The Treasury of David

Charles H. Spurgeon

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Psalm 1

TITLE. *This Psalm may be regarded as THE PREFACE PSALM, having in it a notification of the contents of the entire Book. It is the Psalmist's desire to teach us the way to blessedness, and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners. This, then, is the matter of the first Psalm, which may be looked upon, in some respects, as the text upon which the whole of the Psalms make up a divine sermon.*

Verse 1. *BLESSED*—see how this Book of Psalms opens with a benediction, even as did the famous Sermon of our Lord upon the Mount! The word translated "blessed" is…plural. We might read it, "Oh, the blessednesses!" and we may well regard it as a joyful acclamation of the gracious man's felicity. May the like benediction rest on us!

He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of scornful. When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely walk in the counsel of the careless and ungodly, who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual. But after that, they become habituated to evil, and they stand in the way of open sinners who willfully violate God's commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others. And thus they sit in the seat of the scornful. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation they are installed, and are looked up to by others as Masters in Belial. But the blessed man, the man to whom all the blessings of God belong, can hold no communion with such characters as these. He keeps himself pure from these lepers; he puts away evil things from him as garments spotted by the flesh; he comes out from among the wicked, and goes without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. O for grace to be thus separate from sinners.

And now mark his positive character. *His delight is in the law of the Lord.* He is not under the law as a curse and condemnation, but he is in it, and he delights to be in it as his rule of life. He delights, moreover, to meditate in it, to read it by day, and think upon it by night. He takes a text and carries it with him all day long; and in the night-watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, he museth upon the Word of God. In the day of his prosperity he sings Psalms out of the Word of God, and in the night of his affliction he comforts himself with promises out of the same book. "The law of the Lord" is the daily bread of the true believer. And yet, in David's day, how small was the volume of inspiration, for they had scarcely anything save the first five books of Moses! How much more, then, should we prize the whole written Word which it is our privilege to have in all our houses! But, alas, what ill-treatment is given to this angel from heaven! We are not all Berean searchers of the Scriptures (Act 17:11). How few among us can lay claim to the benediction of the text! Perhaps some of you can claim a sort of negative purity, because you do not walk in the way of the ungodly; but let me ask you—Is your delight in the law of God? Do you study God's Word? Do you make it the man of your right hand—your best companion and hourly guide? If not, this blessing belongeth not to you.

Verse 3. *And he shall be like a tree planted*—not a wild tree, but "a tree planted," chosen, considered as property, cultivated and secured from the last terrible uprooting, for "every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Mat 15:13). *By the rivers of water*—so that even if one river should fail, he hath another. The rivers of pardon and the rivers of grace, the rivers of the promise and the rivers of communion with Christ, are never-failing sources of supply. He is

like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season—not unseasonable graces, like untimely figs, which are never full-flavored. But the man who delights in God's Word, being taught by it, bringeth forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial, and holy joy in the hour of prosperity. Fruitfulness is an essential quality of a gracious man, and that fruitfulness should be seasonable. *His leaf also shall not wither*—his faintest word shall be everlasting; his little deeds of love shall be had in remembrance. Not simply shall his fruit be preserved, but his leaf also. He shall neither lose his beauty nor his fruitfulness. *And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper*. Blessed is the man who hath such a promise as this. But we must not always estimate the fulfillment of a promise by our own eye-sight. How often, my brethren, if we judge by feeble sense, may we come to the mournful conclusion of Jacob, "All these things are against me!" (Gen 42:36). For though we know our interest in the promise, yet we are so tried and troubled, that sight sees the very reverse of what that promise foretells. But to the eye of faith this word is sure, and by it we perceive that our works are prospered, even when everything seems to go against us. It is not outward prosperity which the Christian most desires and values; it is soul prosperity which he longs for…it is often for the soul's health that we would be poor, bereaved, and persecuted. Our worst things are often our best things. As there is a curse wrapped up in the wicked man's mercies, so there is a blessing concealed in the righteous man's crosses, losses, and sorrows. The trials of the saint are a divine husbandry, by which he grows and brings forth abundant fruit.

Verse 4. *The ungodly are not so*. We have now come to the second head of the Psalm. In this verse the contrast of the ill estate of the wicked is employed to heighten the coloring of that fair and pleasant picture which precedes it. The more forcible translation of the Vulgate and of the Septuagint version is— "Not so the ungodly, not so." And we are hereby to understand that whatever good thing is said of the righteous is not true in the case of the ungodly. Oh! how terrible is it to have a double negative put upon the promises! and yet this is just the condition of the ungodly. Mark the use of the term "ungodly," for, as we have seen in the opening of the Psalm, these are the beginners in evil, and are the least offensive of sinners. Oh! if such is the sad state of those who quietly continue in their morality, and neglect their God, what must be the condition of open sinners and shameless infidels? The first sentence is a negative description of the ungodly, and the second is the positive picture. Here is their character—*they are like chaff,* intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away. Here, also, mark their doom—*the wind driveth away*. Death shall hurry them with its terrible blast into the fire in which they shall be utterly consumed.

Verse 5. *Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment*. They shall stand there to be judged, but not to be acquitted. Fear shall lay hold upon them there; they shall not stand their ground; they shall flee away; they shall not stand in their own defense; for they shall blush and be covered with eternal contempt.

Well may the saints long for heaven, for no evil men shall dwell there, *nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous*. All our congregations upon earth are mixed. Every church hath one devil in it. The tares grow in the same furrows as the wheat. There is no floor which is as yet thoroughly purged from chaff. Sinners mix with saints, as dross mingles with gold. God's precious diamonds still lie in the same field with pebbles. Righteous Lots are this side heaven continually vexed by the men of Sodom. Let us rejoice then, that in "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" above (Heb 12:23), there shall by no means be admitted a single unrenewed soul. Sinners cannot live in heaven. They would be out of their element. Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than

the wicked in Paradise. Heaven would be an intolerable hell to an impenitent man, even if he could be allowed to enter; but such a privilege shall never be granted to the man who perseveres in his iniquities. May God grant that we may have a name and a place in his courts above!

Verse 6. *For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous.* Or, as the Hebrew hath it yet more fully, "The Lord is knowing the way of the righteous." He is constantly looking on their way, and though it may be often in mist and darkness, yet the Lord knoweth it. If it be in the clouds and tempest of affliction, he understandeth it. He numbereth the hairs of our head; he will not suffer any evil to befall us. "He knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). *But the way of the ungodly shall perish.* Not only shall they perish themselves, but their way shall perish too. The righteous carves his name upon the rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the sand. The righteous man plows the furrows of earth, and sows a harvest here, which shall never be fully reaped till he enters the enjoyments of eternity. But as for the wicked, he plows the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever. The very "way" of the ungodly shall perish. If it exist in remembrance, it shall be in the remembrance of the bad; for the Lord will cause the name of the wicked to rot, to become a stench in the nostrils of the good, and to be only known to the wicked themselves by its putridity.

May the Lord cleanse our hearts and our ways, that we may escape the doom of the ungodly, and enjoy the blessedness of the righteous!

Psalm 5

SUBJECT. *Throughout the first, second, third, and forth Psalms, you will have noticed that the subject is a contrast between the position, the character, and the prospects of the righteous and of the wicked. In this Psalm you will note the same. The Psalmist carries out a contrast between himself made righteous by God's grace, and the wicked who opposed him. To the devout mind there is here presented a precious view of the Lord Jesus, of whom it is said that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.*

Verse 1. *Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.* There are two sorts of prayers —those expressed in words, and the unuttered longings which abide as silent meditations. Words are not the essence but the garments of prayer. Moses at the Red Sea cried to God, though he said nothing. Yet the use of language may prevent distraction of mind, may assist the powers of the soul, and may excite devotion. David, we observe, uses both modes of prayer, and craves for the one a hearing, and for the other a consideration.

Consider my meditation. What an expressive word! If I have asked that which is right, give it to me; if I have omitted to ask that which I most needed, fill up the vacancy in my prayer. Let thy holy soul consider it as presented through my all-glorious Mediator: then regard thou it in thy wisdom, weigh it in the scales, judge thou of my sincerity, and of the true state of my necessities, and answer me in due time for thy mercy's sake! There may be prevailing intercession where there are no words; and alas! there may be words where there is no true supplication. Let us cultivate the spirit of prayer which is even better than the habit of prayer. There may seem to be prayer where there is little devotion. We should begin to pray before we kneel down, and we should not cease when we rise up.

Verse 2. *The voice of my cry.* In another Psalm we find the expression, "The voice of my weeping." Weeping has a voice—a melting, plaintive tone, an ear-piercing shrillness, which reaches the very heart of God; and crying hath a voice—a soul-moving eloquence; coming from our heart it reaches God's heart. Ah! my brothers and sisters, sometimes we cannot put our prayers into words: they are nothing but a cry: but the Lord can comprehend the meaning, for he hears a voice in our cry. To a loving father his children's cries are music, and they have a magic influence which his heart cannot resist. *My King, and my God.* Observe carefully these little pronouns, "my King, and my God." They are the pith and marrow of the plea. Here is a grand argument why God should answer prayer—because he is our King and our God. We are not aliens to him: he is the King of our country. Kings are expected to hear the appeals of their own people. We are not strangers to him; we are his worshippers, and he is our God—ours by covenant, by promise, by oath, by blood.

For unto thee will I pray. Here David expresses his declaration that he will seek to God, and to God alone. God is to be the only object of worship; the only resource of our soul in times of need. Leave broken cisterns to the godless, and let the godly drink from the Divine fountain alone. *Unto thee will I pray.* He makes a resolution, that as long as he lived he would pray. He would never cease to supplicate, even though the answer should not come.

Verse 3. Observe, this is not so much a prayer as a resolution, *My voice shalt thou hear;* I will not be dumb, I will not be silent, I will not withhold my speech, I will cry to thee for the fire that dwells within compels me to pray. We can sooner die than live without prayer. None of God's children are possessed with a dumb devil.

In the morning. This is the fittest time for intercourse with God. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. While the dew is on the grass, let grace drop upon the soul. Let us give to God the mornings of our days and the morning of our lives. Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star.

If we merely read our English version, and want an explanation of these two sentences, we find it in the figure of an archer. *I will direct my prayer unto thee*—I will put my prayer upon the bow, I will direct it towards heaven, and then when I have shot up my arrow, I will look up to see where it has gone. But the Hebrew has a still fuller meaning than this—*I will direct my prayer.* It is the word that is used for the laying in order of the wood and the pieces of the victim upon the altar, and it is used also for the putting of the shewbread upon the table. It means just this: "I will arrange my prayer before thee;" I will lay it out upon the altar in the morning, just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice. I will arrange my prayer; or, as old Master Trapp has it, "I will marshal up my prayers," I will put them in order, call up all my powers, and bid them stand in their proper places, that I may pray with all my might, and pray acceptably.

And will look up, or, as the Hebrew might better be translated, "I will look out," I will look out for the answer; after I have prayed, I will expect that the blessing shall come. It is a word that is used in another place where we read of those who watched for the morning. So will I watch for thine answer, O my Lord! I will spread out my prayer like the victim on the altar, and I will look up, and expect to receive the answer by fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice.

Two questions are suggested by the last part of this verse. Do we not miss very much of the sweetness and efficacy of prayer by a want of careful meditation before it, and of hopeful expectation after it? We too often rush into the presence of God without forethought or humility. We are like men who present themselves before a king without a petition, and what wonder is it that we often miss the [answer to] prayer? We should be careful to keep the stream of meditation always running; for this is the water to drive the mill of prayer. It is idle to pull up the flood-gates of a dry brook, and then hope to see the wheel revolve. Prayer without fervency is like hunting with a dead dog, and prayer without preparation is hawking with a blind falcon. Prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, but he works by means. God made man, but he used the dust of the earth as a material: the Holy Ghost is the author of prayer, but he employs the thoughts of a fervent soul as the gold with which to fashion the vessel. Let not our prayers and praises be the flashes of a hot and hasty brain, but the steady burning of a well-kindled fire.

But, furthermore, do we not forget to watch the result of our supplications? We are like the ostrich, which lays her eggs and looks not for her young. We sow the seed, and are too idle to seek a harvest. How can we expect the Lord to open the windows of his grace, and pour us out a blessing, if we will not open the windows of expectation and look up for the promised favor? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers.

Verse 4. *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.* And now the Psalmist having thus expressed his resolution to pray, you hear him putting up his prayer. He is pleading against his cruel and wicked enemies. He uses a most mighty argument. He begs of God to put them away from him, because they were displeasing to God himself. "When I pray against my tempters," says David, "I pray against the very things which thou thyself abhorrest." Thou hatest evil: Lord, I beseech thee, deliver me from it!

