



# **“SONGS AND DEVOTIONS OF DAVID”**

by  
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*Electronic Version  
In  
PDF Format*

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# Preface

This electronic version of my previously printed seven volume set on the book of Psalms is being offered because of the high volume of requests that I have received to place these notes in such a format. In my estimation electronic notes, or in this case books, will never take the place of a good hard-bound volume of material. Books were designed to hold in one's hand, or spread open on the top of a desk. There is simply something unique about possessing the author's material in printed form. Be that as it may, an increasing number of preachers and students of the Bible are finding it useful to build an *electronic* library. I too have an ever increasing amount of material in electronic format, much of which is no longer available in printed format. I find these notes to be convenient and available at the touch of a button or the click of mouse. For that I am thankful.

A word or two is in order regarding this electronic format of my previously printed volumes on this material. First, the page numbers in this format do not match the page numbers in my printed volumes. There are number of reasons for this, but we will not attempt to explain why this is the case. Just trust me on this. If you happen to have a printed copy of this work, and you want to do a "search" in this file, keep in mind that it will not match the pages in the printed copy.

Second, I have provided a "table of contents" of the entire 150 chapters on the Psalms. If you desire to go to a specific chapter, simply locate that chapter in the table of contents, and point and click on the page "number" – you will note that the page numbers are formatted with the standard "point and click" format that takes you to the link associated with that item.

Third, I have not divided these notes into "Volumes" as in my printed copies of this study. The chapters run concurrent one to another.

Finally, I still hope you find my printed copies of this work on the Psalms useful. So long as an interest continues in this work we will continue to re-print the bound copies of this work, either in the seven volume set or in a more permanent hard bound edition of the books.

Thanks for your interest in our work. We hope you find this electronic version useful. We welcome your comments and suggestions as to how we might make this more “user friendly.”

Tom Wacaster

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# *Introduction To The Psalms*

This will not be a lengthy introduction. We have tried to provide some of the “basics” that will help you have a workable knowledge of some of those things necessary to a greater appreciation for the Psalms. That the book we commonly call “The Psalms” is a collection of songs, prayers, and praise, cannot be denied. They were evidently collected over a long period of time and written by different authors. Each chapter is a “whole within itself.” This book is, in fact, the only book that the Holy Spirit divided into chapters for us. On occasions one Psalm is related to another (or to a group of other Psalms), and in such cases, they should be studied together.

**AUTHORSHIP:** Of the 150 Psalms, 100 have the author's name inscribed. The “subscript” on many of the Psalms were added at some date following their composition. The following gives a breakdown of the various authors of the Psalms: (1) David, 73 Psalms; (2) Asaph, a Levite, chief of the sacred musicians, 12 Psalms; (3) Sons of Korah, Levites who served in the temple during David's reign, 10 Psalms; (4) Solomon, 2 Psalms; (5) Heman, a Levite who served as musician during David's reign, 1 Psalm; (6) Ethan, probably another musician under David, 1 psalm; (7) Moses, 1 psalm. Psalms 2 and 95 are ascribed to David in the New Testament (Acts 4:25; Heb. 4:7)

The following are reasons why it is safe to ascribe the greater portions of the Psalms to David: (1) He was a skillful musician (cf. 2 Samuel 23:1; 1 Samuel 16:18-23; Amos 6:5). (2) He was a true poet; (3) He was a man of deep feelings and rich imagination; (4) He was a true worshipper of God; (5) He had rich and varied experiences; (6) He was filled with God's spirit (1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:2).

**DATE:** From the time of Moses to the Babylonian Captivity.

**PURPOSE:** It would be difficult to isolate one single purpose for the Psalms. We suggest the following purposes:

- (1) Psalms was the inspired worship book of prayers and praise for Israel. The experiences of the child of God as he lives in the

world are graphically depicted - his doubts, fears, longings, hopes, joys, and sorrows;

- (2) The book also presents the proper method of true worship; namely that of a right attitude of heart toward God, occupation with God Himself, and satisfaction found in Him;
- (3) In addition, the experiences of the wicked are also presented in contrast with the righteous, along with the reward for the righteous in contrast with doom for the wicked;
- (4) Beyond all this it is a great book of prophecy. At least 13 Psalms are proven to be Messianic by New Testament quotations. Many others also undoubtedly refer to Christ. The future glory of Israel is also a subject of prophecy. Over one fourth of the Old Testament quotations in the New Testament are found in the Psalms. We are convinced that the hem of the garment hath not been discovered with regard to the prophetic statements in Psalms.

**THEME :** Were we to suggest a theme, it would most certainly be: "The believer communing with his God through prayer and praise."

**OUTLINE:** Although the Psalms were written over a long period of time, they were gathered together and grouped into FIVE basic sections:

Book I --- Largely prayers of David, Psalms 1-41

Book II -- Nineteen of these are by David. The general subject is the sufferings of the godly and their deliverance, Psalms 42-72

Book III - Psalms emphasizing God's dealings with Israel from the beginning of the nation to the final blessing, Psalms 73-89

Book IV -- The sufferings and afflictions of God's people to end with the Lord's reign, Psalms 90-106

Book V --- These emphasize the Word of God. The Messiah is pictured both in sufferings and glorious return. Closes with Hallelujah Chorus, Psalms 107-150

Of these five divisions, the first and second are Davidic in authorship. They are mournful in their tone, while the fifth is more jubilant. The third and fourth books appear to appeal to history.

## **REASONS FOR STUDYING PSALMS:**

1. It is the most familiar Old Testament book;
2. It is the most frequently quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament; of the two hundred and eighty three references to the

Old Testament in the New Testament, one hundred and sixteen are from the Psalms;

3. Jesus was familiar with the Psalms;
4. These hymns enable us to look directly into the heart of God's faithful saints of olden days;
5. There is no situation in life for which the Psalter does not provide light and guidance; they are, in fact, very relevant.
6. The Psalms are very popular. Consider the following quote from J. Baldwin Brown:

The Jewish Psalms have furnished the bridal hymns, the battle songs, the pilgrim marches, the penitential prayers, and the public praises of every nation in Christendom, since Christendom was born. They have rolled through the din of every European battlefield. Drake's sailors sang them when they clave the virgin waters of the Pacific. They crossed the ocean with the Mayflower pilgrims; were sung around Cromwell's campfires. In Palace halls, by happy hearths, in squalid rooms, in pauper wards, in prison cells, in crowded sanctuaries, in lonely wilderness - everywhere they have uttered our moan of contrition and our song of triumph; our tearful complaints, and our wrestling, conquering prayer (our source for this quote could not be located).

**CHARACTERISTICS OF HEBREW POETRY:** When studying Hebrew poetry, such as that found in the Psalms, certain stylistic traits must be noted:

A. **Parallelism** - The principles of interpretation are closely related to the characteristics of each type of literature. There are several characteristics of Hebrew poetry, some of which are readily seen in the Psalms, the most distinctive of which is **parallelism**, or **thought rhyme**. Hebrew poetry contains little, if any, word rhyme. It is not like our poetry in the Western world. Parallelism appears in several forms which are defined and illustrated in the following:

1. In **synonymous parallelism** the thought of the first line is repeated in the second, expressed in different words. The exact truth the poet wished to express was repeated for emphasis. Example, Psa. 24:1-3.
2. In **antithetic parallelism** the truth presented in one line is strengthened by a contrasting statement in the other. Example, Psa. 1:6.



3. In **synthetic parallelism** the first and second lines bear some definite relation to each other, either as cause and effect, proposition and conclusion, etc. Each part is essential to provide the complete thought. Example, Psa 119:9.
4. **Progressive parallelism** appears in several varieties, the most common ones being the composite or stair-like and the climactic. The composite or stair-like is composed of several lines, each providing a complete element of the aggregate or composite thought. Example Psa. 1:1. In climactic **progressive parallelism** the principle idea in the first line is repeated in the second and expanded to complete the thought. Example, Psalms 29:1. In this couplet the second line is necessary to complete the unit of thought.
5. In **inverted parallelism** the first line is closely related in thought to the fourth, and the second to the third. Example, Psa 91:14.

B. **Rhythm** - A second characteristic of Hebrew poetry is rhythm, or accentuation, which, like parallelism, has exegetical values. It often aids in capturing the exact thought and feeling of the poet. Different kinds of rhythm are found in Hebrew poetry, but it is not likely that the Hebrew poets had standard measures, worked out and defined, as modern poets have. Apparently the art of poetic rhythm was secondary consideration, if, indeed any conscious effort was made to conform to patterns of rhythm.

C. **Figurative expression** - A third characteristic of Hebrew poetry, equally as important as parallelism and rhythm, is figurative expression. As in the poetry of all nations, that of the Hebrews abounds in figures. There are two important considerations in dealing with these figurative expressions. (1) The figure must be accepted and dealt with as a figure and not as a literal statement. (2) The figure must be interpreted in the light of the meaning of the figures in the day and in the setting in which it was used. Illustration, "my shepherd," of Psalms 23.

We cannot recall the source of this remarkable quote regarding the whole of these marvelous Psalms: "The Psalms do not present a system of biblical theology, but they reflect the theology and religious experiences of the writers. They contain much theology, and some of the highest expressions of religious truth are found in them. Indeed, the Psalms are 'Mirrors of the souls' reflecting the religious experiences common to humanity everywhere and in all ages."

**Grouping or Chief Grouping of the Psalms:** Most of the commentaries which we consulted grouped the Psalms into one of the following types:

- (1) **Alphabetic or acrostic:** A composition, usually in verse, in which one or more sets of letters, when taken in order, form words (Webster).
- (2) **Ethical:** Those teaching moral and ethical principles;
- (3) **Hallelujah:** Those beginning or ending with "praise Jehovah," or "hallelujah."
- (4) **Historical:** Psalms which review the history of the people;
- (5) **Imprecatory:** To invoke vengeance upon enemies;
- (6) **Messianic:** Although several prophecies are found throughout the book, there are some which are peculiarly Messianic;
- (7) **Penitential:** Those expressing penitence on the part of the writer;
- (8) **Songs of Ascents:** These were songs sung by pilgrims on their way to the yearly feasts in Jerusalem;
- (9) **Suffering:** Those in which the author expresses some specific sorrow or suffering that he is undergoing;
- (10) **Thanksgiving:** Expressions of grateful praise to Jehovah, and thanksgiving to Him for deliverance;

### **Conclusion**

I have personally enjoyed my daily study from the Psalms. In early 1991 I began a detailed study of this book, which eventually led to the placing of these things in writing. I concentrated on obtaining an outline of each one of the Psalms, eventually expanding and editing these outline notes. Each journey through this book I would seek to write some additional truth, or jot down some noteworthy quote, eventually (hopefully) leading to a commentary on the entire Psalms.

You may be curious how this book has helped me. For one thing, it has given me a deeper appreciation for David, the sweet singer of Israel and man after God's own heart. His feelings, weaknesses, and strengths find expression in his writings. His writings are merely a reflection of all great men of God, for all men are created with the same emotions, desires, and aspirations as was David. Second, meditation upon the contents of this inspired book has improved my personal prayer life. When I examine the prayers of David (and other Psalmists), I see how he expressed his feelings under various circumstances. Third, the book has given me a view of the human

inner spirit. The following quote from the Pulpit Commentary expresses this well:

I am wont to style an anatomy of all parts of the soul, for no one will discover in himself a single feeling whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror. Nay, all griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, anxieties - in short, all those tumultuous agitations wherewith the minds of men are wont to be tossed - the Holy Ghost hath here represented to the life. The rest of Scripture contains the commands which God gave to his servants to be delivered to us; but here the prophets themselves, holding converse with God, inasmuch as they bare all their inmost feelings, invite or impel every one of us to self examination, that of all the infirmities to which we are liable, and all the sins of which we are so full, none may remain hidden (Rawlinson, Pulpit Commentary, Volume 8, page xii).

**As you begin** your personal study of the Psalms, perhaps some "helpful" hints might aid you along the way:

*First, do not be in a hurry!* This is true of every word, every chapter, every book of inspired writ. Take time to meditate upon what you find in these songs of old. The very first Psalm speaks of the "blessed man," and it is clearly stated that he finds delight in the law of the Lord, and "in that law doth he meditate day and night" (1:2). We should seek to "drink deeply" from these marvelous songs from the sweet singer of Israel. If we will but set aside the time to study and mediate from these selection we will be richly rewarded. In this connection notice Psalms 78:1; 1:2; and 19:7.

*Second, keep in mind the historical setting of each Psalm.* Wherever history is employed by the writer, the data and facts are accurate. Consider Psalms 78. An understanding of the historical background will actually enhance the Psalms and our study of them. In addition, it will make clear the unity of the Psalms as a whole.

*Third, gain an appreciation for the "poetic flavor" of these chapters.* We are not reading history, though history is employed. We are reading poetry. And as such, the principles that go into interpretation and application of poetry should be observed.

I will close this introduction to the Psalms with a pair of quotes from Albert Barnes in which he has captured the sentiments of this

student, both the joys and frustrations of attempting to put in writing the wonderful truths presented in these notes on the Psalms:

A religious man is rarely, if ever, placed in circumstances where he will not find something in the Psalms appropriate to his circumstances; where he will not find that the Hebrew sacred bard has not gone before him in the depths of religious experience...To the end of the world the Psalms in religious experience will occupy the same place which they now occupy; to the end of the world they will impart comfort to the troubled, and peace to the dying, as they have done in the ages that are past (Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes*, Volume 1, page xliii).

Again:

Every man who prepares a Commentary on the Psalms will probably, at the close of his work, be sensible of a feeling of disappointment in what he had hoped, perhaps what he had expected to do, and will share fully in the feelings of his readers that what is thus submitted to the world is very far from being what a Commentary on this portion of the sacred Scriptures ought to be... The Psalms are so rich; so full of meaning; so adapted to the wants of believers; - they so meet the varied experiences of the people of God, and are so replete with the illustrations of piety; they so touch the deepest fountains of emotion in the soul, that, so far as most of these points are concerned, a Commentary, considered as an additional source of light, does not differ materially from a candle considered as affording additional splendour to the sun. What a man finds in the ordinary perusal of the Psalms as a book of devotion, on the subject of deep experimental piety, is so much in advance of what he will usually find in the Commentary, that he turns from the attempt to explain them with a feeling of deep disappointment, and comes back to the book itself as better expressing his emotions, meeting his necessities, and imparting consolation in trial, than anything which the commentator can add (Albert Barnes).

## *“Blessed Is The Man”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is not known, although it is likely that David composed the Psalm. We cannot determine the occasion upon which the Psalm was written. The nature of the Psalm makes it suitable as an introduction to the book. It stresses the fact that all men fall into one of two classes, either righteous or unrighteous. In addition, we are given a character sketch of both groups, and the ultimate end to which both will arrive, both now and in eternity. This particular Psalm serves as a suitable introduction. Its lessons are rich, and its message relevant to any age.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have ...

- I. The Character and Condition of the Righteous, and Their Reward, 1-3;
- II. The Condition and Ultimate End of the Wicked, 4-6;

### ***Commentary***

#### **The Character and Condition of the Righteous, and Their Reward Verses 1-3**

- 1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked,  
Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of  
scoffers:*
- 2 *But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he  
meditate day and night.*
- 3 *And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That  
bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not  
wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

**1:1:** *"Blessed"* - the word is an exclamation, "Oh, the blessedness of

the man." The word used is '*aishair*' meaning happiness or blessedness. Notice Deu 33:29; 1Ki 10:8; Job 5:17; et.al. It would embrace all that is to constitute genuine happiness. While the world seeks happiness, it certainly has gone about it in the wrong fashion. Here the Psalmist will describe the man who is genuinely happy. This is the same kind of happiness found only in Christ.

There is a double climax that appears in the verse. First there is the climax involved in the **CHARACTERS**: the ungodly, the sinner, and the scoffers. The ungodly ('*reshaim*') is the man who is unjust, rendering to none his due, withholding from God, society, and himself what rightfully belongs to each. He is not one that necessarily participates in sin, but one who neglects participation in righteousness. He does nothing wrong, he simply neglects the doing of that which is right! The sinner ('*chattaim*') is he who 'misses the mark.' This man does no good, but additionally he DOES EVIL. The scornful ('*letsim*') is the one who lives in open rebellion, mocks religion, and ridicules those who might practice it. It has been rightly said that "the seat of the scorner may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell" (Spurgeon)

The second climax is seen in the words "*walk...stand...sit.*" Here are three different degrees of conduct. "Walk" suggests a life style. It is used to denote a way of life, a pattern by which one is distinguished. Notice 1Jo 1:7-8. "Stand" is an advanced state of commitment. As well, "sit" suggests a fixed state of mind and life. When these various terms are considered in their relationship one to another, an important truth emerges. "Walk, stand, sit" coupled with "counsel, way, seat" suggests a proper STANDARD, ACTION, and MANNER of life.

Notice also certain circumstances of their conduct. The ungodly has his counsel. Being neither zealous about religion, nor concerned about his own salvation, he is quick to 'counsel' those whom he meets. "Don't trouble yourself with prayer, or all that religious stuff, for one can do without it." The blessed man does not heed his counsel! The sinner has his particular way of transgression. Each individual is susceptible to that vice which so easily besets him. The "sinner" is the one who gives in to that vice, and it becomes his "way." The scoffer has sat down, fixed in his position, and utterly confirmed in impiety.

Finally, notice the progression of sin: "1. He who walks according to the counsel of the ungodly will soon, 2. Stand to look on the way of

sinners; and thus, being off his guard, he will soon be a partaker in their evil deeds. 3. He who has abandoned himself to transgression, will, in all probability, soon become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; and sit down with the scorner, and endeavor to turn religion into ridicule." "When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse" (Spurgeon)

**1:2** - What is the delight of the truly happy man? It is the meditation upon the law of God. And take note that it speaks of DELIGHT, in the singular. THE GREAT DELIGHT to the "blessed man" is meditation in the word of God. Instead of finding happiness in the activities of the wicked, and the ways of the world, he finds happiness in contemplation of God's law. This is, of course, a serious problem to those who deny the existence of law as it pertains to man. Not only do these words affirm that there is a law, but also that there is delight in meditating on its precepts.

The KJV translates "LORD" with all caps, while the ASV has "Jehovah." It is properly the latter. The "*delight*" (*'chephtso'*) designates the will, desire, affection and motive in the heart of the one who respects and meditates upon the Divine word. The 'law' means the precepts, instruction, command, etc. of God. It applies in the more general sense to all the books of the Bible. It is upon this law that the happy man 'meditates' - much more than a casual glance; it is his work day and night. Clarke points out that "the employment must be frequent, and the disposition to it perpetual" (Adam Clarke)

Barnes mentions that the word meditate (*'hagah'*) means "to mutter; then to speak; to utter in low murmuring voice, as is often done by a person in deep meditation." The happy man keeps the word before his mind; he contemplates its meaning. How often? "Day and night." He does this (1) habitually; he forms the habit of such meditations; (2) he takes the time to do it - setting aside a certain time of the day to contemplate the law and meditate thereon; (3) he does it in the wakeful hours of the night when he cannot sleep; (4) he does this in the daylight hours when opportunity affords itself. "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" (Adam Clarke)

**1:3** - A description is now given of the blessings bestowed upon the man who A description is now given of the blessings bestowed upon the man who thus lives. He is like a "tree" that (1) is planted by water, and (2) that brings forth fruit in its season. Notice that it is "planted" by the water, it does not grow up of its own fruition. Care has been taken in its cultivation. Consequently, it brings forth abundant fruit. The "streams of water" are literally the "divisions of the waters," and allude to the custom of irrigation. Even in difficult situations, our God will supply the proper nourishment and care so that the happy man will produce fruit and thus prosper. When one stream fails, others will be there to fulfill our thirst. The leaf will not "wither" due to drought, perpetually supplied with the necessities for survival and growth. *"Whatsoever he doeth shall prosper"* is a general statement and not to be taken strictly. It is a fact that those who live godly lives in Christ shall suffer persecution (2Ti 3:12). The godly man may not prosper materially or socially. But if one takes the word "prosper" to mean that according to what is best for him eternally, then it is an absolute rule in the truest sense of the word. So the godly man is ever taking deeper root, growing stronger in the grace he has already received, increasing in heavenly desires, and, under the continual influence of the Divine Spirit, forming those purposes from which such fruit to the glory and praise of God shall be produced.

### **The Condition and Ultimate End of the Wicked Verses 4-6**

- 4 *The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.*
- 5 *Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.*
- 6 *For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

**1:4:** The Vulgate and Septuagint read, "Not so the ungodly, not so," thus emphasizing with a double negative. Whatever is said of the "blessed man" is absent in the life of the ungodly. While the former is blessed, fruitful, and providentially cared for, the wicked are unstable, unfruitful, and unprofitable. The eastern method of separating the chaff from the grain was to throw the two together into the air; the chaff would be blown away, while the grain would



fall to the ground. Just as the chaff is useless, so is the wicked man; he has brought upon himself utter destruction. "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?" (Spurgeon)

**1:5** - The meaning is that when they come to be judged, they shall be condemned. They will not "stand" in the sense that they will be able to face the Almighty with unblemished character and soul. "They shall," as Spurgeon noted, "stand there to be judged, but not to be acquitted." Nor shall the "sinner" have any association in the "congregation" of the "righteous." There is a separation between the people of God and the people of the world that awaits all humanity on the Judgment. It is evidenced here by the life of those who "walk" according to God's will, and will be eternally sealed in the great judgment. We should rejoice knowing that in that "congregation of the righteous" that awaits all of God's redeemed, there will not be one un-regenerated soul.

**1:6** - "*Knoweth*" ('*yodea*') means that God will approve the way of the righteous. But He approves because He KNOWS the way of the righteous. In fact, "he is **knowing** the way of the righteous," as the original states. "The Lord, the great Judge, fully understands the character of those who are his friends, and can discriminate between them and all others, whatever pretenses others may make to that character" (Barnes). These words are very sobering. The very thought that "Jehovah knoweth" all of my ways, should shake my soul to its very depth! While the way of the righteous is approved, the wicked will end in destruction. And not only will the unrighteous perish, but the WAY in which they walk shall also perish. It is not how men may prosper upon this earth, but their final destiny, that is all-important. Eternity will ring with either the words "enter into the joys prepared for you from the foundation of the world" or "depart from me ye workers of iniquity."

## ***Lessons***

We pointed out that the Psalm serves as a fitting introduction to this marvelous devotional book. Here is a recipe book for happiness - genuine happiness! Such a state of mind is not determined by outward circumstances, but the inner contentment and peace that comes from following God's word. The amazing lesson from this

Psalm is that God wants us to attain unto such happiness. He WANTS us to truly enjoy life, both here and in eternity. Look at the Psalm again. What do you see? Blessedness is **CONDITIONAL**. I must live a certain type of life. Happiness (and keep in mind we are talking about genuine happiness, not superficial satisfaction) is not found in a bottle, or the end of a needle; it is not found in accumulation of material things, or popularity with the masses. Nor will happiness be found in self indulgence. Study the Preacher's words in Ecclesiastes 2. He tried it all, but happiness eluded him. Our Psalm holds the key. First, do not take advice from the wicked; their counsel is vain and empty. Second, do not follow the example of sinners; their way is the way of death. Third, do not cast your lot with those who mock the values from heaven; their "seat" is one of scorn for things holy and righteous.

The "blessed" man has a deep love for, and a close relationship with, the law of Jehovah. While some would consider study of the Bible a wearisome task, the blessed man finds delight in examining the words breathed by the Almighty Himself (2Ti 3:16-17). As a result, he "meditates" on that law, day and night. There are various degrees of intellectual stimuli through the printed page. The first level is that of reading; the second that of study; the later, that of meditating on what has been learned. It is by reading that we determine the facts. Study helps us assimilate those facts, reasoning so as to come to the proper conclusion. But meditation is the contemplation of the practical application of those truths to our lives. Without the meditation, the reading and study are robbed of their great power.

Sin is progressive. We have never known anyone to make a serious determination that he would travel the path of sin. If one walks with the wicked, he will eventually sit with the scoffers. "Evil companions corrupt good morals" (1Co 15:33).

The Psalmist would have us to know that there are two distinct classes of people. All men find themselves in one of these two classes. God's word describes them as the righteous and the unrighteous (Joh 5:28-29). There is no middle ground. We are either good, or bad (2Co 5:10).

There is a destiny to which all men are traveling. One has pointed out, "How blessed to have a different destiny separately assigned, as the result of a course separately chosen" (G.Rawlinson, Pulpit Commentary, Volume 8:7).

The righteous will be blessed in this life with fruitful seasons, and in eternity with joy and eternal bliss. The wicked, like the chaff that is driven by the wind, will be forever separated from the face of Jehovah. How it behooves us to set our face toward that eternal home whose builder and maker is God.

May we realize that the "blessed" man lives by a different standard than does the world. God's people walk to the beat of a different drum. Standard produces acts; acts develop habit; habit determines character; and character determines destiny.

Finally, the three essential traits of greatness, happiness, and prosperity can be seen from the Psalm. Greatness is not simply intellectual power, but moral worth. Happiness is living with God, following His law, doing His will. Prosperity is that of the soul and not the body.

*“God Our Ruler – The Christ Our King”*

***Introduction***

There is no title to this Psalm provided in the subscript. Spurgeon calls this "The Psalm Of The Prince." It has long been regarded as Davidic in authorship and this position is supported by Act 4:24-28. It is Messianic in its thrust, and foresees the resurrection of the Christ (Act 13:32, Act 13:33). The exact occasion of the Psalm cannot be determined. The "nations" (or Gentiles) were casting off the restraints placed upon them by the Almighty. Rather than submit to the reign of Jehovah, men were moving away from Him. The design of the Psalm is to impress upon each of us the futility of such rebellion against the Almighty and His Anointed One. The Psalm has been appropriately entitled, "God Our Ruler - The Christ Our King" (Deaver, Volume 1, page 6)

***Analysis***

The Psalm has the following:

- I. The nations and Jehovah, 1-6
  - A. The nations rage, 1-3;
  - B. Jehovah laughs, vexes them, 4-6;
- II. The King - Jehovah's anointed, 7-9
- III. Practical application, 10-12;

Brother Roy Deaver divides the Psalm into (1) Question, verse 1; (2) Fact, verse 2; (3) Attitude, verse 3; (4) Attitude, verses 4- 6; (5) The King, verses 6-9; (6) Appeal, verses 10-12a; and (7) Pronouncement, verse 12b (Deaver, Volume 1, page 6).

***Commentary***

**The nations and Jehovah  
Verses 1-6**

*1 Why do the nations rage, And the peoples meditate a vain thing?*

- 2 *The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying,*
- 3 *Let us break their bonds asunder, And cast away their cords from us.*
- 4 *He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh: The Lord will have them in derision.*
- 5 *Then will he speak unto them in his wrath, And vex them in his sore displeasure:*
- 6 *Yet I have set my king Upon my holy hill of Zion.*

**2:1:** It has been a long-standing fault of the human race to oppose God. The more radical the opposition, the more violent become the actions on the part of the rebel. The Psalmist informs us that the "*nations rage.*" The word means to "make a tumult, and would be expressive of violent commotion or agitation. It occurs in the Hebrew Scriptures only in this place" (Barnes). In addition to this violent agitation, we are told these "*people meditate a vain thing.*" This word "imagine" or "meditate" is from the same Hebrew word translated "meditate" in 1:2. Evidently the mind was engaged in deliberating on this particular thing. The people were meditating on some project which excited deep thought, but would not be completed because it was "vain." They were engaged in some design, the result of which would be unsuccessful. What we have in these first few verses of this Psalm is a description of the hatred of the human race against God's anointed and His church. Coffman adds this note:

This is dramatically opposite to the erroneous impression held by many that the reign of Christ on earth will be a time of universal felicity, prosperity, and righteousness. The reign of Christ will take place during the ages when his enemies actively oppose him, and that his reign shall end when that opposition ceases (Burton Coffman, Vol 1, page 11).

