

to whom "through God" the nation owed the present condition of the Navy. It meant a good deal for a newspaper to put in those words "through God." We are so apt to omit them from our public utterances. It is sometimes done on the plea of reverence. Our reliance upon God is the most sacred part of our life, and we shrink from proclaiming it on the housetops. Yet St. James wrote that we ought to say, "We will do this or that if the Lord will." The Deo Volente should not be implied or taken for granted; it should be expressed humbly and sincerely, but openly. So also with our "through God." It should first be enshrined in the depths of our hearts, but it should also come out in our speech.

I. Six months ago an exposition of this psalm would have dealt with the conquest of our spiritual foes. It would have been a lesson on the prayer offered for all persons baptized in our Church, "Grant that they may have power and strength to have victory and triumph against the Devil, the World, and the Flesh." To-day, although this spiritual conflict is still of supreme importance, our thoughts are chiefly occupied with that victory over the Germans, the Austrians, and the Turks which the whole nation so eagerly and ardently desires. Such an exposition of the passage has the great advantage of bringing the Word of God into that region of practical life where its value can be openly tested and duly appreciated. When I speak about victory over spiritual foes, there may be some who are not greatly interested, because the assaults of sin and temptation, serious as they are, do not awaken in them any grave concern. But we are all concerned in the efforts of the Germans to invade our island home. We are all feeling the terrible strain and burden of this awful war, which is exacting such a heavy toll of sorrow and suffering from the whole nation. If genuine reliance upon God will help us to win the victory, and to bring this war to a speedy conclusion, then the most sceptical and irreligious will admit that faith in God is a valuable asset.

II. But this line of exposition brings us face to face with certain obvious difficulties and objections. One objection is that in Germany there are many Christians who are praying for victory as earnestly and sincerely as we are, and both sides cannot be victorious. But this difficulty is not a serious one. A parent may often have three or four children clamouring for some particular favour which only one of them can enjoy. The children do not refrain from asking because all but one will have to be refused. It may be difficult for the parent to make a satisfactory decision. He does not like to disappoint any, and knows that he may be mistaken in his choice of the one to be favoured. But it is not difficult for God, who in His unerring omniscience knows perfectly which side ought to be favoured, and how to make the very denial of the request a blessing to the other side. Others find a difficulty in the fact that each side is equally confident that their cause is right, and that it is the enemy and not they themselves who are at fault. Opinions are based upon information received, and if that information is inaccurate and misleading, the judgment based upon it will be faulty. Men may make such false judgments quite sincerely, and the responsibility rests chiefly upon those by whom they have been misled. But God is not disturbed by misrepresentations. He knows the whole truth; He weighs with absolute fairness the quarrel between the nations, and He will defend those whose cause He knows to be right.

III. But many people, and this is the root of all the objections, have practically no real faith in God's government and control of the things of this world. This unbelief shows

itself in the common saying that Providence is always on the side of the heaviest battalions. But this statement is false: It is our obvious duty to provide the heavy battalions; God will not work miracles in order to make up for our slackness, but if they do their part, God will be on the side of those whose cause is right, and they will win the victory. This war is testing our faith in God more seriously than it has ever been tested. We all believe that God is supreme in the spiritual realm, but it is not so easy to believe that He is also supreme on the battlefield. It is much harder to trust Him to drive back the Germans than to rely upon Him for spiritual succour and defence. Yet, just as much in the war against the Germans as in our spiritual conflict against all the hosts of Hell, the blessing of God is the one deciding factor. If God is on our side, it does not matter what odds we have to face. If we can only be sure that all our prosecution of this war, all our organizing and recruiting and training and strategy and fighting are "through God," He will surely tread down our enemies under our feet.

But can we be sure of this? What is necessary to make these two words not vain and profane boasting, but reverent and well-grounded confidence?

IV. We must be sure that our cause is right. I am not going over the ground again. I fully believe that this war is God's quarrel, and not England's. I believe that it is for us a holy war in this sense, that we have not entered upon it from greed of gain or desire for the extension of our Empire. We entered upon it to defend the right and to maintain our honour. But a study of this psalm suggests that if we are to win "through God" something more is needed than a righteous cause.