Let us learn here the solemn truth of the hatred which a righteous God must bear toward sin. He

has no pleasure in wickedness, however wittily, grandly, and proudly it may array itself. Its glitter has no charm for him. Men may bow before successful villainy, and forget the wickedness of the battle in the gaudiness of the triumph, but the Lord of Holiness is not such-an-one as we are. *Neither shall evil dwell with thee.* He will not afford it the meanest shelter. Neither on earth nor in heaven shall evil share the mansion of God. Oh, how foolish are we if we attempt to entertain two guests so hostile to one another as Christ Jesus and the devil! Rest assured, Christ will not live in the parlor of our hearts if we entertain the devil in the cellar of our thoughts.

Verse 5. *The foolish shall not stand in thy sight.* Sinners are fools written large. A little sin is a great folly, and the greatest of all folly is great sin. Such sinful fools as these must be banished from the court of heaven. Earthly kings were wont to have fools in their trains, but the only wise God will have no fools in his palace above. *Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.* It is not a little dislike, but a thorough hatred which God bears to workers of iniquity. To be hated of God is an awful thing. O let us be very faithful in warning the wicked around us, for it will be a terrible thing for them to fall into the hands of an angry God!

Verse 6. Observe, that evil speakers must be punished as well as evil workers, for *thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing [lying]*. All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. A man may lie without danger of the law of man, but he will not escape the law of God. Liars have short wings, their flight shall soon be over, and they shall fall into the fiery floods of destruction. *The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.* Bloody men shall be made drunk with their own blood, and they who began by deceiving others shall end with being deceived themselves. Our old proverb saith, "Bloody and deceitful men dig their own graves." The voice of the people is in this instance the voice of God. How forcible is the word abhor! Does it not show us how powerful and deep-seated is the hatred of the Lord against the workers of iniquity?

Verse 7. With this verse the first part of the Psalm ends. The Psalmist has bent his knee in prayer; he has described before God, as an argument for his deliverance, the character and the fate of the wicked; and now he contrasts this with the condition of the righteous. *But as for me, I will come into thy house.* I will not stand at a distance, I will come into thy sanctuary, just as a child comes into his father's house. But I will not come there by my own merits; no, I have a multitude of sins, and therefore I will come in the multitude of thy mercy. I will approach thee with confidence because of thy immeasurable grace. God's judgments are all numbered, but his mercies are innumerable; he gives his wrath by weight, but without weight his mercy. *And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple*—towards the temple of thy holiness. The temple was not built on earth at that time; it was but a tabernacle; but David was wont to turn his eyes spiritually to that temple of God's holiness where between the wings of the Cherubim Jehovah dwells in light ineffable. Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem, but we open our hearts toward heaven.

Verse 8. Now we come to the second part, in which the Psalmist repeats his arguments, and goes over the same ground again. *Lead me, O Lord,* as a little child is led by its father, as a blind man is guided by his friend. It is safe and pleasant walking when God leads the way. *In thy righteousness,* not in my righteousness, for that is imperfect, but in thine, for thou art righteousness itself. *Make thy way,* not my way, *straight before my face.* Brethren, when we have learned to give up our own way, and long to walk in God's way, it is a happy sign of grace; and it is no small mercy to see the way of God with clear vision straight before our face. Errors about duty may lead us into a sea of sins, before we know where we are.

Verse 9. This description of depraved man has been copied by the Apostle Paul, and, together with some other quotations, he has placed it in the third chapter of Romans, as being an accurate description of the whole human race, not of David's enemies only, but of all men by nature. Note that remarkable figure, *Their throat is an open sepulcher,* a sepulcher full of loathsomeness…pestilence and death. But, worse than that, it is an *open sepulcher,* with all its evil gases issuing forth, to spread death and destruction all around. So, with the throat of the wicked, it would be a great mercy if it could always be closed. If we could seal in continual silence the mouth of the wicked, it would be like a sepulcher shut up and would not produce much mischief. But, *their throat is an open sepulcher,* consequently all the wickedness of their heart exhales, and comes forth. How dangerous is an open sepulcher; men in their journeys might easily stumble therein, and find themselves among the dead. Ah! take heed of the wicked man, for there is nothing that he will not say to ruin you; he will long to destroy your character, and bury you in the hideous sepulcher of his own wicked throat. One sweet thought here, however. At the resurrection there will be a resurrection not only of bodies, but characters. This should be a great comfort to a man who has been abused and slandered. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun" (Mat 13:43). The world may think you vile, and bury your character; but if you have been upright, in the day when the graves shall give up their dead, this open sepulcher of the sinner's throat shall be compelled to give up your heavenly character, and you shall come forth and be honored in the sight of men. *They flatter with their tongue.* Or, as we might read it, "They have an oily tongue, a smooth tongue." A smooth tongue is a great evil; many have been bewitched by it. There be many human ant-eaters that with their long tongues covered with oily words entice and entrap the unwary and make their gain thereby. When the wolf licks the lamb, he is preparing to wet his teeth in its blood.

Verse 10. *Against thee:* not against me. If they were my enemies I would forgive them, but I cannot forgive thine. We are to forgive our enemies, but God's enemies it is not in our power to forgive. These expressions have often been noticed by men of over-refinement as being harsh, and grating on the ear. "Oh!" say they, "they are vindictive and revengeful." Let us remember that they might be translated as prophecies, not as wishes; but we do not care to avail ourselves of this method of escape. We have never heard of a reader of the Bible who, after perusing these passages, was made revengeful by reading them, and it is but fair to test the nature of a writing by its effects. When we hear a judge condemning a murderer, however severe his sentence, we do not feel that we should be justified in condemning others for any private injury done to us. The Psalmist here speaks as a judge; he speaks as God's mouth, and in condemning the wicked he gives us no excuse whatever for uttering anything in the way of malediction upon those who have caused us personal offense. The most shameful way of cursing another is by pretending to bless him…blessing in form and cursing in reality. Now, in direct contrast we put this healthy commination[1] of David, which is intended to be a blessing by warning the sinner of the impending curse. O impenitent man, be it known unto thee that all thy godly friends will give their solemn assent to the awful sentence of the Lord, which he shall pronounce upon thee in the day of doom! Our verdict shall applaud the condemning curse which the Judge of all the earth shall thunder against the godless.

In the following verse we once more find the contrast which has marked the preceding Psalms.

Verse 11. *But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice.* Joy is the privilege of the believer. When sinners are destroyed our rejoicing shall be full. They laugh first and weep ever after; we weep now, but shall rejoice eternally. When they howl we shall shout, and as they must groan for ever, so

shall we ever shout for joy. This holy bliss of ours has a firm foundation, for, O Lord, we are joyful in thee. The eternal God is the well-spring of our bliss. We love God, and therefore we delight in him. Our heart is at ease in our God. We fare sumptuously every day because we feed on him. We have music in the house, music in the heart, and music in heaven, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song; he also is become our salvation.

Verse 12. Jehovah has ordained his people the heirs of blessedness, and nothing shall rob them of their inheritance. With all the fullness of his power he will bless them, and all his attributes shall unite to satiate them with divine contentment. Nor is this merely for the present, but the blessing reaches into the long and unknown future. *Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous.* This is a promise of infinite length, of unbounded breadth, and of unutterable preciousness. As for the defense which the believer needs in this land of battles, it is here promised to him in the fullest measure. There were vast shields used by the ancients as extensive as a man's whole person, which would surround him entirely. So says David, *With favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield.*…There is here also the idea of being crowned, so that we wear a royal helmet, which is at once our glory and defense. O Lord, ever give to us this gracious coronation!

Psalm 19

(selected verses)

SUBJECT. *In his earliest days the Psalmist David, while keeping his father's flock, had devoted himself to the study of God's two great books—nature and Scripture; and he had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of these two only volumes in his library that he was able with a devout criticism to compare and contrast them, magnifying the excellency of the Author as seen in both. How foolish and wicked are those who instead of accepting the two sacred tomes, and delighting to behold the same divine hand in each, spend all their wits in endeavoring to find discrepancies and contradictions. We may rest assured that the true "Vestiges of Creation" will never contradict Genesis, nor will a correct "Cosmos" be found at variance with the narrative of Moses. He is wisest who reads both the world-book, and the Word-book as two volumes of the same work, and feels concerning them, "My Father wrote them both."*

Verse 1. *The heavens declare the glory of God.* The book of nature has three leaves: heaven, earth, and sea—of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the beauties of the other two. Any book without its first page would be sadly imperfect, and especially the great "Natural Bible", since its first pages, the sun, moon, and stars, supply light to the rest of the volume, and are thus the keys, without which the writing which follows would be dark and undiscerned. Man walking erect was evidently made to scan the skies, and he who begins to read creation by studying the stars begins the book at the right place.

The heavens are plural for their variety, comprising the watery heavens with their clouds of countless forms, the aerial heavens with their calms and tempests, the solar heavens with all the glories of the day, and the starry heavens with all the marvels of the night; what the Heaven of heavens must be hath not entered into the heart of man, but there in chief all things are telling the glory of God. Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust, but the celestial realm is peculiarly rich in spiritual lore. *The heavens declare,* or are declaring, for the continuance of their testimony is intended by the participles employed; every moment God's existence, power, wisdom and goodness, are being sounded abroad by the heavenly heralds which shine upon us from above. He who would guess at divine sublimity should gaze upward into the starry vault; he who would imagine infinity must peer into the boundless expanse; he who desires to see divine wisdom should consider the balancing of the orbs; he who would know divine fidelity must mark the regularity of the planetary motions; and he who would attain some conceptions of divine power, greatness, and majesty, must estimate the forces of attraction, the magnitude of the fixed stars, and the brightness of the whole celestial train. It is not merely glory that the heavens declare, but the *glory of God,* for they deliver to us such unanswerable arguments for a conscious, intelligent, planning, controlling, and presiding Creator, that no unprejudiced person can remain unconvinced by them. The testimony given by the heavens is no mere hint, but a plain, unmistakable declaration; and it is a declaration of the most constant and abiding kind. Yet for all this, to what avail is the loudest declaration to a deaf man, or the clearest showing to one spiritually blind? God the Holy Ghost must illuminate us, or all the suns in the Milky Way never will.

The firmament sheweth his handy-work; not "handy" in the [common] use of that term, but "hand-

work." The expanse is full of the works of the Lord's skillful, creating hands. "Hands" are attributed to the great creating Spirit to set forth his care and workmanlike action, and to meet the poor comprehension of mortals. It is humbling to find that even when the most devout and elevated minds are desirous to express their loftiest thoughts of God, they must use words and metaphors drawn from the earth. We are children, and must each confess, "I think as a child, I speak as a child" (1Co 13:11). In the expanse above us God flies, as it were, his starry flag to show that the King is at home, and hangs out his escutcheon[2] that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him. He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down as an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar.

Strange is it that some who love God are yet afraid to study the God-declaring book of nature. The mock-spirituality of some believers, who are too heavenly to consider the heavens, has given color to the vaunts of infidels that nature contradicts revelation. The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace; only the foolish have any fears lest the honest study of the one should injure our faith in the other. Dr. M'Cosh has well said, "We have often mourned over the attempts made to set the works of God against the Word of God, and thereby excite, propagate, and perpetuate jealousies fitted to separate parties that ought to live in closest union. In particular, we have always regretted that endeavors should have been made to depreciate nature with a view of exalting revelation; it has always appeared to us to be nothing else than the degrading of one part of God's work in the hope thereby of exalting and recommending another. Let not science and religion be reckoned as opposing citadels, frowning defiance upon each other, and their troops brandishing their armor in hostile attitude. They have too many common foes, if they would but think of it, in ignorance and prejudice, in passion and vice, under all their forms, to admit of their lawfully wasting their strength in a useless warfare with each other. Science has a foundation, and so has religion; let them unite their foundations, and the basis will be broader, and they will be two compartments of one great fabric reared to the glory of God. Let one be the outer and the other the inner court. In the one, let all look, and admire and adore; and in the other, let those who have faith kneel, and pray, and praise. Let the one be the sanctuary where human learning may present its richest incense as an offering to God, and the other the holiest of all, separated from it by a veil now rent in twain, and in which, on a blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, we pour out the love of a reconciled heart, and hear the oracles of the living God."

Verse 2. *Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.* As if one day took up the story where the other left it, and each night passed over the wondrous tale to the next. The original has in it the thought of pouring out or welling over, with speech; as though days and nights were but as a fountain flowing evermore with Jehovah's praise. Oh to drink often at the celestial well, and learn to utter the glory of God! The witnesses above cannot be slain or silenced; from their elevated seats they constantly preach the knowledge of God, unawed and unbiased by the judgment of men. Even the changes of alternating night and day are mutely eloquent, and light and shade equally reveal the Invisible One; let the vicissitudes of our circumstances do the same, and while we bless the God of our days of joy, let us also extol him who giveth "songs in the night."

The lesson of day and night is one which it were well if all men learned. It should be among our day-thoughts and night-thoughts, to remember the flight of time, the changeful character of earthly things, the brevity both of joy and sorrow, the preciousness of life, our utter powerlessness to recall the hours once flown, and the irresistible approach of eternity. Day bids us labor, night reminds us to

prepare for our last time; day bids us work for God, and night invites us to rest in him; day bids us look for endless day, and night warns us to escape from everlasting night.

