

# DAVID:

## SHEPHERD, PSALMIST, KING

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### CHAPTER FIFTEEN

#### CUSH: A BENJAMITE

(I Samuel 26:1; Psalm 7).

“Who to that bliss aspire  
Must win their way through blood and fire!  
The writhings of a wounded heart  
Are fiercer than a foeman’s dart.  
Oft in life’s stillest shade reclining,  
In desolation unrepining,  
Without a hope on earth to find  
A mirror in an answering mind,  
Meek souls these are who little deem  
Their daily strife an angel’s theme!”

- Keble

IT is somewhat surprising to find Saul in search of David, after the first of the incidents described in the previous chapter. At Engedi there seemed so absolute and entire a reconciliation between them. Saul confessed that David was more righteous than himself; acknowledged that he had dealt well with him; asked that God would reward him; and assured him that he would undoubtedly be king. He even went so far as to make him swear that, when he had come to the throne, he would not destroy his name out of his father’s house (24:21). And yet, after so short a space, he is again on the war-path. These capricious changes may, of course, have been due to the malady from which he was suffering; but another and more satisfactory explanation has been suggested, and one which casts fresh light on the seventh Psalm.

Dr. Maclaren, whose work on the Psalter has brought the whole Church into his debt, is specially emphatic in connecting the psalm with this part of David’s history, and indicates its value in helping us to understand the rapid vacillations in Saul’s behavior.

It is headed *Shiggaion of David which he sang unto the Lord*. That is, it is an irregular ode; like a stream broken over a bed of rocks and stones, expressing by its uneven measure and sudden changes the emotion of its author. We have often to sing these Shiggaion meters; our songs are frequently broken with sighs and groans; but we do well still to sing with such tunefulness as we may. Happy are they who can find themes for singing to the Lord in every sad and bitter experience!

The title proceeds, concerning the words of Gush, a Benjamite. Who was this Cush? The word means *black*. It may possibly refer to the color of the skin and hair, and been given as a familiar designation to some swarthy Benjamite. Some have supposed that it was David's title for Saul; but the terms of respect in which he ever spoke of the Lord's anointed make that supposition unlikely. Others have referred it to Shimei, the Benjamite, whose furious abuse of the king, in the hour of his calamity, elicited such plaintive resignation from him, such passionate resentment from Abishai. But the style and phraseology belong so evidently to this period of David's life, that this supposition also seems untenable.

If the psalm be carefully examined, it will be found to bear a close resemblance to the words spoken by David, when Saul and he held the brief colloquy outside the cave at Engedi, and afterwards at the hill Hachilah.

Indeed, the correspondences are so many and minute that they establish, almost beyond question, the date of the psalm as synchronous with the incidents described in the last chapter; and if so, we can infer the cause of Saul's renewed passion.

On comparison of psalm and narrative it seems more than likely that Cush was one of Saul's intimate friends and constant companions, and that he was incessantly at work poisoning the king's mind with malignant and deliberate falsehoods about David. When Saul was away from this man, and under the spell of David's noble and generous nature, he laid aside his vindictiveness, and responded to the appeals of olden friendship and chivalry; but when he returned to his palace, and Cush had fresh opportunities of influencing him, he yielded to the worse side of his character, and resumed his desperate attempt to thwart the Divine purpose. Thus like a shuttlecock he was tossed to and fro between the two men. Now inclined to mercy by David, and then to vengeance by Cush.

It is quite likely that many of those who shall read these lines will be able to understand, by bitter experiences, the anguish of David's soul from this cause.

You, too, have a Cush in the circle of your life, who is constantly circulating baseless and calumnious statements concerning you; poisoning the minds of those who otherwise would be well disposed, and suggesting questions, suspicious misunderstandings of your purest and most untainted actions. Such slanderers are to be found in the salons of modern society, as in the palace of the first king of Israel; and cause as much exquisite torture to sensitive and tender natures to-day, as to David in the wilds of Engedi.

Let us learn how to deal with such.

### **I. SEARCH YOUR HEART TO SEE IF THESE SLANDERS HAVE FOUNDATION IN FACT**

It may be that there is more truth in these hurtful words than you are inclined, at first sight, to admit. Would it not be wise to ask if it be so, before dismissing them, or treating them with disdain?

