

# DAVID:

## SHEPHERD, PSALMIST, KING

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### CHAPTER SIX

#### “IN THE NAME OF THE LORD OF HOSTS”

(I Samuel 17:45)

“Oh, I have seen the day,  
When with a single word,  
God helping me to say,  
My trust is in the Lord!  
My soul hath quenched a thousand foes,  
Fearless of all that could oppose.”

- Cowper

WHILST the two armies, on either side of the ravine, waited expectant, every eye was suddenly attracted by the slight young figure, which, staff in hand, emerged from the ranks of Israel, and descended the slope, For a little while David was hid from view, as he bent intent on the pebbles that lined the bottom, of which five smooth stones were presently selected and placed in his shepherd's bag.

Then, to the amazement of the Philistines, and especially of their huge champion, he sprang up on the further bank, and rapidly moved towards him.

Goliath had apparently been sitting; and when he realized that the youth was daring to accept his challenge, he arose, and came, and drew near to meet David, cursing him as he did so, and threatening him that his blood should encrimson the mountain sward, whilst his unburied body feasted the wild things of earth and air.

**“Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a javelin; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.”**

### I. THE TALISMAN OF VICTORY

**“The name of the Lord of Hosts.”** Throughout the Scriptures, a name is not simply, as with us, a label; it is a revelation of character. It catches up and enshrines some moral or physical peculiarity in which its owner differs from other men, or which constitutes his special gift and force.

The names which Adam gave the animals that were brought to him were founded on characteristics which struck his notice. And the names which the Second Adam gave to the apostles either expressed qualities which lay deep within them, and which He intended to evolve, or unfolded some great purpose for which they were being fitted.

Thus the Name of God, as used so frequently by the heroes and saints of sacred history, stands for those Divine attributes and qualities which combine to make Him what He is.

In the history of the early Church the Name was a kind of summary of all that Jesus had revealed of the nature and the heart of God. **“That for his name’s sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.”** There was no need to specify whose Name it was there was none other Name by which men could be saved, none other Name that could be compared with that, or mentioned on the same page. Stars die out and become invisible when the sun appears. That Name is above every name, and in it every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess; because it embodies under one all-sufficient designation everything that any single soul, or the whole race, can require, or imagine, or attain in the conceiving of God.

The special quality that David extracted from the bundle of qualities represented by the Divine Name of God is indicated in the words, **“the Lord of Hosts.”** That does not mean only that God was Captain of the embattled hosts of Israel; that idea was expressed in the words that followed, **“The God of the armies of Israel.”**

But there was probably something of this sort in David’s thought. He conceived of angels and worlds, of the armies of heaven and the elements of matter, of winds and waves, of life and death, as a vast ordered army, obedient to the commands of their Captain, the Lord of Hosts. In fact, his idea was identical with that of the heathen centurion of the Gospels, who said he was a man under authority, having servants to whom he said, Come, or Go, or Do this or that.

To come in the Name of the Lord of Hosts did not simply mean that David understood the Lord to be all this but implied his own identification by faith with all that was comprehended in this sacred Name.

An Englishman in a foreign land occupies a very different position, and speaks in a very different tone, according to whether he assumes a private capacity as an ordinary traveler, or acts as representative and ambassador of his country. In the former case he speaks in his own name, and receives what respect and obedience it can obtain; in the latter he is conscious of being identified with all that is associated with the term Great Britain. For a man to speak in the name of England means that England speaks through his lips; that the might of England is ready to enforce his demands; and that every sort of power which England wields is pledged to avenge any affront or indignity to which he may be exposed.

Thus, when Jesus bids us ask what we will in his Name, He means not that we should simply use that name as an incantation or formula, but that we should be so one with Him in his interests, purposes, and aims, that it should be as though He were Himself approaching the Father with the petitions we bear.

There is much for us to learn concerning this close identification with God before we shall be able to say with David, **“I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts.”**

It is only possible to those who carefully fulfill certain conditions which were familiar enough to this God-taught youth. But it were well worth our while to withdraw ourselves from the activities of our life, to lay aside everything that might hinder the closeness of our union with the Divine nature and interests, and to become so absolutely identified with God, that his Name might be our strong tower, our refuge, our battle-cry, our secret of victory.

Oh to be able to approach each high-handed wrong-doer, each confederacy of evil, each assault of the powers of darkness, each tribe of savages, each drink-sodden district, each congregation of the unsaved and impenitent, with the words, **“I come in the name of the Lord of Hosts!”**

## **II. THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH WE ARE WARRANTED IN USING THE NAME**

(1) *When we are pure in our motives.*

There was no doubt as to the motive which prompted David to this conflict. It is true that he had spoken to the men of Israel, saying, **“What shall be done to the man that killeth the Philistine?”** but no one supposed that he acted as he did because of the royal reward. His one ambition was to take away the reproach from Israel, and to let all the earth know that there was a God in Israel.