Verse 3. *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.* Every man may hear the voices of the stars. Many are the languages of terrestrials, to celestials there is but one, and that one may be understood by every willing mind. The lowest heathen are without excuse, if they do not discover the invisible things of God in the works which he has made. Sun, moon, and stars are God's traveling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey confirming those who regard the Lord, and judges on circuit condemning those who worship idols.

The margin gives us another rendering, which is more literal, and involves less repetition; "no speech, no words, their voice is not heard;" that is to say, their teaching is not addressed to the ear, and is not uttered in articulate sounds; it is pictorial, and directed to the eye and heart; it touches not the sense by which faith comes, for faith cometh by hearing. Jesus Christ is called the Word, for he is a far more distinct display of Godhead than all the heavens can afford; they are, after all, but dumb instructors; neither star nor sun can arrive at a word, but Jesus is the express image of Jehovah's person, and his name is the Word of God.

Verse 7. *The law of the Lord is perfect;* by which he means not merely the law of Moses but the doctrine of God, the whole run and rule of sacred Writ. The doctrine revealed by God he declares to be perfect, and yet David had but a very small part of the Scriptures, and if a fragment, and that the darkest and most historical portion, be perfect, what must the entire volume be? How more than perfect is the book which contains the clearest possible display of divine love, and gives us an open vision of redeeming grace. The Gospel is a complete scheme or law of gracious salvation, presenting to the needy sinner everything that his terrible necessities can possibly demand. There are no redundancies and no omissions in the Word of God, and in the plan of grace; why then do men try to paint this lily and gild this refined gold? The Gospel is perfect in all its parts, and perfect as a whole: it is a crime to add to it, treason to alter it, and felony to take from it.

Converting the soul. Making the man to be returned or restored to the place from which sin had cast him. The practical effect of the Word of God is to turn the man to himself, to his God, and to holiness; and the turn or conversion is not outward alone, "the soul" is moved and renewed. The great means of the conversion of sinners is the Word of God, and the more closely we keep to it in our ministry the more likely we are to be successful. It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. When the law drives and the Gospel draws, the action is different but the end is one, for by God's Spirit the soul is made to yield, and cries, "Turn me, and I shall be turned" (Jer 31:18). Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation.

The testimony of the Lord is sure. God bears his testimony against sin, and on behalf of righteousness; he testifies of our fall and of our restoration; this testimony is plain, decided, and infallible, and is to be accepted as sure. God's witness in his Word is so sure that we may draw solid comfort from it both for time and eternity, and so sure that no attacks made upon it however fierce or subtle can ever weaken its force. What a blessing that in a world of uncertainties we have something sure to rest upon! We hasten from the quicksands of human speculations to the *terra firma* of Divine Revelation.

Making wise the simple. Humble, candid, teachable minds receive the word, and are made wise unto salvation. Things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes (Mat 11:25). The

persuadable grow wise, but the cavillers[3] continue fools. As a law or plan the Word of God converts, and then as a testimony it instructs; it is not enough for us to be converts, we must continue to be disciples; and if we have felt the power of truth, we must go on to prove its certainty by experience. The perfection of the Gospel converts, but its sureness edifies; if we would be edified it becomes us not to stagger at the promise through unbelief, for a doubted Gospel cannot make us wise, but truth of which we are assured will be our establishment.

Verse 8. *The statutes of the Lord are right.* His precepts and decrees are founded in righteousness, and are such as are right or fitted to the right reason of man. As a physician gives the right medicine, and a counselor the right advice, so does the Book of God. "Rejoicing the heart." Mark the progress; he who was converted was next made wise and is now made happy; that truth which makes the heart right then gives joy to the right heart. Free-grace brings heart-joy. Earth-born mirth dwells on the lip, and flushes the bodily powers; but heavenly delights satisfy the inner nature, and fill the mental faculties to the brim. There is no cordial of comfort like that which is poured from the bottle of Scripture.

Psalm 22

(selected verses)

SUBJECT. *This is beyond all others THE PSALM OF THE CROSS. It may have been actually repeated word-by-word by our Lord when hanging on the tree; it would be too bold to say that it was so, but even a casual reader may see that it might have been. It begins with, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and ends, according to some, in the original with "It is finished." For plaintive expressions uprising from unutterable depths of woe we may say of this Psalm, "there is none like it." It is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours, the record of his dying words, the memorial of his expiring joys. David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David. Before us we have a description both of the darkness and of the glory of the Cross, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow. Oh for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture, it is in this Psalm.*

Verse 1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* This was the startling cry of Golgotha: *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani*. The Jews mocked, but the angels adored when Jesus cried this exceeding bitter cry. Nailed to the tree we behold our great Redeemer in extremities, and what see we? Having ears to hear let us hear, and having eyes to see let us see! Let us gaze with holy wonder, and mark the flashes of light amid the awful darkness of that midday-midnight. First, our Lord's faith beams forth and deserves our reverent imitation; he keeps his hold upon his God with both hands and cries twice, "My God, my God!" The spirit of adoption was strong within the suffering Son of Man, and he felt no doubt about his interest in his God. Oh that we could imitate this cleaving to an afflicting God! Nor does the sufferer distrust the power of God to sustain him, for the title used ("El") signifies strength, and is the name of the Mighty God. He knows the Lord to be the all-sufficient support and succor of his spirit, and therefore appeals to him in the agony of grief, but not in the misery of doubt. He would fain know why he is left, he raises that question and repeats it, but neither the power nor the faithfulness of God does he mistrust. What an inquiry is this before us! "Why hast thou forsaken me?" We must lay the emphasis on every word of this saddest of all utterances. "Why?" what is the great cause of such a strange fact as for God to leave his own Son at such a time and in such a plight? There was no cause in him, why then was he deserted? "Hast:" it is done, and the Savior is feeling its dread effect as he asks the question; it is surely true, but how mysterious! It was no threatening of forsaking which made the great Surety cry aloud, he endured that forsaking in very deed. "Thou:" I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but thou, my God, my faithful friend, how canst thou leave me? This is worst of all, yea, worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God. "Forsaken:" if thou hadst chastened I might bear it, for thy face would shine; but to forsake me utterly, Ah! why is this? "Me:" thine innocent, obedient, suffering Son, why leavest thou me to perish? A sight of self seen by penitence, and of Jesus on the Cross seen by faith, will best expound this question. Jesus is forsaken because our sins had separated between us and our God.

Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? The Man of Sorrows had prayed until his speech failed him, and he could only utter moanings and groanings as men do in severe sicknesses, like the roarings of a wounded animal. To what extremity of grief was our Master driven? What strong crying and tears were those which made him too hoarse for speech! What must have been his anguish to find his own beloved and trusted Father standing afar off, and neither granting help nor apparently hearing prayer! This was good cause to make him "roar." Yet there was reason for all this which those who rest in Jesus as their Substitute well know.

Verse 2. *O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not.* For our prayers to appear to be unheard is no new trial, Jesus felt it before us, and it is observable that he still held fast his believing hold on God, and cried still, "My God." On the other hand his faith did not render him less importunate, for amid the hurry and horror of that dismal day he ceased not his cry, even as in Gethsemane he had agonized all through the gloomy night. Our Lord continued to pray even though no comfortable answer came, and in this he set us an example of obedience to his own words, "men ought always to pray, and not to faint" (Luk 18:1). No daylight is too glaring, and no midnight too dark to pray in; and no delay or apparent denial, however grievous, should tempt us to forbear from importunate pleading.

Verse 3. *But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.* However ill things may look, there is no ill in thee, O God! We are very apt to think and speak hardly of God when we are under his afflicting hand, but not so the obedient Son. He knows too well his Father's goodness to let outward circumstances libel his character. There is no unrighteousness with the God of Jacob, he deserves no censure; let him do what he will, he is to be praised, and to reign enthroned amid the songs of his chosen people. If prayer be unanswered it is not because God is unfaithful, but for some other good and weighty reason. If we cannot perceive any ground for the delay, we must leave the riddle unsolved—but we must not fly in God's face in order to invent an answer. While the holiness of God is in the highest degree acknowledged and adored, the afflicted speaker in this verse seems to marvel how the holy God could forsake him, and be silent to his cries. The argument is, thou art holy, Oh! why is it that thou dost disregard thy holy One in his hour of sharpest anguish? We may not question the holiness of God, but we may argue from it, and use it as a plea in our petitions.

Verse 4. *Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.* This is the rule of life with all the chosen family. Three times over is it mentioned, they trusted, and trusted, and trusted, and never left off trusting, for it was their very life; and they fared well too, for thou didst deliver them. Out of all their straits, difficulties, and miseries faith brought them by calling their God to the rescue; but in the case of our Lord it appeared as if faith would bring no assistance from heaven, he alone of all the trusting ones was to remain without deliverance. The experience of other saints may be a great consolation to us when in deep waters, if faith can be sure that their deliverance will be ours; but when we feel ourselves sinking, it is poor comfort to know that others are swimming. Our Lord here pleads the past dealings of God with his people as a reason why he should not be left alone; here again he is an example to us in the skillful use of the weapon of all prayer. The use of the plural pronoun "our" shows how one with his people Jesus was even on the Cross.

Verse 5. *They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.* As if he had said, "How is it that I am now left without succor in my overwhelming griefs, while all others have been helped? We may remind the Lord of his former lovingkindnesses to his people, and beseech him to be still the same. This is true wrestling; let us learn the art. Observe,

that ancient saints cried and trusted, and that in trouble we must do the same; and the invariable result was that they were not ashamed of their hope, for deliverance came in due time; this same happy portion shall be ours. The prayer of faith can do the deed when nothing else can. Let us wonder when we see Jesus using the same pleas as ourselves, and immersed in griefs far deeper than our own.

Verse 6. *But I am a worm, and no man.* This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than men. What a contrast between "I AM" and "I am a worm"! yet such a double nature was found in the person of our Lord Jesus when bleeding upon the tree. He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-trodden worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh; and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of himself when his body and soul had become a mass of misery—the very essence of agony—in the dying pangs of crucifixion. Man by nature is but a worm; but our Lord puts himself even beneath man, on account of the scorn that was heaped upon him and the weakness which he felt, and therefore he adds, "and no man." The privileges and blessings which belonged to the fathers he could not obtain while deserted by God, and common acts of humanity were not allowed him, for he was rejected of men; he was outlawed from the society of earth, and shut out from the smile of heaven. How utterly did the Savior empty himself of all glory, and become of no reputation for our sakes!

Verse 7. *All they that see me laugh me to scorn.* Read the evangelistic narrative of the ridicule endured by the Crucified One, and then consider, in the light of this expression, how it grieved him. The iron entered into his soul. Mockery has for its distinctive description "cruel mockings;" those endured by our Lord were of the most cruel kind. The scornful ridicule of our Lord was universal; all sorts of men were unanimous in the derisive laughter, and vied with each other in insulting him. Priests and people, Jews and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians, all united in the general scoff, and that at the time when he was prostrate in weakness and ready to die. Which shall we wonder at the most, the cruelty of man or the love of the bleeding Savior? How can we ever complain of ridicule after this?

They shoot out the lip, they shake the head. These were gestures of contempt. Pouting, grinning, shaking of the head, thrusting out of the tongue, and other modes of derision were endured by our patient Lord; men made faces at him before whom angels veil their faces and adore. The basest signs of disgrace which disdain could devise were maliciously cast at him. They punned upon his prayers, they made matter for laughter of his sufferings, and set him utterly at nought.

Verse 8. *Saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.* Here the taunt is cruelly aimed at the sufferer's faith in God, which is the tenderest point in a good man's soul, the very apple of his eye. They must have learned the diabolical art from Satan himself, for they made rare proficiency in it. According to Matthew 27:39-44, there were five forms of taunt hurled at the Lord Jesus; this special piece of mockery is probably mentioned in this Psalm because it is the most bitter of the whole; it has a biting, sarcastic irony in it, which gives it a peculiar venom; it must have stung the Man of Sorrows to the quick. When we are tormented in the same manner, let us remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and we shall be comforted. On reading these verses one is ready, with Trapp, to ask, is this a prophecy or a history? for the description is so accurate. We must not lose sight of the truth which was unwittingly uttered by the Jewish scoffers. They themselves are witnesses that Jesus of Nazareth

trusted in God: why then was he permitted to perish? Jehovah had aforetime delivered those who rolled their burdens upon him: why was this man deserted? Oh that they had understood the answer! Note further, that their ironical jest, "seeing he delighted in him," was true. The Lord did delight in his dear Son, and when he was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, he still was well pleased with him. Strange mixture! Jehovah delights in him, and yet bruises him; is well pleased, and yet slays him.