**2:2-3** - "*Kings*" and "*rulers*" are leaders! There was an organization about this rebellion. The restraints were being "*cast away,*" and the "*cords*" and "*bonds*" broken. This was no mere dissatisfaction on the part of certain individuals. Here was complete, absolute, determined rebellion, designed by those in prominent positions of leadership to involve others. Learn an important lesson here, dear reader. When men rebel against God, they are never satisfied with keeping it to themselves. The rebel only finds satisfaction in involving others in his refusal to follow God. Consequently plans are often made, and evil men "counsel together" against their God. They go against God with all the art and cunning they can muster. The attitude here is

that of a firm or determined resistance. It has been observed, where there is much rage there is generally some folly, and in this case there is an excess of it.

The "*anointed*" is God's appointed King. If the Psalm was written by David, there may have been some occasion of rebellion against his authority. But the Psalm has a far greater application in that it refers to Jesus Christ, and is so identified by inspired writers. Notice Act 13:32-33. The nation of Israel had rebelled against God's anointed One, Jesus the Christ. Their plans and imaginations, carried out in the crucifixion of the Messiah, were vain; rather than accomplish THEIR design, they actually played a part in bringing about GOD'S design. It is significant that their opposition to the Christ was opposition against Jehovah.

God's anointed is appointed, and shall not be disappointed. Look back through all the ages of infidelity, hearken to the high and hard things which men have spoken against the Most High, listen to the rolling thunder of earth's volleys against the Majesty of heaven, and then think that God is saying all the while, 'Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion' (Spurgeon).

*"bands"*- The word suggests the restraints imposed by God's authority. The figure is probably taken from fastening a yoke of oxen, or the bands or cords which were used in plowing - the "bands" signifying subjection to the authority of another.

*"cast away their cords from us"* - The use of "cords" is probably speaking of the ropes or thongs which bound oxen to the yoke. The Psalmist uses it to describe those things that bind men to the service of God. The word here properly means "what is twisted or interlaced, and refers to the usual manner in which ropes are made" (Barnes). The verse indicates a state of mind that is impatient of the restraints that God has placed upon them, but more especially the reign of Jesus the Messiah. "The idea here is that it was the purpose of Jehovah and his Anointed to establish a dominion over men, and that it was equally the purpose of the kings and rulers here referred to that it should not be done" (Barnes).

**2:4** - While the former verses describe the feelings and purposes of those who would cast off the government of God, this verse (through 6) describes the feelings and purposes of God in exactly THE SAME ORDER. In each case the Psalmist describes what is DONE, and then what is SAID. It is quite a scene. While men rage and oppose the plans of God, God sits calmly in the heavens.

*"shall laugh"* - The language describes God's look of contempt upon their vanity.

*"the Lord will have them in derision"* - The Hebrew word for "derision" means to "stammer," and then to mock or deride, by imitating the stammering voice of one. The meaning is that there is a result in the case, in the Divine mind, as if He mocks or derides the vain attempts of men; that is, He goes calmly forward in the execution of His own purposes, and He looks upon and regards man's efforts as vain, as many do the efforts of others when they mock or deride them.

Mark the quiet dignity of the Omnipotent One, and the contempt which he pours upon the princes and their raging people. He has not taken the trouble rise up and do battle with them - he despises them, he knows how absurd, how irrational, how futile are their attempts against him - he therefore laughs at them (Spurgeon)

**2:5** - *"Then will he speak unto them"* - He will not continue to sit idly by. The time will come when God will warn. And the time will come when God will act!

*"And vex them"* - The word (*bahal*) means to "tremble" - here meaning "to cause to tremble, to terrify; to strike with consternation."

*"his sore displeasure"* - literally, "in his heat or burning" (Barnes). We learn that God is opposed to sin, and will express His opposition AS IF he felt anger. We must keep in mind that God's anger and wrath are never capricious. His anger is judicial in the absolute sense of the word.

Indeed God DOES have power over the nations, and He WILL render judgment upon those who oppose him. Coffman noted, "In my lifetime, a mighty nation, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics, the USSR, in effect declared war upon God and his Anointed; but God has indeed spoken unto that nation in his wrath!" (Coffman, Vol 1, page 13).

**2:6** - *"Yet I have set"* - The word rendered "set" (*nasach*) means, literally, "to pour, to pour out," as in making a libation to the Deity. The word means to "pour out oil in anointing the king or priest, and hence to consecrate, to inaugurate."

"my king" - Notice that it is not "a" king, but "MY KING."

"Zion" - The highest hill in Jerusalem. It is often used to refer to the city of Jerusalem itself (Isa 2:3; 8:18; 10:24; 33:14, et. al.).

### **The King - Jehovah's anointed Verses 7-9**

- 7 *I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son;  
This day have I begotten thee.*
- 8 *Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,  
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*
- 9 *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them  
in pieces like a potter's vessel.*

**2:7:** At this point in the Psalm there is a change in the speaker. The Anointed One is himself introduced as declaring the great purpose which was formed in regard to him, and referring to the promise which was made to him, as the foundation of the purpose of Jehovah to set him on the hill of Zion. The "I" obviously refers to the Messiah.

The word for "decree" (*chokk*) properly means something decreed, prescribed, appointed. It is equivalent to a law, a statute, or an ordinance. It is not so much a law to obey as it is an ordinance or statute respecting the reign of the Messiah.

"*this day*" - The time referred to is that when it was determined to crown Christ as the Messiah. This coronation of our Lord is founded on the relationship existing between Him and Jehovah, and implied when in that relation He is called his "Son." But it determines nothing as to the time WHEN this relationship commenced. Jehovah, in this passage, is regarded as declaring His purpose to make Christ King in Zion, and the language is that of a solemn consecration to the kingly office.

"*begotten thee*" - The word is used in an "accommodative" sense so as to show the point in time which the appointment began. So far as we can tell, the word could not mean that the Anointed One was begotten in the absolute sense of the word, since He is in fact, eternal in nature. What, then, is the meaning of such passages as Joh 3:16 and Joh 1:18 wherein it is noted by the inspired writers that Jesus is the "only begotten Son"? This is especially interesting in light of passages that speak of the child of God having been "begotten."



Jam 1:18, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth" ["of his own will begat he us..." KJV]. 1Jo 5:13, "We know that whosoever is begotten of God sinneth not..." Our English words "only begotten" translate the Greek '*monogenes*.' It is a compound word consisting of '*mono*,' meaning "one or only one," and '*genes*' meaning "to beget, to be born, to come into being." When the Bible speaks of Jesus as the "only begotten Son" it is speaking of His unique birth. Therein lies the difference between Jesus being "begotten of the Father" and our being begotten by the word of truth. As one brother put it, "There is a great gulf of difference between being in the heart begotten by the truth leading to spiritual birth and being in the womb of Mary begotten by the Holy Spirit leading to the physical birth of the only begotten Son of God" (Curtis Cates, page 91). There is no doubt in this writer's mind that we have in this Psalm a prophetic glimpse of the virgin birth of Jesus, a unique entrance into this world that was essential to qualify Him to sit at the right hand of God. Hence, when it is said by the Psalmist, "this day have I begotten thee," he is speaking of the appointment of our Lord to His proper rule over the nations because who and what Christ is. The very thought astounds the imagination. We happen to think Spurgeon's comments are noteworthy: "If this refers to the Godhead of our Lord, let us not attempt to fathom it, for it is a great truth, a truth reverently to be received, but not irreverently to be scanned" (Spurgeon).

**2:8** - The Psalmist continues the words of the Messiah as He reflects upon the promises made unto him from the Father. "*Ask of me*" suggests conditional fulfillment. Barnes wrote, "It may be added that as this wide dominion is promised to the Messiah only on the condition that he 'asks' for it or prays for it, much more is it true that we can hope for this and for no favor from God, unless we seek it by earnest prayer." The subordination of the Son to the Father is here depicted, a relationship that is taught throughout the New Testament.

*"nations for thine inheritance"* - The nations are the Gentiles. Jesus has inherited and possessed the nations by establishing the church, into which all nations flow (Isa 2:2-4).

*"earth for thy possession"* - The kingdom of God had spread to the far ends of the earth during the lifetime of Paul. See Col 1:23.

**2:9** - The thought is that He would overcome all of His enemies. Barnes points out that this has reference to the enemies of the

Messiah, "for it cannot be supposed to be meant that he would sway such a scepter over his own people" (Barnes). The "*rod of iron*" is used to describe the power of his rule, and his absolute authority. Clarke has an interesting comment: "This may refer to the Jewish nation, whose final rejection of the Gospel was foreseen, and in whose place the Gentiles or heathen were brought into the Church of Christ" (Adam Clarke). Brother Burton Coffman concluded, "These verses refer to the ultimate end of Adam's rebellious race, which is on a collision course with disaster, which will eventually occur when God terminates the probation of our ungodly humanity" (Burton Coffman, Vol 1, page 15)

### **Practical application** **Verses 10-12**

- 10 Now therefore be wise, O ye kings: Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.*  
*11 Serve Jehovah with fear, And rejoice with trembling.*  
*12 Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish in the way, For his wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all they that take refuge in him.*

**2:10** - The proper course to take is that of submission. Rebellion will only end in destruction. Therefore, the wise course to pursue is that of humble obedience. Rather than cast off the dictates of the Almighty King and face destruction, why not submit to His rule and enjoy the blessings that accompany obedience? Pay close attention to the admonition here to "*be wise*." It is always wise to be willing to be instructed, especially when such instruction tends to the salvation of the soul.

**2:11** - Notice the connection of "*serve*" and "*rejoice*." If one will but submit to the guidance of God, he will naturally rejoice. "If ye serve God aright, ye cannot but be happy; but let a continual filial fear moderate all your joys. Ye must all stand at last before the judgment seat of God; watch, pray, believe, work, and keep humble."

"There must ever be a holy fear mixed with the Christian joy. This is a sacred compound, yielding a sweet smell, and we must see to it that we burn no other upon the altar. Fear, without joy, is torment; and joy, without holy fear, would be presumption." Notice the connection of "*serve*" and "*rejoice*." If one will but submit to the guidance of God, he will naturally rejoice. "If ye serve God aright, ye cannot but be happy; but let a continual filial fear moderate all your joys. Ye

must all stand at last before the judgment seat of God; watch, pray, believe, work, and keep humble" (Clarke).

There must ever be a holy fear mixed with the Christian joy. This is a sacred compound, yielding a sweet smell, and we must see to it that we burn no other upon the altar. Fear, without joy, is torment; and joy, without holy fear, would be presumption (Spurgeon).

**2:12** - The "*kiss*" was an indication of respect for one of superior rank. The mode was to kiss the hand, his clothing, or his feet. The expression is not to be taken literally. Homage for his Kingship, and worship due to Him, is the idea of the passage. Failure to do so will result in one's perishing. The "*wrath*" of Jehovah is always judicial, never capricious or arbitrary. Those who "*take refuge*" in Him will, of course, be blessed. It would appear that the taking of refuge is included in the "kissing" or paying homage unto Him. Clarke points out that the word for blessed here is the same as that of chapter one, and is properly translated, "O the blessedness of all them who trust in him" (Adam Clarke).

It is incumbent upon all men that they kiss the Son while there is time, lest they perish in the way of rebellion.

### ***Lessons***

While men may rage, rebel, and reject our God and His Anointed One, it is still a fact that God is in control and that it is spiritual suicide to oppose our Creator. Biblical and secular history teach us that men, when left to their own guidance, tend to move AWAY from God rather than TOWARD Him. Our present Psalm describes a great multitude, under improper leadership, raging and meditating upon a vain thing. But their "opposition to the King does not destroy the fact that He IS King (Roy Deaver, Vol 1, page 7).

Our present age demonstrates the same kind of rebellion spoken of in this Psalm. I grew up during a time when religion was generally accepted and practiced by the majority of society. It was common to attend church, uphold certain values, and maintain respect for the Bible and things spiritual. In the 1970's and 80's there was a dramatic shift. Society seemed to be agitated by the restrictions that the previous generation imposed upon them. There was a determined effort to "break the bonds asunder" and "cast away their cords" in order to produce a new age, free from religion in general, and God in particular. The last couple of decades have ushered in an

almost anti-religious attitude. Those who uphold faith in God, and who set forth His word as the ONLY safe and infallible guide are looked upon as stupid and superstitious. Undoubtedly, those holding to the Judeo-Christian ethics are in the minority. In addition, this present decade (1990's) is plagued with a spiritual rebellion within the very body of Christ itself. We are hearing of cries for a "new hermeneutic" and some sort of a "transition" within the church as we move toward a new century. There are leaders within the body of Christ who want to break the bonds established by God Himself. The call is for a freedom from the old worn out "wineskins" of the previous generation. Those who are determined to hold fast to the word of God are labeled as "mossbacks" and "knuckleheads." But listen to the Psalmist: "He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh." The writer was not saying God finds man's rebellion humorous. He was simply pointing out that man's rebellion is feeble and futile; their raging and rebellion is no threat to God. The Almighty remains in control. Ultimately the Eternal God will call these rebels to give an account. And although the wicked mock God and ridicule His word, it is they who will be mocked when all is said and done. They will then face the wrath and displeasure of Jehovah.

There is a process of God's communication with man. God delivered these words through the Holy Spirit unto David, who in turn recorded them for our benefit and study. Here is inspiration! "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2Pe 1:21).

The Psalm finds its ultimate fulfillment at Pentecost and following. It was announced then that God "hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye have crucified" (Act 2:36). While the Jewish nation raged against our Lord, and eventually crucified Him on the cross, it was God who had the last word in raising Jesus from the dead.

Note the authority of the King. God has said, "ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (vs. 8). Cf. Mat 28:18-20).

"Men often try to break the bands of God - the bands with which God holds them accountable to Himself. But in reality they break themselves in their efforts to get away from God's law" (Deaver, page 9).

"The first Psalm was a contrast between the righteous man and the

sinner; the second Psalm is a contrast between the tumultuous disobedience of the ungodly world and the sure exaltation of the righteous Son of God" (Spurgeon).

The following homiletic outline comes from Winfred Clark's exposition of this marvelous Psalm. I originally obtained a copy of this outline in the early 1970's in a bulletin edited by brother Clark.

**Introduction:** We have no problem as which psalm this one is. Paul tells us that it is the second when he quotes from it (Act 13:33). David is the author and this is verified by the prayer of early Christians (Act 4:25).

There is to this Psalm the Messianic tone. It is prophetic, pointing to Christ and his kingdom's establishment in spite of opposition. When one reads with this in mind it becomes all the more foolish for men to oppose God. Also, men were without excuse in not knowing God's plan when Christ came. Among other things, this is a "psalm of voices." There are several speakers and what they say is quite revealing. Though we live in a world where we are bombarded by voices we would do well to hear what is said here.

#### I. There is the VOICE OF **ASTONISHMENT** (vs. 1-3)

A casual reading will show that the speaker is astonished at some things that are happening. It seems beyond all the bounds of reasoning that such as he describes should occur. Why men would dare what they are doing amazes the writer. He is astonished at several things and we shall try to note some, such as:

2. Antagonism (vs 1) - This shows itself in the foolish rage and false reasoning of the people he speaks of. Their attitude is one of anger and rage. They are unreasonable. It is interesting to note that the word for "imagine" here is from the same word as meditate in Psa 1:2. One thing is of God, the other of nonsense. The latter one thinks of plans that will not work. So the writer is astonished and asks why people do as they do.
3. Arrogance (vs. 2) - The antagonism of verse one will show itself in a number of ways but one will be seen in the arrogance of verse two. Look at the positions these

people take. They set themselves, which is equal to setting themselves up in places they have no right to. They feel self sufficient. Arrogance also shows itself in the plans they adopt. You see, their position and plans are against the Lord and his anointed. Surely one must be proud and puffed up to dare do this.

4. Assumptions (vs. 3) - Not only is he astonished at the antagonism and arrogance, but look at the assumptions of these people. They declare that they will have liberty. They don't want God's restraints. They want to be free to live lawless lives. They assume that they could do such.

But, that crowd is still alive with one "lib" movement after another. They want to cast away the restraints also, and such ought to arouse voices of astonishment.

## II. The VOICE OF **AUTHORITY** (vs. 4-6)

In spite of what kings, judges, and others may assume or say, there is one who has the last word. He is God. When the one who is really in control speaks, we see his:

1. Derision (vs. 4) - Though they set themselves on earth to oppose him, God still sits in control in heaven. He, as it were, laughs at the puny efforts of man to snatch control. His will is sovereign and nobody will be able to unseat him.
2. Displeasure (vs. 5) - He will show his displeasure by his wrath and these men like Pilate, Herod, and others cannot hope to escape.
3. Determination (vs. 6) - The way of the Lord is settled and men are not going to stop it. God would set up his kingdom when Christ came regardless of the Jews. Their reception or rejection of him was not the determining factor. God has a determinate counsel. His word is sure and settled and men are not going to undo it.

## III. The VOICE OF **AFFIRMATION** (vs. 7-9)

The king declares his position in spite of what those who are in rebellion may do or say. The king who is set on the throne

by God speaks of his:

1. Person (vs. 7) - He lets us know who he is. He is none other than the Son of God. He lets men know that God said that is who he is. He identifies him as such. Paul used this verse and refers to the resurrection of Jesus (Act 13:33). Also, he says he is declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4). So we don't have to wonder who he is who was to be king.
2. Position (vs. 8) - He would be over the heathen, even those that rage, his reign would be universal.
3. Power (vs. 9) - Since he is supreme and has power, it is foolish for anybody to oppose him. Those who set themselves up are no match for God and his anointed.

#### IV. The VOICE OF **ADMONITION** (v. 10-12)

The writer, by the Holy Spirit, appeals to those who oppose the Lord and his plan. They should know such is foolish and unworthy. His appeal was that they might properly:

1. Exercise the mind (vs. 10) - They need to do their own thinking and get their information from the right source. If only they would be instructed by those who would give proper counsel. Wasn't this what the Jews did not do when in ignorance they put Jesus to death?
2. Exert the Will (vs. 11) - They should determine that they are going to serve God with reverence rather than rebellion. Such service is bound to produce joy.
3. Express their Submission (vs. 12) - To kiss the Son is equal to showing submission to him rather than rebellion. Such a person would never think of throwing off the cords that bind him to the Lord.

Conclusion: The question of verse one would never have to be asked if people would listen to the voice of authority and accept the affirmation and admonition of the voices of verses four through twelve.





## *“The Morning Hymn”*

### ***Introduction***

It is commonly held that this Psalm was written by David "when he fled from Absalom." Absalom, David's son, led a fierce and powerful rebellion against his own father, seeking to take the Kingdom from David. In this connection it is helpful to read 2 Samuel 13-15.

### ***Analysis***

The following outline should serve to get the Psalm before us:

- I. Calamity (1-2)
  - A. The adversaries are many in number;
  - B. They ridicule David's God;
- II. Confidence (3-4)
  - A. God is our shield;
  - B. God will hear and answer;
- III. Courage (5-6)
  - A. Peace and Calm as a result;
  - B. Fearlessness to face our enemies;
- IV. Call of Action (7)
  - A. Present;
  - B. Past;
- V. Comfort (8)
  - A. Source of salvation;
  - B. Recipients of blessings;

Roy Deaver has entitled this Psalm, "God - Our Deliverer," with the following breakdown: **Charge**, where David refers to his many foes, and to their foolish charge (vs 1-2); **Assurance**, wherein David stresses the believer's assurance (vs 3-4); **Blessings** (vs 5-6); **Deliverance**, in which the Psalmist prays for deliverance from his enemies (vs 7); and finally, **Source**, where David emphasizes that God is the source of deliverance (vs 8). We have selected the title, ***"The Morning Hymn."***

## Commentary

### Calamity Verses 1-2

- 1 *Jehovah, how are mine adversaries increased! Many are they that rise up against me.*
- 2 *Many there are that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah*

**3:1:** "*How are mine adversaries increased*" suggests that initially the numbers were few, but with the passing of time, they had increased in number. If the author is David, and the enemy here is Absalom, this would be a natural reaction. At first, the number who adhered to Absalom were few, but by his fair speech and grand promises, the number of defectors increased. See 2Sa 15:1-6. Those who were classified as "adversaries" are the same as the ones that "rise up against" the author. And oh, how those adversaries increased during David's troubled reign. Added to the rebellion of his own son was the abandonment of Ahithophel, and a number of his generals and soldiers who deserted David for the promises of those who would destroy the Divinely appointed king.

**3:2** - "*Soul*" is from '*nephesh*,' sometimes translated "life." This "enemy" was confident that God would not preserve David's life. See 2Sa 17:1-4 for one example of where this attitude might have prevailed among David's enemy. Barnes has this comment: "It is no uncommon thing in this world for good men to be in similar circumstances of trial, when they seem to be so utterly forsaken by God as well as men, that their foes exultingly say they are entirely abandoned" (Barnes). These must have been the bitterest of words. We can only wonder how strong the temptation must have been on the part of David actually to believe these false claims on the part of his enemies.

"*Selah*" - There are varying opinions regarding this word, and the meaning is by no means certain. Barnes agrees with the difficulty involved in translating the word. It is rendered in the Targum, or Chaldee as "forever," or "to eternity." The word occurs seventy-one times in the Psalms, and three times in Habakkuk (3:3, 9, 13). In the KJV and ASV it always appears as a transliteration. Since it appears only in connection with poetry, it is likely that it was a musical term. Barnes concluded that it most probably meant "silence, or pause, and that its use was, in chanting the words of the psalm, to direct the

singer to be silent, to pause a little, while the instruments played an interlude or harmony" (Barnes). Clarke suggests that it means, "mark this, and take encouragement from it" (Clarke). When we come across this word in the Psalms we should pause and take note of the verses preceding and following.

### **Confidence Verses 3-4**

- 3 *But thou, O Jehovah, art a shield about me; My glory and the lifter up of my head.*  
4 *I cry unto Jehovah with my voice, And he answereth me out of his holy hill. Selah*

**3:3:** "*But..*" - Here is a word of contrast. While the enemies perceived that David's defeat was imminent, they had not given due consideration of the might and power of Jehovah. God served as a "shield" about the author. The shield was a part of the ancient armor, used for defense. It was usually made of tough hides, fastened to a rim, attached to the arm so as to provide a ready defense against the swords or spears thrown at the soldier. God is the PROTECTOR, the SHIELD; and like that which protects the soldier in time of battle, God providentially cares for us in times of attack by the enemy. Notice Gen 15:1; Deu 33:29; 2Sa 22:3; Psalms 28:7; Psalms 119:114; 144:2; 33:20; et al. Spurgeon has pointed out that "the original signifies more than a shield; it means a buckler round about, a protection which shall surround a man entirely, a shield above, beneath, around, without and within" (Spurgeon).

In addition, Jehovah is our "glory." He bestows upon us the honor of being His children. It is because of our special relationship to God that we are thus protected. May God give us the faith to see our future glory amidst the trials and tribulations of life.

As well, Jehovah is the "*lifter up of my head.*" In the margin of my Bible I have written, "To relieve one's distress." In times of trouble, the head is bowed down, overpowered by the affliction one might face. See Psalms 35:14; 38:6; 42:5, et al. To lift up the head is, therefore, to raise one up, to give him courage and hope, and thus take away his troubles. When we are discouraged and troubled, we should take heart - God will lift us up. He will ultimately bring us forth victorious. "What a divine trio of mercies is contained in this verse! Defense for the defenseless, glory for the despised, and joy for

the comfortless" (Spurgeon).

**3:4** - There is an action-reaction here noted. The Psalmist points out that he would *"cry unto Jehovah with my voice."* The "cry" is the calling unto Jehovah for help. This would suggest (1) recognition of the proper source of help, (2) recognition of man's utter inability to overcome in and of himself, and (3) the need to seek that help from Jehovah. Barnes points out that this was a characteristic of David, and that the "language is not so much retrospective as it is indicative of the uniform state of his mind in the midst of affliction" (Barnes). Before leaving this phrase, it is important to notice that David's cry was audible. It is "with the voice." The mind and heart came into play, but there was something important in the use of the voice. Jesus often prayed aloud (cf. Mat 26:39). Though the enemies of David may have lifted up their voices in anger and rebellion, David vowed that he would life up HIS voice to God.

And how does Jehovah God react? *"He answereth me out of his holy hill."* There are two or three points of interest here. For one thing, God ANSWERS PRAYER. I have seen this, perhaps more in the last few years of my life than previous. It may be due to a greater awareness of those answers in my life personally, or due to spiritual growth; but it is true, not only from experience, but from the promises in the word, that God DOES ANSWER US. Second, God is interested in the INDIVIDUAL. He answers MY prayers. He is interested in me. He cares about every single, precious soul. Third, He answers me in spite of my imperfections and weaknesses. He is perfectly holy. He is in heaven, I upon the earth. He is separate from man, but at the same time, He condescends to man for the purpose of meeting his needs in love. "We need not fear a frowning world while we rejoice in a prayer-hearing God" (Spurgeon).

### **Courage Verses 5-6**

*5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; For Jehovah sustaineth me.*

*6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of the people That have set themselves against me round about.*

**3:5:** The Psalmist now speaks of the great blessings that attend those who have God as their shield and protector. In the midst of troubles he could calmly lay "down to sleep." Here was the absence of anxiety. He would not fear what man could do unto him. As well, he was sustained in his sleep, and "awakened, for Jehovah sustaineth

me." Barnes notes, "That we are 'awakened' in the morning after a night's refreshing slumber; that we are raised up again to the enjoyments of life...permitted again to greet our friends and to unite with them in the privileges of devotion, should always be regarded as a new proof of the goodness of God, and should lead to acts of praise" (Barnes). Indeed, thank God for a new day. Consideration of the many who are taken from this earth during the night's sleep, we are reminded of His care for us, even while we sleep.

**3:6** - The assurance that God is with us will produce courage and dispel fear. The Psalmist may have felt confident following the night's rest. His body, and his mind, had been refreshed. "With the bright light of a new morning he looked with more cheerful views and hopes on the things around him, and felt with new strength to meet the dangers to which he was exposed" (Barnes). The righteous will always have enemies, but the multitudes, though they number into the thousands, cannot rob us of our relationship to God or the blessings He bestows upon us. There will arise occasions which may look discouraging, as when the enemy surrounds us, or defeat seems inevitable. When such faces us, we, like the Psalmist, must be courageous.

### **Call of Action**

#### **Verse 7**

*7 Arise, O Jehovah; Save me, O my God: For thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked.*

**3:7:** The language is accommodative to human limitations. God does not sleep, nor is He in need of rest. This was a call on the part of the writer for God to help him. He wanted God to interpose in his behalf. Having prepared himself to meet an enemy great in number, the Psalmist is careful to beseech God's blessings for an assured victory. Notice the personal nature of the request, in that he believes God is HIS God. Were it not for the personal nature of God, none of us could feel secure. It is BECAUSE God is a personal God to each one of us that He IS willing to save His creation. Here evident in the Psalmist is a confidence borne from past experience. God had smitten the enemy in times past, and the Psalmist was confident He would do no less on this occasion. The reference to smiting the "cheek bone" and breaking the "teeth" of the wicked is an allusion to the complete overthrow of the enemy. The "cheek bone" is that which holds the teeth, and to smite that portion of an animal is to

literally disarm him. The idea is that God had removed the power of the enemy to do David harm. Their "teeth" had been broken. We often use the same language. We might say regarding desired legislation, "Give us a law that has some 'teeth' in it."