Perhaps those quick, envious eyes have discerned weaknesses in your character, of which your closest friends are aware, but they have shrunk from telling you; for love is quick to notice the weak points in the beloved, though it is not always true to indicate and rebuke. The supreme love alone girds itself to the task of washing the feet of its friends. It is a good rule before you destroy the anonymous letter, or dismiss the unkind statement, which has been going the round of your society, to sit down before the judgment-seat of Christ, and in its white light ask yourself whether you can say with David:

**“My defence is of God,  
Which saveth the upright in heart.”**

## **II. IF THERE IS NO BASIS FOR THEM, REJOICE!**

Always remember, when men revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely first, that you are in the succession of the prophets and saints of every age, and may be assured that you are on the right track; and, secondly, that out of this, according to the express words of Christ, you may extract that blessedness which is richer and deeper than the world's joy, that passes like a summer brook.

How thankful we should be that God has kept us from being actually guilty of the things whereof we are accused! We might have done them, and worse. It was only by his grace that we have been withheld. That we have the witness of good conscience, and of his Spirit in our hearts, should be a perennial source of gladness.

## **III. TAKE SHELTER IN THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD**

We are his servants, and if He is satisfied with us, why should we break our hearts over what our fellow-servants say? He put us into the positions we occupy, and if He please to keep us there, all that men may say or do will be unavailing to dislodge us. It is, after all, but a small matter with us to be judged of man's judgment; yea, we judge not our own selves, but He that judgeth us is the Lord. He only can properly determine the quality of our lives, because to Him alone are the hidden things known which give the real clue to Tightness or wrongness.

## **IV. ABJURE MORE COMPLETELY THE CARNAL LIFE**

Why do we smart under these unkind and slanderous words, which are as baseless as uncharitable? Is it not because we set too high a value upon the favour and applause of men? Is there not a deadly fear of being despised and condemned? Does not the world still live within us, revealing the tenacity of its hold, in this mortification and shame? Is this being crucified to the world, and the world crucified to us?

If we were really nothing, and God were all in all; if the Spirit and the Lamb of God were dominant in our inner life; if we were dead to the flesh, with its affections and lusts, and alive only to God surely it would be a matter of indifference what became of our good name in the lips of foolish and sinful men.

Here then there is a revelation of a deeper death to be realized; let us not flinch from it, but be willing to fall into the ground, and die to our reputation, as Jesus did, who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and of whom they spoke as in league with Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

We must choose death in all those forms in which our Master knew it; that having been planted in the likeness of his death, we may be also in the likeness of his resurrection.

## V. LEAVE GOD TO VINDICATE YOUR GOOD NAME

Any unjust imputation or stigma that rests on us is part of the evil of the world, and a manifestation of its inveterate badness; it is a grief and care to God; it is part of the burden which He is carrying ever; it is impossible for us to cope with or remove it; it is useless to retaliate or revenge.

Like Jesus, we may meekly ask the false accuser to establish his untrue charges, or we may meet them with our steadfast denial; but when we have done this, and we shall find it of little avail, there is no more to do but wait patiently till God arise to avenge our wrong and vindicate our characters.

It was so that David acted, even in those twilight days. He appealed to the righteous God who trieth the hearts and reins; believed that He would gird on his armour, whetting his sword and bending his bow against those who repented not of their hatred against his saints. The Psalmist had a clear apprehension of the immutable law that the wickedness of the wicked would come to an end; that his mischief would return on his own head; that the trapper of the saints would fall into his own snare; whilst they would be established, and their character cleared. It was so that Jesus bore Himself. **“When He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.”**

Such is the true and wisest policy. Be still; give place unto wrath; concern thyself rather with the misery of that soul from which these wild words proceed; think more of this than of thy wrongs; let thy heart be exercised with a great tenderness toward him; if he hunger feed him, if he thirst give him drink; try to overcome the evil of his heart by thy generous good; and leave vindication and vengeance alike to God, whose prerogative is to plead the cause of the innocent and defenseless, whilst He will repay the wrong doer in due time.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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