Verse 9. *But thou art he that took me out of the womb.* Kindly providence attends with the surgery of tenderness at every human birth; but the Son of Man, who was marvelously begotten of the Holy Ghost, was in an especial manner watched over by the Lord when brought forth by Mary. The destitute state of Joseph and Mary, far away from friends and home, led them to see the cherishing hand of God in the safe delivery of the mother, and the happy birth of the child; that Child now fighting the great battle of his life, uses the mercy of his nativity as an argument with God. Faith finds weapons everywhere. He who wills to believe shall never lack reasons for believing.

Verse 10. *I was cast upon thee from the womb.* Into the Almighty arms he was first received, as into those of a loving parent. This is a sweet thought. God begins his care over us from the earliest hour. We are dandled upon the knee of mercy, and cherished in the lap of goodness; our cradle is canopied by divine love, and our first totterings are guided by his care. *Thou art my God from my mother's belly.* The Psalm begins with "My God, my God," and here, not only is the claim repeated, but its early date is urged. Oh noble perseverance of faith, thus to continue pleading with holy ingenuity of argument! Our birth was our weakest and most perilous period of existence; if we were then secured by Omnipotent tenderness, surely we have no cause to suspect that divine goodness will fail us now. He who was our God when we left our mother, will be with us till we return to mother earth, and will keep us from perishing in the belly of hell.

Psalm 51

(selected verses)

TITLE. *"When Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba." When the divine message had aroused his dormant conscience and made David see the greatness of his guilt, he wrote this Psalm. He had forgotten his psalmody while he was indulging his flesh, but he returned to his harp when his spiritual nature was awakened, and he poured out his song to the accompaniment of sighs and tears. The great sin of David is not to be excused, but it is well to remember that his case has an exceptional collection of specialties in it. He was a man of very strong passions, a soldier, and an Oriental monarch having despotic power; no other king of his time would have felt any compunction for having acted as he did, and hence there were not around him those restraints of custom and association which, when broken through, render the offense the more monstrous. He never hints at any form of extenuation, nor do we mention these facts in order to apologize for his sin, which was detestable to the last degree; but for the warning of others, that they reflect that the licentiousness in themselves at this day might have even a graver guilt in it than in the erring King of Israel. When we remember his sin, let us dwell most upon his penitence, and upon the long series of chastisements which rendered the after part of his life such a mournful history.*

Verse 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God.* He appeals at once to the mercy of God, even before he mentions his sin. The sight of mercy is good for eyes that are sore with penitential weeping. Pardon of sin must ever be an act of pure mercy, and therefore to that attribute the awakened sinner flies.

According to thy lovingkindness. Act, O Lord, like thyself; give mercy like thy mercy. Show mercy such as is congruous with thy grace. What a choice word is "lovingkindness,"…a rare compound of precious love and kindness sweetly blended in one. *According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies.* Let thy most loving compassions come to me, and make thou thy pardons such as these would suggest. Reveal all thy gentlest attributes in my case, not only in their essence but in their abundance. Numberless have been thine acts of goodness, and vast is thy grace; let me be the object of thine infinite mercy, and repeat it all in me. Make my one case an epitome of all thy tender mercies. By every deed of grace to others I feel encouraged, and I pray thee let me add another and a yet greater one, in my own person, to the long list of thy compassions. *Blot out my transgressions.* My revolts, my excesses, are all recorded against me; but, Lord, erase the lines. Draw thy pen through the register. Obliterate the record, though now it seems engraven in the rock for ever; many strokes of thy mercy may be needed, to cut out the deep inscription, but then thou has a multitude of mercies, and therefore, I beseech thee, erase my sins.

Verse 2.*Wash me thoroughly.* It is not enough to blot out the sin; his person is defiled, and he fain would be purified. He would have God himself cleanse him, for none but he could do it effectually. The washing must be thorough, it must be repeated, therefore he cries, "Multiply to wash me." The dye is in itself immovable, and I, the sinner, have lain long in it, till the crimson is ingrained; but, Lord, wash, and wash, and wash again, till the last stain is gone, and not a trace of my defilement is left. The hypocrite is content if his garments be washed, but the true suppliant cries, "wash me." The careless soul is content with a nominal cleansing, but the truly awakened conscience desires a real

and practical washing, and that of a most complete and efficient kind. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity.* It is viewed as one great pollution, polluting the entire nature, and as all his own; as if nothing were so much his own as his sin. The one sin against Bathsheba served to show the Psalmist the whole mountain of his iniquity, of which that foul deed was but one falling stone. He desires to be rid of the whole mass of his filthiness, which though once so little observed, had then become a hideous and haunting terror to his mind. *And cleanse me from my sin.* This is a more general expression; as if the Psalmist said, "Lord, if washing will not do, try some other process; if water avails not, let fire, let anything be tried, so that I may but be purified. Rid me of my sin by some means, by any means, by every means, only do purify me completely, and leave no guilt upon my soul." It is not the punishment he cries out against, but the sin. Many a murderer is more alarmed at the gallows than at the murder which brought him to it. The thief loves the plunder, though he fears the prison. Not so David: he is sick of sin as sin; his loudest outcries are against the evil of his transgression, and not against the painful consequences of it. When we deal seriously with our sin, God will deal gently with us. When we hate what the Lord hates, he will soon make an end of it, to our joy and peace.

Verse 3.*For I acknowledge my transgressions.* Here he sees the plurality and immense number of his sins, and makes open declaration of them. He seems to say, "I make a full confession of them. Not that this is my plea in seeking forgiveness, but it is a clear evidence that I need mercy, and am utterly unable to look to any other quarter for help. My pleading guilty has barred me from any appeal against the sentence of justice: O Lord, I must cast myself on thy mercy, refuse me not, I pray thee. Thou hast made me willing to confess. O follow up this work of grace with a full and free remission!" *And my sin is ever before me.* My sin as a whole is never out of my mind; it continually oppresses my spirit. I lay it before thee because it is ever before me: Lord, put it away both from thee and me. To an awakened conscience, pain on account of sin is not transient and occasional, but intense and permanent, and this is no sign of divine wrath, but rather a sure preface of abounding favor.

Verse 4.*Against thee, thee only have I sinned.* The virus of sin lies in its opposition to God: the Psalmist's sense of sin towards others rather tended to increase the force of this feeling of sin against God. All his wrong doing centered, culminated, and came to a climax, at the foot of the divine throne. To injure our fellow men is sin, mainly because in so doing we violate the law of God. The penitent's heart was so filled with a sense of the wrong done to the Lord himself, that all other confession was swallowed up in a broken-hearted acknowledgment of offense against him. *And done this evil in thy sight.* To commit treason in the very court of the king and before his eye is impudence indeed: David felt that his sin was committed in all its filthiness while Jehovah himself looked on. None but a child of God cares for the eye of God, but where there is grace in the soul it reflects a fearful guilt upon every evil act, when we remember that the God whom we offend was present when the trespass was committed. That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. He could not present any argument against divine justice, if it proceeded at once to condemn him and punish him for his crime. His own confession, and the judge's own witness of the whole transaction, places the transgression beyond all question or debate; the iniquity was indisputably committed, and was unquestionably a foul wrong, and therefore the course of justice was clear and beyond all controversy.

Verse 5.*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity.* He is thunderstruck at the discovery of his inbred sin, and proceeds to set it forth. This was not intended to justify himself, but it rather meant to complete

the confession. It is as if he said, "Not only have I sinned this once, but I am in my very nature a sinner. The fountain of my life is polluted as well as its streams. My birth tendencies are out of the square of equity; I naturally lean to forbidden things. Mine is a constitutional disease, rendering my very person obnoxious to thy wrath." *And in sin did my mother conceive me.* He goes back to the earliest moment of his being, not to traduce his mother, but to acknowledge the deep tap roots of his sin. It is a wicked wresting of Scripture to deny that original sin and natural depravity are here taught. Surely men who [object to] this doctrine have need to be taught of the Holy Spirit what be the first principles of the faith. David's mother was the Lord's handmaid, he was born in chaste wedlock, of a good father, and he was himself, "the man after God's own heart" (Act 13:22). Yet his nature was as fallen as that of any other son of Adam, and there only needed the occasion for the manifesting of that sad fact. In our shaping we were put out of shape, and when we were conceived our nature conceived sin. Alas, for poor humanity! Those who will may cry it up, but he is most blessed who in his own soul has learned to lament his lost estate.

Verse 6.*Behold.* Here is the great matter for consideration. God desires not merely outward virtue, but inward purity, and the penitent's sense of sin is greatly deepened as with astonishment he discovers this truth, and how far he is from satisfying the divine demand. The second "Behold" is fitly set over against the first; how great the gulf which yawns between them! *Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.* Reality, sincerity, true holiness, heart fidelity, these are the demands of God. He cares not for the pretense of purity, he looks to the mind, heart, and soul. Always has the Holy One of Israel estimated men by their inner nature, and not by their outward professions; to him the inward is as visible as the outward, and he rightly judges that the essential character of an action lies in the motive of him who works it. And in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom. The penitent feels that God is teaching him truth concerning his nature, which he had not before perceived. The love of the heart, the mystery of its fall, and the way of its purification—this hidden wisdom we must all attain; and it is a great blessing to be able to believe that the Lord will "make us to know it." No one can teach our innermost nature but the Lord, but he can instruct us to profit. The Holy Spirit can write the law on our heart, and that is the sum of practical wisdom. He can put the fear of the Lord within, and that is the beginning of wisdom. He can reveal Christ in us, and he is essential wisdom. Such poor, foolish, disarranged souls as ours shall yet be ordered aright, and truth and wisdom shall reign within us.

Verse 7.*Purge me with hyssop.* Sprinkle the atoning blood upon me with the appointed means. Give me the reality which legal ceremonies symbolize. Nothing but blood can take away my blood stains, nothing but the strongest purification can avail to cleanse me. Let the sin offering purge my sin. Let him who was appointed to atone, execute his sacred office on me; for none can need it more than I. The passage may be read as the voice of faith as well as a prayer, and so it runs—"Thou wilt purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." Foul as I am, there is such power in the divine propitiation that my sin shall vanish quite away. Like the leper upon whom the priest has performed the cleansing rites, I shall again be admitted into the assembly of thy people and allowed to share in the privileges of the true Israel; while in thy sight also, through Jesus my Lord, I shall be accepted. *Wash me.* Let it not merely be in type that I am clean, but by a real spiritual purification, which shall remove the pollution of my nature. Let the sanctifying as well as the pardoning process be perfected in me. Save me from the evils which my sin has created and nourished in me. *And I shall be whiter than snow.* None but thyself can whiten me, but thou canst in grace outdo nature itself in its purest state. Snow

soon gathers smoke and dust, it melts and disappears; thou canst give me an enduring purity. Though snow is white below as well as on the outer surface, thou canst work the like inward purity in me, and make me so clean that only an hyperbole can set forth my immaculate condition. Lord, do this; my faith believes thou wilt, and well she knows thou canst.

Scarcely does Holy Scripture contain a verse more full of faith than this. Considering the nature of the sin, and the deep sense the Psalmist had of it, it is a glorious faith to be able to see in the blood sufficient, nay, all sufficient merit entirely to purge it away. Considering also the deep natural inbred corruption which David saw and experienced within, it is a miracle of faith that he could rejoice in the hope of perfect purity in his inward parts. Yet, be it added, the faith is no more than the word warrants, than the blood of atonement encourages, than the promise of God deserves. O that some reader may take heart, even now while smarting under sin, to do the Lord the honor to rely thus confidently on the finished sacrifice of Calvary and the infinite mercy there revealed.

Verse 8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness.* He prays about his sorrow late in the Psalm; he began at once with his sin; he asks to hear pardon, and then to hear joy. He seeks comfort at the right time and from the right source. His ear has become heavy with sinning, and so he prays, "Make me to hear." No voice could revive his dead joys but that which quickeneth the dead. Pardon from God would give him double joy—"joy and gladness." No stinted bliss awaits the forgiven one; he shall not only have a double blooming joy, but he shall hear it; it shall sing with exultation. Some joy is felt but not heard, for it contends with fears; but the joy of pardon has a voice louder than the voice of sin. God's voice speaking peace is the sweetest music an ear can hear. *That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.* He was like a poor wretch whose bones are crushed, crushed by no ordinary means, but by omnipotence itself. He groaned under no mere flesh wounds; his firmest and yet most tender powers were "broken in pieces all asunder;" his manhood had become a dislocated, mangled, quivering sensibility. Yet if he who crushed would cure, every wound would become a new mouth for song, every bone quivering before with agony would become equally sensible of intense delight. The figure is bold, and so is the supplicant. He is requesting a great thing; he seeks joy for a sinful heart, music for crushed bones. Preposterous prayer anywhere but at the throne of God! Preposterous there most of all but for the Cross where Jehovah Jesus bore our sins in his own body on the tree. A penitent need not ask to be an hired servant, or settle down in despairing content with perpetual mourning; he may ask for gladness and he shall have it; for if when prodigals return the father is glad, and the neighbors and friends rejoice and are merry with music and dancing (Luk 15:11*ff*), what need can there be that the restored one himself should be wretched?