### **Comfort Verse 8**

*8 Salvation belongeth unto Jehovah: Thy blessing be upon thy people. Selah.*

**3:8:** What is said by the Psalmist with regard to his physical salvation is applicable to our spiritual salvation. The power to save is only in God. There is a great lesson in the analogy between physical and spiritual salvation. While it is true that God provided the deliverance for David, it was essential that this man of God do all within his power to escape, or overthrow the enemy. God would not do what man was capable of doing himself. So it is with spiritual salvation. God is the source of salvation, but there are some things that man must DO in order to attain those spiritual blessings. Likewise, God delivers us from our enemy today, and those brethren who oppose God and all that is right and true will be overthrown. But those who love the Lord, who love His church, and who uphold the 'old paths,' must be the active force by which victory comes.

The last part of this verse gives us some insight into this man after God's own heart. His thoughts were not only upon himself, but those who were the people of God. Here is a prayer for God's blessings to be upon Israel. "It is one of the characteristics of true piety thus to turn from our own condition to that of others, and to desire that what we enjoy may be partaken of by the people of God everywhere" (Barnes).

### ***Lessons***

G. Campbell Morgan has written: "A consciousness of the constancy of the Divine Love has always been the strength of a trusting soul amid circumstances of the greatest peril. If that is lost, all is lost. If that be maintained no great waters can overwhelm" (G. Campbell Morgan, Page, 222). A great number of the Psalms express the confidence of the Psalmist in God's willingness and power to deliver. How refreshing to know that God DOES care, and that He WILL offer help in time of need. Were this not true, or were it even left in

doubt, our struggle in this life would be great and fraught with uncertainties and doubt. But notice what the Psalmist says about this One who does lift us up. He is our SHIELD, our GLORY, and the LIFTER UP OF our souls. He is the One who HEARS our prayers and ANSWERS.

God's people will have enemies. Our Lord had more than His share. The apostles faced the enemies of the cross of Christ, from Jerusalem to Rome. Since the servant is not above his Master, it is certain that "all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

In times of trouble, let us not forget to pray, for God will lift up our heads and answer us out of His holy hill. And then, in times of peace and harmony, let us offer thanksgiving and praise to Him Who guides and protects us, moving us ever closer to that eternal home that is promised to the faithful.

The Christian is to be "realistically optimistic" when it comes to assessing the enemy. We can go to one extreme and refuse to recognize the enemy, and even refuse to be informed. How foolish is an Army general who would go to battle and refuse to inform himself about the strength of the enemy! Those who would defend the truth must be enlightened about the adversary. The other extreme is to fix the eyes upon the enemy and forget Who it is that is on OUR SIDE! The result will be a heart filled with fear and a life filled with lack of action. During the Civil War, President Lincoln had a most difficult time getting the Army of the Potomac to act because the Generals in charge constantly overestimated the strength of the Confederates, while in reality the North outnumbered the South two to one.

Salvation belongs to Jehovah! But man must respond in loving obedience if he is to enjoy the blessings God has to offer. God is not willing that any should perish.

## *“The Evening Hymn”*

### ***Introduction***

This is a Psalm of David, and in metrical structure it is very similar to the third Psalm. The historical background is likely the same as that for the third Psalm - that is, the time of the rebellion of Absalom. Roy Deaver suggests that it was written on the eve of the battle which is described in 2Sa 18:1-8 (Roy Deaver, Vol 1, page 13). Barnes suggests that, as Psalm 3 is a morning Psalm, this one is an evening Psalm. We shall call this "The Evening Hymn."

### ***Analysis***

I divide the Psalm as follows:

- I. **Call** - the writer calls on God to hear him, and reflects upon the fact that God had helped him in the past ( 1);
- II. **Counsel** - he addresses directly his enemies, and gives counsel as to what they should do (2-5);
- III. **Contrast** - he contrasts the sources of his own joy and theirs (6-7);
- IV. **Consequence** - as the result of all, and in view of all these mercies and comforts, he says that he will lie down calmly and sleep (8);

### ***Commentary***

#### **Call Verse 1**

*1 Answer me when I call, O God of my righteousness; Thou hast set me at large when I was in distress: Have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.*

**4:1:** This verse is a **CALL**, in which the writer asks God to hear him, and reflects upon the fact that God had helped him in the past.

"It is not to be imagined that he who has helped us in six troubles



will leave us in the seventh. God does nothing by halves, and he will never cease to help us until we cease to need" (Spurgeon).

*"Answer me when I call"* - "hear" in the KJV, is used in the sense of listen to in a favorable way.

*"O God of my righteousness."* Notice (1) the personal aspect of David's plea, (2) the expectation that God will do what is right is inclusive in the word "righteousness." This is the only time this language is used in reference to God. It would imply that God is the author, and the sustainer of all that is righteousness. David recognized that righteousness originates with God, and finds its fulfillment in our lives only by God's mercy.

*"Thou hast set me at large when I was in distress."* Some past experience in the life of the Psalmist was being recalled. In view of past experiences, hope was projected toward future deliverance. "It is right in our prayers to recall the former instances of the Divine interposition, as an argument or as a ground of hope that God would again interpose" (Barnes). The language here is taken from a situation in which an army was surrounded by the enemy, and hard pressed to the point of impending defeat. Out of such a situation the writer had been delivered before, and fully expected to be delivered again.

*"Have mercy upon me"* suggests an attitude of humility on the part of the writer. God's blessings are never merited; how grateful we should be for His abundant mercy!

### **Counsel** **Verses 2-5**

- 2 *O ye sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into dishonor? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after falsehood? Selah*
- 3 *But know that Jehovah hath set apart for himself him that is godly: Jehovah will hear when I call unto him.*
- 4 *Stand in awe, and sin not: Commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah*
- 5 *Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in Jehovah.*

**4:2:** Whereas the first verse presented a CALL, the Psalmist now gives COUNSEL to his enemies regarding what they should do (vs. 2-

5). We are moved from the "closet of prayer to the field of conflict" (Spurgeon).

Notice also that David speaks to God before he speaks to men. "Surely we should all speak the more boldly to men if we had more constant converse with God. He who dares to face his Maker will not tremble before the sons of men" (Spurgeon).

That David calls them "*sons of men*" suggests that his audience consisted of great men, evidently in positions of authority and influence. But he still considers them foolish in behavior. Those educated in the ways of the world and attaining to great positions in the eyes of men are not necessarily wise with a heavenly wisdom.

*"how long.."* The cry of humanity in distress. How long? We are not to assume that the enemy was here with David. This is a poetic remonstrance, AS IF they were present with him. If our introductory material is correct, then this most likely refers to Absalom and his cohorts.

*"shall my glory be turned into shame"* - There was an attempt underway to rob David of his throne, his scepter, and his power, and to reduce him to the condition of beggary and want. The Psalmist is asking, "HOW LONG will you continue in this endeavor?"

*"How long will ye love vanity, and seek after falsehood?"* Barnes suggests the following meaning: "That is, how long will you act as if you were in love with a vain and impracticable thing; a thing which must be hopeless in the end" (Barnes). There is a note of tremendous faith on the part of David. God had anointed him to be king over Israel. Now his own son and his followers were seeking to overthrow him. David's confidence in God's promise and appointment led him to realize that any effort on the part of another to usurp the throne was futile. As Clarke has pointed out, "The poor, empty, shallow-brained, pretty-faced Absalom; whose prospects are all vain, and whose promises are all empty!" (Clarke). It is a sad commentary on the human race that, more often than not, men would rather exchange "the truth of God for a lie," and serve and worship the creature rather than the Creator (Rom 1:25).

*"Selah"* - Mark this! Observe well what is going to take place. Here is a musical pause designed to call attention to what has been, and shall be, said. "Surely we too may stop awhile, and meditate upon the deep-seated folly of the wicked, their continuance in evil, and

their sure destruction; and we may learn to admire that grace which has made us to differ, and taught us to love truth, and seek after righteousness" (Spurgeon).

**4:3** - The counsel continues. There was something the Psalmist wanted his enemies to know. He wanted them to be aware that God takes note of the godly individual, i.e. the man who serves God and makes application of God's law to his life. He wanted them to know that, although it may have appeared that God was not near, it was a fact that GOD WILL ANSWER when His people call unto Him. What faith! What confidence!

*"Jehovah hath set apart...him that is godly."* There is a difference between the godly and the ungodly. The very fact that God has set us apart for His purpose should inspire us with courage and conviction.

**4:4** - The Chaldee Paraphrase reads, "Tremble before him, and sin not." Yet the multitude of the ungodly have reversed this, who sin and tremble not. The original word meant to "be moved, disturbed, disquieted, thrown into commotion" (Barnes). It does not seem that the context would suggest this idea, so we conclude that the attitude of reverence or godly fear is under consideration. The enemy was seeking to overthrow God's king, David. The Psalmist (David) was counseling them to give serious consideration to what they are doing. His advice was for them to "follow their better judgment" as we might say. Do not follow your head, your own selfish desires, or the advisors that might lead you astray. Consult your sense of what is right and wrong and make appropriate application. The suggestion that it be "upon your bed" has reference to the quiet of night when they are by themselves and proper meditation can be given to the matter at hand. Oft times decisions are made on the spur of the moment, without due consideration. We should think soberly and seriously about every decision made in life, especially those that have to do with spiritual matters. "The perpetual danger to God's children is that they might presume upon his love and mercy and fail to manifest the proper fear and awe of all sinful indulgences whatsoever; hence the special warning here" (Coffman, Vol 1, page 23).

**4:5** - The very suggestion that those listening should offer sacrifices implies the need to atone for sin. By rebelling against God's anointed king (David) they had actually rebelled against God Himself. Sin had entered their lives, and sacrifice had to be made. "They should now manifest their repentance, and their purpose to turn to God, by

presenting to him an appropriate sacrifice" (Barnes).

### **Contrast** **Verses 6-7**

- 6 *Many there are that say, Who will show us any good? Jehovah, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.*  
7 *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, More than they have when their grain and their new wine are increased.*

**4:6:** Verses 6 and 7 present a CONTRAST regarding the source of joy and gladness. While the world seeks gladness in the "grain" and "wine," the child of God finds his happiness in serving and loving God. Notice again Psalms 1:1-3.

There is some question as to who the "many" are in this verse. IF they are the friends of David, then they were anxious about deliverance. The more likely explanation, however, is that the Psalmist was referring to the great anxiety of mankind in general, as compared to the calm disposition and gladness which he enjoyed in serving God. One of the most perplexing questions of mankind is, "Where shall happiness be found?" Solomon attempted to find it in pleasure and indulgence. He concluded, however, that such material things are vain and a vexation of the soul (cf. Ecc 2:1 ff). But the Psalmist pointed out that these things are not the answer. "It is truly pitiful how little there is to cheer the heart other than what is promised for those who seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. What can the unbeliever expect? At best, his life cannot extend very far into the future; the world's riches shall never be received except by a tragically small fraction of mankind; and those who do receive earthly affluence can never maintain their status except for a few fleeting tragic years. For every mortal life promises only a few days and much trouble. Sickness, disease, incompetence and death itself await every man" (Coffman, Vol 1, page 24). In contrast, the child of God has blessed joy and peace in this life, and the hope of something far, far better when he has closed his eyes in the blessed rest of death.

The last part of this verse is a request that God would extend His favor unto the Psalmist. This phrase is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures, and is expressive of favor and friendship.

**4:7** - Notice the following truths: (1) It is God that provides genuine happiness; (2) true happiness extends from the heart and not outward circumstances; (3) the happiness that God provides is far

greater than that which the world might offer.

One writer has noted, "It is better to feel God's favour one hour in our repenting souls, than to sit whole ages under the warmest sunshine that this world affords" (Spurgeon). And I like Kyle M. Yates comment: "God's help in time of need causes more gladness than bumper crops" (Coffman, Vol 1, page 24).

## **Consequence** **Verse 8**

*8 In peace will I both lay me down and sleep; For thou, Jehovah,  
alone makest me dwell in safety.*

**4:8:** The Psalm closes with the CONSEQUENCE of accepting the counsel heretofore offered. And what is the consequence? (1) When the night shades fall I will be able to lay my head down in peace and serenity; (2) sleep will not escape me because of feelings of anxiety; (3) I will have the blessed assurance that safety is mine to enjoy. Notice the complete trust the Psalmist places in his God. There is little doubt that David slept more calmly in the wilderness than did his son Solomon in the riches of the Palace. It is not worldly things that offer peace and safety; nor is it worldly things mixed with just a little religion; but rather true safety, and accompanying peace, comes ONLY from God. Is it any wonder that our world is so paranoid and fearful? "They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep" (Spurgeon).

## ***Lessons***

What comfort to know that God is always near. We can call upon him at any time. God does not take vacations, nor does He sleep! He is there when we need Him. Past experience has proven such to be true.

And what about the world? How often I have thought to myself, "They don't even know what its all about!" The world has no idea of what is really important, lasting, and of true value. While men embrace the trinkets of life and the fool's gold that is laid at their feet by the Devil, the greater and more important things go unnoticed by the multitudes. And seldom do men even open their eyes and look! Instead, they actually "love vanity and seek after falsehood."

There are basically two kinds of counsel - good and bad! We seek advise financially, politically, socially, and medically. Some of it is good; some bad. But the ill followed advise in those areas of life do not have eternal consequences. If I could speak to the world, have their attention for just a moment, and know that they were listening, what advise would I give? Would it be any different than that offered by our writer? I think not! And what would I say? "Stand in awe!" Look at God and stand in awe. Things that are spiritual are sacred and holy and demand our greatest respect and admiration. "Sin not!" Stop rebelling against God. Walk not in the vanity of your mind.

"Be honest with yourself and with the truth!" In the quietness of your bed, when none can disturb, weigh all the evidence that is available, and listen, Listen, LISTEN! "Offer the sacrifices!" Do what you must to make things right with your God, for eternity is sure and life is short. And finally, "put your trust in God." Men will deceive; money will fail; your best friend will disappoint! But God will prove true in every single situation. "Chrysostom is credited with having said that if he had the privilege of preaching to all mankind at one time and that he could speak only once that it would be from this text" (Coffman, Vol. 1, page 22).

The TRUE source of happiness is not found in the material abundance, but in one's spiritual relation with his God (vs 7).

Realization of the providence and protection of God will cause us to lay down in peace.

The following will make a good sermon outline for this chapter. I do not remember the source.

#### I. REQUEST (verse 1)

1. It was a personal request - hear "me" - have mercy upon "me" - hear "my" prayers;
2. The request is knowledgeable - the writer has a knowledge of the righteousness of God;
3. In what way does God's righteousness give strength to David's request?
4. It was a request in view of his own needs - have mercy on "me";

#### II. REBUKE (verses 2-6)

1. A rebuke for their SARCASM (vs 2);
2. A rebuke for their FOLLY - they (1) love vanity, and they (2)

- seek falsehood;
3. Rebuke for their IGNORANCE, or for their joy in IGNORING WHAT THEY KNEW (vs 3);
  4. Rebuke for their IMPULSIVENESS - they should stop and give some thought to the direction they are going (vs 5);
  5. Rebuke for MISPLACED CONDUCT and CONFIDENCE (vs 5);
  6. Caution to his followers for PROPER CONDUCT (vs 6);

### III. REJOICING

1. For abundant blessings off true value
2. For peace and protection;

## ***“God Blesses Righteousness”***

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is ascribed to David and there is no reason to doubt this. Though the time and circumstances of writing are uncertain, it is a time when David was beset with enemies that are clearly in opposition to God and His plans and purposes. There is much to learn about prayer in this Psalm, and we will make note of those lessons as we proceed.

### ***Analysis***

An appropriate title for this psalm would be "God Blesses Righteousness." I suggest the following outline for study:

- I. HIS APPEAL (1-3)
  - 1. His plea (1-2);
  - 2. His consistency (3);
- II. HIS ASSESSMENT (4-8)
  - 1. God's opposition to the wicked set forth (4-6);
  - 2. God's favor to the righteous set forth (7-8);
- III. HIS ADVERSARIES (9-10)
  - 1. Their foulness (9);
  - 2. Their fate (10);
- IV. HIS ASSURANCE (11-12)
  - 1. Encouragement to others (11);
  - 2. An affirmation of these things (12);

### ***Commentary***

#### **HIS APPEAL Verses 1-3**

- 1 *Give ear to my words, O Jehovah, Consider my meditation.*
- 2 *Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God; For unto thee do I pray.*
- 3 *O Jehovah, in the morning shalt thou hear my voice; In the morning will I order my prayer unto thee, and will keep watch.*



**5:1:** The first three verses contain an APPEAL, consisting of (1) His plea (vs. 1-2) and (2) His consistency (vs. 3).

When he says *"give ear"* he is in fact asking God to place his hand to his ear so as to be able to hear better. As noted in the previous psalm, included in this is the expectation of an answer from God. There is a boldness on the part of David in approaching God. We likewise are instructed to come before God with boldness (cf. Heb 4:16).

*"Give ear to my words...."* Prayer consists of WORDS. Certainly there are times when words are difficult to come by, and the later portion of this verse makes provisions for those occasions.

*"Consider my meditations..."* - The Psalmist is asking God to consider his innermost thoughts, yea, even the very groanings of the heart. "The idea seems to be that while his words would be sincere and truthful, yet they could not express all his meaning. There were desires of the soul which no language could convey - deep, unuttered 'groanings' (cf. Rom 8:26-27), which could not be uttered in language" (Barnes). Spurgeon has noted that "words are not the essence but the garments of prayer." It is interesting that David asks God to "give ear" to the words of his prayer, and "consider" his deep meditations. Our God will not only listen to our earnest pleas, but He will look deep within the heart for those meditations that cannot be put into words.

Note here that prayer is PERSONAL. There is repeated reference to "my meditation," "my cry," "my voice," and "my prayer." On occasions others may pray in behalf of the brethren, but the prayers of others are not a substitute for individual responsibility in prayer.

**5:2** - Herein is an earnest appeal, a cry for help from a troubled soul. "Hearken unto the voice of my cry...unto thee do I pray." There was no one else to whom David could go; God was and is the only true source of comfort.

Notice carefully the reference to "MY King and MY God." It is precisely because God IS our King that He answers our prayers.

We are His children, members of His spiritual family. And as children of the Father and citizens in His kingdom, He provides a listening ear.

**5:3** - Note especially the PERSISTENCE of David's appeal. His prayer would be in "the morning," suggesting steadfastness in David's prayer life. But note also that David's prayer is PLANNED. He makes his intentions known, looking to the new day, the morning, and his communication with God. Of interest is the word "direct" (KJV), translated "order" in the ASV. It is a word that is like unto laying the wood in order upon an altar (cf Gen 22:9), or as the offering of Lev 1:6-7. There was nothing haphazard about his prayer; it was PLANNED.

Barnes has some good comments on this verse regarding prayer: "Prayer should not be rash; it should not be performed negligently or with a light spirit; it should engage the profound thought of the soul, and it should be performed with the same serious regard to time and to propriety which was demanded in the solemn and carefully prescribed rites of the ancient temple service" (Barnes). Spurgeon also has noted:

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 live men who present themselves before a king without a petition, and what wonder is it that we often miss the end of 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. Let not our prayers and praises be the flashes of a hot and hasty brain, but the steady burning of a well kindled fire.

And having prayed, let us watch for an answer. "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 favour? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers" (Spurgeon). Our Savior taught us to ask, "believing, ye shall receive it" (Mat 21:22).

We also learn from this verse the need for steadfastness in prayer. The writer says that he will pray "in the morning." As to WHAT morning, it would seem EVERY morning. "Prayer is not a sporadic or occasional thing at all. It is regular, continual, persistent and unceasing" (Coffman, Vol. 1, page 28). See 1Th 5:17.

## HIS ASSESSMENT

### Verses 4-8

- 4 *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: Evil shall not sojourn with thee.*
- 5 *The arrogant shall not stand in thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.*
- 6 *Thou wilt destroy them that speak lies: Jehovah abhorreth the blood-thirsty and deceitful man.*
- 7 *But as for me, in the abundance of thy lovingkindness will I come into thy house: In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.*
- 8 *Lead me, O Jehovah, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; Make thy way straight before my face.*

**5:4:** In this section the Psalmist writes of (1) God's opposition to the wicked (vs. 4-6), and (2) God's favor to the righteous (vs. 7-8). The Psalmist mentions a well known characteristic of our God. He is absolutely holy, and thus cannot abide with sin. God does not delight in wickedness, it being contrary to His nature. It is this absolute Holiness of our God that encourages us in prayer. If our cause is right, then we know that God will be on our side. On the other hand, if our aim is evil and wrong, then we can be assured that God will not advance it in any way.

Oh, the great hatred that God must have toward sin and wickedness! Let us learn well the truth of the hatred that God must bear toward sin. He has absolutely NO PLEASURE IN WICKEDNESS. To Him, sin is folly, and wickedness abominable in His sight. Evil shall not "sojourn with thee," says the Psalmist. And how foolish are we should we attempt to entertain God and Satan at the same time. "Rest assured, Christ will not live in the parlour of our hearts if we entertain the devil in the cellar of our thoughts" (Spurgeon).

**5:5 - "The arrogant"** - The KJV renders this as the "foolish." Those who are arrogant are indeed foolish. These "shall not stand," meaning they shall not stand acquitted before God; there will be no justification for them before God. There is an interesting statement in the last of this verse. It is said that God "*hatest all workers of iniquity.*" I have often heard it said that God hates sin, but he loves the sinner. According to this verse, God hates the worker of iniquity. We must keep in mind that God's "hate" is absolutely judicial in nature. While men may "hate" with improper passion, God does not do so. Coffman has noted that "God's love potentially belongs to

every man who was ever born, but the practice of wickedness alienates that love and changes it into hatred" (Coffman, page 29). The "iniquity" here considered is, of course, all forms of evil; all types of sin. This is due to His perfect holiness. "It is not a little dislike, but a thorough hatred which God bears to workers of iniquity" (Spurgeon).

**5:6** - *"Thou wilt destroy them that speak lies."* It is of interest that when sin is specified, it is an abuse of the tongue that most often appears. James (chapter 3) gives a vivid description of the inability of men in general to control the tongue, and that those who do manage to control the tongue control the whole body. Evidently David's enemies were false and treacherous, spreading lies about David in order to gain advantage over him.

*"Jehovah abhorreth"* - There is included in this description of God the idea of reaction to sin. He abhors; He will punish. The man whom He abhors is the "bloodthirsty and deceitful man." Literally the "man of bloods"; the idea being that this man was guilty of shedding much blood.

**5:7** - With this verse, the writer turns his attention to the treatment of those who are righteous. Unlike the wicked, David avows that he would "come into thy house," and in fear and reverence, worship God in the "temple." The house is synonymous with the temple. There are two observations worthy of note. First, the temple was not built during David's lifetime. But the tabernacle was sometimes referred to as the temple. Notice Jos 6:24, 1Sa 1:9, 3:3, and 2Sa 12:20. Second, David, not being a priest, would not be allowed to enter into the holy place or the most holy place. His words likely mean that he would enter the temple through God's divinely appointed medium, the priest. The last part of the verse has him worshipping TOWARD the temple, or facing as it were the city of Jerusalem where the temple was located.

Coffman points out that the word for "worship" here refers to "one's prostrating himself before God" (Coffman, page 30).

We should note that David would only enter into the presence of God in the "abundance" of God's lovingkindness. Only God's grace permits us into His presence.

The word "fear" is suggestive of a reverent attitude in worship. Approach to God is a serious matter, and only the contrite and

reverent heart will find access to God. And it was with such reverence, and genuine appreciation, that David considered himself privileged to attend the public worship. It is an astonishing blight upon a number in the body of Christ who find no pleasure in attending services. It is something they endure rather than enjoy.

**5:8** - Having heard the FACT of prayer, we now learn the CONTENTS of that prayer. The request of David's is a noble example for each one of us to follow. Our desire should be that God will lead us in the path of righteousness; the path that leads to righteousness and a right relationship with God. The word "straight" can be variously interpreted. The Pulpit Commentary points out that it is "not so much 'smooth my way,' or 'make it level,' as 'put it plainly before me'" (Rawlinson, PC, Vol. 8, page 31). The same thought is seen in Psalms 25:5 and 27:11.

## **HIS ADVERSARIES**

Verses 9-10

- 9 *For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; Their inward part is very wickedness; Their throat is an open sepulchre; They flatter with their tongue.*
- 10 *Hold them guilty, O God; Let them fall by their own counsels; Thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions; For they have rebelled against thee.*

**5:9:** These two verses set forth a description of the enemy (verse 9) and their fate should they persist in this rebellion (verse 10).

Oh, what a treacherous enemy! There is no "faithfulness in their mouth," no sincerity or honesty in what they speak. Their "inward part," the heart, is nothing but wickedness. Like a sepulcher, they are filled with death and destruction. But even worse, their throat is like an open grave, "emitting the noisome exhalations of a putrid heart" (Rawlinson, PC, Vol. 8, page 31). And how dangerous is this open sepulcher, casting a stumbling block in the way of others! Oh, that we might take heed of this wicked man, for he will only succeed in destroying you with his own vile wickedness of character. They "flatter," or "make smooth their tongues," so as to deceive. Oh, how this describes the false teachers who are plaguing the church today; the Rubel Shellys, Randy Harrises, Randy Maxyeus, etc. How can words be more explicit?

**5:10** - The word translated "*hold them guilty*" means to recognize the enemy guilty and render appropriate judgment. There is a prayer that "their own plans might be the means of quelling the rebellion" (Barnes). And why does David seek God's revenge? It was not because they had done David wrong, but because they had sinned against God. And all such imprecatory Psalms are not a call for personal vengeance, but a plea that a Holy and Righteous God should perform His justice; thereby reclaiming the glory and honor that rightfully belongs to Him, and Him alone.

## **HIS ASSURANCE**

### **Verses 11-12**

- 11 But let all those that take refuge in thee rejoice, Let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: Let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.*
- 12 For thou wilt bless the righteous; O Jehovah, thou wilt compass him with favor as with a shield.*

**5:11:** The last two verses set forth the great assurance that the Psalmist had in God, and His ability to deliver. David offers encouragement to others (vs. 11) and affirms these things to be true (vs. 12).

While the wicked have everything to dread, the righteous have everything for which to rejoice. It is one of the characteristics of those who are righteous to be genuinely happy; rejoicing in every circumstance. Why? Not because of what they have accomplished, but because they recognize that Jehovah defends them, and brings deliverance.

**5:12** - As a shield protects the body from physical harm, God's favor is upon the righteous to protect him; to "effectually secure him from all dangers" (Rawlinson, Vol. 8, page 31). We are grateful to Coffman for calling attention to the fact that the word for "compass him" occurs only here and in 1Sa 23:26. In the latter it "describes a hostile force closing in on David, only to find itself quietly deflected by God's encircling, providential care of David" (Coffman, page 31).

## ***Lessons***

How marvelous the power of prayer! And yet, how neglected is that great power, even by some who are leaders in the Kingdom. Prayer is PERSONAL, it being with a personal God and a person seeking

God's help. James tells us that the "fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working" (Jam 5:16).

## ***“God Hears The Supplications Of the Righteous”***

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is generally regarded as having been written by David. The Psalmist is sorely troubled. He is encompassed by enemies; his heart is filled with grief. He regards his condition as chastisement from the Lord. He stresses his confidence in deliverance. The Psalm might be entitled, “God Hears The Supplications of the Righteous.”

“Here is a Psalm that must have been written after a sleepless night. It is the first of the penitential psalms, of which there were seven: 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143” (Winfred Clark, Vol. 1, page 44). The grief of the Psalmist had arisen as a result of his consciousness of sin. This is the first of seven penitential Psalms. Although it is somewhat weak in its note of repentance, we have classified it with those Psalms that give us a glimpse into the penitent heart of David.