We must be wary here. It is so easy to confuse issues which are wide asunder as the poles, and to suppose that we are contending for the glory of God, when we are really combating for our church, our cause, our prejudices or opinions. It has always been a temptation to earnest men to veil from their own eyes the selfishness of their motives and aims by insisting, with vehement asseveration, that they are actuated by pure zeal for the cause of God.

To fall into this sin, though unconsciously, is to forfeit the right to use his sacred Name. We may still conjure with it and invoke it, but in vain. The very demons we seek to bind as with a spell will deride us, and leap out on us, and chase us before them. How constantly we need to expose our hearts to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that He may wholly cleanse them, and fill them with an all-consuming devotion to the glory of God; so that the words may be true of us, as of our Lord, **“The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.”**

(2) *When we are willing to allow God to occupy his right place.*

David said repeatedly that the whole matter was God’s. He might gather up the spoils of the battle; but the overthrow of Goliath and the Philistine host was not in his province at all.

**“The battle is the Lord’s . . . This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand . . . The Lord saveth, and He will give you into our hand.”**

And David's attitude has been that of every man who has wrought great exploits in the behalf of righteousness.

- Moses said, "**The Lord hath appeared unto me, and He will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt.**"

- Samuel said, "**Prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistine.**"

- Paul said, "**I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought through me.**"

We must recognize Jesus Christ as the essential warrior, worker, organizer, and administrator of his Church, through the Holy Spirit. Whatever is rightly done, He must do. We are not called to work for Him, but to let Him work through us. Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. The battle is not ours, but His. His skill must direct us; His might empower us his uplifted hands bring us victory.

(3) *When we take no counsel with the flesh.*

It must have been a hard thing for a youth to oppose his opinion to Saul's, especially when the king was so solicitous for his welfare. "**Spare thyself, my son,**" he seemed to say; "be wise, take ordinary precautions, do not throw thy young life away." It was a dangerous moment.

To meet scorn, hatred, wrong-doing, with uncompromising defiance and resistance is so much easier than to refuse assistance or advice which are kindly meant. It was well for him, indeed, that David withstood the siren song, and remained unaffected by the blandishments of royal favour. He could not have served two masters so utterly antagonistic. To have yielded to Saul would have put him beyond the fire-ring of the Divine environment.

How perpetually does Satan breathe into our ears the soft words that Peter whispered to his Master, when He began to speak about the cross. "Spare Thyself: that shall not come unto Thee." There is so much talk about the legitimacy of means, that no room is left on which the Almighty can act. Means are right enough in their right place; but that place is far from first. Both their nature and time have to be fixed by Him who refuses helmets of brass and coats of mail, that no flesh should glory in His presence, but who uses the rustic sling, the smooth stone from the brook, and the sword of Goliath.

### III. THE BEARING OF THOSE WHO USE THE NAME

(1) *They are willing to stand alone.*

The lad asked no comradeship in the fight. There was no running to and fro to secure a second. He was perfectly prepared to bear the whole brunt of the fray without sympathy or succour; so sure was he that the Lord of Hosts was with him, and that the God of Jacob was his refuge.

(2) *They are deliberate.*

He was free from the nervous trepidation which so often unfits us to play our part in some great scene. Our heart will throb so quickly, our movements become so fitful and unsteady. Calmly and quietly he went down the slope, and selected the pebbles which best suited his purpose. In this quietness and confidence he found his strength. His mind was kept in perfect peace, because it was stayed on God. He did not go by haste or flight, because the Lord went before him, and the Holy One of Israel was his reward.

(3) *They are fearless.*

When the moment came for the conflict, David did not hesitate, but ran toward the Philistine army to meet their champion. There was no fear of the result in that young heart; no tremor in the voice that answered the rough taunt; no falter in the arm that wielded the sling; no lack of precision in the aim that drove the stone to the one part of the Philistine's body that was unprotected and vulnerable.

(4) *They are more than conquerors.*

The stone sank into the giant's forehead; in another moment he fell stunned to the earth. There was no time to lose; before he could recover himself, or his startled comrades overcome their stupefied amazement, his head had been hewn from his body by one thrust of his own sword. And when the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. The spoils of victory lay with the victor. David took the head of the Philistine as a trophy, and put his armour in his tent.

Let us live alone with God.

The weakest man who knows God is strong to do exploits. All the might of God awaits the disposal of our faith. As a child by touching a button may set in motion a mighty steamship, making it glide like a swan into her native element, so a stripling who has learnt to reckon on God may bring the whole forces of Deity to bear on men and things on the world's battlefield. This is the victory that overcomes the world, the flesh, and the devil even our faith.

**~ end of chapter 6 ~**

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