Verse 9. *Hide thy face from my sins.* Do not look at them; be at pains not to see them. They thrust themselves in the way; but, Lord, refuse to behold them, lest if thou consider them, thine anger burn, and I die. *Blot out all mine iniquities.* He repeats the prayer of the first verse with the enlargement of it by the word "all." All repetitions are not "vain repetitions." Souls in agony have no space to find variety of language: pain has to content itself with monotones. David's face was ashamed with looking on his sin, and no diverting thoughts could remove it from his memory; but he prays the Lord to do with his sin what he himself cannot. If God hide not his face from our sin, he must hide it forever from us; and if he blot not out our sins, he must blot our names out of his book of life.

Verse 10. *Create.* What! has sin so destroyed us, that the Creator must be called in again? What ruin then doth evil work among mankind! *Create in me.* I, in my outward fabric, still exist; but I am empty, desert, void. Come, then, and let thy power be seen in a new creation within my old fallen

self. Thou didst make a man in the world at first; Lord, make a new man in me! *A clean heart*. In the seventh verse he asked to be clean; now he seeks a heart suitable to that cleanliness; but he does not say, “Make my old heart clean;” he is too experienced in the hopelessness of the old nature. He would have the old man buried as a dead thing, and a new creation brought in to fill its place. None but God can create either a new heart or a new earth. Salvation is a marvelous display of supreme power; the work in us as much as that for us is wholly of Omnipotence. The affections must be rectified first, or all our nature will go amiss. The heart is the rudder of the soul, and till the Lord take it in hand we steer in a false and foul way. O Lord, thou who didst once make me, be pleased to new make me, and in my most secret parts renew me.

Psalm 100

TITLE. *A Psalm of Praise; or rather of thanksgiving. This is the only Psalm bearing this precise inscription. It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favorite with the people of God ever since it was written….In this divine lyric we sing with gladness the creating power and goodness of the Lord, even as before with trembling we adored his holiness.*

Verse 1.*Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.* This is a repetition of Psalm 98:4. The original word signifies a glad shout, such as loyal subjects give when their king appears among them. Our happy God should be worshipped by a happy people; a cheerful spirit is in keeping with his nature, his acts, and the gratitude which we should cherish for his mercies. In every land Jehovah's goodness is seen, therefore in every land should he be praised. Nearer will the world be in its proper condition till with one unanimous shout it adores the only God. O ye nations, how long will ye blindly reject him? Your golden age will never arrive till ye with all your hearts revere him!

Verse 2.*Serve the LORD with gladness.* "Glad homage pay with awful mirth." He is our Lord, and therefore he is to be served; he is our gracious Lord, and therefore to be served with joy. The invitation to worship here given is not a melancholy one, as though adoration were a funeral solemnity, but a cheery gladsome exhortation, as though we were bidden to a marriage feast. Come before his presence with singing. We ought in worship to realize the presence of God, and by an effort of the mind to approach him. This is an act which must to every rightly instructed heart be one of great solemnity, but at the same time it must not be performed in the servility of fear, and therefore we come before him, not with weepings and wailings, but with psalms and hymns. Singing, as it is a joyful, and at the same time a devout, exercise, should be a constant form of approach to God. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance of praise by a congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous but delightful, and is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration. How a certain society of brethren can find it in their hearts to forbid singing in public worship is a riddle which we cannot solve.

Verse 3.*Know ye that the Lord, he is God.* Our worship must be intelligent. We ought to know whom we worship and why. "Man, know thyself," is a wise aphorism[4], yet to know our God is truer wisdom; and it is very questionable whether a man can know himself until he knows his God. Jehovah is God in the fullest, most absolute, and most exclusive sense, he is God alone; to know him in that character and prove our knowledge by obedience, trust, submission, zeal, and love is an attainment which only grace can bestow. Only those who practically recognize his Godhead are at all likely to offer acceptable praise. *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.* Shall not the creature reverence its maker? Some men live as if they made themselves; they call themselves "self-made men," and they adore their supposed creators; but Christians recognize the origin of their being and their well-being, and take no honor to themselves either for being, or for being what they are. Neither in our first or second creation dare we put so much as a finger upon the glory, for it is the sole right and property of the Almighty. To disclaim honor for ourselves is as necessary a part of true reverence as to ascribe glory to the Lord.…Of late philosophy has labored hard to prove that all things have been developed from atoms, or have, in other words, made themselves: if this theory shall ever find believers, there will certainly remain no reason for accusing the superstitious of credulity.…For our part, we find it far more easy to believe that the Lord made us than that we were developed by a long

chain of natural selections from floating atoms which fashioned themselves. *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* It is our honor to have been chosen from all the world besides to be his own people, and our privilege to be therefore guided by his wisdom, tended by his care, and fed by his bounty. Sheep gather around their shepherd and look up to him; in the same manner let us gather around the great Shepherd of mankind. The avowal of our relation to God is in itself praise; when we recount his goodness we are rendering to him the best adoration; our songs require none of the inventions of fictions, the bare facts are enough; the simple narration of the mercies of the Lord is more astonishing than the productions of imagination. That we are the sheep of his pasture is a plain truth, and at the same time the very essence of poetry.

Verse 4. *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving.* To the occurrence of the word thanksgiving in this place the Psalm probably owes its title. In all our public service the rendering of thanks must abound; it is like the incense of the temple, which filled the whole house with smoke. Expiatory sacrifices are ended, but those of gratitude will never be out of date. So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks. Mercy permits us to enter his gates; let us praise that mercy. What better subject for our thoughts in God's own house than the Lord of the house. And into his courts with praise. Into whatever court of the Lord you may enter, let your admission be the subject of praise: thanks be to God, the innermost court is now open to believers, and we enter into that which is within the veil; it is incumbent upon us that we acknowledge the high privilege by our songs. Be thankful unto him. Let the praise be in your heart as well as on your tongue, and let it all be for him to whom it all belongs. And bless his name. He blessed you, bless him in return—bless his name, his character, his person. Whatever he does, be sure that you bless him for it; bless him when he takes away as well as when he gives; bless him as long as you live, under all circumstances; bless him in all his attributes, from whatever point of view you consider him.

Verse 5. *For the Lord is good.* This sums up his character and contains a mass of reasons for praise. He is good, gracious, kind, bountiful, loving; yea, God is love. He who does not praise the good is not good himself. The kind of praise inculcated in the Psalm, viz., that of joy and gladness, is most fitly urged upon us by an argument from the goodness of God. *His mercy is everlasting.* God is not mere justice, stern and cold; he has bowels of compassion, and wills not the sinner's death. Towards his own people mercy is still more conspicuously displayed; it has been theirs from all eternity, and shall be theirs world without end. Everlasting mercy is a glorious theme for sacred song. *And his truth endureth to all generations.* No fickle being is he, promising and forgetting. He has entered into covenant with his people, and he will never revoke it, nor alter the thing that has gone out of his lips. As our fathers found him faithful, so will our sons, and their seed for ever. A changeable God would be a terror to the righteous, they would have no sure anchorage, and amid a changing world they would be driven to and fro in perpetual fear of shipwreck. It were well if the truth of divine faithfulness were more fully remembered by some theologians; it would overturn their belief in the final fall of believers, and teach them a more consolatory system. Our heart leaps for joy as we bow before One who has never broken his word or changed his purpose. Resting on his sure word, we feel that joy which is here commanded, and in the strength of it we come into his presence even now, and speak good of his name.

Psalm 103

(selected verses)

TITLE. *A Psalm doubtless by David; it is in his own style when at its best, and we should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because a keener sense of sin, than in his younger days. His clear sense of the frailty of life indicates his weaker years, as also does the very fullness of his praiseful gratitude.…There is too much in the Psalm, for a thousand pens to write, it is one of those all-comprehending Scriptures which is a Bible in itself, and it might alone almost suffice for the hymn-book of the church.*

Verse 1.*Bless the Lord O my soul.* Soul music is the very soul of music. The Psalmist strikes the best keynote when he begins with stirring up his inmost self to magnify the Lord. He…holds self-communion and exhorts himself, as though he felt that dullness would all too soon steal over his faculties, as, indeed, it will over us all, unless we are diligently on the watch. Jehovah is worthy to be praised by us in that highest style of adoration which is intended by the term bless—"All thy works praise thee, O God, but thy saints shall bless thee." Our very life and essential self should be engrossed with this delightful service, and each one of us should arouse his own heart to the engagement. Let others forbear if they can: "Bless the Lord, O MY soul." Let others murmur, but do thou bless. Let others bless themselves and their idols, but do thou bless the LORD. Let others use only their tongues, but as for me I will cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."

Verse 2.*Bless the LORD, O my soul. And forget not all his benefits.* Not so much as one of the divine dealings should be forgotten, they are all really beneficial to us, all worthy of himself, and all subjects for praise. Memory is very treacherous about the best things; by a strange perversity, engendered by the fall, it treasures up the refuse of the past and permits priceless treasures to lie neglected; it is tenacious of grievances and holds benefits all too loosely. It needs spurring to its duty, though that duty ought to be its delight. Observe that he calls all that is within him to remember all the Lord's benefits. For our task our energies should be suitably called out. God's all cannot be praised with less than our all. Reader, have we not cause enough at this time to bless him who blesses us? Come, let us read our diaries and see if there be not choice favors recorded there for which we have rendered no grateful return. Remember how the Persian king, when he could not sleep, read the chronicles of the empire, and discovered that one who had saved his life had never been rewarded. How quickly did he do him honor! The Lord has saved us with a great salvation, shall we render no recompense? The name of ingrate is one of the most shameful that a man can wear; surely we cannot be content to run the risk of such a brand. Let us awake then, and with intense enthusiasm bless Jehovah.

Verse 3.*Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.* Here David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes and arguments for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude. Pardoned sin is, in our experience, one of the choicest boons of grace, one of the earliest gifts of mercy—in fact, the needful preparation for enjoying all that follows it. Till iniquity is forgiven, healing, redemption, and satisfaction are unknown blessings. Forgiveness is first in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value. The pardon granted is a present

one—"forgiveth;" it is continual, for he still forgiveth; it is divine, for God gives it; it is far reaching, for it removes all our sins; it takes in omissions as well as commissions, for both these are inequities; and it is most effectual, for it is as real as the healing and the rest of the mercies with which it is placed. *Who healeth all thy diseases.* When the cause is gone, namely, iniquity, the effect ceases. Sicknesses of body and soul came into the world by sin, and as sin is eradicated, diseases bodily, mental, and spiritual, will vanish, till "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick" (Isa 33:24). Many-sided is the character of our heavenly Father, for, having forgiven as a judge, he then cures as a physician. He is all things to us, as our needs call for him, and our infirmities do but reveal him in new characters.

God gives efficacy to medicine for the body, and his grace sanctifies the soul. Spiritually we are daily under his care, and he visits us, as the surgeon does his patient; healing still (for that is the exact word) each malady as it arises. No disease of our soul baffles his skill, he goes on healing all, and he will do so till the last trace of taint has gone from our nature. The two alls of this verse are further reasons for all that is within us praising the Lord. The two blessings of this verse the Psalmist was personally enjoying, he sang not of others but of himself, or rather of his Lord, who was daily forgiving and healing him. He must have known that it was so, or he could not have sung of it. He had no doubt about it, he felt in his soul that it was so, and, therefore, he bade his pardoned and restored soul bless the Lord with all its might.

Verse 4. *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.* By purchase and by power the Lord redeems us from the spiritual death into which we had fallen, and from the eternal death which would have been its consequence. Had not the death penalty of sin been removed, our forgiveness and healing would have been incomplete portions of salvation, fragments only, and but of small value. But the removal of the guilt and power of sin is fitly attended by the reversal of the sentence of death which had been passed upon us. Glory be to our great Substitute, who delivered us from going down into the pit, by giving himself to be our ransom. Redemption will ever constitute one of the sweetest notes in the believer's grateful song. *Who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies.* Our Lord does nothing by halves, he will not stay his hand till he has gone to the uttermost with his people. Cleansing, healing, redemption, are not enough, he must needs make them kings and crown them, and the crown must be far more precious than if it were made of corruptible things, such as silver and gold; it is studded with gems of grace and lined with the velvet of lovingkindness; it is decked with the jewels of mercy, but made soft for the head to wear by a lining of tenderness. Who is like unto thee, O Lord! God himself crowns the princes of his family, for their best things come from him directly and distinctly; they do not earn the crown, for it is of mercy not of merit; they feel their own unworthiness of it, therefore he deals with tenderness; but he is resolved to bless them, and, therefore, he is ever crowning them, always surrounding their brows with coronets of mercy and compassion. He always crowns the edifice which he commences, and where he gives pardon he gives acceptance too. Our sin deprived us of all our honors, a bill of attainder[5] was issued against us as traitors; but he who removed the sentence of death by redeeming us from destruction, restores to us more than all our former honors by crowning us anew. Shall God crown us and shall not we crown him? Up, my soul, and cast thy crown at his feet, and in lowliest reverence worship him, who has so greatly exalted thee, as to lift thee from the dunghill and set thee among princes.