### ***Analysis***

The first seven verses of this Psalm address the misery of the writer. He seems to be aware of the meaning of his suffering, and recognizes that it is God’s chastising hand that is upon him. In the late part of the Psalm the Divine assurance provides hope. In this Psalm we have...

- I. His Appeal, (1-3);
- II. His Anguish, (4-7);
- III. His Assurance, (8-10).

### ***Commentary***

#### **His Appeal Verses 1-3**

- 1 O Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger, Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*



2 *Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah; for I am withered away: O Jehovah, heal me; for my bones are troubled.*  
3 *My soul also is sore troubled: And thou, O Jehovah, how long?*

**6:1:** “*O Jehovah, rebuke me not in thine anger*” - The Psalmist had evidently contemplated his afflictions and had come to the conclusion that these trials just might have been for his sins. The word “rebuke” properly refers to the reproof of an offender by words; or it may also be used to denote the reproof which God administers by His providential dealings when He brings judgment upon anyone for his sins.

“*In thine anger*” means literally, “in thine heat.” The Bible often speaks of God's wrath as “consuming.” See Genesis 39:19; Numbers 11:33; Deuteronomy 11:17; Job 19:11 and 32:2-3.

David would no more look forward to the wrath of God than we would. He knew that it was not something to be taken lightly. Notice that the Psalmist does not offer excuses for his sin.

**6:2:** “*Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah...*” -- When men sin, it is mercy for which they plead. David did not claim any meritorious worth on his part. And while it is certainly by grace that we are saved, we must exercise caution lest we conclude that grace alone will see us through. God's divine mercy and lovingkindness are extended to the penitent, obedient soul; and to none other.

“*For I am withered away*” - “The original word here (*umlal*) properly means to languish or droop, as plants do that are blighted, Isa. 24:7... There have been numberless cases where sorrow has prostrated the strength and has brought on languishing sickness” (Barnes).

“*for my bones are troubled*” - The word for troubled is ‘vexed’ in the KJV, which we now commonly apply to mental trouble. It is used here in reference to the anguish or torment of the soul. The Psalmist was describing the deepness of his anguish. Medical knowledge now knows that the bones feel no pain, thus the words are used in a figurative way.

**6:3:** “*And thou, O Jehovah, how long?*” - It is as if he were about to say that he had hoped God would interpose; or that his dealings had been of a very severe nature. But he ends the sentence by asking,

“How long...?” “The writer is allowing us to look into his heart and soul and see just how much effect sin had upon him... When David refers to the suffering of the soul, he shows just how deep the suffering is. The effect of sin had not to do just with the body, but rather goes down into and affects the soul” (Winfred Clark, page 45).

### **His Anguish** **Verses 4-7**

- 4 *Return, O Jehovah, deliver my soul: Save me for thy lovingkindness' sake.*  
5 *For in death there is no remembrance of thee: In Sheol who shall give thee thanks?*  
6 *I am weary with my groaning; Every night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.*  
7 *Mine eye wasteth away because of grief; It waxeth old because of all mine adversaries.*

**6:4:** Notice that sin causes a separation between God and man. The Psalmist calls for God to return. God's return would, of course, be conditional. Reconciliation occurs when repentance has taken place, never before.

**6:5:** The Psalmist was not teaching the modern doctrine of “soul sleeping.” It must be remembered that among the ancient saints there was not as much light on the subject of the future state of the dead. The context of the Psalm also helps us in determining the meaning of his words. In penitence one must return to God WHILE THERE IS TIME IN THIS LIFE. In the grave that return will not be possible.

**6:6:** The Psalmist was exhausted, worn out with his groaning. His sorrow was so great, his groaning so constant, that his strength had failed as a result. Genuine penitence is here manifested by the shedding of tears. David recognized his sinfulness, and his sorrow for that his sin led him to weep bitterly. This is hyperbolic language, expressing his deep sorrow. Barnes points out that “this verse discloses the true source of the trials....It was some deep mental anguish - some source of grief - that exhausted his strength, and that had laid him on a bed of languishing” (Barnes).

**6:7:** “*wasteth away*” - KJV says “consumed” - The word (*ashash*) means to fall in, to fall away, and is applied here to the eye as pining or wasting away from care, anxiety, and sorrow.

## **His Assurance** **Verses 8-10**

- 8 *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; For Jehovah hath heard the voice of my weeping.*  
9 *Jehovah hath heard my supplication; Jehovah will receive my prayer.*  
10 *All mine enemies shall be put to shame and sore troubled: They shall turn back, they shall be put to shame suddenly.*

**6:8:** There is a change of tone on the part of the Psalmist. He now demonstrates a sense of confidence that God has heard his prayer. In some way he was assured that it would be answered. "This is, therefore, a remarkable and striking proof that prayer may be heard, even while we are speaking to God; that the assurance may be conveyed suddenly to the mind that God will hear and answer the prayer which is addressed to him" (Barnes).

It is significant that David's repentance and restoration included putting away the workers of iniquity. "Getting rid of evil companions is a very necessary step in any man's repentance" (Coffman, page 37).

**6:9:** His confidence is back, he can now approach life with new hope. Notice 2 Chron. 7:14 also.

**6:10:** He not only has confidence, but courage as well. The enemies would somehow observe the writer's reconciliation, and be put to shame and made "sore troubled." It is a curious thing that the children of God should have any enemies at all. And yet, we are told that Abel was slain by his brother Cain for no other reason than the fact that Cain's "works were evil and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12).

## ***Lessons***

What a deep sense of grief the Psalmist must have felt for his sin. He deserved God's sore displeasure; he knew God must have been angry with him. What sin he might have committed we are not told. Nor do we know the magnitude of his sin. But no matter the sin, David knew it stood between him and his God, and between the ever pressing enemies and victory. Our 21st century civilization seldom feels the deep sorrow brought on by the guilt of sin. It is because they know not what sin is, nor the consequences of their evil deeds. Sin is serious business, and unless one receives the necessary

cleansing, he will not see God! “Sin brings indescribable grief and sorrow to the person whose conscience is rooted in God” (Roy Deaver, page 20).

Notice the terms describing the conscience-stricken soul: “I am languishing”; “my bones are troubled”; “I am weary with my moaning”; “I flood my bed with tears”; “my eye wastes away because of grief”; “my eye grows weak because of my foes.” If men would languish over their sins as did this Psalmist, repentance would be more forthcoming, and sinners converted to God.

Our God is a chastening God. For that we should be extremely grateful. It is through chastening that the child comes to learn obedience, and ultimately maturity. Notice Hebrews 12:6-7 in this connection.

How great to know that God is a forgiving God. He “delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18). While the so-called gods of idol worshippers are vicious and vindictive, the Bible describes our God as having great mercy.

## *“God Our Righteous Judge”*

### ***Introduction***

Roy Deaver points out that the title note “Shiggaion” means “wandering,” an appropriate preface to “this Psalm of David, written while he was wandering in efforts to get away from King Saul” (Roy Deaver, page 22). The subtitle points out that this Psalm had something to do with the words of “Cush, a Benjamite.” Clarke points out that “As to Cush the Benjamite, he is a person unknown in Jewish history; the name is probably a name of disguise; and by it he may covertly mean Saul himself, the son of Kish, who was of the tribe of Benjamin” (Adam Clark). This would fit the Psalm, and the occasion upon which this Psalm was written would be that incident in 1 Samuel 24.

Brother Deaver entitles this Psalm “God Our Righteous Judge.” We will follow his lead here.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm can be outlined as follows:

- I. Prayer For Deliverance, 1-2
- II. Declaration of Innocence, 3-5;
- III. Plea For Divine Justice, 6-9;
- IV. Trust In God, 10-11;
- V. Destruction Of The Wicked, 12-16;
- VI. Praise, 17;

### ***Commentary***

#### **Prayer For Deliverance Verses 1-2**

- 1 *O Jehovah my God, in thee do I take refuge: Save me from all them that pursue me, and deliver me,*
- 2 *Lest they tear my soul like a lion, Rending it in pieces, while there*

*is none to deliver.*

**7:1:** “*O Lord my God*” - Note the personal aspect of David’s relationship to God.

*“in thee do I put my trust”* - Men will place their trust in something: It may be material gain, human wisdom, or self-attainment; but the follower of God places his trust in God Almighty.

*“save me from all them that persecute me”* - God’s servant has enemies. They that live godly lives WILL suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). Notice Matthew 5:11-12 and John 15:18-27.

*“Lest he tear my soul like a lion...”* - David makes reference to some specific individual. Likely the reference is to Saul. David was cognizant of Saul’s power, and his determination to “tear” David’s soul.

**7:2:** “Whatever may be the emergency of our condition we shall never find it amiss to retain our reliance upon our God” (Spurgeon).

*“None to deliver”*-- Even in times of distress the author was aware that without God there would be no one to deliver him from his troubles. “It is never right to distrust God, and never vain to trust him” (Spurgeon).

### **Declaration of Innocence Verses 3-5**

*3 O Jehovah my God, if I have done this; If there be iniquity in my hands;*

*4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (Yea, I have delivered him that without cause was mine adversary);*

*5 Let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it; Yea, let him tread my life down to the earth, And lay my glory in the dust. Selah*

**7:3** - We cannot determine exactly what accusation Cush might have brought against David. However, it would appear from these verses that this Benjamite had accused David of bringing evil upon someone who was at peace with him; of wantonly and without provocation doing some wrong. The design of David was to deny these charges by declaring that if these things were so, then might disaster come upon him. It would be somewhat like our modern adage, “If I am not telling the truth, may lightening strike me.” Of interest is the fact

that David was addressing Jehovah, and asking HIM to determine if there was any evil that had occurred, and if so, asking God to take the action described in verse 5. David's life demonstrates a trust in the justice of God, desiring always to have punishment administered by the Almighty rather than by man. The parenthetical statement is an affirmation of David's innocence. As pointed out in the introduction, Cush may actually have been Saul. It is possible that David was referring to the incident in 1 Samuel 24:10 where the life of Saul was spared. That would be an indication of the character of David, and would most certainly make these verses understandable.

**7:5:** David was willing to suffer defeat if the charge were true. Barnes notes, "His desire for the interposition of God, therefore, arose solely from the fact of his feeling that, in these respects, he was entirely innocent, and that the conduct of his enemy was unjust and cruel" (Barnes). Paraphrased, David was saying, "If I have done wrong I am willing to accept punishment at the hands of God by allowing Saul to defeat me. But I contend that I am innocent! When I had the opportunity to take Saul's life, I did good unto him by sparing his life; I cut off his skirt in order to show him the danger he had been in. This act sufficiently demonstrates my innocence of these false accusations."

In spite of the fact that David sought only good for Saul, he was still hounded by the King, and rewarded evil for good. "As the shadow follows the substance, so envy pursues goodness. It is only at the tree laden with fruit that men throw stones. If we would live without being slandered we must wait until we get to heaven" (Spurgeon).

### **Plea For Divine Justice Verses 6-9**

- 6 *Arise, O Jehovah, in thine anger; Lift up thyself against the rage of mine adversaries, And awake for me; thou hast commanded judgment.*
- 7 *And let the congregation of the peoples compass thee about; And over them return thou on high.*
- 8 *Jehovah ministereth judgment to the peoples: Judge me, O Jehovah, according to my righteousness, and to mine integrity that is in me.*
- 9 *O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the righteous: For the righteous God trieth the minds and*

*hearts.*

**7:6:** The words “*lift up*” are a call for God to appear in full strength against the enemies. Their rage called for stern action on the part of God; this the Psalmist requests. The last portion of the verse seems to appeal to the fact that God “commanded judgment” as a cause for the desired action. God is a God of judgment, and it seemed consistent with His nature that He should immediately act accordingly.

*“arise, O Lord, in thine anger”* -- Though it may appear that at times our God slumbers, we must never forget that God’s patience and longsuffering are actually manifestations of His love for men and His desire that they come to repentance.

**7:7:** As a result of God’s intervention, the congregation of God’s people would praise Jehovah. We are not certain what the last part of the verse means, but it may be a plea for demonstration that God IS ruling; that He IS in control.

**7:8:** The words actually declare David’s innocence of any charges that had been brought against him. The meaning is, “If thou findest me righteous, acquit me and vindicate me.”

**7:9:** The critics usually attack the Psalms for their frequent call for revenge upon the wicked. The imprecatory call of the Psalms is not a FAULT with the writers, but rather an indication that these men realized that the vengeance belonged to God, and God alone. Only God can determine the inner thoughts of a man; it is HE ALONE Who can see the heart, and thus HE ALONE is qualified to pass judgment.

### **Trust In God Verses 10-11**

*10 My shield is with God, Who saveth the upright in heart.*

*11 God is a righteous judge, Yea, a God that hath indignation every day.*

**7:10-11:** God searches the heart, sees the innermost thoughts, and saves and protects those who are His. It is because of the desire and ability of God to so protect and save that David declares Jehovah his “shield.” The King James Version inserts “with the wicked” before the words “every day.” This seems to convey the meaning. It is with



the WICKED that God is angry, not the righteous. And He is angry because of their rebellion to His will. The characteristics of divine anger and wrath reveal a side of God that many do not want to consider. But our God IS an angry God, and He is capable of venting His anger (and will do so) upon those who are disobedient. “The best day that ever dawns on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days, but no safe days” (Spurgeon). God’s judgment will prevail, if not apparently in this life, then certainly in eternity. There is an old proverb that says, “The mill of God grinds late, but grinds to powder.”

### **Destruction Of The Wicked** **Verses 12-16**

- 12 If a man turn not, he will whet his sword; He hath bent his bow, and made it ready.*
- 13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; He maketh his arrows fiery shafts.*
- 14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity; Yea, he hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.*
- 15 He hath made a pit, and digged it, And is fallen into the ditch which he made.*
- 16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, And his violence shall come down upon his own pate.*

**7:12:** God’s anger is upon those who will not repent. We have here an excellent definition of repentance. It is nothing short of “turning away” from sin. The picture is that of a warrior, fully equipped, standing ready to destroy the enemy. It is a horrible thing to be fighting against God.

**7:13:** There is no need, on God’s part, for preparation. He STANDS prepared, ready to use His Divine instruments in judgment upon the wicked. This implies that when the time comes, there will be no delay in meting out punishment.

The latter part of this verse is difficult to interpret, and numerous renderings have been offered. Horsley renders it, “He putteth his arrows in action against those who are ready for burning.” The Latin Vulgate reads, “His arrows he has made for the burning.”

**7:14:** This is the first of two metaphors used to describe the slanderer’s plight. First is that of a woman in travail. This is what the wicked man does. The idea is, “the wicked man labours or

struggles, even with great pain, to accomplish his purposes of iniquity” (Barnes). Having “conceived mischief,” it eventually is “brought forth” in full deliverance of falsehood. It is difficult to imagine someone so wicked that he “conceives mischief,” originating it in his mind and then developing the plans to carry it out. This verse, along with the next, has the design of which to say, “that any plan or purpose of wickedness must be in the end a failure, since God is a righteous Judge, and will vindicate his own cause” (Barnes).

**7:15:** Here is the second metaphor of the wicked’s plight: He digs a pit and falls into it. Wickedness, in the final analysis, is a dead-end street. Haman is the perfect example that men will eventually end up being hanged by their own “gallows” (so to speak); if not in this life, then certainly in the final judgment. Barnes remarked, “he had been snared in his own devices; his cunning had recoiled on himself, and instead of bringing ruin on others he had only managed to bring it on himself” (Barnes).

**7:16:** This is a reiteration of the truth established in the previous verse. Though there are certainly exceptions, it is often true to life that those who pursue a wicked life unusually end up getting caught in their own deceptions and falsehood. The “pate” is simply another word for “head.”

### **Praise Verse 17**

*17 I will give thanks unto Jehovah according to his righteousness,  
And will sing praise to the name of Jehovah Most High.*

**7:17:** The absolute justice of God Almighty is the foundation of praise and adoration to Him. Were He anything short of absolutely just and completely righteous, He would be no better than the idols that the heathen worship and serve. David recognized these marvelous traits of Jehovah, and proclaimed his thanksgiving and praise to the Most High!

### ***Lessons***

The fact that charges are made against us does not mean they are true. Often the enemies of God’s children will make false accusations in an attempt to defeat them and bring them to shame.

Humility should characterize our lives. If we have sinned, we should

be willing to accept punishment, always trusting in God to deal justly with us.

In this Psalm we have “Exemplary Conduct Under Social Trial.” David’s conduct teaches us that he was a man of (1) Earnest Application, (2) Devout Meditations, and (3) Reverent Adoration of His God. His concept of God was that of a Being Who is (a) accessible at all times, (b) equal to all emergencies, and (c) immutable amidst the revolution and changes of the ages.

God is angry with the wicked every day (verse 11). If God were not angry with the wicked it would cast dispersion upon the Almighty. We must, however, define the nature of this anger. It is not a malicious anger. God’s anger is never a flare up of uncontrolled anger; it is absolute judicial anger founded upon His absolute holiness.

## *“What Is Man, That Thou Art Mindful Of Him?”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is one of thanksgiving and praise. It contemplates man as God’s creation, and expresses awe at the position God has given man with regard to the earth and all things therein. “That God, who had made the heavens, and set his glory on them, should have regard for man, and ‘visit’ him, and not only so, but give him so lofty a position, so exalted a destiny, is a thought that is well nigh overwhelming” (G. Rawlinson, PC, Vol. 8, page 48).

“This Psalm is a beautiful song of worship. It opens and closes with the same words of praise. Such is the glory of God’s divinity, power, and goodness that it fills not only the earth, but transcends the very heavens. This Psalm is definitely Messianic in nature and is quoted by the Holy Spirit (in reference to the Christ) in Hebrews 2:6-9” (Roy Deaver, page 25). Our title of the Psalm comes directed from the text: “What Is Man, That Thou Art Mindful of Him?” We believe that the Psalm was written by David.

### ***Analysis***

The primary idea in this Psalm is the love and goodness of God toward man. That God would condescend to man, and thus “visit him,” thereby giving him a lofty position, is indeed an awesome thought.

Roy Deaver offers the following outline which we will follow:

- I. **EXCLAMATION** (1) - the Psalmist gives an exclamation of praise. Jehovah is our God; His name is excellent in all the earth.
- II. **DECLARATION** (2) - the Psalmist declares that God’s glory is made known even by babes and infants, and this to the consternation of God’s enemies.
- III. **INTERROGATION** (3-4) – Upon looking at the heavens, the

Psalmist asks a significantly profound question: “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man that thou visitest him?”

- IV. **EXULTATION** (5-8) – The Psalmist describes man’s honor and position; man is made a little lower than the angels, he is crowned with honor and glory, he has dominion over the works of God, and all things are put under his feet.
- V. **EXCLAMATION** (9) - The Psalmist repeats the wonderful exclamation of praise.

## **Commentary**

### **EXCLAMATION**

#### **Verse 1**

*1 O Jehovah, our Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth,  
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens!*

**8:1:** The first and ninth verse frame the Psalm and set the tone for its meaning and interpretation. In the original, “*ehovah Adoneynu*,” or “*Jehovah, who art our sovereign Lord and Master.*” The very “name” of Jehovah is excellent; there is none like it in meaning, or in significance.

“*how excellent....*” Indeed, what marvelous truth is contained in these two words when it comes to describing the greatness of our God. No tongue can even begin to utter the half of our God’s excellence. And if the NAME of Jehovah is excellent, how much more the very nature and being of God Himself.

“*Who hast set thy glory...*” The word rendered “*hast set*” is in the imperative mood; ‘*tenah*’ or “give.” Barnes renders this, “which glory of thine give or place above the heavens. In other words, let it be exalted in the highest degree, and to the highest place, even above the heavens upon which he was gazing, and which were in themselves so grand” (Barnes). If men gaze upon the moon in wonder, and admire the nature that surrounds us, so may the very name of Jehovah be adored and admired.

“*upon the heavens*” is rendered “above the heavens” in the KJV. Coffman is correct in noting that “the AV is the superior rendition, because the glory of the Creator is not merely upon the heavens, it is likewise above them” (Coffman, page 46).

## DECLARATION

### Verse 2

*2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength, Because of thine adversaries, That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.*

**8:2:** The meaning of the verse seems to revolve around two words. The first of these is “*babes*,” the Hebrew word used to describe a child, a young boy, etc. “By babes and sucklings are meant young children just able to lisp God’s praises, and often doing so, either through pious teachings or by a sort of natural instinct, since ‘Heaven lies about us in our infancy’” (Rawlinson, page 48). The other word is “strength,” and such strength as to enable the overthrow of the enemy of Jehovah. It would appear that the verse suggests one of two thoughts, and perhaps even the both of them. The first thought is summed up in the words of Paul, “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor 1:25). Man, humble and weak, is the instrument that God has selected to overthrow His enemies. In that sense man might be compared to an infant or suckling. Second, the meaning may be more literal in that, insofar as God’s greatness is concerned, some of most sublime praise and honor has come forth from the mouths of babes and sucklings. We even use a similar adage, “Out of the mouth of babes,” when we are impressed with the wisdom of their youth. Such wisdom subdues the enemies.

He was just a little lad,  
And on the week’s first day  
Was wandering home from Bible school,  
And dawdling on the way.  
He scuffed his shoes in the grass;  
And found a caterpillar  
He found a fluffy mil-weed pod,  
And blew out all the ‘filler.’  
A bird’s nest in a tree o’erhead  
So wisely placed and high,  
Was just another wonder  
That caught his eager eye.  
A neighbor watched his zig-zag course,  
And hailed him from the lawn;  
Asked him where he had been that day,  
And what was going on.  
“M’m, a very fine way,” the neighbor said

“For a boy to spend his time;  
If you’ll tell me where God is,  
I’ll give you a brand new dime.”  
Quick as a flash his answer came!  
Nor were his accents faint;  
“I’ll give you a dollar, Mister,  
If you’ll tell me where God ain’t”

Such simple wisdom on the part of this imaginary child does indeed “still the enemy and the avenger.” Barnes’ conclusion on this verse gets very near the meaning: “It was to some manifested strength or prowess, by which some enemy, or some one who was seeking revenge, was overcome by the instrumentality of those who might be compared with children on account of their feebleness” (Barnes). It is likely, in view of the next verse, that David had in mind his encounter with Goliath. David was at that time a young boy, and was looked upon by the enemy of God’s people as but a lad. The next verse would suggest that particular time in David’s life when he served as a shepherd, out under the evening sky observing the moon and the stars.

The Messianic tone of this Psalm is quite evident. In the absolute sense of the word it was the Babe of Bethlehem who came into this world and eventually destroyed the greatest of the enemies of mankind, Satan himself.

From the principle established in this verse the Psalmist would most naturally reflect upon the feeble, yet exalted, position of man.

### **INTERROGATION**

#### **Verses 3-4**

- 3 *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;*  
4 *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

**8:3:** “The fingers are the instruments by which we construct a piece of work - perhaps indicating skill rather than strength; and hence so used in respect to God, as it is by his skill that the heavens have been made” (Barnes). Scriptural references to the “hand of God” are abundant, and it is but very rarely that we hear of His “finger” or “fingers.”

The reference to the moon and stars suggests that the words may have been composed at night. The Psalmist was evidently contemplating the goodness that God had bestowed upon him despite his feeble nature in comparison to the great works of God's hands. There is something about the moon and the stars that provoke deep meditations. On a number of occasions while serving aboard the Coast Guard cutter Chataqua in the Pacific, I would sit on the fantail and observe the beauty of the night skies unencumbered by the lights of the city and meditate upon the power of my God, and His providential care for me. "It is inconceivable that any man in full possession of his mental faculties can look upon the magnificent glory of the night sky without being conscious of the existence of God and of man's constant need of his love and favor" (Coffman, page 48).

**8:4:** What is there in man that entitles him to so much notice, and that by the Almighty? Why is it that God has bestowed upon man the most esteemed honor of all His creation? The "son of man" is another way of saying "man." Here it likely means any descendent of man, or anyone of the human race. "And why is it," the writer asks, "that thou visitest him?" "The word here used would properly express a visitation for any purpose - for inspection; for mercy; for friendship; for judgment; etc. Here it refers to the attention bestowed by God on man in conferring on him such marks of favor and honor as he had done" (Barnes). The Psalmist is amazed at God's condescension. When we contemplate the marvelous things that God has done for man even since these words were written, our astonishment at God's dealings with man is even greater.

When we consider the enormous expanse of this universe, it has an humbling effect upon us. The mere size of this galaxy, not to mention the entire universe, overwhelms our mortal minds. All of these things considered, and man is a mere speck in the whole of things; insignificant indeed when compared to the whole. And yet our God is STILL MINDFUL of us.

### EXULTATION Verses 5-8

- 5 *For thou hast made him but little lower than God, And crownest him with glory and honor.*
- 6 *Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; Thou hast put all things under his feet:*



7 *All sheep and oxen, Yea, and the beasts of the field,*  
8 *The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, Whatsoever*  
*passeth through the paths of the seas.*

**8:5:** The Hebrew is “Elohim” and is rendered “God” in the Chaldee Paraphrase, Latin Vulgate, and the Syriac and Arabic. It is rendered “a little lower than the angels” in Hebrews 2:6-8 for the simple reason that the LXX (Septuagint), the common OT translation of that era, so rendered it. The proper rendering, however, is “God.”

In some way God had made man just a little lower than Himself. The reference here is probably to man’s dominion over the earth. In this role, man is just a little lower than God with respect to authority over God’s creation. Barnes agrees that “in respect to his dominion over the earth, man had been placed in a condition comparatively but little inferior to God himself; he had made him almost equal to himself” (Barnes). In giving man such a position, God has placed a crown of glory upon man that has been given to no other creature. The Hebrews writer quotes this verse to show that man has failed to subject all things unto himself (2:8). It is only in Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, that complete dominion was accomplished. “It is categorically stated that all that was intended in the creation of man was fulfilled only in Jesus Christ our Lord. He was the only human ever born who was in every way and at all times exactly what God created man to be” (Coffman, page 50).

**8:6-8:** It is interesting that God “makest” man to have dominion. Such authority was given by God; God gave to man such dominion over the creation. The passage to which the Psalmist refers is Genesis 1:26.

*“all things under his feet”* - These words are taken from the act of treading down one’s enemies in battle. When an enemy was captured, the victor would often place the feet upon the neck as a symbolic gesture of complete defeat. The remarkable fulfillment of the promise given in Genesis 1:26 is seen in the control that man has exercised over even the wildest of animals. Barnes has pointed out with regard to the animal kingdom, “Numerous as they are, and rapid as is their flight, and strong as many of them are, they have never succeeded in making man subject to them, or in disturbing the purposes of man” (Barnes).

### ***EXCLAMATION***

## Verse 9

9 *O Jehovah, our Lord, How excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

**8:9:** The repetition of the words with which the Psalm opened suggests that these two verses set forth the truth intended, and all intervening verses illustrate that marvelous truth.

## Lessons

We learn something of God: (1) His name is excellent, and glorious. How detestable is the thought that men drag the name of God through the dirt in total irreverence! (2) His glory is even above the heavens; (3) The heavens are the product of creation, not evolution; (4) He is the Creator of MAN.

We learn something about Man: (1) He is the product of God's creation; (2) He is the object of God's concern and affection; (3) He has been crowned with honor and glory; (4) He has been given dominion over the works of God's hands; (5) He has the obligation to be thankful and grateful, and to give God the praise for His divine love and blessings.

There are "*paths of the sea*," a fact not known nor understood when this Psalm was first written. Ocean going vessels use those paths today. Yes, the Bible is scientifically accurate.

