

do under circumstances of similar impotency—turn the heart and voice towards Jehovah in prayer, acknowledging the absolute insufficiency of himself and his people to do anything in the way of their own deliverance, and earnestly beseeching God to come to their help.

The answer seems to be communicated to Isaiah as Hezekiah is praying; and that answer is such as ought to encourage all to seek God's help in times of threatened danger and destruction; whether that danger be of a physical and material character, as in the case before us, or danger to our moral and spiritual nature, through the power of temptation—a danger more likely to threaten us than destruction through war.

2. The lesson which lies side by side with this of prayer is taught by the conduct of the Assyrian king and generals, the awful folly and heinous sin of a man who rises up in opposition to God.

This folly is apparent to us, if we follow reason itself. That the creature should resist and oppose the Creator; that a weak subject should oppose an all-conquering sovereign; that a mere babe should raise his hand against the strong man, is the plainest folly and madness; and the sin of such conduct is no less manifest than the folly.

One form of this sin and folly is that which is forbidden in the third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," and any one who does so should think of God as addressing him in the words of the 22nd verse, *against whom hast thou exalted thy voice?* Whose name are you profaning, as you mingle it with laughter, ribaldry and curses? There is no form of sin more unlimitedly foolish and fool-hardy than that of profane swearing.

3.—The 28th verse illustrates the proverb "Man proposes, but God disposes." The king's plan looked to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the people; but he had reckoned without reference to God, or had regarded Jehovah as on his own side, counting him as of small importance in any case. But the death of the great body of his troops led him, as he and we would say, to change his plans; but in reality God's hook was in his nose, and his bit in his mouth. The outward circumstances which direct us in life, and often

lead us to change our plans, are really God's directing and restraining power, of which we may be unconscious, and which we may entirely ignore. God never forces a man to a choice between right and wrong, but his providences are the directing influences in outward and material things to a far greater extent than we know or acknowledge.

4.—The reference to David in the 34th verse shows how a good man's influence may long survive him. David had been dead for more than three hundred years, and yet he had something to do with the preservation of his capital from the destruction which threatened it. The time would come when captivity would be the best way to preserve the knowledge of God in Israel; but as yet the promises made to David would be best fulfilled by the preservation of independence to the nation. That a man's influence should reach forward for centuries after his death, and tend to preserve a nation, seems strange, and should be a motive to right and goodness; but we should also remember that badness is just as far-reaching in its destructive and baneful influences, and be restrained from sinful courses.

5.—The three verses with which the lesson ends show the awfully tragic results of blasphemy against God. First, the destruction of a great army, by some sudden and inexplicable cause, attributed to God's messenger; then, probably several years afterwards, the king's sudden and cruel death at the hands of his own sons. Such a murder suggests wickedness as characteristic of the family. A good father's influence can hardly make murderers of his sons, although the contrast between the character of a father and that of his children may be very marked; and the deed of these sons, no matter what the character of the father may have been, reveal them as monsters of wickedness. Both tragedies suggest the destructive character of sin, especially that of blasphemy against Jehovah.

## QUESTIONS.

What induced Sennacherib to cease warring against Judah on a former occasion? 2 Ki. 18: 13-16.

In what way did Hezekiah oppose this second invasion? Vs. 1-4; 14-19.