Verse 5. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things,* or rather "filling with good thy soul." No man is ever filled to satisfaction but a believer, and only God himself can satisfy even him. Many a

worldling is satiated, but not one is satisfied….*So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* Renewal of strength, amounting to a grant of a new lease of life, was granted to the Psalmist; he was so restored to his former self that he grew young again, and looked as vigorous as an eagle, whose eye can gaze upon the sun, and whose wing can mount above the storm.

Verse 11.*For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.* Boundless in extent towards his chosen is the mercy of the Lord; it is no more to be measured than the height of heaven or the heaven of heavens. "Like the height of the heavens" is the original language, which implies other points of comparison besides extent, and suggests sublimity, grandeur, and glory. As the lofty heavens canopy the earth, water it with dews and rains, enlighten it with sun, moon, and stars, and look down upon it with unceasing watchfulness, even so the Lord's mercy from above covers all his chosen, enriches them, embraces them, and stands for ever as their dwelling-place. The idea of our version is a very noble one, for who shall tell how exceeding great is the height of heaven? Who can reach the first of the fixed stars, and who can measure the utmost bounds of the starry universe? Yet so great is his mercy! Oh, that great little word "so"! All this mercy is for "them that fear him;" there must be a humble, hearty reverence of his authority, or we cannot taste of his grace. Godly fear is one of the first products of the divine life in us, it is the beginning of wisdom, yet it fully ensures to its possessor all the benefits of divine mercy, and is, indeed, here and elsewhere, employed to set forth the whole of true religion. Many a true child of God is full of filial fear, and yet at the same time stands trembling as to his acceptance with God; this trembling is groundless, but it is infinitely to be preferred to that baseborn presumption, which incites men to boast of their adoption and consequent security, when all the while they are in the gall of bitterness. Those who are presuming upon the infinite extent of divine mercy, should here be led to consider that although it is wide as the horizon and high as the stars, yet it is only meant for them that fear the Lord, and as for obstinate rebels, they shall have justice without mercy measured out to them.

Verse 12.*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* O glorious verse, no word even upon the inspired page can excel it! Sin is removed from us by a miracle of love! What a load to move, and yet is it removed so far that the distance is incalculable. Fly as far as the wing of imagination can bear you, and if you journey through space eastward, you are further from the west at every beat of your wing. If sin be removed so far, then we may be sure that the scent, the trace, the very memory of it must be entirely gone. If this be the distance of its removal, there is no shade of fear of its ever being brought back again; even Satan himself could not achieve such a task. Our sins are gone, Jesus has borne them away. Far as the place of sunrise is removed from yonder west, where the sun sinks when his day's journey is done, so far were our sins carried by our scapegoat nineteen centuries ago, and now if they be sought for, they shall not be found, yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord. Come, my soul, awaken thyself thoroughly and glorify the Lord for this richest of blessings. Hallelujah. The Lord alone could remove sin at all, and he has done it in a godlike fashion, making a final sweep of all our transgressions.

Verse 15.*As for man, his days are as grass.* He lives on the grass, and lives like the grass. Corn is but educated grass, and man, who feeds on it, partakes of its nature. The grass lives, grows, flowers, falls beneath the scythe, dries up, and is removed from the field: read this sentence over again, and you will find it the history of man. If he lives out his little day, he is cut down at last, and it is far more likely that he will wither before he comes to maturity, or be plucked away on a sudden, long before he has fulfilled his time. *As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.* He has a beauty and a

comeliness even as the meadows have when they are yellow with the king-cups, but, alas, how short-lived! No sooner come than gone, a flash of loveliness and no more! Man is not even like a flower in the conservatory or in the sheltered garden border, he grows best according to nature, as the field-flower does, and like the unprotected beautifier of the pasture, he runs a thousand risks of coming to a speedy end. A large congregation, in many-colored attire, always reminds us of a meadow bright with many hues; and the comparison becomes sadly true when we reflect, that as the grass and its goodliness soon pass away, even so will those we gaze upon, and all their visible beauty. Thus, too, must it be with all that comes of the flesh, even its greatest excellencies and natural virtues, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore is but as grass which withers if but a breath of wind assails it. Happy are they who, born from above, have in them an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

Verse 18. Children of the righteous are not, however, promised the Lord's mercy without stipulation, and this verse completes the statement of the last by adding: *To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.* The parents must be obedient and the children too. We are here bidden to abide by the covenant, and those who run off to any other confidence than the finished work of Jesus are not among those who obey this precept; those with whom the covenant is really made stand firm to it, and having begun in the Spirit, they do not seek to be made perfect in the flesh. The truly godly keep the Lord's commands carefully—they "remember;" they observe them practically—"to do them." Moreover they do not pick and choose, but remember "his commandments" as such, without exalting one above another as their own pleasure or convenience may dictate. May our offspring be a thoughtful, careful, observant race, eager to know the will of the Lord, and prompt to follow it fully, then will his mercy enrich and honor them from generation to generation. This verse also suggests praise, for who would wish the Lord to smile on those who will not regard his ways? That were to encourage vice. From the manner in which some men unguardedly preach the covenant, one might infer that God would bless a certain set of men however they might live, and however they might neglect his laws. But the word teaches not so. The covenant is not legal, but it is holy. It is all of grace from first to last, yet it is no panderer to sin; on the contrary, one of its greatest promises is, "I will put my laws in their hearts and in their minds will I write them" (Heb 10:16). Its general aim is the sanctifying of a people unto God, zealous for good works, and all its gifts and operations work in that direction. Faith keeps the covenant by looking alone to Jesus, while at the same time by earnest obedience it remembers the Lord's commandments to do them.

Verse 19. *The LORD has prepared his throne in the heavens.* Here is a grand burst of song produced by a view of the boundless power, and glorious sovereignty of Jehovah. His throne is fixed, for that is the word; it is established, settled, and immovable.

About his government there is no alarm, no disorder…no hurrying to and fro in expedients, no surprises to be met or unexpected catastrophes to be warded off—all is prepared and fixed, and he himself has prepared and fixed it. He is no delegated sovereign for whom a throne is set up by another…his dominion arises from himself and is sustained by his own innate power. This matchless sovereignty is the pledge of our security, the pillar upon which our confidence may safely lean. And his kingdom ruleth over all. Over the whole universe he stretches his scepter. He now reigns universally, he always has done so, and he always will. To us the world may seem rent with anarchy, but he brings order out of confusion. The warring elements are marching beneath his banner when they

most wildly rush onward in furious tempest. Great and small, intelligent and material, willing and unwilling, fierce or gentle—all, all are under his sway. His is the only universal monarchy, he is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. A clear view of his ever active, and everywhere supreme providence, is one of the most delightful of spiritual gifts; he who has it cannot do otherwise than bless the Lord with all his soul. Thus has the sweet singer hymned the varied attributes of the Lord as seen in nature, grace, and providence, and now he gathers up all his energies for one final outburst of adoration, in which he would have all unite, since all are subjects of the Great King.

Psalm 133

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees of David. We see no reason for depriving David of the authorship of this sparkling sonnet. He knew by experience the bitterness occasioned by divisions in families, and was well prepared to celebrate in choicest Psalmody the blessing of unity for which he sighed. Among the "songs of degrees", this hymn has certainly attained unto a good degree, and even in common literature it is frequently quoted for its perfume and dew. In this Psalm there is no wry word, all is "sweetness and light"—a notable ascent from Psalm 110 with which the pilgrims set out. That is full of war and lamentation, but this sings of peace and pleasantness. The visitors to Zion were about to return, and this may have been their hymn of joy because they had seen such union among the tribes who had gathered at the common altar. The previous Psalm, which sings of the covenant, had also revealed the center of Israel's unity in the Lord's anointed and the promises made to him. No wonder that brethren dwell in unity when God dwells among them, and rest in them. Our translators have given to this Psalm an admirable explanatory heading, "The benefit of the communion of saints." These good men often hit of the meaning of a passage in a few words.*

Verse 1.*Behold*. It is a wonder seldom seen, therefore behold it! It may be seen, for it is the characteristic of real saints—therefore fail not to inspect it! It is well worthy of admiration; pause and gaze upon it! It will charm you into imitation, therefore note it well! God looks on with approval, therefore consider it with attention. *How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* No one can tell the exceeding excellence of such a condition; and so the Psalmist uses the word "how" twice;—"Behold how good! and how pleasant!" He does not attempt to measure either the good or the pleasure, but invites us to behold for ourselves. The combination of the two adjectives "good" and "pleasant", is more remarkable than the conjunction of two stars of the first magnitude: for a thing to be "good" is good, but for it also to be pleasant is better. All men love pleasant things, and yet it frequently happens that the pleasure is evil; but here the condition is as good as it is pleasant, as pleasant as it is good, for the same "how" is set before each qualifying word.

For brethren according to the flesh to dwell together is not always wise; for experience teaches that they are better a little apart, and it is shameful for them to dwell together in disunion. They had much better part in peace like Abraham and Lot, than dwell together in envy like Joseph's brothers. When brethren can and do dwell together in unity, then is their communion worthy to be gazed upon and sung of in holy Psalmody. Such sights ought often to be seen among those who are near of kin, for they are brethren, and therefore should be united in heart and aim; they dwell together, and it is for their mutual comfort that there should be no strife; and yet how many families are rent by fierce feuds, and exhibit a spectacle which is neither good nor pleasant!

As to brethren in spirit, they ought to dwell together in church fellowship, and in that fellowship one essential matter is unity. We can dispense with uniformity if we possess unity: oneness of life, truth, and way; oneness in Christ Jesus; oneness of object and spirit—these we must have, or our assemblies will be synagogues of contention rather than churches of Christ. The closer the unity the better; for the more of the good and the pleasant there will be. Since we are imperfect beings, somewhat of the evil and the unpleasant is sure to intrude; but this will readily be neutralized and easily ejected by the true love of the saints, if it really exists. Christian unity is good in itself, good for ourselves, good for the brethren, good for our converts, good for the outside world; and for

certain it is pleasant; for a loving heart must have pleasure and give pleasure in associating with others of like nature. A church united for years in earnest service of the Lord is a well of goodness and joy to all those who dwell round about it.

Verse 2. *It is like the precious ointment upon the head.* In order that we may the better behold brotherly unity David gives us a resemblance, so that as in a glass we may perceive its blessedness. It has a sweet perfume about it, comparable to that precious ointment with which the first High Priest was anointed at his ordination. It is a holy thing, and so again is like the oil of consecration which was to be used only in the Lord's service. What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high priest alone! It is a diffusive thing: being poured on his head the fragrant oil flowed down upon Aaron's head, and thence dropped upon his garments till the utmost hem was anointed therewith; and even so doth brotherly love extend its benign power and bless all who are beneath its influence. Hearty concord brings a benediction upon all concerned; its goodness and pleasure are shared in by the lowliest members of the household; even the servants are the better and the happier because of the lovely unity among the members of the family. It has a special use about it; for as by the anointing oil Aaron was set apart for the special service of Jehovah, even so those who dwell in love are the better fitted to glorify God in his church. The Lord is not likely to use for his glory those who are devoid of love; they lack the anointing needful to make them priests unto the Lord. That ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard. This is a chief point of comparison, that as the oil did not remain confined to the place where it first fell, but flowed down the High Priest's hair and bedewed his beard, even so brotherly love descending from the head distills and descends, anointing as it runs, and perfuming all it lights upon. That went down to the skirts of his garments. Once set in motion it would not cease from flowing. It might seem as if it were better not to smear his garments with oil, but the sacred unguent could not be restrained, it flowed over his holy robes; even thus does brotherly love not only flow over the hearts upon which it was first poured out, and descend to those who are an inferior part of the mystical body of Christ, but it runs where it is not sought for, asking neither leave nor license to make its way. Christian affection knows no limits of parish, nation, sect, or age. Is the man a believer in Christ? Then he is in the one body, and I must yield him an abiding love. Is he one of the poorest, one of the least spiritual, one of the least lovable? Then he is as the skirts of the garment, and my heart's love must fall even upon him. Brotherly love comes from the head, but falls to the feet. Its way is downward. It "ran down", and it "went down": love for the brethren condescends to men of low estate, it is not puffed up, but is lowly and meek. This is no small part of its excellence: oil would not anoint if it did not flow down, neither would brotherly love diffuse its blessing if it did not descend.