## *“Praise And Deliverance”*

### ***Introduction***

There are various opinions as to the exact occasion of this Psalm. The general background of this chapter is a time of deliverance. Some of the differing opinions as to the exact occasion include David's triumph over Goliath, his deliverance from Absalom, the deliverance of the Jews from Babylonian captivity, and the times of the Maccabees. To ascertain the exact occasion for the Psalm seems to us, at best, to be little more than guesswork. The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David, and it would seem that those ancient authorities who wrote the title would be a far better position to determine the author than modern day scholars so far removed in time. Some things regarding this occasion of deliverance can be learned from the Psalm itself:

- 1) The Psalm was composed in view of “enemies” (plural) with which the Psalmist had been engaged (verse 3);
- 2) These were foreign nations (verse 5);
- 3) The enemy was a “destroying” enemy - one that had evidently invaded the land (verse 5);
- 4) The writer had achieved a victory over them (verses 1, 2, 10, 11 and 15);
- 5) The writer was evidently still surrounded by some of these enemies (verse 13).

Of special interest is the phrase “upon Muthlabben,” a term that appears nowhere else in the Psalms. Joe Gilmore says that the term “may refer to a well known melody meaning ‘die for the son.’ Many well informed scholars believe the term refers to the death of Absalom” (Joe Gilmore, page 56). Others, Barnes included, think that it is not possible to determine the exact meaning of the words.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains two leading subjects - one pertaining to the past and the other to the future. Both occasions illustrate the character of God and give the writer opportunity to express his confidence in

God.

I. **Deliverance Procured** - deliverance from foes ALREADY GRANTED and thus furnishing occasion for praising God, (1-12).

1. Proclamation (1-2), in which the author expresses his thanksgiving;
2. Particulars (3-6), in which the author states the reasons showing that God had enabled him in times past to overcome his enemies;
3. Praise (7-12), in which the author reflects upon the character of God as one who would endure forever;

II. **Deliverance Projected** - deliverance expected in view of what had occurred in the past, (13-20).

1. Prayer (13-14);
2. Pronouncement (15-18);
3. Plea (19-20).

The fundamental message of the Psalm is that “all men and all nations stand before God. God blesses those men and those nations which fear Him. God punishes (and will punish) wicked men; He brings wicked nations to destruction. God will not bless any nation that turns away from Him” (Deaver, page 29). Albert Barnes presents a fundamental truth from both parts one and two. The first part (verses 1-12) teaches us “that God is a refuge and help for those who are in trouble and danger; and that all such may put their trust in him.” Of the second half, “the principle truth taught in this part of the psalm is, that the wicked will be destroyed; that they, as contradistinguished from the righteous, can hope for no protection from God, but will be cut down and punished” (Barnes).

### ***Commentary***

#### **Deliverance Procured Verses 1-12**

First, we have **Proclamation** (verses 1-2), in which the author expresses his thanksgiving.

- 1 *I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvellous works.*
- 2 *I will be glad and exult in thee; I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High.*

In this section we have deliverance from foes ALREADY GRANTED and thus furnishing occasion for praising God.

**9:1:** *“I will praise thee”* - In view of the merciful interpositions referred to in the Psalms, and especially in view of the character of God, the Psalmist vows to praise God.

*“with my whole heart”* - Notice (1) the personal nature of his praise, and (2) the undivided nature of the praise. This is the only kind of praise that God will accept; that which is both personal, and without divided allegiance. “The word ‘heart’ is a spacious word. It includes all the interior things, all the central things; when a man comes to praise, will, intellect, and imagination must all be active. He must bring to the ministry of praise the worship of his feelings. Come will, and make my praise forceful. Come intellect, and make it enlightened. Come feeling, and make it affectionate” (Bible Illustrator, page 57).

*“I will show forth all thy marvelous works”* - In what ways can one “show forth” the works of God? This “showing forth” the works of God would include both (1) verbal teaching, and (2) application to life. “Gratitude for one mercy refreshes the memory as to the thousands of others. One silver link in the chain draws up a long series of tender remembrances” (Spurgeon).

**9:2:** the Psalmist states the purpose of this song of praise. He would express his joy in recognition of the majesty of God. “Songs are the fitting expressions of inward thankfulness, and it were well if we indulged ourselves and honoured our Lord with more of them” (Spurgeon).

Second, we have the **Particulars** (verses 3-6), in which the author states the reasons showing that God had enabled him in times past to overcome his enemies.

3 *When mine enemies turn back, They stumble and perish at thy presence.*

4 *For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; Thou sittest in the throne judging righteously.*

5 *Thou hast rebuked the nations, thou hast destroyed the wicked; Thou hast blotted out their name for ever and ever.*

6 *The enemy are come to an end, they are desolate for ever; And the cities which thou hast overthrown, The very remembrance of them is perished.*

**9:3:** The author was referring to some past event, not future. This is clear from verses 4-6. Some past deliverance supported the truth that the enemies of God's people will be defeated. Notice that the reason for the fall of the enemy is the "presence" of Jehovah. The idea is that God interposed in such a way as to manifest His presence with David. The KJV leaves the impression of a future victory over the enemy. Barnes points out that the Hebrew may be translated either way. The context, however, lends support to the rendering in the ASV. But Coffman suggests, "what God's prophet prophesied was as certain of fulfillment as if it had already happened; and that is why the Hebrew writers used the present or the past tense regarding the promise of future events" (Coffman, page 55).

**9:4:** We see here a "judge" sitting on the judicial bench, weighing the evidence, coming to a conclusion, and then acting in behalf of that which is right. This is how David sees God. He is a Righteous Judge, and He will maintain or support that cause which is right. Christ is our Advocate, and He will plead our cause before the throne of God (1 John 2:1-2).

**9:5:** The "heathen" that the Lord has rebuked are not here identified. Clarke points out that this reference "is most probably to the Canaanitish nations, which God destroyed from off the face of the earth" (Adam Clarke). If one will consider the history of those heathen nations, he will readily learn that unrighteous nations will not survive. The word rendered "rebuke" has reference to the deeds designed to rebuke rather than referring to words of rebuke. The first portion of this verse is explained by the later, in that God "blotted out their name for ever and ever." Cities, and sometimes whole nations, have lost their identity, their name being incorporated into that of the conqueror, or in some instances completely changed. This being the case, the language of the Psalmist implies complete subjugation over the enemies threatening the Psalmist.

The "wicked" is singular, and "the Chaldee Paraphrase renders this, 'Thou hast destroyed the impious Goliath' (Barnes). We learn that "God rebukes before he destroys, but when he once comes to blows with the wicked he ceases not until he has dashed them in pieces so small that their very name is forgotten, and like a noisome snuff their remembrance is put out for ever and ever" (Spurgeon).

**9:6:** What stands out here is the utter destruction of those nations

and/or individuals which forget God. They are desolate “for ever” and the very “remembrance of them is perished.” The KJV rendering is quite different than the ASV, and suggests that the Psalmist was referring to the “destruction” which the enemy had performed. This led Barnes to conclude “that this enemy had been distinguished for spreading desolation and ruin, and that this career was now closed for ever” (Barnes).

Third, there is **Praise** (verses 7-12), in which the author reflects upon the character of God as one who would endure forever.

- 7 *But Jehovah sitteth as king for ever: He hath prepared his throne for judgment;*
- 8 *And he will judge the world in righteousness, He will minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness.*
- 9 *Jehovah also will be a high tower for the oppressed, A high tower in times of trouble;*
- 10 *And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee; For thou, Jehovah, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*
- 11 *Sing praises to Jehovah, who dwelleth in Zion: Declare among the people his doings.*
- 12 *For he that maketh inquisition for blood remembereth them; He forgetteth not the cry of the poor.*

**9:7:** In contrast to the wicked nations, God stands. His rule over mankind will never cease. The statement that he has “prepared his throne for judgment” is most certainly a glimpse at that final judgment which will take place at the end of this dispensation. What a contrast: the nations will cease, but God will endure. In spite of the fierceness that day will hold, this contemplation of a judgment before a God Who changes not is, at the same time, the very basis for the confidence which the Psalmist manifests here.

**9:8:** God’s judgment is not biased. The administration of His justice will take into account every situation and every circumstance that are so often hid from the eyes of men. And while there is a great comfort in knowing this, there is likewise the awesome prospect of standing before a God Who knows all of the details of our life, every thought and imagination as well as every single act committed. “How the prospect of appearing before the impartial tribunal of the Great King should act as a check to us when tempted to sin, and as a comfort when we are slandered or oppressed” (Spurgeon).

While there is certainly a temporary judgment that is passed upon

nations in this earthly sojourn, the reference to that final judgment is certainly before the writer. Any judgment passed upon man is not an arbitrary judgment, but one that is ministered in uprightness. God will not be influenced by partiality. He will not show favoritism; absolute and perfect justice will be administered unto all men. We are grateful to brother Coffman for this quote from Arnold Rhodes: "The final judgment, which will include the destruction of the wicked and of their memory, is so certain that it is spoken of here as if it were already past" (Coffman, page 55-56).

**9:9:** There is great encouragement in knowing that God's judgment will eventually be exercised upon the wicked. There is, however, the need for some refuge from those who would do us harm, and seek to overthrow all that is good. While we can find comfort in knowing that the wicked cannot stand, it is natural that one would desire protection. God is that "high tower in times of trouble." The army holding the high ground has the greater advantage; from aloft he can view the enemy and plan his defense and attack. With God as our "tower," one can get a clearer picture of the enemy.

**9:10:** Notice that "they that know thy name" receive the blessings. There are entirely too many who do not know God! The reader must keep in mind that knowing God's name is more than just being able to pronounce it. It means to walk blameless before Him, keeping His commandments and ordinances. It is equivalent to Enoch's walking with God. "Ignorance is worst when it amounts to ignorance of God, and knowledge is best when it exercises itself upon the name of God" (Spurgeon).

There is a condition noted in the closing words of this verse. This protection is for "them that seek" Jehovah. Barnes points out that "the more we learn of his real character, the more shall we see that he is worthy of universal love" (Barnes). Such is only accomplished in "seeking" after God.

**9:11:** The contemplation of God's protection in times of need provide ample reason to sing praises unto Him "who dwelleth in Zion." James wrote, "If any is cheerful, let him sing..."

God's people are a singing and teaching people. Their vertical relationship is summed up in the words, "sing praises," while the horizontal relationship with humanity is expressed with the admonition to "declare among the people his doings." Were God's people of this century to wholly participate in these two activities,



God's cause on earth would be advanced much more than at present.

**9:12:** The words "maketh inquisition for blood" has reference to God's judgment upon man, not only in the final judgment, but in this present life. Notice in this connection Genesis 9:5. "God inquires and demands an explanation regarding every instance of a murderer's slaying his victim, as God did in the case of Abel (Genesis 4:9)" (Coffman, page 57-58). Murderers will NOT go unpunished; if they do in this world, then they certainly will not in that which is to come!

*"he forgetteth not...."* The righteous will not be forgotten.

### **Deliverance Projected Verses 13-20**

First, we have **Prayer** (verses 13-14).

13 *Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah; Behold my affliction which I suffer of them that hate me, Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death;*

14 *That I may show forth all thy praise. In the gates of the daughter of Zion I will rejoice in thy salvation.*

**9:13:** The language suggests that David was still surrounded by the enemy. So, in recollection of the past, he now calls upon God to have mercy, and consider his present distress.

*"Behold my affliction"* - God sees all. The language is an appeal that God would act upon the Psalmist's affliction of which He is already aware.

*"Which I suffer of them that hate me..."* The enemies were still not subdued. The suffering may have been so intense as to bring the author close to what he thought were the "gates of death."

**9:14:** What a contrast we have before us. There are the gates of death and the gates of the daughter of Zion. Brother Coffman quotes W.F. Forsyth: "The gates of death open for all men; the gates of Zion open only for the saved. The gates of death open regardless of our will; the gates of Zion open only by our choice. The gates of death are dark with terror; the gates of Zion are bright with hope and joy" (Coffman, page 58-59).

Barnes has pointed out that the reference to Zion “proves that the psalm was composed after Zion or Jerusalem was made the capital of the kingdom and the seat of public worship, and, therefore, that it cannot refer, as is supposed in the Chaldee Paraphrase, to the death of Goliath” (Barnes).

Second, there is a **Pronouncement** (verses 15-18).

15 *The nations are sunk down in the pit that they made: In the net which they hid is their own foot taken.*

16 *Jehovah hath made himself known, he hath executed judgment: The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah*

17 *The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God.*

18 *For the needy shall not alway be forgotten, Nor the expectation of the poor perish for ever.*

**9:15:** The truth often emphasized in scripture is that the wicked are often caught in their own devices of wickedness. “The pit of human misery and ruin is digged by man, not by God” (Coffman, page 59). Drunkards kill themselves, the contentious embroil themselves in constant litigation and argumentation with others. As Spurgeon noted, “Men may read their sin in their punishment. They sowed the seed of sin, and the ripe fruit of damnation is the natural result” (Spurgeon).

**9:16:** The KJV reads, “The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth.” God’s character can be learned by a careful observation of God’s dealing’s with man. We should be grateful for our God’s absolute justice and holiness. The only alternative is a vacillating and weak God.

The last portion of this verse expresses the same sentiments as verse 15. It is often the case that the wicked bring about their own destruction, and their own evil schemes and devices are the means of their ruin. They, in a sense, become their own executioners. Just the week of this writing, the news reported the execution style murder of an 11 year old boy who himself was being sought for murder charges. This young man’s evil schemes returned upon him in proportion to that which he had dealt out.

“*Higgaion*” - The exact meaning of this word is not certain. The word occurs in Psalms 19:14 where it is rendered “meditation.” It

also appears in Psalms 92:3, translated “solemn sound.” Then, in Lamentations 3:62 it is translated “device.” Barnes points out that the “proper meaning is ‘murmur,’ ‘muttering,’ the ‘utterance of a low sound,’ as the low sound of a harp” (Barnes). It is likely a musical sound intended to cause the reader to pause and meditate upon the things thus presented.

**9:17:** The force of the words “*turned back*” suggests utter defeat. The course that these enemies were pursuing would be turned back upon themselves. They would be brought to defeat and ruin.

“*Sheol*” cannot mean simply the grave, for the righteous and wicked alike will eventually be consigned to the grave. The use of the word suggests that these enemies would be cut off by a sudden calamity, suffering the punishment from God. Ungodly nations will not go unpunished. Nations can continue to exist separate and apart from the preserving element that Jesus calls the “salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13-16). Once a nation forgets God it has nothing to look forward to except God’s impending judgment. Historians have pointed out that few nations have lasted more than 200 years. But these same historians are at a loss as to why these nations would come to an abrupt end, as if overthrown by some unseen enemy. In view of the moral decline of the blessed United States of America, the words of the prophet serve as a warning: America, “Prepare to meet thy God!”

**9:18:** This verse serves as an explanation of at least a portion of what is involved in a nation’s forgetting God. It is not the absence of social programs that is under consideration here, but the mindset of the people of a nation that causes them to have no concern for the needy and the poor. The absence of compassion and kindness is enough to destroy any nation. The responsibility of the leaders of any country is to instill within its people a respect for God, and for others, to further the cause of the needy and the poor. When a nation fails to do this, God’s judgment is all that remains.

Third, we have a ***Plea*** (verses 19-20).

19 *Arise, O Jehovah; Let not man prevail: Let the nations be judged in thy sight.*

20 *Put them in fear, O Jehovah: Let the nations know themselves to be but men. Selah*

**9:19:** Derek Kinder says, “These verses are a plea for God to put

man in his place” (Coffman, page 70).

**9:20:** The humanistic philosophy that presently permeates the thinking of those in control of our country is precisely the type of thinking that the Psalmist was asking God to overthrow. Wisdom’s voice pleads with men to realize that they are only men. The words of that enduring song, *‘God Bless America,’* should be the song of every nation. “God, bless America; land that I love. Stand beside her, and guide her, through the night with the light from above.” Without heaven’s blessings there is no nation that can hope to stand, nor can they achieve the heights to which they can otherwise rise.

Crowns leave their wearers but MEN, degrees of eminent learning make their owners not more than MEN, valour and conquest cannot elevate beyond the dead level of ‘but men;’ and all the wealth of Croesus, the wisdom of Solomon, the power of Alexander, the eloquence of Demosthenes, if added together, would leave the possessor but a man. May we ever remember this, lest like those in the text, we should be put in fear (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

It is important to learn the truth that “The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God.” None shall escape. All those who willfully violate God’s laws are included in this number. The profane and profligate, the drunkards and those who dishonor God, hypocrites and hinderers; all such individuals will be turned into Sheol. Nations are made up of people. And when the people of any nation are characterized by dishonesty, lack of integrity, and lack of concern for the needy, judgment from the Almighty cannot be far off.

## *“Help Of The Helpless”*

### ***Introduction***

There is no title on this Psalm, nor is there anything in the contents that would suggest its authorship. Some have suggested that the 9th and 10th Psalms belong together, but such a conclusion seems forced at best. As to authorship, it is believed by most to have been written by David. “From the place which it occupies among the acknowledged Psalms of David, it is morally certain that it was regarded by those who arranged the Book of Psalms, as having been composed by him” (Barnes).

The theme of this Psalm is the oppression and persecution of the righteous. There are a number of occasions in David’s life when this Psalm may have been written. Any attempt to identify any specific event as the background of this Psalm is guesswork at best. Much of David’s life was spent in fleeing from his enemies. It appears from the contents of the Psalm that it was written on just such an occasion. “So far as appears from the psalm itself, it was composed...when the writer was in the midst of trouble; and when, for the time, he seemed to be forsaken by God” (Barnes).

### ***Analysis***

In the Psalm we have:

- (1) A call on the part of the Psalmist for God to deliver the poor and persecuted people (1);
- (2) A description of the wicked (2-11);
- (3) Another call for God to intervene (12);
- (4) The fact that God’s eye clearly beholds the cruel deeds of the wicked (13-15);
- (5) The final vindication of the poor and oppressed (16-18).

We will follow brother Deaver’s outline:

- I. Complaint, 1-2;

- II. Character, 3-11;
- III. Call, 12-16;
- IV. Confidence, 17-18;

## **Commentary**

### **Complaint**

#### **Verses 1-2**

- 1 *Why standest thou afar off, O Jehovah? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?*
- 2 *In the pride of the wicked the poor is hotly pursued; Let them be taken in the devices that they have conceived.*

**10:1:** The first section of the Psalm contains a description of his enemy. It is introduced by a question in which the author seeks to understand God's absence in times of distress. The author evidently felt that he had been abandoned by God. In this particular situation it appeared that God was indifferent to the sorrows and afflictions of the author.

Trouble is the fire that purifies the gold and removes the dross. We should be grateful for those times when God allows us to grow through suffering. "If we are carried in the arms of God over every stream, where would be the trial, and where the experience, which trouble is meant to teach us?" (Spurgeon).

*"stand afar off"* - These words indicate the Psalmist thought God was indifferent and unconcerned. That man should do this might be expected; but that God should do this filled the writer with amazement.

*"why hidest thyself"* - God did not manifest himself, but seemed to let the afflicted man suffer alone. Such feelings have often entered the minds of men. When times of trouble strike, our first reaction is to ask, "Where is God?" To the Psalmist it SEEMED as if God were hiding, or as if He were far off.

Let us ever remember that the Lord is nigh us. The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire, and the Son of God is always walking in the midst of the flames when his holy children are cast into them (Spurgeon).

**10:2:** *"the wicked in his pride.."* - This verse begins the actual

description of the “wicked” which were afflicting the writer. There is a twofold accusation brought against the wicked. Pride and cruelty are the double sin of the wicked, the latter being the cause of the other. The KJV here provided evidently has the better rendering. In pursuing his own selfish purposes, the wicked had utter disregard for the rights and comforts of others, especially the poor. The “wicked” is more properly “the wicked one” or “the wicked man.” While David may have had in mind a specific individual, it is characteristic of the wicked in general.

“*persecute*” - The word means “to burn, to flame; then to burn after any one, to persecute” (Barnes). Overtaken by his pride, the wicked individual is inflamed against the poor; he hotly pursues him.

“*the poor*” has reference to the afflicted, the downtrodden, or those in circumstances of humiliation and poverty.

“*let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined*” - Evidently the wicked to whom the writer refers had some “plan” or “scheme” which they had formed. What this is we are not told. The Psalmist was praying that justice might be rendered by God.

### **Character Verses 3-11**

- 3 *For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, And the covetous renounceth, yea, contemneth Jehovah.*
- 4 *The wicked, in the pride of his countenance, saith, He will not require it. All his thoughts are, There is no God.*
- 5 *His ways are firm at all times; Thy judgments are far above out of his sight: As for all his adversaries, he puffeth at them.*
- 6 *He saith in his heart, I shall not be moved; To all generations I shall not be in adversity.*
- 7 *His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression: Under his tongue is mischief and iniquity.*
- 8 *He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages; In the secret places doth he murder the innocent; His eyes are privily set against the helpless.*
- 9 *He lurketh in secret as a lion in his covert; He lieth in wait to catch the poor: He doth catch the poor, when he draweth him in his net.*
- 10 *He croucheth, he boweth down, And the helpless fall by his strong ones.*
- 11 *He saith in his heart, God hath forgotten; He hideth his face; he*

*will never see it.*

**10:3:** *“the wicked boasteth”* - The main idea is that he boasts of his natural inclinations, the passions of his soul; he takes pride in himself. It is not uncommon to hear the wicked actually brag about their evil devices and accomplishments. The employee who “put one over” on some innocent customer; the citizen who really “got to” Uncle Sam; the escapades of the fornicator, etc. The list goes on. “Bragging sinners are the worst and most contemptible of men, especially when their filthy desires (too filthy to be carried into act) become the theme of their boastings. When Mr. Hate-Good and Mr. Heady are joined in partnership, they drive a brisk trade in the devil’s wares” (Spurgeon).

*“blesseth the covetous”* - The marginal note reads, “the covetous blesseth himself.” One has it, “And winning blesses, despises Jehovah.” The thought seems to be that the “covetous individual hypocritically thanks God for his success, but despises him in his heart” (Barnes). The NIV renders this, “He blesses the greedy and reviles the Lord.” If the usual meaning of the word “bless” is to be used, it would seem that the wicked is said to bless HIMSELF. Barnes says, “The idea does not seem to be that he was even professedly a religious man, but that he was a proud and vain boaster who attributed all success to himself, and despised God and his claims” (Barnes). We have such men with us even today. Among the educated elite, the politically correct, and the materially successful there is no shortage of those who pat themselves on the back and attribute their success to their own abilities. Little, if any, credit is given to God.

**10:4:** As a consequence of his pride the wicked is said to reject God and His commandments. It is of interest that pride, more often than not, manifests itself in one’s “countenance.” The proud have a lofty air about them. “Proud hearts breed proud looks and stiff knees...A brazen face and a broken heart never go together” (Spurgeon).

The fact that *“he will not require it”* means that he (the wicked) is not willing to acknowledge the will of God. He does not think that the commandments of God apply to him. He says in effect that “God will not require an answer for my actions.” The last phrase in this verse is somewhat difficult. The literal rendering (per Barnes) is “No God [are] all his thoughts.” It is not that the wicked has no thoughts of God, for verse 11 clearly states that the wicked assumes that God has hidden his face, and has in some way forgotten. Barnes suggests



that “either all his thoughts were that there is no God, or that he wished that it might be so” (Barnes). As Coffman noted, “The wicked man depicted here may not have been an avowed atheist, but he was a practical atheist. He ordered his life, planned all of his deeds, and laid out all of his objectives as if there was no God whatever” (Coffman, page 62-63). It seems that the only place where God is NOT, is in the thoughts of the wicked. What a damning accusation this is. For if God is not in our hearts and thoughts, then most assuredly the devil is there. The word here translated “thoughts” actually means “schemes.” Also of interest here is the subtle suggestion of the actual source of atheism. It is not the result of a careful study of the evidence, but the CHOICE of one who wants to live a wicked life. In referring to John 3:19, brother Coffman notes: “This blunt reason behind all atheism does not cite super-knowledge, education, intelligence, or any special power of discernment as the cause of atheism, but simply wickedness. Atheism is invariably the product of a sinful heart” (Coffman, page 64).

**10:5:** In describing his “ways,” the Psalmist must have been referring to something that had to do with the character of the wicked, for such agrees with the context. The Hebrew word rendered “firm” (“grievous” in KJV) means properly “to turn around, to be whirled, or twist.” It also means to “twist with pain,” or “to be strong or stable, as things twisted are” (Barnes). Thus, it seems that the Psalmist is simply saying that the ways of the wicked are set; they are firm. Sin has so hardened his heart that he has become set in his ways. Notice the similar character implied in the first Psalm. There the “seat of the scoffer” suggests that the scoffer has taken a position, and that he is so set in his way as not to be moved.

In addition, to the wicked the *“judgments are far above out of his sight.”* He does not see them. Like one who has his head turned downward, observing the filth and muck of the ground under his feet, the wicked man does not see the judgments of God. He does not see them, because he is not looking for them. “A swine may sooner look through a telescope at the stars than this man study the Word of God to understand the righteousness of the Lord” (Spurgeon).

Finally, he treats his adversaries with contempt. He “puffeth at them.” It would seem that the adversaries here would be those who seek to turn him back to God; those who oppose his wicked ways. It is said that he views them with an attitude of contempt and disdain. He acts as if “he could sweep them away with a breath” (Barnes).

“Death will puff at the candle of his life and blow it out, and the wicked boaster will find it grim work to brag in the tomb” (Spurgeon).

**10:6:** *“He saith in his heart”* – The wicked made a deliberate statement. We see here a man who has become so vile, and so wicked, that he has long since passed the point of no return. The word of God no longer pricks the heart. Such a one proclaims that he *“shall not be moved.”* He denies even the power of his Creator to bring about destruction upon this unholy and unjust individual. He seems to think he is exempt from illness, pestilence, or failure of any kind! He views the future as completely within his control, supposing that he shall never be in adversity or want. Because of his assumed state of stability, he does not believe that he shall ever be in adversity. He believes that he and his family will never be in want. Like that imaginary man in Luke 12, he has built his barns, he has forgotten God, and has assumed that he can now sit back, take his ease, eat, drink, and be merry. Little does he realize that there is a judgment day coming. Oh, how the wicked have grown proud!

**10:7:** It is of interest how much wickedness the Bible attributes to the tongue. James tells us that if a man can control the tongue, he should be able to control the body. This wicked man under consideration is “full of cursing.” He is a profane man. Cursing was designed to call condemnation upon the one being cursed. There is nothing so appalling as one who uses gutter language. And yet such language is increasingly being used by men and women of today’s society. The entertainment industry has probably done more to desensitize us to foul language than any other single tool of Satan.

This wicked man also is deceitful. He hides his true colors. His intentions are not readily made known. In addition, he uses “oppression.” He uses violent action to achieve his end. When the restraints of a law-abiding society have been removed, we can be assured that the full indignation of the wicked will be poured forth upon those who seek to follow God and obey His will.

Finally, “under his tongue is mischief and iniquity.” Like poison in the mouth of the serpent, hidden but deadly, so the wicked man will bring about destruction in order to fulfill his desires.

**10:8:** The Psalmist continues to describe the character of this “wicked one.” Deceit is his trademark; he hides in the “lurking places.” There is in him a determination of will to take advantage of

the helpless.

As robbers do, who hide themselves in the vicinity of villages, that they make a sudden descent upon them in the silence of the night, or that they may seize and rob the inhabitants as they go forth in the morning to attend their flocks to the pastures, or to labour in the fields (Barnes).

Also, “these lurking places must not be supposed to have been inside the villages, but outside of them” (Rawlinson, page 66). Evil intentions are carried out in isolation. A village would provide witnesses to the evil deed. The wicked are careful to avoid any public exposure of their actions.

The “innocent” has reference to those who had done the robber no wrong; they had given no occasion for such treatment by the oppressor.

**10:9:** As a lion might stalk his prey, being careful not to be detected, so the wicked man seeks to take advantage of the poor, being careful not to let his full intentions be made known until it is too late. The “drawing into the net” implies intentional setting of a trap.

