know; if we do get there, by-and-by, there is not one of us who will throw up his cap, and shout, "Hurrah! glory be to myself! I did this." Nay, nay, nay; but we will all go together, and such crowns as grace shall give us we will cast at Jesu's feet, and the song, "Non nobis, Domine," shall go up from all of us, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Let us begin to learn that song now, and let us sing it in life, and in death, and for ever, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM LXVIII.

This was a Psalm sung, at the removing of the ark, when it was taken up to its resting-place on Mount Zion. All the tribes were gathered together, and, in full pomp, they marched along, bearing the sacred chest. As they tramped forward, the trumpets sounded, and this Psalm rose up to God.

Verse 1. *Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.*

That is the way to move,—God first, and his people following closely after him. That is the true order of revival,—the Lord in the van, then

all his children, quick of step, to follow where he leads. The psalmist seems to take it for granted that there would be no fighting if God should arise, for all his enemies would be put to flight by his presence.

2, 3. *As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.*

The courtiers of God ought to be clad in the silks of joy, and to be bright with the jewellery of rejoicing.

4, 5. *Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation.*

In the wilderness, the Israelites were like a company of fatherless people; but God was their Protector, and in all their trials and dangers he was their Defender.

6. *God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.*

They had been in a sad condition in Egypt, scattered and driven hither and thither. God promised to bring them all together, in great families, and richly to bless them.

7, 8. *O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah: the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.*

If the translators had given us the original words, we should have valued this Psalm much more, for it contains nearly every name of God. This verse would run, "Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel.

9, 10. *Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.*

It rained manna, and it rained quails. There are no difficulties about the commissariat of an army when God is the Commander-in-chief. All shall be provided for those who put their trust in him.

11. *The Lord—*

Or, Adonai—

11. *Gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.*

When God speaks, he always has publishers of his message. Our Lord found a woman at the well, and sent her back to the men of the city as his messenger, and he will find many others before his work is all done.

12, 13. *Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil. Though ye have lien among the pots,—*

Grimy among the brick kilns, covered with clay, and black with smoke,—despised, rejected, earthbound,—“Though ye have lien among the pots,”—

13. *Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*

There are good times ahead for God's people. Rich and rare blessings are laid up in store for them that fear him. Therefore, let us rejoice in him even now.

14. *When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.*

Driven from the bare, bleak mountain-side in gusts like feathers, the snow flies before the wind; and so, when God scatters the mighty, they cannot resist him: “It was as snow in Salmon.”

15. *The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.*

This hill of Zion is not high at all, it is a mere knoll compared with the lofty peaks; yet it was highly favoured. So, to carnal eyes, Christ's kingdom on earth was little in comparison with the kingdoms of this world; yet, in the sight of God, it is greater than all of them.

16. *Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever.*

There are grander places than Zion, but if God chooses to dwell there, his presence gives her a glory and a greatness that no other spot can have. The forces at the disposal of Zion's King are boundless; note how the psalmist enumerates some of them.

17, 18. *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.*

As the ark went up the hill of Zion, so has Christ ascended to the eternal glory. He is the true Ark of the covenant, and he is also the true Mercy-seat; wherefore, let our hearts rejoice in our ascended Saviour, who has "led captivity captive."

"Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also." "In due time, Christ died for the ungodly." "He made intercession for the transgressors." Let rebellious sinners catch at this great truth; and, touched by the love and grace of God, let them cease to rebel any longer.

19, 20. *Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death.*

All glory be to his thrice-blessed name for all that this verse includes!

21, 22. *But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea:*

Wherever his people may have gone, God will bring them all together again, "from Bashan," or "from the depths of the sea."

23—35. *That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same. They have seen thy goings, O God; and the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah: to him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.*

The Psalm ends with an ascription of praise unto God. So let our reading end, and our worship, and our lives: "Blessed be God."