Verse 3. *As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.* From the loftier mountains the moisture appears to be wafted to the lesser hills: the dews of Hermon fall on Zion. The Alpine Lebanon ministers to the minor elevation of the city of David; and so does brotherly love descend from the higher to the lower, refreshing and enlivening in its course. Holy concord is as dew, mysteriously blessed, full of life and growth for all plants of grace. It brings with it so much benediction that it is as no common dew, but as that of Hermon which is specially copious, and far reaching. The proper rendering is, "As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion", and this tallies with the figure which has been already used; and sets forth by a second simile the sweet descending diffusiveness of brotherly unity. *For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.* That is, in Zion, or better still, in the place where brotherly love

abounds. Where love reigns God reigns. Where love wishes blessing, there God commands the blessing. God has but to command, and it is done. He is so pleased to see his dear children happy in one another that he fails not to make them happy in himself. He gives especially his best blessing of eternal life, for love is life; dwelling together in love we have begun the enjoyments of eternity, and these shall not be taken from us. Let us love for evermore, and we shall live for evermore. This makes Christian brotherhood so good and pleasant; it has Jehovah's blessing resting upon it, and it cannot be otherwise than sacred like "the precious ointment", and heavenly like "the dew of Hermon." O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity. Never shall we know the full power of the anointing till we are of one heart and of one spirit; never will the sacred dew of the Spirit descend in all its fullness till we are perfectly joined together in the same mind; never will the covenanted and commanded blessing come forth from the Lord our God till once again we shall have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Lord, lead us into this most precious spiritual unity, for thy Son's sake. Amen.

Psalm 138

TITLE. *A Psalm of David. This Psalm is wisely placed. Whoever edited and arranged these sacred poems, he had an eye to apposition and contrast; for if in Ps 137:1-9 we see the need of silence before revilers, here we see the excellence of a brave confession. There is a time to be silent, lest we cast pearls before swine; and there is a time to speak openly, lest we be found guilty of cowardly not confessing. The Psalm is evidently of a Davidic character, exhibiting all the fidelity, courage, and decision of that King of Israel and Prince of Psalmists. Of course the critics have tried to rend the authorship from David on account of the mention of the temple, though it so happens that in one of the Psalms which is allowed to be David's the same word occurs. Many modern critics are to the word of God what blowflies are to the food of men: they cannot do any good, and unless relentlessly driven away they do great harm.*

Verse 1.*I will praise thee with my whole heart.* His mind is so taken up with God that he does not mention his name: to him there is no other God, and Jehovah is so perfectly realized and so intimately known, that the Psalmist, in addressing him, no more thinks of mentioning his name than we should do if we were speaking to a father or a friend. He sees God with his mind's eye, and simply addresses him with the pronoun "thee." He is resolved to praise the Lord, and to do it with the whole force of his life, even with his whole heart. He would not submit to act as one under restraint, because of the opinions of others; but in the presence of the opponents of the living God he would be as hearty in worship as if all were friends and would cheerfully unite with him. If others do not praise the Lord, there is all the more reason why we should do so, and should do so with enthusiastic eagerness. We need a broken heart to mourn our own sins, but a whole heart to praise the Lord's perfections. If ever our heart is whole and wholly occupied with one thing, it should be when we are praising the Lord.

Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. Why should these idols rob Jehovah of his praises? The Psalmist will not for a moment suspend his songs because there are images before him, and their foolish worshippers might not approve of his music. I believe David referred to the false gods of the neighboring nations, and the deities of the surviving Canaanites. He was not pleased that such gods were set up; but he intended to express at once his contempt of them and his own absorption in the worship of the living Jehovah by continuing most earnestly to sing wherever he might be. It would be paying these dead idols too much respect to cease singing because they were perched aloft. In these days when new religions are daily excogitated, and new gods are set up, it is well to know how to act. Bitterness is forbidden, and controversy is apt to advertise the heresy; the very best method is to go on personally worshipping the Lord with unvarying zeal, singing with heart and voice his royal praises. Do they deny the Divinity of our Lord? Let us the more fervently adore him. Do they despise the atonement? Let us the more constantly proclaim it. Had half the time spent in councils and controversies been given to praising the Lord, the church would have been far sounder and stronger than she is at this day. The Hallelujah Legion will win the day. Praising and singing are our armor against the idolatries of heresy, our comfort under the depression caused by insolent attacks upon the truth, and our weapons for defending the Gospel. Faith when displayed in cheerful courage has about it a sacred contagion: others learn to believe in the Most High when they see his servant "Calm 'mid the bewildering cry, Confident of victory."

Verse 2.*I will worship toward thy holy temple,* or the place of God's dwelling, where the ark abode. He would worship God in God's own way. The Lord had ordained a center of unity, a place

of sacrifice, a house of his indwelling; and David accepted the way of worship enjoined by revelation. Even so, the true-hearted believer of these days must not fall into the will worship of superstition, or the wild worship of skepticism, but reverently worship as the Lord himself prescribes. The idol gods had their temples; but David averts his glance from them, and looks earnestly to the spot chosen of the Lord for his own sanctuary. We are not only to adore the true God, but to do so in his own appointed way: the Jew looked to the temple, we are to look to Jesus, the living temple of the Godhead.

And praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth. Praise would be the main part of David's worship; the name or character of God the great object of his song; and the special point of his praise the grace and truth which shone so conspicuously in that name. The person of Jesus is the temple of the Godhead, and therein we behold the glory of the Father, "full of grace and truth." It is upon these two points that the name of Jehovah is at this time assailed—his grace and his truth. He is said to be too stern, too terrible, and therefore "modern thought" displaces the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and sets up an effeminate deity of its own making. As for us, we firmly believe that God is love, and that in the summing up of all things it will be seen that hell itself is not inconsistent with the beneficence of Jehovah, but is, indeed, a necessary part of his moral government now that sin has intruded into the universe. True believers hear the thunders of his justice, and yet they do not doubt his lovingkindness. Especially do we delight in God's great love to his own elect, such as he showed to Israel as a race and more especially to David and his seed when he entered into covenant with him. Concerning this there is abundant room for praise. But not only do men attack the lovingkindness of God, but the truth of God is at this time assailed on all sides; some doubt the truth of the inspired record as to its histories, others challenge the doctrines, many sneer at the prophecies; in fact, the infallible word of the Lord is at this time treated as if it were the writing of impostors, and only worthy to be carped at. The swine are trampling on the pearls at this time, and nothing restrains them; nevertheless, the pearls are pearls still, and shall yet shine about our Monarch's brow. We sing the lovingkindness and truth of the God of the Old Testament—"the God of the whole earth shall he be called." David before the false gods first sang, then worshipped, and then proclaimed the grace and truth of Jehovah; let us do the same before the idols of the New Theology.

For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. The word of promise made to David was in his eyes more glorious than all else that he had seen of the Most High. Revelation excels creation in the clearness, definiteness, and fullness of its teaching. The name of the Lord in nature is not so easily read as in the Scriptures, which are a revelation in human language, specially adapted to the human mind, treating of human need, and of a Savior who appeared in human nature to redeem humanity. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the divine word will not pass away, and in this respect especially it has a preeminence over every other form of manifestation. Moreover, the Lord lays all the rest of his name under tribute to his word: his wisdom, power, love, and all his other attributes combine to carry out his word. It is his word which creates, sustains, quickens, enlightens, and comforts. As a word of command it is supreme; and in the person of the incarnate Word it is set above all the works of God's hands. The sentence in the text is wonderfully full of meaning. We have collected a vast mass of literature upon it, but space will not allow us to put it all into our notes. Let us adore the Lord who has spoken to us by his word, and by his Son; and in the presence of unbelievers let us both praise his holy name and extol his holy word.

Verse 3. *In the day when I cried thou answerest me.* No proof is so convincing as that of

experience. No man doubts the power of prayer after he has received an answer of peace to his supplication. It is the distinguishing mark of the true and living God that he hears the pleadings of his people, and answers them; the gods hear not and answer not, but Jehovah's memorial is—"the God that heareth prayer." There was some special day in which David cried more vehemently than usual; he was weak, wounded, worried, and his heart was wearied; then like a child he "cried"—cried unto his Father. It was a bitter, earnest, eager prayer, as natural and as plaintive as the cry of a babe. The Lord answered it, but what answer can there be to a cry?—to a mere inarticulate wail of grief? Our heavenly Father is able to interpret tears, and cries, and he replies to their inner sense in such a way as fully meets the case. The answer came in the same day as the cry ascended: so speedily does prayer rise to heaven, so quickly does mercy return to earth. The statement of this sentence is one which all believers can make, and as they can substantiate it with many facts, they ought boldly to publish it, for it is greatly to God's glory. Well might the Psalmist say, "I will worship" when he felt bound to say "thou answeredst me." Well might he glory before the idols and their worshippers when he had answers to prayer to look back upon. This also is our defense against modern heresies: we cannot forsake the Lord, for he has heard our prayers.And strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. This was a true answer to his prayer. If the burden was not removed, yet strength was given wherewith to bear it and this is an equally effective method of help. It may not be best for us that the trial should come to an end; it may be far more to our advantage that by its pressure we should learn patience. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and our prudent Father in heaven will not deprive us of those benefits. Strength imparted to the soul is an inestimable boon; it means courage, fortitude, assurance, heroism. By his word and Spirit the Lord can make the trembler brave, the sick whole, the weary bright. This soul might well continue: the man having been strengthened for one emergency remains vigorous for life, and is prepared for all future labors and sufferings; unless, indeed, he throw away his force by unbelief, or pride, or some other sin. When God strengthens, none can weaken. Then is our soul strong indeed when the Lord infuses might into us.

Verse 4.*All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth.* Kings have usually small care to hear the word of the Lord; but King David feels assured that if they do hear it they will feel its power. A little piety goes a long way in courts; but brighter days are coming, in which rulers will become hearers and worshippers: may the advent of such happy times be hastened. What an assembly!—"all the kings of the earth!" What a purpose! Gathered to hear the words of Jehovah's mouth. What a preacher! David himself rehearses the words of Jehovah. What praise! when they all in happy union lift up their songs unto the Lord. Kings are as gods below, and they do well when they worship the God above. The way of conversion for kings is the same as for ourselves: faith to them also cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Happy are those who can cause the word of the Lord to penetrate palaces; for the occupants of thrones are usually the last to know the joyful sounds of the Gospel. David, the king, cared for kings' souls, and it will be wise for each man to look first after those who are of his own order. He went to his work of testimony with full assurance of success: he meant to speak only the words of Jehovah's mouth, and he felt sure that the kings would hear and praise Jehovah.

Verse 5.*Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD.* Here is a double wonder—kings in God's ways, and kings singing there. Let a man once know the ways of Jehovah, and he will find therein abundant reason for song; but the difficulty is to bring the great ones of the earth into ways so little attractive to the carnal mind. Perhaps when the Lord sends us a King David to preach, we shall yet

see monarchs converted and hear their voices raised in devout adoration. For great is the glory of the LORD. This glory shall overshadow all the greatness and glory of all kings: they shall be stirred by a sight of it to obey and adore. O that Jehovah's glory were revealed even now! O that the blind eyes of men could once behold it, then their hearts would be subdued to joyful reverence. David, under a sense of Jehovah's glory, exclaimed, "I will sing" (Ps 138:1), and here he represents the kings as doing the same thing.

Verse 6. *Though the Lord be high.* In greatness, dignity, and power, Jehovah is higher than the highest. His nature is high above the comprehension of his creatures, and his glory even exceeds the loftiest soarings of imagination. *Yet hath he respect unto the lowly.* He views them with pleasure, thinks of them with care, listens to their prayers, and protects them from evil. Because they think little of themselves he thinks much of them. They reverence him, and he respects them. They are low in their own esteem, and he makes them high in his esteem. *But the proud he knoweth afar off.* He does not need to come near them in order to discover their utter vanity: a glance from afar reveals to him their emptiness and offensiveness. He has no fellowship with them, but views them from a distance; he is not deceived, but knows the truth about them, despite their blustering; he has no respect unto them, but utterly abhors them. To a Cain's sacrifice, a Pharaoh's promise, a Rabshakeh's threat, and a Pharisee's prayer, the Lord has no respect. Nebuchadnezzar, when far off from God, cried, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded"; but the Lord knew him, and sent him grazing with cattle. Proud men boast loudly of their culture and "the freedom of thought", and even dare to criticize their Maker: but he knows them from afar, and will keep them at arm's length in this life, and shut them up in hell in the next.

Verse 7. *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me.* If I am walking there now, or shall be doing so in years to come, I have no cause for fear; for God is with me, and will give me new life. When we are somewhat in trouble it is bad enough, but it is worse to penetrate into the center of that dark continent and traverse its midst: yet in such a case the believer makes progress, for he walks; he keeps to a quiet pace, for he does no more than walk; and he is not without the best of company, for his God is near to pour fresh life into him. It is a happy circumstance that, if God be away at any other time, yet he is pledged to be with us in trying hours: "when thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee." He is in a blessed condition who can confidently use the language of David—"thou wilt revive me." He shall not make his boast of God in vain: he shall be kept alive, and made more alive than ever. How often has the Lord quickened us by our sorrows! Are they not his readiest means of exciting to fullness of energy the holy life which dwells within us? If we receive reviving, we need not regret affliction. When God revives us, trouble will never harm us. *Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.* This is the fact which would revive fainting David. Our foes fall when the Lord comes to deal with them; he makes short work of the enemies of his people—with one hand he routs them. His wrath soon quenches their wrath; his hand stays their hand. Adversaries may be many, and malicious, and mighty; but our glorious Defender has only to stretch out his arm and their armies vanish. The sweet singer rehearses his assurance of salvation, and sings of it in the ears of the Lord, addressing him with this confident language. He will be saved—saved dexterously, decidedly, divinely; he has no doubt about it. God's right hand cannot forget its cunning; Jerusalem is his chief joy, and he will defend his own elect.