**10:10:** Albert Barnes tells us that

The word rendered ‘croucheth’ is in the Keri or margin, ‘and crushed, he sinks down. There is some uncertainty about the form in which the word is used, but it is certain that it does not mean, as in our translation, ‘he croucheth.’ The word properly means to be broken in pieces, to be crushed. The true idea is that this does not refer to the wicked man, but to his victim or victims, represented here by a word in the collective singular; and the meaning is that such a victim, crushed and broken down, sinks under the power of the persecutor and oppressor (Barnes).

The idea of the verse seems to be this: The crushed ones sink down under the power of the oppressor. The “strong ones” are the “ruffians whom the wicked man employs to effect his purpose” (Rawlinson, page 67). Unfortunately those who are weak cannot withstand the onslaught of those who overpower them.

**10:11:** The words express the DESIRE of the wicked. Those who live ungodly lives have convinced themselves that God does not take notice of their actions; or, if it be the case that God has noticed, that He has overlooked, or forgotten, their sins. He “acts as if God had

forgotten, or as if God takes no knowledge of what is occurring in the earth” (Barnes). What they fail to realize is that God DOES see, and that He will call for all men to give an account of the deeds done in this life. Men may dismiss any thought that there just might be a God in heaven Who will call men to judgment, but mere human wishing does not make it so. Coffman has this observation: “When at last, the Final Judgment is begun, there shall not be left a single infidel in all the world” (Coffman, page 66).

### **Call** **Verses 12-16**

- 12 Arise, O Jehovah; O God, lift up thy hand: Forget not the poor.*  
*13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God, And say in his heart, Thou wilt not require it?*  
*14 Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: The helpless committeth himself unto thee; Thou hast been the helper of the fatherless.*  
*15 Break thou the arm of the wicked; And as for the evil man, seek out his wickedness till thou find none.*  
*16 Jehovah is King for ever and ever: The nations are perished out of his land.*

**10:12:** With this verse there is an obvious change in the tenor of the Psalm. The writer turns from a description of the wicked to a cry for God now to intervene.

Here the author calls on God to remember those who had been wronged by the wicked. God does not sleep, nor does He rest. The language is an appeal for God to now ACT, to manifest His concern for the poor.

**10:13:** To “contemn God” is to despise God. It is to “treat Him with contempt and disregard” (Barnes). Wicked men do not obey God’s commands, nor do they have any concern whatsoever regarding God’s presence or the coming day of judgment. “They go forward to meet him as if his wrath were not to be apprehended or dreaded” (Barnes). How descriptive of the world today. “If there were no hell for other men, there ought to be one for those who question the justice of it” (Spurgeon).

Why in the world would men act so vain, so rebellious? The later portion of this verse gives us the answer. Such men do not think God will require an answer for their actions. Barnes says that the

“Hebrew is simply, ‘Thou wilt not seek;’ and the idea is, that God would not make an investigation of this matter. This fact, the Psalmist says, would account for the conduct of the wicked” (Barnes).

**10:14:** Though men seek to hide their actions from the all seeing eye of God; and though they ignore this fact; the simple truth is, our God has “seen it.” There is nothing that escapes the eye of the Almighty. This verse “stands in stark and dramatic contrast to the insane assertions of the wicked” (Coffman, page 67). This alone should motivate us to proper behavior at all times, and in every circumstance.

“*spite*” - Barnes has this discerning note regarding this vice:

Though it originally denoted rancour, malice, ill will, [it] now denotes usually a less deliberate and fixed malice than is indicated by those words, but is used to denote a sudden fit of ill will excited by temporary vexation. It relates to small subjects, and is accompanied with a desire of petty revenge, and implies that one would be gratified with the disappointment or misfortune or another” (Barnes).

The idea here is that God has seen and taken note of all the anger of wicked men. God would NOT PASS OVER THIS.

The word “*committeth*” means that the poor would leave his cause with God, and trust in Him to intervene and deliver. Consequently, our God “*has been the helper of the fatherless.*” “God is the parent of all orphans. When the earthly father sleeps beneath the sod, a heavenly Father smiles from heaven” (Spurgeon).

**10:15:** To have the arm broken is to be rendered powerless. “In the days when the sword was the principle weapon of violence, breaking the arm of the wicked would be equivalent to putting him completely out of business” (Coffman, page 67). David’s prayer was for the enemy to be disarmed, thus powerless to carry out their evil schemes and plans.

“*seek out his wickedness till thou find none*” - These words convey complete defeat of the enemy. Coffman quotes Leupold here: “The thought is not that the wicked devices of ungodly men are not discernible to the Almighty, but that he will so completely have disposed of them that no trace of them will be left” (Coffman, page 67-68).

*“Seek out his wickedness”* means to render justice for the wicked deeds being committed. And it was the Psalmist’s desire that such justice be rendered that no trace of the enemy would remain.

**10:16:** Here is a manifestation of the Psalmist’s confidence. The victory was so sure that he spoke as if the victory had already been accomplished. It is interesting that reference here is to the *“nations”* that have perished. History is full of examples of nations that have forgotten God, turned away from Him, and eventually were brought to complete ruination. Why does not our country hear the wails of Rome, ancient Egypt, Nazi Germany, the U.S.S.R., and countless other nations that now lay in the dust and ashes of complete destruction?

### **Confidence** **17-18**

*17 Jehovah, thou hast heard the desire of the meek: Thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear;*

*18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, That man who is of the earth may be terrible no more.*

**10:17:** Again, “He was so certain that God would interpose, he had such assurance that his prayer would be answered, that his mind was perfectly calm” (Barnes).

**10:18:** Once this particular judgment had been exercised in behalf of the fatherless and oppressed, *“that man”* under consideration would literally be “terrible no more.” His evil deeds would no longer threaten; his oppression upon the poor would cease. This “man of the earth” is representative of the whole of Adam’s race that have turned their back on God. The wicked are here described as “of the earth” in the “sense that the earth is the home of all his hopes and aspirations; heaven with its salvation and promise is of no concern whatever to the wicked” (Coffman, page 69).

### **Lessons**

1. Verse four speaks of the “pride” of the wicked. Indeed, how pride has caused many a man to turn away from his God. Here are some ways that pride will keep a man separated from God:

(1) It will keep him from recognizing his dependence on God.

- (2) It will make him unwilling to acknowledge sin, or pray to Jehovah his Creator.
- (3) It will make him unwilling to seek the aid of anyone, much less God, in times of trouble.
- (4) It makes him depend solely upon himself for strength and success, rather than recognize his need for help and sustenance from God.

2. "Let us learn that we are sure to speed well, if we carry our complaint to the King of kings. Rights will be vindicated, and wrongs redressed, at his throne" (Spurgeon).

## ***“God: Our Refuge And Trust In Time of Need”***

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is ascribed to David both in the title and in the location which it has among the Psalms. There is nothing in the Psalm which would make this doubtful. All that can be said about its background (at least with any certainty) is that it was composed when David was in danger, and when some of his friends advised him to seek safety by flight. It is supposed by some that it may have been when David was in Saul’s court, and in view of the danger to him, he was told to flee to safety. The reasons for this untimely advice were (1) that there were murderers seeking his life (verse 2), that the very “foundations” of David’s kingdom had been destroyed (verse 3), and that there was nothing the “righteous” could do (verse 4). We are grateful for Coffman’s reference to these timely words by Arnold Rhodes: “Psalm 11 is one of the gems of the Psalter classified as affirmations of faith in spite of danger to himself, in spite of advice of friends to flee, and in spite of the seeming hopelessness of the cause” (Coffman, page 2).

### ***Analysis***

Of this Psalm, G. Campbell Morgan concluded: “This psalm is the answer of faith to the advice of fear...Fear sees only the things that are near. Faith takes in the larger distances. If the things fear sees are indeed all, its advice is excellent. When the things which faith sees are realized, its determination is vindicated” (G. Campbell Morgan, page 225). Fear says, “Flee as a bird to your mountain” (verse 1). Faith answers, “The Lord is in his holy temple” (verse 4). The former has an earthly world view; the latter has a heavenly view.

The following outline appeared in the Pulpit Commentary and serves as an excellent outline for our study:

- I. Fear Confronting Faith, 1-3
  - 1. The advice suggested, 1;



2. The reasons for this advice, 2-3;
- II. Faith Conquers Fear, 4-7
  1. By realizing God's presence, 4-5a;
  2. By confiding in God's protection, 5b-6;
  3. By anticipating God's deliverance, 7; (W. Forsyth, pages 74-75).

Morgan concludes his analysis: "Perhaps among all the psalms none reveals more perfectly the strong hold of faith. It is the man who measures things by the circumstances of the hour who is filled with fear and counsels and practices flight! The man who sees Jehovah enthroned and governing has no panic" (Morgan, page 225).

## ***Commentary***

### **Fear Confronting Faith Verses 1-3**

- 1 *In Jehovah do I take refuge: How say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain;*
- 2 *For, lo, the wicked bend the bow, They make ready their arrow upon the string, That they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart;*
- 3 *If the foundations be destroyed, What can the righteous do?*

**11:1:** "*In Jehovah do I take refuge*" - This sets the tone for the entire Psalm. It suggests that David was, at that time, determined NOT to flee from his enemies, but rather to put his trust in God; to take refuge in Jehovah.

"*How say ye..*" - This was the counsel being given. In the existing situation (of which we are not informed) the Psalmist felt that his fleeing would have implied a want of confidence in God. He would maintain his position and rely upon the deliverance of God. Barnes notes, "He seems to have supposed that such an act of flight would have been construed by his enemies, and by the enemies of religion, as evidence that he had no faith or confidence in God" (Barnes).

"*flee*" - It should be noted that "ye" is plural, and seems to designate all who might find themselves in the situation like that of the author. Those counselors who advised flight in this particular situation would advise flight in all similar cases. "When Satan cannot overthrow us by presumption, how craftily will he seek to ruin us by distrust" (Spurgeon). It would appear that David was in danger of

following such advice for the simple reason that he presents the temptation here in the Psalm. But he would not yield to such cowardice.

**11:2:** *“the wicked bend their bow”* - Here is the first reason for the counsel thus given. The enemies were preparing to strike.

*“that they might privily shoot”* (KJV) or “shoot in darkness.” They were planning to attack secretly or treacherously. Not in the open, or as we might say, “in a fair fight.” There was something wicked about their intentions; they would do it when their victim was not aware of their design. So it is with the wicked.

**11:3:** *“if the foundations be destroyed”* - The reference is to a destruction of all that is good and right. When a society reaches a point where truth is no longer respected, justice is no longer practiced, and when fraud and violence have taken the place of honesty and honor, then certainly the “foundations” have been destroyed. Evidently this was the situation in Israel. For this reason, the counsel given was to flee. But the child of God measures every situation with an optimistic eye of faith. “There is no such word as ‘impossibility’ in the language of faith; that martial grace knows how to fight and conquer but she knows not how to flee” (Spurgeon).

### **Faith Conquers Fear Verses 4-7**

- 4 *Jehovah is in his holy temple; Jehovah, his throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.*
- 5 *Jehovah trieth the righteous; But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.*
- 6 *Upon the wicked he will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind shall be the portion of their cup.*
- 7 *For Jehovah is righteous; He loveth righteousness: The upright shall behold his face.*

**11:4:** This verse begins the next major section of the Psalm. Here the faith of the Psalmist is evident and his faith conquers his fears. David’s reply was an expression of absolute faith and trust in God. Yes, Saul may have ruled on earth, but God was in His holy temple, reigning over the world. There was no need, therefore, to fear an earthly king.

*“Jehovah is in his holy temple; Jehovah, his throne is in heaven”* -

There is a great deal of comfort in the realization that God is in heaven, and He is in control. The throne is fixed, and the affairs of the universe are totally under His control. The book of Daniel teaches us that God rules over the nations (Daniel 4). Of interest is the place where God resides. It is in the “temple,” as opposed to the mountain. Some have attempted to discredit the Davidic authorship of this Psalm based upon the author’s use of this word “temple.” The physical temple was yet to be built. But the reference here is not to that earthly temple that Solomon would build, but to the heavenly dwelling place of Jehovah God. The point the writer was making is that “His throne is above...the super-terrestrial judgment-seat” of men” (Keil and Delitzsch). Coffman also stressed this point when he noted:

The second half of the psalm, vv. 4-7, affirms the psalmist’s unwavering trust and confidence in God. He thundered the name of Jehovah no less than four times in this concluding division. God himself is the answer to all of man’s problems, doubts, dangers and fears. God is in heaven; he is in his holy temple, and that expression in this context has no relation whatever to some earthly house (Coffman, page 73).

In the New Testament the “temple of God” is the church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17, Eph. 2:21-22).

*“His eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men”* - Here is a second reason for confidence. God “sees.” He is well aware of the way our enemies treat us. His “eyelids” are said to “try men,” because when men closely scrutinize something, they squint the eyelids and close the eyes halfway. The language here is anthropomorphic, and suggests God’s close examination of our every situation. “It is much, in the trials of life, to have this assurance - this constant feeling - that God sees us. He knows our condition, our wants, our dangers; he knows all that our enemies are doing - all their machinations against us” (Barnes). With the knowledge that He sees, and that He cares, it seems most probable that God will intervene on our behalf when the need arises. The “eyelids” here are synonymous with the “eyes.”

**11:5:** *“Jehovah trieth the righteous”* is yet further comfort for those in like situation as the Psalmist. Knowing that our trials and tribulations are designed to prove us encourages us to withstand the test, and thereby to develop our faith. Notice James 1:2-4. “God’s people are purposely exposed to wickedness because of God’s purpose thus to strengthen and develop them” (Coffman, page 73).

The “wicked” is a general term describing all those who are not righteous. The enemies of the Psalmist were most likely perpetrating some violence against him, suggesting the phrase “him that loveth violence.” Such individuals stand in extreme disfavor before Jehovah.

**11:6:** The very thought of punishment from God puts one in a state of fear. Here the reference is to the immediate punishment and defeat of the enemies of the Psalmist, but we cannot discount the fact that the language is typical of the eternal punishment that will ultimately be administered to the “unrighteous” and “he that loveth violence.”

As a wild beast is taken in a trap or “snare,” so shall God apprehend the wicked. The fact that these snares would be sent like rain suggests that their arrest and punishment would exist in abundance; there would be no escape. The idea of the “cup” is that “the Lord holds out to them a cup for them to drink - a cup containing a deadly mixture” (Barnes). Here is a “cup of misery, but not a drop of mercy” (Spurgeon). Here then, is yet another reason why the righteous should confide in Jehovah. In addition to (1) God’s being in control and sitting upon His throne, (2) His omniscience, (3) trials being sent to strengthen the righteous, we learn of (4) God’s ultimate punishment of the wicked.

**11:7:** What a joy it will be to “*behold his face.*” But that reward is conditional. God loves the righteous, i.e. those who practice righteousness. Later the Psalmist will tell us that all the commandments of God are righteousness (Psa. 119:172). Here is the condition for reconciliation and fellowship with God, namely the keeping of the commands of Jehovah.

## ***Lessons***

1. Roy Deaver suggests that the fundamental lesson of this Psalm is that we “must not listen to the counsel of fear, but must take refuge in God” (Roy Deaver, page 35).
2. “The great lesson for all Christians in this psalm is that we should not attempt to run away from every danger but place our trust in God” (Coffman, page 73).
3. We must not fear him that can destroy the body, but He that can

destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28).

4. What we sow, we shall reap (notice verse 6). If we fill our cup with the pleasures of this world, our cup shall be filled by God with the wrath of His vengeance.

5. Faith which nullifies fear...

- (1) Sees the Lord in His temple;
- (2) Recognizes that God rules in the affairs of men;
- (3) Realizes that God sees and knows;
- (4) Understands that God tests men;
- (5) Knows that God hates wickedness;
- (6) knows that God will punish wickedness;
- (7) Knows that God loves and approves righteousness.

6. Courage is not the absence of fear, but the conquest of it. Who else should manifest courage more than the Christian, he who knows that God rules.

7. Barnes gives this summary lesson of the Psalm: "The argument is, that God could be his defender, and that he might safely rely on His protection. The wicked have everything to fear; the righteous, nothing. The one is never safe; the other, always. The one will be delivered out of all his troubles; the end of the other can be only ruin" (Barnes).

## *“From Darkness to Light”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript (uninspired) attributes the Psalm to David and there is no reason to doubt this. The exact occasion is not known, but the context implies that this Psalm was written during a time of extreme wickedness, when David's enemies seemed to have gotten the upper hand. Regarding the social conditions, Barnes has the following:

It was a general failure of fidelity among good men; a general withdrawal from active duties of such men as had before been found faithful; a want of that firmness and zeal which it was proper to expect from those who professed to be good men. Particularly it refers to prevailing modes of speech among those from whom it was right to expect better things: a condition in which there was a want of seriousness and sincerity in conversation; in which flattery abounded; in which double meanings in conversation were common; in which promises solemnly made could not be relied on; and in which there was in consequence, great wrong done to the poor and the suspecting (Barnes).

There is no doubt that the Psalm was written during a time in which good men were hard to find. The wicked abounded and were taking advantage of their superiority in number to pursue their ends. “The Psalmist looks with concern and distress upon this state of things and sends up a piercing cry to God to arise and make his glory known” (Rawlinson, page 79).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm consists of (1) a statement of the prevailing condition of things, verses 1-2; (2) the fact that the Lord would interpose, verses 3-5; (3) a strong contrast between the words of the Lord and those used by wicked men, verse 6; and (4) a deep conviction on the part of David that God would protect the righteous, verses 7-8.

Out of a consciousness of the terrible evil of his times, the worshiper cries to Jehovah for help. The failure of godly men and faithful souls is always the gravest peril which can threaten a nation

or an age. There is no trouble which more heavily afflicts the heart of the trusting. The psalm ends with a description of the same condition which it at first describes. It is the cry of a godly soul for help amid prevailing ungodliness and it is answered (Morgan, page 225).

Brother Deaver has the following outline, which we will use for our study:

- I. Cry, 1;
- II. Complaint, 2;
- III. Confidence, 3-4;
- IV. Care, 5;
- V. Character, 6-7;
- VI. Corruption, 8.

## ***Commentary***

### **Cry Verse 1**

*1 Help, Jehovah; For the godly man ceaseth; For the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

**12:1:** Here is the Psalmist's cry. It was a cry of discouragement. The writer was concerned about the lives of those with whom he was associated. Evidently society had reached a point where godliness was the exception rather than the rule. The writer was calling upon the help of God, either for strength to endure any temptations there might have been to "go with the flow," or for God to provide some sort of retributive help.

"*the godly man*" is from the Hebrew *'hhasid'* and denotes the "merciful man." It is so applied to the righteous man for the simple reason that mercy and compassion is a common trait of those who serve God. See also Psalms 4:3 and 32:6 where the word is rendered "godly." In addition see Psalms 30:4, 31:23, and 37:28 where it is rendered "saints," and Psalms 16:10 and 86:2 where it is rendered "holy."

"*ceaseth*" means to bring to an end. It would seem that godly men were falling away, as suggested by the second part of this verse. They were apostatizing by allowing falsehood to enter their lives. Consequently their influence failed. As a result society was sick from

the head down. “They say that fish smell first at the head, and when godly men decay, the whole commonwealth will soon go rotten... When godliness goes, faithfulness inevitably follows; without fear of God, men have no love of truth. Common honesty is no longer common, when common irreligion leads to universal godlessness” (Spurgeon).

*“fail from among the children of men”* simply means that these men to whom the writer refers were not being true to the trust committed to them. On many an occasion David experienced disappointment in those about him. Perhaps the greatest of these was the rebellion of his own son, Absalom.

### **Complaint Verse 2**

2 *They speak falsehood every one with his neighbor: With flattering lip, and with a double heart, do they speak.*

**12:2:** Here is the specific complaint offered by the writer. The “everyone” cannot be taken literally. This is hyperbolic language. There was a remnant which remained faithful to God and did not speak falsehood. David is describing the “manner” in which these once faithful men fell away. They speak vanity. They had a disregard for truth; they could not be trusted. All the promises they may have made to their “neighbors” were vain, empty, and void of substance. “That which the writer especially laments, is the prevailing untruthfulness...They speak lips of smoothness, i.e. the smoothest, most deceitful language with a double heart, inasmuch, namely, as the meaning they deceitfully express to other, and even to themselves, differs from the purpose they now so flatteringly put forth quickly changes to the very opposite” (Keil and Delitzsch).

The “*flattering lips*” were literally lips of “smoothness.” They spoke “smooth” things. Such was the common practice of the enemies of God. Barnes tells us that the word means “to divide, to distribute; then, to make things equal or smooth” (Barnes). “The flatterer is the most dangerous enemy we can have.

Raleigh, himself a courtier, and therefore initiated into the whole art of flattery, who discovered in his own career and fate its dangerous and deceptive power, its deep artifice and deeper falsehood, says, ‘A flatterer is said to be a beast that biteth smiling. But it is hard to know them from friends - they are so obsequious and full of protestations; for, as a wolf resembles a dog, so doth a



flatterer a friend (Spurgeon).

*“with a double heart”* is literally “a heart and a heart” in the Hebrew. “One that gives utterance to the words, and the other that retains a different sentiment” (Barnes). The *“flattering lip”* suggests the outward manifestation, while the *“double heart”* speaks of the inward. Both suggest hypocrisy. “He who puffs up another’s heart, has nothing better than wind in his own” (Spurgeon). Again, “Flattery is the sign of the tavern where duplicity is the host” (Spurgeon).

### **Confidence Verses 3-4**

3 *Jehovah will cut off all flattering lips, The tongue that speaketh great things;*

4 *Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; Our lips are our own: Who is lord over us?*

**12:3:** The complaint was made; here a threat follows. In spite of the situation in Israel, the writer expresses his confidence in God. He is sure that God will judge those who speak falsehood. Here is a warning to those who pursue a like course. They will be cut off. The idea is that of separating offenders from a community. See Gen. 17:14.

*“the tongue speaketh great things”* - The wicked, more often than not, boast of their accomplishments. “The same man sometimes cozens with smooth words, sometimes blusters and talks big” (Rawlinson, page 76).

**12:4:** This is a continuation of the description of those who possess “flattering lips.” It reveals to us the inward attitude of those unrighteous individuals who were speaking falsehood against David, and who had denied their faith. *“Who have said”* does not suggest that this was done outwardly. It was an inward attitude of rebellion which the Psalmist describes, and manner of thinking which, in the final outcome, had led to the open rebellion. This is characteristic of sin. It begins in the heart, and is finally manifested in open sin.

*“With our tongue”* - That is, with their power of persuasion. It is as if they claimed, “whatever we desire we can accomplish through our tongues - by persuasion, or by menaces, or by skill in argument” (Rawlinson, page 76). Much damage has been done by the tongue.

The “smooth” speech of the false teachers within the body of Christ today has done immeasurable harm, leading away disciples after themselves. These false teachers have great power and ability to “persuade” others to follow their false doctrine.

*“our lips are our own”* - All restraints had been cast off. No one would be “lord over us” and tell them how they would act. Barnes points out that “there is usually a greater degree of recklessness among men in regard to their speech than in regard to their conduct; and many a man who would shrink from doing another wrong by an act of dishonesty in business, may be utterly reckless as to doing him wrong by an unkind remark” (Barnes).

*“who is Lord over us”* - Like Pharaoh who boasted that he did not know the God of Moses, these trouble makers rebel in their claims and their actions. They will learn, of course, that God’s words are not idle threats, and that indeed there IS a God over them, though they care not to admit it.

### **Care Verse 5**

5 *Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the sighing of the needy, Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; I will set him in the safety he panteth for.*

**12:5:** In all situations, God has promised that He will take care of us. This verse would suggest that the “*poor*” and “*needy*” were especially the object of their falsehood. But despite the efforts of the wicked to overcome them, the Psalmist says that safety has been promised to them.

### **Character Verses 6-7**

6 The words of Jehovah are pure words; As silver tried in a furnace on the earth, Purified seven times.  
7 Thou wilt keep them, O Jehovah, Thou wilt preserve them from this generation for ever.

**12:6:** There is a contrast that is drawn between the lying tongue of the enemy, and the sure promises of Jehovah. God cannot lie, and His words, tried and proven, are sure. “The design is to bring his

words into contrast with the sayings of such men, and to show how much more safety there is in relying on his promises than on the promises made by such men" (Barnes).

**12:7:** The "them" are the faithful. God will protect and preserve those who put their trust in Him.

### **Corruption Verse 8**

*8 The wicked walk on every side, When vileness is exalted among the sons of men.*

**12:8:** The state of things was as IF the vile person was exalted and honored. But not all things are as they seem, and behind the scenes God is working out His will. The time will come when God will come to the forefront. For this the Psalmist is pleading throughout this Psalm.

Keil and Delitzsch concluded: "Thus even at last the depressing view of the present prevails in the midst of the confession of a more consolatory hope. The present is gloomy. But in the central hexastich the future is lighted up as a consolation against this gloominess. The Psalm is a ring and this central oracle is its jewel" (Keil and Delitzsch).

### ***Lessons***

1. Fundamental lesson: We should never fear the opposition, for God is on our side. Because of the power and providence of God, wickedness shall not prevail.
2. There are three lines of thought in the Psalm: (1) the fierce trials the Psalmist faced; (2) The fervent prayer of the Psalmist; and (3) the faithful promise from the Father.
3. There are some lessons regarding our speech. Verse 2 describes the speech of the wicked - they speak vanity, having flattering lips and a double or hypocritical heart. Obviously the Christian should not so speak. Cf Ephesians 4:25 and like passages.
4. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Matthew 12:34). The speech of the wicked is an indication of the condition of their heart.

5. A proud and haughty will may cause us to say, “Who is Lord over us?” (verse 4).
6. God will keep his promises (verse 6).
7. Trouble moves men to prayer (verse 1). When society decays and waxes worse and worse, and when the righteous fall away, the faithful child of God turns to the only refuge that can comfort and deliver.
8. Prayer strengthens faith (verse 4). We cast our cares upon Him in the hour of trial. “In communing with God, and casting our cares upon him who careth for us, our faith gains force and grows in ardour and activity” (Rawlinson, page 80).
9. Faith inspires hope (verse 5). God’s word will not fail. Notice Hebrews 13:5-6. God keeps His promises. There may be delay, but never failure on the part of God. God has His own way, and His own time schedule.
10. Hope culminates in assurance (verses 7-8). The Psalmist was confident that God would “keep them” and preserve them from this “generation” of wickedness.

## *“Yearning For Help From God”*

### ***Introduction***

This is a Psalm of David, as per the subtitle. It was composed during a time of persecution when it seemed that God had turned away. Roy Deaver suggests that it was written when David was being pursued by Saul (cf. 1 Samuel 26:20). Coffman has selected an appropriate title for this Psalm: "Yearning For Help From God." Spurgeon calls this the "How Long Psalm."

### ***Analysis***

Most commentators divide this Psalm into three parts, each containing two verses. There is (1) a complaint, vs. 1-2, (2) a call, vs. 3-4, and (3) comfort, vs. 5-6. Spurgeon divided the Psalm into (1) The Question of Anxiety, vs. 1-2; (2) The Cry of Prayer, vs.3-4; and (3) The Song of Faith, vs. 5-6. I do not recall the source of the following outline, but it has been in my personal notes for quite some time:

- I. Protest, verses 1-2;
- II. Prayer, verses 3-4;
- III. Praise, verses 5-6;

### ***Commentary***

#### **Protest Verses 1-2**

- 1 *How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou forget me for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?*
- 2 *How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?*

**13:1:** The first two verses in the Psalm express the feelings of the Psalmist as he faced apparent abandonment. It seemed to the writer

that God had hidden His face for some reason or another. The enemy had overcome the Psalmist, if only temporarily.