If we are to end where the Psalmist ends, in expecting glorious deliverances, we must begin where the Psalmist began, by facing solemn facts. Look at the solemn facts in the opening verses of this psalm. There is the fact of national backsliding. "O God, Thou hast cast us off, Thou hast broken us down, Thou hast been angry with us. O restore us again." That is the rendering of the Revised Version. God has, indeed, begun to break us down. He has not yet broken our battle-line on sea or on land, but He has broken our ease and security, He has broken our peace and prosperity, He is breaking hundreds of family circles and thousands of tender hearts. We must face the fact that God has begun to break England down, and we must see the reason for this: He is angry with us. We have transgressed His commandments, we have profaned His Sabbath, we have neglected His sanctuary, we have despised His Holy Scriptures, we have provoked God to anger. To blame the German Emperor for this breaking down in a measure of England is to make the serious mistake of looking only at second causes. It is God who is breaking us down. It is not yet absolute and complete. God has mercifully preserved the health of our soldiers, He has not taken from us the command of the sea, He has kept our island free from invaders; but it is because God is displeased with us that all this trouble has fallen upon us. The third verse of this psalm applies to us, "Thou hast showed Thy people hard things"—literally severity—"Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering." This war is staggering the nations. Never before has there been such wholesale slaughter. We have had to drink our portion of the wine of staggering. It is God's punishment for our sins. Our cause is right, but our conduct is wrong; God is displeased with us.

V. There is another fact to be faced. "Thou hast given a banner of truth to them

that fear Thee." God has given Great Britain the banner of Gospel truth. At the time of the Reformation the Bible became a household book. It was studied by the whole nation. God has entrusted to us the banner of Gospel Truth. We have had more Gospel light than other nations. God has made us a great missionary nation. We have been permitted to do ten times more than any other nation in the translation and circulation of the Bible. It is no valid excuse to contend that our sins are not greater than those of other nations. They ought to be very much less; God has done more for us than for any other nation; He expects more from us than from other nations. If we are to win "through God," we must face these solemn facts.

Along with the facing of solemn facts comes the recalling of gracious promises. Then our prayer will be in hope. The Psalmist continues: "God hath spoken in His holiness." They were words of doom upon the Canaanite, but all God's words are spoken in holiness. They were promises concerning Shechem and Succoth and Ephraim and Manasseh. God's purpose concerning Canaan was unaltered. I believe that God's purpose for the British Empire still holds good, and it will not be lightly changed; He has spoken in His holiness. The war does not affect the faithfulness of God—the more than 20,000 Scripture promises all hold good. It is still true. "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for Mine anger is turned away." The outlook may be dark, pitch dark, to human sight, but to faith it is radiant with all the promises of God. "Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Be sure that while facing the solemn facts you do not forget to recall the gracious promises of God. Then you can go on as the Psalmist did to anticipate a glorious deliverance. He does not minimize the difficulties. "Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?" The task is too great for human power. "Vain is the help of man." So the cry goes up, "Give us help against our adversaries." Then with the confession of human impotence and the acknowledgment of his entire reliance upon God there springs up in his heart the conviction that his prayer is answered, and he looks forward to glorious victory. "Through God shall we do valiantly, for it is He that shall tread down our enemies."—Life of Faith.

#### THE LESSON.

The following little poem was written by a Churchwoman of Winnipeg, who recently passed to her rest after a long and painful illness. She had been constantly bombarded by Christian Scientists to be cured of her incurable cancer. After long and serious consideration she wrote these words and sent them to her clergyman with the comment, "See what a poor Christian Scientist I am."

When all along the rose-strewn path  
We wandered hand in hand,  
When wide were flung the gates of Joy,  
And life was fairy-land.

We shuddered at the thought that Pain  
Might fall across our day,  
At every mention of His name  
We turned in fear away.

Yet now that we have seen His face,  
Have clasped Him by the hand,  
We feel that, blind and knowing not,  
We did not understand.

For lo! His hand is soft and kind,  
And what we thought a rod,  
With humble hearts we whisper low,  
"It is the touch of God."