Verse 8. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.* All my interests are safe in Jehovah's

hands. “The work which his goodness began, The arm of his strength will complete.” God is concerned in all that concerns his servants. He will see to it that none of their precious things shall fail of completion; their life, their strength, their hopes, their graces, their pilgrimage, shall each and all be perfected. Jehovah himself will see to this and therefore it is most sure. Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. The refrain of the former Psalm is in his ears, and he repeats it as his own personal conviction and consolation. The first clause of the verse is the assurance of faith, and this second one reaches to the full assurance of understanding. God’s work in us will abide unto perfection because God’s mercy towards us thus abideth. Forsake not the works of thine own hands. Our confidence does not cause us to live without prayer, but encourages us to pray all the more. Since we have it written upon our hearts that God will perfect his work in us, and we see it also written in Scripture that his mercy changeth not, with holy earnestness we entreat that we may not be forsaken. If there be anything good in us, it is the work of God’s own hands: will he leave it? Why has he wrought so much in us if he means to give us up?—it will be a sure effort. He who has gone so far will surely persevere with us to the end. Our hope for the final perseverance of the believer lies in the final perseverance of the believer’s God. If the Lord begins to build, and does not finish, it will not be his honor. He will have a desire to the work of his hands, for he knows it has cost him already, and he will not throw away a vessel upon which he has expended so much of labor and skill. Therefore do we praise him with our whole heart, even in the presence of those who depart from his Holy Word, and, set up another god and another gospel; which are not another, but there be some that trouble us.

Psalm 139

(Selected Verses)

SUBJECT. *One of the most notable of the sacred hymns. It sings the omniscience and omnipresence of God, inferring from these the overthrow of the powers of wickedness, since he who sees and hears the abominable deeds and words of the rebellious will surely deal with them according to his justice....It flames out with such flashes of light as to turn night into day....This holy song casts a clear light even to the uttermost parts of the sea, and warns it against that practical atheism which ignores the presence of God, and so makes shipwreck of the soul.*

Verse 1.*O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.* He invokes in adoration Jehovah the all knowing God, and he proceeds to adore him by proclaiming one of his peculiar attributes. If we would praise God aright we must draw the matter of our praise from himself—"O Jehovah, thou hast." No pretended god knows ought of us; but the true God, Jehovah, understands us, and is most intimately acquainted with our persons, nature, and character. How well it is for us to know the God who knows us! The divine knowledge is extremely thorough and searching; it is as if he had searched us, as officers search a man for contraband goods, or as pillagers ransack a house for plunder. Yet we must not let the figure run upon all fours, and lead us further than it is meant to do: the Lord knows all things naturally and as a matter of course, and not by any effort on his part. Searching ordinarily implies a measure of ignorance which is removed by observation; of course this is not the case with the Lord; but the meaning of the Psalmist is, that the Lord knows us as thoroughly as if he had examined us minutely, and had pried into the most secret corners of our being. This infallible knowledge has always existed—"Thou hast searched me"; and it continues unto this day, since God cannot forget that which he has once known. There never was a time in which we were unknown to God, and there never will be a moment in which we shall be beyond his observation. Note how the Psalmist makes his doctrine personal: he saith not, "O God, thou knowest all things"; but, "thou hast known me." It is ever our wisdom to lay truth home to ourselves. How wonderful the contrast between the observer and the observed! Jehovah and me! Yet this most intimate connection exists, and therein lies our hope. Let the reader sit still a while and try to realize the two poles of this statement—the Lord and poor puny man—and he will see much to admire and wonder at.

Verse 2.*Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising.* Me thou knowest and all that comes of me. I am observed when I quietly sit down, and marked when I resolutely rise up. My most common and casual acts, my most needful and necessary movements, are noted by time, and thou knowest the inward thoughts which regulate them. Whether I sink in lowly self-renunciation, or ascend in pride, thou seest the motions of my mind, as well as those of my body. This is a fact to be remembered every moment: sitting down to consider, or rising up to act, we are still seen, known, and read by Jehovah our Lord. Thou understandest my thought afar off. Before it is my own it is foreknown and comprehended by thee. Though my thought be invisible to the sight, though as yet I be not myself cognizant of the shape it is assuming, yet thou hast it under thy consideration, and thou perceivest its nature, its source, its drift, its result. Never dost thou misjudge or wrongly interpret me: my inmost thought is perfectly understood by thine impartial mind. Though thou shouldest give but a glance at my heart, and see me as one sees a passing meteor moving afar, yet thou wouldst by that glimpse sum up

all the meanings of my soul, so transparent is everything to thy piercing glance.

Verse 3.*Thou compassest my path and my lying down.* My path and my pallet, my running and my resting, are alike within the circle of thine observation. Thou dost surround me even as the air continually surrounds all creatures that live. I am shut up within the wall of thy being; I am encircled within the bounds of thy knowledge. Waking or sleeping I am still observed of thee. I may leave thy path, but you never leave mine. I may sleep and forget thee, but thou dost never slumber, nor fall into oblivion concerning thy creature. The original signifies not only surrounding, but winnowing and sifting. The Lord judges our active life and our quiet life; he discriminates our action and our repose, and marks that in them which is good and also that which is evil. There is chaff in all our wheat, and the Lord divides them with unerring precision. *And art acquainted with all my ways.* Thou art familiar with all I do; nothing is concealed from thee, nor surprising to thee, nor misunderstood by thee. Our paths may be habitual or accidental, open or secret, but with them all the Most Holy One is well acquainted. This should fill us with awe, so that we sin not; with courage, so that we fear not; with delight, so that we mourn not.

Verse 4.*For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.* The unformed word, which lies within the tongue like a seed in the soil, is certainly and completely known to the Great Searcher of hearts. A negative expression is used to make the positive statement all the stronger: not a word is unknown, is a forcible way of saying that every word is well known. Divine knowledge is perfect, since not a single word is unknown, nay, not even an unspoken word, and each one is "altogether" or wholly known. What hope of concealment can remain when the speech with which too many conceal their thoughts is itself transparent before the Lord? O Jehovah, how great art thou! If thine eye hath such power, what must be the united force of thine whole nature!

Verse 5.*Thou hast beset me behind and before.* As though we were caught in an ambush, or besieged by an army which has wholly beleaguered the city walls, we are surrounded by the Lord. God has set us where we be, and beset us wherever we be. Behind us there is God recording our sins, or in grace blotting out the remembrance of them; and before us there is God foreknowing all our deeds, and providing for all our wants. We cannot turn back and so escape him, for he is behind; we cannot go forward and outmarch him, for he is before. He not only beholds us, but he besets us; and lest there should seem any chance of escape, or lest we should imagine that the surrounding presence is yet a distant one, it is added—*and laid thine hand upon me.*The prisoner marches along surrounded by a guard, and gripped by an officer. God is very near; we are wholly in his power; from that power there is no escape. It is not said that God will thus beset us and arrest us, but it is done —"Thou hast beset me." Shall we not alter the figure, and say that our heavenly Father has folded his arms around us, and caressed us with his hand. It is even so with those who are by faith the children of the Most High.

Verse 6.*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.* I cannot grasp it. I can hardly endure to think of it. The theme overwhelms me. I am amazed and astounded at it. Such knowledge not only surpasses my comprehension, but even my imagination. It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Mount as I may, this truth is too lofty for my mind. It seems to be always above me, even when I soar into the loftiest regions of spiritual thought. Is it not so with every attribute of God? Can we attain to any idea of his power, his wisdom, his holiness? Our mind has no line with which to measure the Infinite. Do we therefore question? Say, rather, that we therefore believe and adore. We are not surprised that the Most Glorious God should in his knowledge be high above all the knowledge to which we can attain.

It must of necessity be so, since we are such poor limited beings; and when we stand a tip-toe we cannot reach to the lowest step of the throne of the Eternal.

Verse 7. Here omnipresence is the theme—a truth to which omniscience naturally leads up. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit?* Not that the Psalmist wished to go from God, or to avoid the power of the divine life; but he asks this question to set forth the fact that no one can escape from the all pervading being and observation of the Great Invisible Spirit. Observe how the writer makes the matter personal to himself—"Whither shall I go?" It were well if we all thus applied truth to our own cases. It were wise for each one to say—The spirit of the Lord is ever around me: Jehovah is omnipresent to me. Or whither spirit I flee from thy presence? If, full of dread, I hastened to escape from that nearness of God which had become my terror, which way could I turn? "Whither?" "Whither?" He repeats his cry. No answer comes back to him. The reply to his first "Whither?" is its echo—a second "Whither?" From the sight of God he cannot be hidden, but that is not all—from the immediate, actual, constant presence of God he cannot be withdrawn. We must be, whether we will it or not, as near to God as our soul is to our body. This makes it dreadful work to sin; for we offend the Almighty to his face, and commit acts of treason at the very foot of his throne.Go from him, or flee from him we cannot: neither by patient travel nor by hasty flight can we withdraw from the all surrounding Deity. His mind is in our mind; himself within ourselves. His spirit is over our spirit; our presence is ever in his presence.

Verse 8.*If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there.* Filling the loftiest region with his yet loftier presence, Jehovah is in the heavenly place, at home, upon his throne. The ascent, if it were possible, would be unavailing for purposes of escape; it would, in fact, be a flying into the center of the fire to avoid the heat. There would he be immediately confronted by the terrible personality of God. Note the abrupt words—"THOU, THERE." If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. Descending into the lowest imaginable depths among the dead, there should we find the Lord. THOU! says the Psalmist, as if he felt that God was the one great Existence in all places. Whatever Hades may be, or whoever may be there, one thing is certain, Thou, O Jehovah, art there. Two regions, the one of glory and the other of darkness, are set in contrast, and this one fact is asserted of both—"thou art there." Whether we rise up or lie down, take our wing or make our bed, we shall find God near us. A "behold" is added to the second clause, since it seems more a wonder to meet with God in hell than in heaven, in Hades than in Paradise. Of course the presence of God produces very different effects in these places, but it is unquestionably in each; the bliss of one, the terror of the other. What an awful thought, that some men seem resolved to take up their night's abode in hell, a night which shall know no morning.

About This Booklet

The Treasury of David was first published in monthly installments over a twenty year span in the London Metropolitan Tabernacle's periodical, *The Sword and the Trowel* . Completed sections were released volume by volume, until the seventh and final volume was released in 1885. It is his *Magnum Opus* and has become one of Spurgeon's most valued works. About it Spurgeon said in the preface: "The delightful study of the Psalms has yielded me boundless profit and ever-growing pleasure; common gratitude constrains me to communicate to others a portion of the benefit, with the prayer that it may induce them to search further for themselves. That I have nothing better of my own to offer upon this peerless book is to me a matter of deepest regret; that I have anything whatever to present is subject for devout gratitude to the Lord of grace. I have done my best, but, conscious of many defects, I heartily wish I could have done far better."—C.H. Spurgeon

Spurgeon's original work comprises 1436 pages in three volumes. Of each Psalm he has written for each verse the following sections:

- a verse by verse exposition
- a collection of illustrative extracts from the whole range of literature
- a series of homiletical hints upon almost every verse
- lists of writers upon each Psalm

It is the exposition section which has been included here for selected Psalms.

There are two modern editions of the complete *Treasury of David.* One is a careful reproduction of the original seven volumes in quality bindings, from: Pilgrim Publications; PO Box 66; Pasadena, TX 77501; (713) 477-4261; *www.pilgrimpublications.com.* The other edition is from Hendrickson Publishers in three volumes. Both can be ordered through most Christian bookstores.

About the Author

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) was born in Kelvedon, Essex, England, in 1834. Though reared in the knowledge of the Gospel, Spurgeon was not converted to Jesus Christ until 1850. In August of the same year, he preached his first sermon. Then in 1854, when he was only nineteen, the New Park Street Chapel, Southwark, London, called him as pastor. This church became the 6,000 seat Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon preached the Gospel faithfully until his death in January 1892.

Notes

[←1]
commination – denunciation.

[←2]

escutcheon – a shield-shaped surface bearing a coat of arms for honor.

[←3]

cavillers – one who objects when there is little reason to do so; a quibbler

[←4]

aphorism – a concise statement of a principle

[←5]

bill of attainder – a legislative action wherein the guilty party was deprived of all earthly possessions, for those sentenced to death.