*“How long, O Jehovah?...”* If our assumption is correct that this Psalm was written by David when he was being pursued by Saul, this must have been written at a low ebb during David’s life. David was observing the success of Saul in overthrowing his efforts. It would have been quite natural to ask, “How long...?” These words appear four times in the first two verses. It seemed to the writer that his trials would never end, that they would go on forever. Had God forgotten him? Did God not see? “This consciousness of separation from God has indeed brought an agony of near despair to the Psalmist” (Coffman, page 81). And one can only imagine how the time must have crept by during these dog days of persecution and despair. “A week within prison-walls is longer than a month at liberty...Long sorrow seems to argue abounding the corruption; for the gold which is long in the fire must have had much dross to be consumed, hence the question, ‘How long?’ may suggest deep searching of heart” (Spurgeon).

*“Wilt thou forget me forever?”* Here the Psalmist sets forth one reason for his troubled heart. The mere thought of God’s forgetting His people only for a moment is terrifying. How much more the thought that He would forget us forever!

*“How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?”* Reason number two for the Psalmist’s troubled heart, the suggestion that God would hide His face from him. Coffman makes an interesting observation regarding the saint’s frequent feeling of abandonment and despair: “Perhaps the Lord wishes to drive us to our knees repeatedly that we should ever rely upon Him and not upon ourselves” (Coffman, page 82). He then quotes Leslie McGraw: “Prayer is not only the proper reaction of the godly to trouble, it is also the effective medicine against depression in the face of it” (Coffman, page 82). Spurgeon makes this observation: “Thus the reader will remark that the question ‘how long?’ is put in four shapes. The writer’s grief is viewed, as it seems to be, as it is, as it affects himself within, and his foes without” (Spurgeon).

### **Prayer Verses 3-4**

*3 Consider and answer me, O Jehovah my God: Lighten mine eyes,*

*lest I sleep the sleep of death;*

4 *Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; Lest mine adversaries rejoice when I am moved.*

**13:3-4:** This next part of the Psalm is a call unto Jehovah. In response to the four troubles expressed by the Psalmist, he now makes his request in view of four principles:

*“Consider and answer me, O Jehovah my God”* - The Psalmist seeks an answer from God. It is as if he were saying, “Look, hear me...” David knew that God would answer prayer, and now he seeks that answer. Notice here the marvelous cry of faith on the part of the Psalmist.

*“Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death”* - Here is the second reason for his request, that being the very real prospect of death. The seriousness of the writer’s predicament is here evident. The enemy was bearing down. If God did not intervene, then surely death would come upon him. It is important to note that the desire on the part of David to avoid death was not for personal reasons. Rather it was his concern that the enemy might use his death as an occasion to mock God.

*“Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him”* - Here is the third reason for his request. David did not want his enemy to think that they had prevailed against him. If God did not soon provide help, the victory would belong to the unrighteous rather than the righteous.

*“Lest mine adversaries rejoice when I am moved”* - Finally, his request for God’s intervention was needed to prevent an unfounded rejoicing by those who were his enemies. Barnes points out that “his ground of apprehension and of appeal was, that by his being vanquished the cause in which he was engaged would suffer, and that the enemies of religion would triumph” (Barnes). The great love that David must have had for God’s absolute rule and authority is here evident. Should the enemy prevail, those about might view such as an indication of the type of kingdom that God would approve. The CAUSE was at stake. As during his encounter with Goliath, David was concerned about the cause. In his youth he had asked, “Is there not a cause?” And if his cause was great, how much greater is ours? Coffman observes the truth taught here that “God’s honor is bound up with the deliverance of his people” (Coffman, page 82). Any failure on the part of God to provide deliverance, or

to keep His promises, is an occasion for the enemies of God to ridicule and blaspheme. Notice in this connection the pleading of Moses in Numbers 14:15-16. It is comforting to know that our enemies will NOT prevail: "And if for awhile we become their scoff and jest, the day is coming when the shame will change sides, and the contempt shall be poured on those to whom it is due" (Spurgeon).

### **Praise Verses 5-6**

- 5 But I have trusted in thy lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.*  
*6 I will sing unto Jehovah, Because he hath dealt bountifully with me.*

**13:5:** Finally the Psalmist expresses his comfort (verses 5-6), and offers up praise for God's marvelous blessings. The idea is that David had trusted in God's mercy and providence, and he would continue to do so. Past experiences had proven God's faithfulness. Why should God let him down now? There is a dramatic change in the tenor of the Psalm at this point: "Lo the rain is over, and time of the singing of birds is come...It is worthy to be observed that the joy is all the greater because of the previous sorrow, as calm is all the more delightful in recollection of the preceding tempest" (Spurgeon).

*"thy lovingkindness"* - This seems to be one of David's favorite character traits of Jehovah.

*"dealt bountifully"* - The word rendered by these two English words means properly to deal with anyone; to treat anyone well or ill. It is commonly employed in a good sense, as it is here.

The psalm closes, therefore, with expressions of joy, thankfulness, triumph. Though it begins with depression and sadness, it ends with joy. This is often observable in the Psalms. In the commencement it often occurs that the mind is overwhelmed with sorrow, and there is earnest pleading with God. Light, under the influence of prayer, breaks in gradually upon the soul. The clouds disperse; the darkness disappears. New views of the goodness and mercy of God are imparted; an assurance of his favour is brought to the soul; confidence in his mercy springs up in the heart; and the psalm that began with sorrowful complaining ends with the language of praise and joy" (Barnes).



## ***Lessons***

1. Sometimes it may seem that God is no longer watching over us, but be assured that He is with us. Notice Matthew 28:20.
2. Evil persons may overcome righteous individuals momentarily, but that is no indication that God has failed, or has not kept His promise.
3. Trust will lead to rejoicing.
4. Count your blessings.
5. There are times when there seems to be no help from Jehovah, when he seems to be waiting too long to respond to our pleas; when he seems to have his face turned from us; when the pain of soul and sorrow of heart seem to overwhelm us; when our enemies seem to have prevailed over us (Deaver, page 41).
6. The Lord may not come to us just WHEN we think He ought to come, but He will always be on time (Deaver, page 41)
7. The Psalmist passes from PROTEST to PRAYER, and from PRAYER to PRAISE.
8. “If the heart be overburdened and Jehovah seems to hide His face, let the story of woe be told to Him. It is a holy exercise. Men may not understand it. They may even charge us with failing faith; when, as a matter of fact, while all other anchorage crumbles in the storm, faith fastens itself more surely on the Rock” (Morgan, page 226).

## *“The Foolishness of Disbelief”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is ascribed to David, and I see no reason to doubt his authorship. It has been strongly argued, from mention of the ‘captivity’ of God’s people in verse 7, that this Psalm was written during the time of the Babylon sojourn, and therefore not by David. But the word ‘captivity’ is often used metaphorically in scriptures. There is nothing to prevent the Psalm from being written by David, most likely during the time that he was fleeing from Absalom.

### ***Analysis***

In my original notes I had as an outline (1) the wickedness of the ungodly, verses 1-3, (2) the coming discomfiture of the wicked, verses 4-6, and (3) the salvation of the righteous, verse 7. Spurgeon has this interesting analysis: “The world’s foolish creed (verse 1); its practical influence in corrupting morals, 1, 2, 3. The persecuting tendencies of sinners, 4; their alarms, 5; their ridicule of the godly, 6; and a prayer for the manifestation of the Lord to his people’s joy” (Spurgeon).

Coffman sees in this Psalm a reference to the judicial hardening of the human race, prophesied here, and quoted by Paul in Romans 3. Accordingly, the hardening of mankind occurred first in that period just prior to the Flood of Genesis 6-9; second, during the time leading up to the call of Abraham; and third, during that time just prior to the coming of the Savior, to which Paul refers in Romans 1-3. He then concludes that there is to be a “fourth and final hardening of the Adamic race” (Coffman, page 86). This final hardening will usher in the Second Coming of the Savior, and the Judgment.

We will follow Roy Deaver’s outline: (Deaver, page 43)

- I. Depravity (1-3);
- II. Destruction (4-6);
- III. Deliverance (7).

## Commentary

### Depravity Verses 1-3

- 1 *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works; There is none that doeth good.*
- 2 *Jehovah looked down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there were any that did understand, That did seek after God.*
- 3 *They are all gone aside; They are together become filthy; There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

**14:1:** “*The fool hath said in his heart*” - A state of mind and, therefore, a certain type of character is spoken of in verse one. It is from the HEART that one becomes an atheist. When men decide to abandon moral purity, and reject responsibility, they seek some means to justify their action. Rather than honestly examine the evidence, they disbelieve in God IN SPITE OF the evidence. This is exactly why the atheist is considered a fool. “Atheism is not the product of knowledge, education, intelligence, or discernment of any kind, but the child of corruption. Atheism is the essence of ingratitude, injustice, pride, hatred, and selfishness” (Coffman, page 88). Wilbur Smith was correct in pointing out, “In our day it is not so much that men cannot believe in God because the facts of life contradict Him, or deny His existence, but *men are determined not to believe in God*, because the way they want to live requires a freedom from all divine restraint” (Wilbur Smith, page 155). Indeed, “To say there is no God is to belie the plainest evidence, which is obstinacy; to oppose common consent of mankind, which is stupidity; to stifle consciousness, which is madness” (Spurgeon). Our English word “fool” is sometimes used to denote a wicked man, his sin being the essence of folly. The word is stronger than “wicked” for there is many a man who would rather be called a sinner than a fool. The connotation of the word emphasizes the folly of one who rejects God.

And yet, such folly begins “*in the heart.*” Here is where departure begins. When once the heart has abandoned Jehovah, the abandonment of rational thinking, and corruption of life cannot be far behind.

*“They are corrupt, they have done abominable works”* There is a connection between disbelief and the reprobate life. Disbelief in God is the consequence of a desire to live a life out of harmony with the rules and regulations set forth in the inspired record. Quoting from Robert South, Wilbur Smith writes,

The fool’s saying in his heart *there is no God*, implies his seeking out arguments to persuade himself that there is none. Where the heart is concerned, it will quickly employ the head; and reason shall be put to the drudgery of humoring a depraved mind, by providing it with a suitable hypothesis....For the fool to say in his heart *there is no God*, implies not only a seeking for reasons and arguments, but also a marvelous readiness to acquiesce in any seeming probability or appearance of reason that may make for his opinion” (Wilbur Smith, page 154).

The “they” and the “fool” are one and the same. Barnes points out that “it is only a wicked man who finds pleasure in an argument to prove that there is no God” (Barnes). The *“abominable works”* are those things that are to be detested, abhorred. It is significant that the Psalmist changes from the singular (“fool”) to the plural “they.” One fool begets another, and his counsel wins converts. Spurgeon has noted that the “noisy blasphemer spreads his horrible doctrines as lepers spread the plague” (Spurgeon).

*“there is none that doeth good”* - The application is limited. The Psalmist was saying that among those who disbelieve in God, there is none that doeth good. Paul used this verse to bring all men into judgment (Romans 3); and we suppose that in the absolute sense of the word, no one does good, for all sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

**14:2:** Barnes points out that “the original here - *‘shakaph’* - conveys the idea of an intense and anxious looking, as we bend forward when we wish to examine anything with attention, or when we look out for one who is expected to come” (Barnes). God is pictured as One Who was searching intently to determine whether there were any children of men who did good. The “children of men” are those who had corrupted themselves. God was searching to see whether any of those who had so corrupted themselves possessed any degree of understanding. While Calvinistic theologians use this verse as a sugarstick for the doctrine of total hereditary depravity, it does not teach it. Verse three will point out that men are not born totally depraved, as per Calvin, but that they become sinful. They turn away from the truth; “they are all gone aside,” not born aside.

**14:3:** The word translated “*gone aside*” means properly to go off, to turn aside or away, to depart (Barnes). While in principle the universal sinfulness of man is upheld, the context must be considered in studying these verses. The context is discussing the “fool” that has said there is no God. While the “wicked” may not openly avow such a disbelief, practically speaking, those who live reprobate lives profess a disbelief in their God. All men sin. They go astray. They “*become filthy*.” Like the fool that disavows any belief in God, wicked men live as if God does not exist. In the long run, there is no difference in the two. Profession is mere hypocrisy if life is not affected by faith. Such men are described as being “filthy.” The original here means “stinking.” In Arabic the word means to become sour, like spoiled milk. The idea is that they have become corrupt in a moral sense, and they produce a foul odor in the presence of God. “The only reason why we do not more clearly see this foulness is because we are accustomed to it, just as those who work daily among offensive odours at last cease to smell them” (Spurgeon).

### **Destruction Verses 4-6**

- 4 *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And call not upon Jehovah?*  
5 *There were they in great fear; For God is in the generation of the righteous.*  
6 *Ye put to shame the counsel of the poor, Because Jehovah is his refuge.*

**14:4:** The contrast is presented between the “*workers of iniquity*” and the “*people*” of God. Here is a question that needs to be addressed. Do those who despise and persecute God’s people have no knowledge? Do they not understand that they will be brought into judgment? Do they not have the same evidence that we have? Certainly they do! But they have chosen to ignore it. Their self-will simply refuses to call upon Jehovah. Choice comes into focus here. It is not that these wicked men **cannot** call upon God; but rather than they **will not**. John Calvin is wrong here. The “T” (total hereditary depravity) of the Calvinist T-U-L-I-P is not supported here, or anywhere else in God’s word.

Note here the absence of thanksgiving. These eat their bread and refuse to “call upon Jehovah.” Ingratitude is the key that opens the

gate into apostasy. This absence of offering thanks is at the beginning of Paul's indictment against the apostate Gentile world (Romans 1:21), where it is said, "That, Knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was darkened." Coffman has pointed out that "there is no failure in America today that is any more shameful or loaded with any greater potential for ultimate disaster for the whole nation than is this simple neglect of thanksgiving for food" (Coffman, page 90).

**14:5:** The Psalmist points out that in some way they were in fear. This "*fear*" is based upon the presence of the "*righteous*," for "*God is in the generation of the righteous*." The idea is that those who disbelieved in God were not calm in their disbelief. Something troubled and agitated them. They wanted to disbelieve in God; but in spite of all their efforts, the evidence was so overwhelming that it produced fear within them. The "evidence" would seem to be the recognition that God was blessing and prospering His people. God's people have always stood as lights in a world of darkness. It is implied here that the righteous are to manifest their unmistakable allegiance to God. It is in the manifestation of the faith so ingrained in the life of the truly righteous that the atheist finds his greatest fear. It just may be that there IS a God in heaven, and that such a possibility instills fear in the deep recesses of the mind of the atheist. "The most hardened of men have their periods when conscience casts them into a cold sweat of alarm...and though unbelievers may boast as loudly as they will, a sound is in their ears which makes them ill at ease" (Spurgeon). Perhaps this will explain why "there are no atheists in foxholes."

**14:6:** Delitzsch noted that the "original form appears to be destroyed by some deficiency" (Keil and Delitzsch, page 208). This makes any comment upon this passage difficult. The "ye" has reference to the wicked under consideration. The "*counsel of the poor*" is the act of the poor putting their trust and confidence in God. The wicked looked upon their trust as something foolish, and thus are said to "shame the counsel of the poor." It is an astonishing trait of the depraved that emerges here. "Whatever good may be intended or advocated by anyone, the possessors of worldly power will move to frustrate any such good intentions" (Coffman, page 91).

Barnes points out that the word rendered "poor" means more properly "afflicted, distressed, needy. It is often rendered afflicted, Job xxxiv.28, Ps xviii.27; xxii.24; xxv.16" (Barnes). Spurgeon has

this comment:

The special point and butt of their jest seems to be the confidence of the godly in their Lord. What can your God do for you now? Who is that God who can deliver out of our hand? Where is the reward of all your praying and beseeching? Taunting questions of this sort they thrust into the faces of weak but gracious souls, and tempt them to feel ashamed of their refuge. Let us not be laughed out of our confidence by them, let us scorn their scorning and defy their jeers; we shall need to wait but a little, and then the Lord our refuge will avenge his own elect and ease himself of his adversaries, who once made so light of him and of his people (Spurgeon).

### **Deliverance**

#### **Verse 7**

*7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When Jehovah bringeth back the captivity of his people, Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.*

**14:7:** The language here “is expressive of an earnest desire, as if the thing were in the hand of another, that he would impart that blessing or favor” (Barnes). It is not necessary to take this captivity to be Babylonian captivity. In fact, Israel was often “captive” to those nations about her, as during the times of the Judges.

### ***Lessons***

1. David Brown noted: “Today we are treated to a triple portion of materialism. Such as spawned all manner of infidelity and corruption... Christians must be on the offensive...we must do the challenging” (David Brown, page 80).
2. “We can well say that no good comes from no God” (David Brown, page 80).
3. John Calvin’s doctrine of “total hereditary depravity” is clearly refuted in this Psalm. Rather than being BORN in sin, men CHOOSE to depart from God. Note that men have “gone aside,” that they are “become filthy,” and they do not “DO good” (verse 3). They are “workers of iniquity” (verse 4).
4. David Brown had this noteworthy observation: “The workers of iniquity, atheists in particular, abort babies, advocate euthanasia, mock the home, glorify homosexuality and other works of like

nature. Where is the 'Atheists Memorial Hospital,' the Atheists Orphans Home, or the Nursing Homes that are run by the Society for the Advancement of Atheism? " (David Brown, page 81).

5. This Psalm denounces atheism in this manner:

- (1) It shows the COURSE by which men reject a belief in God - it begins in the heart, and manifests itself in conduct:
  - A. Positively, they "go astray," they "prey upon the righteous," and they "defeat the counsels of the poor";
  - B. Negatively, they do not do good, and they do not seek after God in an attempt to find him;
- (2) It implies the INCREDIBLE FOOLISHNESS of the Atheist:
  - A. He is ignorant of God's all seeing eye (verse 2);
  - B. He is ignorant of God's providence over his people (verse 5);
  - C. He is ignorant of the eternal justice of God (verse 7);
  - D. Consider this: If the atheist is right, then I will lose nothing; IF there is a God, then the atheist will lose all, for eternity.

6. Concerning atheists:

- (1) They have always existed and will continue to manifest themselves in unholy ways;
- (2) Their character generally follows the path of wickedness; this is due to their rejection of God and His standard for our lives;
- (3) They oppress the poor by deriding the only hope the poor have - the existence of God and His ultimate judgment and reward;
- (4) They are fools for rejecting the evidence;
- (5) Deep inside they still fear.

7. "There is security in godliness; there is no security in wickedness" (Deaver, page 43)



## *“The Citizen of Zion”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm refers to a single subject, arranged in question and answer form. The first verse presents a question which should be of the utmost importance in the minds of each individual. That question is, “Who shall enter heaven?” The Psalm is believed to have been written by David and there is no reason to doubt this. The occasion, however, is not known and there is nothing within the Psalm which would indicate the date or circumstance when it was written. Spurgeon says that it “is exceedingly probable that, together with the twenty-fourth Psalm, to which it bears a striking resemblance, its composition was in some way connected with the removal of the ark to the holy hill of Zion. Who should attend upon the ark was a matter of no small consequence” (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have:

I. The Question (verse 1).

II. The Answer (verses 2-5a).

1. Based upon his character.

2. Based upon his treatment of others.

(1) Positively (verse 4).

A. To him, the vile person is condemned;

B. Honors them that fear the Lord;

C. He keeps his promises, even if it causes him trouble.

(2) Negatively (verse 5)

A. Puts not out his money to usury;

B. Does not misuse the innocence of others; does not play on their misfortune.

III. The Blessing - Shall Never Be Moved (5b).

Barnes gives this analysis of verses 2-5: (1) The man who is upright, just, honest, truthful, ver.2; (2) The man who treats his neighbor

properly; who does not slander or reproach him; who does not readily listen to calumnious reports in regard to him, verse 3; (3) The man who regards the righteous and the wicked as they should be regarded; who looks with proper dis-approbation on all who are 'vile' in their character, and with the true respect on all who fear the Lord, verse 4; (4) The man who is faithful to an engagement, though it proves to be against his own interest, verse 4; (5) The man who does not take advantage of the necessities of others, who does not put out his money to 'usury,' and who, if a magistrate, does not take a bribe to induce him to condemn the innocent, verse 5.

## ***Commentary***

### **The Question**

#### **Verse 1**

*1 Jehovah, who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*

**15:1:** *“Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle”* - The tabernacle was the movable structure, carried about by the priests during the wanderings, up until such a time as the temple was erected by Solomon.

The Christian is a “stranger and pilgrim.” In view of the type and anti-type figure employed, the Psalmist (in application to us) is about to describe the one who is a faithful member of the Lord’s church.

*“who shall dwell in thy holy hill”* - It was in Zion where the permanent temple was erected. The idea of permanency is suggested here. “The questions are parallel, but not identical. The answers for both are the same: The one who shall dwell permanently in heaven and the one who is a faithful sojourner on earth share these qualities mentioned” (Stephen Powell, page 85). The complete irreverence of some with regard to their approach to God in worship suggests that their heart is not where it ought to be. Unfortunately, their lives manifest the absence of a holy heart. They may dwell in the church house, but unless the heart is pure, they most certainly do not dwell in the “holy hill” of the Almighty!

### **The Answer: Based Upon His Character**

#### **Verses 2-3**

- 2 *He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, And speaketh truth in his heart;*  
3 *He that slandereth not with his tongue, Nor doeth evil to his friend, Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor;*

Positively, he (1) Walks uprightly; (2) Works righteousness; and (3) Speaks the truth.

**15:2:** *“He that walketh uprightly”* - “Walk” is used in the scriptures to depict a manner of life. Notice Psalms 1, and also 1 John 1:6-8. The word “uprightly” in the Hebrew means “that which is complete in all its parts” (Barnes). “True believers do not cringe as flatterers, wriggle as serpents, bend double as earth-grubbers, or crook on one side as those who have sinister aims; they have the strong backbone of the vital principle of grace within, and being themselves upright, they are able to walk upright” (Spurgeon). The great cry today is for the man and woman who will manifest integrity in their lives. Horace Greeley had a quote that Harry Truman used to like: “Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today may curse tomorrow, only one thing endures -- character.”

*“and worketh righteousness”* - Notice Micah 6:8. Here is the man who DOES that which is right. The one who enters into God’s presence is a worker, always willing and ready to serve the Lord. That work is one of righteousness. “The doctrine is every where laid down in the Scriptures that no man can be a friend of God who does not do habitually what is right” (Barnes). Notice also the connection of faith and works so implied here.

*“and speaketh truth in his heart”* - This is, of course, opposed to all mere outward professions and pretenses. Here is a characteristic as it relates to the inward man. Purity of heart is absolutely essential if one would “see God.” “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). The saint will not lie; they will scorn little white lies, flatteries deceptions, and the like. “Though truths, like roses, have thorns about them, good men wear them in their bosoms” (Spurgeon).

It would seem, as well, that the Psalmist describes one who is true to himself!

Negatively, he (1) Does not backbite; (2) Does no evil to his neighbor; and (3) Takes no reproach against his neighbor.

**15:3:** There are three negative attributes of the man who will enter into heaven. Here are three things that he will NOT do. Each of these has to do with the man's relationship to his neighbor.

*"he that slandereth not with his tongue"* - The word "backbite" appears in some versions, including the KJV. The word means to censure, reproach, or speak evil of another. Barnes tells us that the Hebrew word (ragal) means "to foot it, and then to go about" (Barnes). The one who circulates reports that are unfavorable to others is a "backbiter." Notice James 3:2-11 in this regard. The one who is to enter heaven will not injure his neighbor with gossip or evil insinuations. It is unfortunate that "some men's tongues bite more than their teeth" (Spurgeon). Mark Twain once said, "A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes."

*"Nor doeth evil to his friend"* - The one who would enter heaven will not injure his fellow man. He will seek his fellow man's good rather than his hurt. Love does not allow one to do evil to his neighbor. He who will dwell in Zion will treat others as he would like to be treated (cf. Matthew 7:12).

*"Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor"* - He is slow to believe an evil report of another. Not only must one avoid initiating any rumor, he must not encourage the spreading of one by "taking it up." Barnes adds, "If he be constrained to believe it, it is only because the evidence becomes so strong that he cannot resist it, and his believing it is contrary to all the desires of his heart" (Barnes). Were there none to LISTEN to the tale bearer, the back-bitter and his gossip would soon fade away. Trapp says that "the tale bearer carrieth the devil in his tongue, and the tale hearer carries the devil in his ear" (Spurgeon). A number of years ago I came across the following newspaper article which addresses this very subject:

I am more deadly than the screaming shell of the cannon. I win without killing. I tear down homes, break hearts, wreck lives. I travel on the wings of the wind. No innocence is strong enough to intimidate me, no purity pure enough to daunt me. I have no regard for truth, no respect for justice, no mercy for the defenseless. My victims are as numerous as the sands of the sea and often as innocent. I never forget and seldom forgive. My name is Gossip.

-- Morgan Blake, sportswriter for the Atlanta Journal

## **The Answer: Based Upon His Treatment of Others** **Verses 4-5a**

- 4 *In whose eyes a reprobate is despised, But who honoreth them that fear Jehovah; He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not;*  
5 *He that putteth not out his money to interest, Nor taketh reward against the innocent.*

The Psalmist first addresses his treatment of others **positively**: (1) To him, the vile person is contemned; (2) He honors them that fear the Lord; and (3) He keeps his promises, even if it causes him trouble.

**15:4:** *“In whose eyes a reprobate is despised”* - The Psalmist points out that there is a difference between his attitude toward the wicked and his attitude toward the faithful. The one who will enter into God’s heavenly abode does not show respect to a man of base or bad character on account of his wealth, his position, or his rank in life. It is tragic that the rock and movie stars are hailed as heroes and set forth as role models for our youth. The Psalmist points out that the righteous man will be careful to whom he pays respect and/or shows honor. He simply does not honor those who do not deserve to be honored.

*“But honoreth them that fear Jehovah”* - Too often we fail in this respect. Those who so often fear the Lord, and demonstrate it by their teaching and their lives, are frowned upon, often by members of the Lord’s church. How are elders, deacons, and faithful preachers and teachers of God’s word viewed? Are they esteemed highly for their works sake? Or more often than not, are they ridiculed and derided because of their faithful dedication to God? “A sinner in a gold chain and silken robes is no more to be compared with a saint in rags than a rushlight in a silver candlestick with the sun behind a cloud. The proverb says, ‘ugly women, finely dressed, are the uglier for it,’ and so mean men in high estate are the more mean because of it” (Spurgeon).

*“he that sweareth to his own heart, and changeth not”* - Often men make promises, or contracts, which turn out to their disadvantage. The godly man sticks with his promise, even if it causes him hurt. If the thing is wrong, he must obviously abandon it at once. But all other factors considered, and the promise being right in and of itself, once the vow is made it must be kept; no matter how uncomfortable

it might be.

**Negatively,** (1) The Psalmist next tells us that the righteous man puts not out his money to usury; and (2) He does not misuse the innocence of others; does not play on their misfortune.

**15:5:** *“he that putteth not out his money to interest”* - The word in the KJV is “usury,” and denotes an unlawful interest. Webster says it is “a premium or compensation paid, or stipulated to be paid, for the use of money borrowed or retained, beyond the rate of interest established by law” (Barnes). The Jews were forbidden to charge interest to their brethren (notice Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35-37). Although charging interest was forbidden in respect to Israelites, it was lawful to charge the “stranger,” or “gentile” (Deut. 25:19-20). There was nothing morally wrong in the thing itself; the thing forbidden here is not the taking of interest but the taking of interest in such a way as would be oppressive and hard. The Psalmist forbids a harsh, grasping, griping disposition; a disposition that takes advantage of the hardships and disadvantages of others. Our business dealings should always be conducted with the utmost of honesty and fidelity.

*“nor taketh reward against the innocent”* - The taking of bribes is forbidden in the Scriptures (cf. Exodus 23:8; Deut 16:19, 27:25, Prov. 17:23, etc.).

### **The Blessing - Shall Never Be Moved Verse 5b**

*5b He that doeth these things shall never be moved.*

*“he that doeth these things shall never be moved”* - Here is a summary of assured blessings for those who thus meet the above qualifications. He will stand on solid ground, having built his foundation on the Rock of Ages. No storm shall move him or destroy that foundation!

### ***Lessons***

There are certain qualifications, given by God, which must be met before we can enjoy fellowship with, or dwell with, God the Father. It is absurd to think that salvation is totally unconditional.

Truth is that which will make us free. We must love it, embrace it,

teach it, practice it, speak it, and seek it with our whole being. John 8:32-34.

God has always frowned upon an unruly tongue. Notice Proverbs 6:16-19. Of the seven things that Jehovah “hates,” three pertain to an unruly tongue. Notice also James 3:1-12 in this connection.

A proper relation to one’s neighbor is essential to fellowship with God. No man is an island unto himself. Every man’s life is intertwined with those about him.

We should treat our brethren in a special way. While it was good and right to collect interest from those of gentile background, such was not the case with their brethren. Notice in this connection Galatians 6:10.

“He that doeth these things shall never be moved.” If we follow the given guidelines, neither the storms of life, the trials that we face, nor the persecution that may be ours will move us away from God. We will stand firm on the Rock of Ages.

## *“I Shall Not Be Moved”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is believed to be David. The occasion is unknown. So far as concerns the subtitle, “Michtam of David,” there is no certainty as to its meaning. We have heard explanations ranging from “the Golden Psalm” to “the Secret Psalm.” The word appears as a subtitle in the Psalms only here and in Psalms 56, 58, 59, and 60. A form of the word appears in Isaiah 38:9 where it is rendered “writing.” Dr. Alexander (per Spurgeon) thinks that the word “is probably a simple derivative of a word signifying to hide, and signifies a secret or mystery, and indicates the depth of doctrinal and spiritual import in these sacred compositions” (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm expresses a confident expectation of eternal life on the part of the writer. David had a deep conviction that one who loves God would not be left in the grave, and would not be permitted to see permanent corruption. The contents of this Psalm are (1) an earnest prayer for preservation on the ground that he had put his trust in God, verse 1, (2) a statement of his close fellowship to God, and his love for others of like mind, verses 2-3, (3) a statement of the fact that he had no sympathy with those who rejected God, verses 4-5, (4) an expression of thankfulness, verse 6-7, (5) and finally, a confident expectation of happiness, that he would not be left in the grave, verses 8-11. It is out of the Psalm that we derive our title, and our theme as well: “I Shall Not Be Moved” (verse 8). A closer study of this Psalm has led this writer to the conclusion that we have here a beautiful prophecy of our Lord, His resurrection, ascension, and rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. It is a “confident and dogmatic promise of God’s resurrection of his Holy One from the grave, so quickly after his death that no corruption whatever should destroy his body” (Coffman, page 99).

We give the Psalm the following outline:

I. Prayer, verse 1;



- II. Provisions, verse 2;
- III. Preference, verse 3;
- IV. Pity, verse 4;
- V. Portion, verse 5;
- VI. Provisions, verse 6;
- VII. Priorities, verses 7-8;
- VII. Promise, verses 9-11.

## ***Commentary***

### **Prayer Verse 1**

*1 Preserve me, O God; For in thee do I take refuge.*

**16:1:** Though Jesus was Divine, it is an undisputed fact that His confidence was in the Father, and that He often relied upon the strength that He would draw from God. One particular plea comes to mind when Jesus prayed, “Father, save me from this hour” (John 12:27). That the writer himself may have faced a life-threatening situation is admittedly possible. But any circumstance that may have given rise to the writing of this Psalm does not in any way negate the prophetic nature of these words.

### **Provisions Verse 2**

*2 O my soul, thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord: I have no good beyond thee.*

**16:2:** The words “O my soul” have been supplied. Various renderings of this verse can be found, but the ASV is the superior rendering. Spurgeon has pointed out that the word for God here is “El,” by “which name the Lord Jesus, when under a sense of great weakness, as for instance when upon the cross, was wont to address the Mighty God” (Spurgeon).

“Jehovah, thou art my Lord” – ‘Yhawe’ is my ‘adonai (as the Hebrew appears). This is one reason why the Psalmist determined to take refuge in God. A second reason why such refuge was sought was a recognition that apart from God, there is “no good.” A number of commentators point out the difficulty of the Hebrew. The meaning of the text, however, is not in the least complicated. There is no source of good of any kind separate and apart from Jehovah

God. What men may sometimes classify as “good” falls short of the true definition of goodness when God is left out of the picture.

### **Preference Verse 3**

*3 As for the saints that are in the earth, They are the excellent in whom is all my delight.*

**16:3:** “*The saints*” are nothing more than the faithful followers of God. The modern doctrine of elevated sainthood has no basis in the Bible. This reference to their being “*in the earth*” simply means that these saints were living. The Psalmist is giving another reason for his close attachment to God. He regarded with a sense of deep feelings of gratitude and affection, the saints of God. Rather than associate with those who were worldly, wicked and unholy, his desire was to have his friendship with the “*excellent*” of the earth. Indeed, the most “*excellent*” of all the earth are the people of God. If our conclusion is correct that we have here a view of the Messiah, then there is great comfort in knowing that, in spite of our weaknesses and shortcomings, our God delights in us and is not ashamed to call us brethren (Hebrews 2:11).

### **Pity Verse 4**

*4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that give gifts for another god: Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, Nor take their names upon my lips.*

**16:4:** The word rendered “*sorrows*” (*atzteboth*) may mean either idols or sorrows” (Barnes). For this reason some would have the verse say, “*Their idols are multiplied.*” Biblical history and experience has taught us that service to the false gods actually do multiply sorrow. What a contrast we have between verses 3 and 4. “*The same loving heart which opens towards the chosen people is fast closed against the wickedness, and especially the high crime of idolatry. The text, while it shows our Lord’s abhorrence of sin, shows also the sinner’s greediness after it*” (Spurgeon). Unfortunately, those who multiply idols unto themselves multiply their grief proportionately. Man is never satisfied with sin, and one false god leads to another. Nothing but pity fills our hearts for those who would multiply unto themselves sorrow by way of idolatrous practices.

The “*drink-offering*” was a common religious practice, even among the Hebrews. But the added words “*of blood*” suggest that the blood of animals may have been mixed with these idolatrous drink offerings. Such acts were forbidden to the Jew (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 3:17, 7:26 and 17:10).

The Psalmist vows that he will not so much as allow the names of idols to be upon his lips. Such would be a safeguard against any future participation in worship with such idols. “If we allow poison upon the lip, it may ere long penetrate to the inwards, and it is well to keep out of the mouth that which we would shut out from the heart” (Spurgeon). The principle behind the Psalmist’s vow is present in such New Testament passages as Ephesians 5:11 and 5:3.

There is an underlying theme in this Psalm of the characteristics and nature of one who is righteous. Here is a man in whom (1) God is the object of his trust, (2) God is sovereign in his life, (3) He takes delight in his brethren, and (4) He shuns false worship.

### **Portion Verse 5**

*5 Jehovah is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: Thou maintainest my lot.*

**16:5:** Rather than find any occasion for joy, or source of strength from the vain worship of idols, “Jehovah is the portion,” or source of my strength. Idols supply nothing; our God gives us an inheritance. Idols maintain nothing; Jehovah maintains our lot.

### **Provisions Verse 6**

*6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; Yea, I have a goodly heritage.*

**16:6:** The “*lines*” were employed in dividing land (Amos 7:17, 2 Sam 8:2). The inheritance that the Psalmist had received was pleasant. That which had “*fallen unto*” the author, that which he had received, was pleasant or pleasing and satisfying. Why would one even consider serving the idols that could neither provide happiness, nor promise a goodly heritage?

Close examination of this Psalm, verse by verse, and line by line, continue to reinforce our conclusion that the Psalmist was looking down the road of time to the promised Messiah. Surely none enjoyed the serenity and peace, nor did any man ever inherit that which is “goodly” to the degree of our Savior.

It may seem strange, but while no other man was ever so thoroughly acquainted with grief, it is our belief that no other man ever experienced so much joy and delight in service, for no other served so faithfully and with such great results in view as his recompense of reward. The joy which was set before him must have sent some of its beams of splendour down the rugged places where he endured the cross, despising the shame, and must have made them in some respects pleasant places to the generous heart of the Redeemer (Spurgeon).

Indeed, our Lord received a “*goodly heritage*.” Though poorer than most who have ever lived upon the face of this earth, He was endowed with great riches. The last three words which He spake before His death (“it is finished”) manifest a sense of peace and calm that comes with complete and absolute submission to the Father. Indeed, “martyrs have been happy in dungeons.”

### **Priorities Verses 7-8**

- 7 *I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel; Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons.*  
8 *I have set Jehovah always before me: Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.*

**16:7:** We happen to believe that this verse not only addresses the occasions which the Psalmist had to reflect upon his God during the “night seasons,” but that it is a prophetic look at our Lord’s passion in the garden the night before His betrayal and arrest. “Great generals fight their battles in their own mind long before the trumpet sounds, and so did our Lord win our battle on his knees before he gained it on the cross. It is a gracious habit after taking counsel from above to take counsel within. Wise men see more with their eyes shut by night than fools can see by day with their eyes open” (Spurgeon).

We can almost envision the Psalmist reclining ” (Spurgeon).he starry skies and meditating upon the goodness of God. Indeed,

The natural calmness and composure of the mind; the stillness of night; the starry heavens; the consciousness that we are alone with God, and that no human eye is upon us - all these things are favourable to profound religious meditation. They who are kept wakeful by night need not find this an unprofitable portion of their lives. Some of the most instructive hours of life are those which are spent when the eyes refuse to close themselves in slumber, and when the universal stillness invites to contemplation on Divine things (Barnes).

Anyone who has found it difficult to sleep in the night will confess that some of the most opportune times for prayer and meditation are during the “night seasons.”

**16:8:** Recognition of the omnipresence of God motivated the writer to faithfulness. Courage is a natural consequence of knowing that God is at our “right hand.” The only one to whom these words could be absolutely applicable is, of course, our Lord. He could honestly say that He had “set Jehovah ALWAYS” before Himself.

### **Promise Verses 9-11**

- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth; My flesh also shall dwell in safety.*  
*10 For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption.*  
*11 Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fulness of joy; In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

**16:9:** The heart is the seat of emotions, knowledge, and intentions. The happiness that permeates the heart and provides courage in times of distress is NOT merely an emotional twinge, but the recognition that all is well with the soul. The prophetic nature of this Psalm is reinforced by the words “my flesh also shall dwell in safety.” These words were not applicable to David, even as Peter pointed out in Acts 2:29- 31.

**16:10:** Peter’s use of this passage is significant. He purposely pointed out that this could NOT have applied to David, but rather to the Christ. Whatever action was contemplated on the part of God would occur before the body would suffer corruption. Though the Bible teaches us to look with expectant hope for our own resurrection, THIS passage speaks of the resurrection of our Savior, the first fruits of heaven’s promise for all mankind.

**16:11:** The verse implies, among other things, the following:

- (1) There is such a thing as *“the path of life”*; it is not just any path, or some path, but THE path.
- (2) Genuine joy is only to be found in the presence of Jehovah, or in complete fellowship with Him.
- (3) Untold blessings, eternal in their nature, are in the hand of God, there for the taking by obedience to His Divine will.

### ***Lessons***

This great Messianic Psalm has a very special relationship to the Lord’s resurrection from the dead. It is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:25 ff., and applied to the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

It is only when we make God “the portion of our inheritance” that He will “maintain our lot.” The NT equivalent of this truth is found in Matthew 6:33. The obligation is that we “seek first” the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. The blessing is that “these things” shall be added to us.

Idolatry in the 20th century produces the same kind of bitter sorrow as it did in David’s day. Modern idolatry, especially in Western society, consists of covetousness (Colossians 3:5). Paul warned us, “They that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9). Let us “keep ourselves from covetousness” (Luke 12:15).

## *“Keep Me As The Apple of the Eye”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle identifies this Psalm as a “prayer of David.” The language is clearly that of David, and there is no evidence, external or internal, to suggest otherwise. The exact time is unknown. In our original notes we mentioned that it was probably written during the persecution of David by King Saul. But there were actually any number of occasions upon which this Psalm could have been penned. Of this Psalm, G.Campbell Morgan noted: “The two exercises of priesthood are exemplified in the psalms [16 & 17, TW]. In the first the sacrifices of praise are offered. In this the petitions of need are presented. First, the ground of appeal is the singer’s uprightness of heart, and speech, and action. It then moves into another and higher realm, the singer’s confidence in God” (Morgan, page 227).

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have...

- I. Prayer of the Righteous (verses 1-5);
- II. Protection of the Righteous (verses 6-9);
- III. Persecution of the Righteous (verses 10-12);
- IV. Promise of the Righteous (verses 13-15).

We have entitled this Psalm, “Keep Me As The Apple of the Eye.”

### ***Commentary***

#### **Prayer of the Righteous Verses 1-5**

- 1 *Hear the right, O Jehovah, attend unto my cry; Give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.*
- 2 *Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; Let thine eyes*

*look upon equity.*

3 *Thou hast proved my heart; Thou hast visited me in the night;  
Thou hast tried me, and findest nothing; I am purposed that my  
mouth shall not transgress.*

4 *As for the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me  
from the ways of the violent.*

5 *My steps have held fast to thy paths, My feet have not slipped.*

**17:1:** “*Hear the right, O Jehovah*” - The basis upon which God hears prayer is and always has been, righteousness. James tells us that the “prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working.” When David said that his prayer “goeth not out of feigned lips,” he was not being haughty, but simply stating a fact known by God. Unlike the Pharisees of Jesus’ time, David’s heart was submissive, and his words earnest and sincere. Barnes has this interesting thought: “It is to be observed here that the ground of the petition of the Psalmist is not that HE was righteous, that is, he did not base his petition on the ground of his own merits, but that his CAUSE was righteous” (Barnes). But it appears to me that here, and elsewhere, David maintained his innocence and righteousness before God. Again, it was not a haughty spirit being demonstrated by David, but one of close fellowship with God.

David’s plea for God to “*give ear unto my cry*” is intensive. The language suggests a wide array of emotions. The Hebrew word used (*‘rinnah*) means either a shout of joy, or a mournful cry. It is expressive of deep feelings, expressed in an audible manner. Of interest in the Psalm is the constant reference to prayer and praise expressed with this audible sound. As well, the repetition of identical desires appears frequently throughout David’s Psalms. It was not repetitious prayer that our Lord condemned, but VAIN repetitions. David’s persistence is “like the repeated blow a hammer hitting the same nail on the head to fix it the more effectually, or the continued knocking of a beggar at the gate who cannot be denied an alms” (Spurgeon).

**17:2:** “*Let my sentence*” - This would be God’s judgment upon the writer. David felt that he was being wronged by his enemies and was appealing to God that He might interpose and exercise that which was right. David felt that God would do that which was in his favor, rather than that which would further the cause of the wicked.

The request for God’s “*eyes*” to “*look upon equity*” expresses the writer’s desire for the Lord to examine the situation at hand and act



with equity toward his request.

**17:3:** The language suggests a thorough investigation by the Almighty into the life of David. The result was that David had proven himself to be righteous and trustworthy, and certainly undeserving of the treatment he was receiving from the hand of his enemy.

*“Thou hast proved my heart”* goes to the very center of David’s being. If the heart is corrupt, the whole man is corrupt. In addition, it is said that *“thou hast visited me in the night.”* The “visiting” under consideration is “often used to denote a visitation for the purpose of inspection and examination” (Barnes). The reference to the “night” is significant. The word is being used to describe those moments when the writer was alone, the cares and concerns of the day were past, and he could concentrate on the matter at hand. “It is a time when it can be seen what we really are; when we do not put on appearances to deceive others” (Barnes). While the ungodly revel in the night shadows, the righteous maintain faithfulness and invite Deity to examine their actions. But the investigation deepens. It is said, “thou hast tried me, and findest nothing.” The word used for “tried” (*tzaraph*) means to melt, to smelt, etc. It described metals being heated to separate the pure metal from the dross. And what was the result in David’s life? There was “nothing” that was amiss. Does this mean that David was sinless? Absolutely not. The context is simply suggesting that there was nothing in David’s life that justified the treatment that he was receiving from those who were mistreating him. The tense denotes that even if the investigation were continued, God would find nothing in his heart or in his conduct that would warrant their treatment of him. David had the settled determination that he would not do wrong to them in any respect whatsoever, regardless of how they might treat him. Here was a pledge to faithfulness based upon his past and projected into the future. There is nothing haughty about making the statement that we are determined to remain faithful to our Lord. In view of his faithful determination, David went on to declare, “I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.” Much evil has proceeded from the mouth. This small member of the body manifests what is in the heart. David purposed that he would refrain his tongue from evil. A bridled tongue is the sign of a controlled self (James 3:1-10).

**17:4:** This is an affirmation of faithfulness to the law of God on the part of David. It is significant that escape from the “ways of the violent” can only be found by giving heed to God’s law. The meaning

seems to be that, with regard to the sinful conduct of men and the wicked course they pursue, the Psalmist declares that he has guarded his conduct so that he has not fallen into the sins in which they participate.

**17:5:** There is a continued declaration of innocence. The writer affirms that he has “held fast to thy paths,” and that in perseverance his “feet have not slipped” - all of this in the midst of extreme hardship. The true test of Christian character comes during the trials of life: “A candle is not easily kept alight when many envious mouths are puffing at it” (Spurgeon).

### **Protection of the Righteous Verses 6-9**

- 6 *I have called upon thee, for thou wilt answer me, O God: Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.*  
7 *Show thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them that take refuge in thee From those that rise up against them.*  
8 *Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,*  
9 *From the wicked that oppress me, My deadly enemies, that compass me about.*

**17:6:** As at other times, the Psalmist simply beseeches answer to prayer. The request to “incline thine ear unto me” is emphatic. It is proper, when we are tempted to seek revenge, to pray that God would keep us strong. The key to overcoming sin is to keep the avenues of communication open to heaven. This the Psalmist had done in the past, and would continue to do in the future; thus the request that God would “incline thine ear unto me and hear my speech.”

**17:7:** The literal translation here would be, “distinguish thy favors” (Barnes). The Hebrew means to “separate; to distinguish,” leading Barnes to conclude, “The prayer is, that God would separate his mercies on this occasion from his ordinary mercies by the manifestation of greater powers, or by showing him special favor” (Barnes).

**17:8:** The eye is one of the most precious members of the body. Special concern is shown when any danger presents itself that might rob one of his sight. In like manner the Psalmist is asking God that

He protect him, that Jehovah might give special attention to him at this particular moment, as one might take measures to protect the eye. The Hebrew (*'ishon*) means properly, “a little man,” and means the pupil of the eye. Barnes points out that the words make reference to that part of man “In which, as a mirror, a person sees his own image reflected in miniature” (Barnes).

The “*shadow of thy wings*” is simply a place of protection; much like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings in times of danger.

**17:9:** We get a glimpse into the magnitude of the danger facing the Psalmist. There was evidently intent on the part of the enemy to take David’s life. “David’s enemies sought nothing less than the absolute destruction and death of the Psalmist” (Coffman, page 113). These enemies surrounded him in the much the same way that an army besieges a city.

### **Persecution of the Righteous Verses 10-12**

*10 They are inclosed in their own fat: With their mouth they speak proudly.*

*11 They have now compassed us in our steps; They set their eyes to cast us down to the earth.*

*12 He is like a lion that is greedy of his prey, And as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.*

**17:10:** The idea seems to be that the enemies were prosperous, and consequently they were very arrogant and haughty. Similar language can be seen in Deuteronomy 32:15; Job 15:27; Psalms 73:7 and Psalms 119:70. Pride filled their hearts and was manifested in their speech. “The old proverb says that full bellies make empty skulls, and it is yet more true that they frequently make empty hearts” (Spurgeon).

**17:11:** The use of the plural “us” suggests that the Psalmist was not alone. Barnes has noted that the marginal rendering could as easily be singular. In either case the meaning is not substantially affected. It is taught in scripture that Satan’s battle is not toward one, but the WHOLE of God’s people. The refusal of Mordecai to bow before Haaman turned that wicked man’s anger upon all the Jews.

“*set their eyes....*” The enemy looked intently and directly at their object. They would not allow their eyes to wander from their goal.

“They pursue us as hunters tracking a wild beast” (Coffman, page 114).

*“cast me down to the earth....”* The KJV renders this, “they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth.” Barnes suggests that a more literal rendering would be, “They have fixed their eyes to lay me prostrate upon the ground.” This would be in harmony with the context, and in agreement with the Hebrew word (*‘natah’*) which means to bow, to depress, and “thus to make the shoulder bend downwards” (Barnes). The enemy has so fixed their eyes upon him as to completely overwhelm him.

**17:12:** *“greedy of his prey”* - The Hebrew has the idea of longing after, or greatly desiring. This enemy of which the Psalmist spoke longed to destroy him.

*“lurking in secret places”* - The allusion is to a lion crouching, or lying in wait for a favorable opportunity to pounce upon his prey.

### **Promise of the Righteous Verses 13-15**

13 *Arise, O Jehovah, Confront him, cast him down: Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword;*

14 *From men by thy hand, O Jehovah, From men of the world, whose portion is in this life, And whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure: They are satisfied with children, And leave the rest of their substance to their babes.*

15 *As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with beholding thy form.*

**17:13:** *“Confront him”* is translated “disappoint him” in the KJV. The word in the original “means to anticipate, to go before, to prevent; and the prayer here is that God would come before his enemies; that is, that he would cast himself in their way before they should reach him” (Barnes).

*“by thy sword”* is preferred to the KJV, *“which is thy sword.”* The Chaldee Paraphrase renders this, “Deliver my soul from the wicked man, who deserves to be slain with thy sword.” David left the judgment and vengeance to the Almighty. It was HIS sword upon which David depended for the destruction of his enemy.

We see in this verse the control that God has even over His enemies.

It remains true that God and one man make a majority.

**17:14:** *“by thy hand”* refers to the instrument of deliverance. The enemy is described as

- (1) *“men of the world”* - The enemy consisted of men who lived their lives based upon the philosophy of the world.
- (2) *“whose portion is in this life”* - Such men are governed wholly by this world’s principles, and who seek to obtain what this world has to offer in contrast to those whose portion is the Lord.
- (3) *“whose belly thou fillest with thy treasure”* - God makes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust. The very things that God has given unto men in the form of physical blessings, these men had used to fill their own belly. This stands in contrast to the Christian’s responsibility to labor with his hands that he may be able to give to those in need (Ephesians 4:28).
- (4) *“They are satisfied with their children”* - This rendering is rough, and the idea is better expressed by the marginal reading: “Their children are full.” They have enough to satisfy the wants of their children.
- (5) They *“leave the rest of their substance to their babes”* - These wicked prosper so as to leave a substantial part to their children in the form of an inheritance.

One of the age-old questions is why God allows the wicked to prosper as they do. The Psalmist does not seek to answer that question (at least not here), but to provide a contrast between himself and those who place their trust and confidence in material things.

**17:15:** How dramatic these three words, *“As for me.”* Joshua presented the challenge for men to CHOOSE whom they would serve, but *“as for me and my house we will serve Jehovah”* (Joshua 24:15).

*“I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake”* - This is a most definite reference to the general resurrection of mankind at the termination of this earth’s existence. That David was NOT speaking of awaking from sleep and somehow observing God’s face is abundantly clear from the very context of the Psalm.

### ***Lessons***

First, the Psalm is a prayer, and many valuable lessons can be

learned about prayer. We are to bring our PETITIONS unto God, for He will answer. We are to pray confidently, nothing doubting.

Second, “Righteousness of life gives confidence in prayer” (Deaver, page 53).

Third, only God can provide equitable justice.

Fourth, the words of God are the only safe and reliable guide for our lives, and escape from the “ways of the violent” are for those who walk therein.

Fifth, it is out of the heart that the abundance of the mouth speaks (verse 10).

Finally, we must never forget that vengeance belongs to God, and He will recompense.

## *“God Will Deliver In Times of Trouble”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm has the superscription “A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul.” Spurgeon quotes George Gilfillan:

It appears to many besides us, one of the most magnificent lyrical raptures in the Scriptures. As if the poet had dipped his pen in ‘the brightness of that light which was before his eyes,’ so he describes the descending God...Perhaps the great charm of the eighteenth, apart from the poetry of the descent, is the exquisite and subtle alternation of the ‘I’ and the ‘Thou.’ It has been ingeniously argued, that the existence of the ‘I’ suggests, inevitably as a polar opposite, the thought of the ‘Thou,’ that the personality of man proves thus the personality of God; but, be this as it may, David’s perception of that personality is nowhere so intense as here. He seems not only to see, but to feel and touch, the object of his gratitude and worship (Spurgeon).

A parallel passage is found in 2 Samuel 22:1 ff, so there is no doubt whatsoever that David did indeed write the Psalm. It was probably composed at a somewhat advanced period of the life of David, likely among the last of his compositions. Thus in the book of Samuel it is placed immediately preceding a chapter which professes to record “the last words of David” when the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, an event which occurred only at a comparatively late period of his life.

What we have here is a song of a grateful heart overwhelmed with a retrospect of the manifold and marvelous mercies of God. “It should be observed that the words of this song were not composed with the view of gratifying the taste of men, but were spoken unto Jehovah...That praise is little worth which is not directed solely and heartily to the Lord” (Spurgeon).

## ***Analysis***

“It is a song of victory, and is beyond doubt the most sublime ode that was ever composed on such an occasion” (Barnes). We also see in this Psalm a wonderful foreshadow of the sufferings and the deliverance of our Lord. The Psalm has been variously divided. We suggest the following:

- I. Praise, 1-3;
- II. Peril, 4-5;
- III. Protection, 6-19;
- IV. Purity, 20-30;
- V. Power, 31-45;
- VI. Praise, 46-50.

An alternate outline from my original notes on this Psalm divided the chapter into (1) Introduction, setting forth all that Jehovah is to David, verses 1-3; (2) The record of David’s sufferings and peril, and the mighty power by which he was delivered, verses 4-19; (3) The reason for this deliverance, verses 20-30; (4) The blessings which David received in his life, verses 31-45; and (5) Joyful thanksgiving and acknowledgment of all God’s mercies, verses 46-50.

## ***Commentary***

### **Praise Verses 1-3**

- 1 *I love thee, O Jehovah, my strength.*
- 2 *Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; My God, my rock, in whom I will take refuge; My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower.*
- 3 *I will call upon Jehovah, who is worthy to be praised: So shall I be saved from mine enemies.*

**18:1:** The first section of the Psalm deals with praise. It is an acknowledgment and thanks to God (verses 1-3). Certain nouns are used to describe the power of God and His providential care for David. David begins by expressing his love for God. The word “love” translates the Hebrew *‘racham’* which signifies love “with all the tender feelings of nature” (Clarke). That love grew out of a recognition of all that God had done for him. Love would have been natural. David then uses several words to describe exactly WHY he loved Jehovah.



**18:2:** The various terms used by David express a number of traits of God. Consider the following:

*“My strength”* - God had given him power over his enemies.

*“My rock”* - He is David’s foundation; from God derive all the blessings of life; the Hebrew word *‘sela’* signifies those craggy precipices which afford shelter to men and wild animals. “Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm of ” (Spurgeon).

*“My fortress”* – A place of strength and safety. David most likely was referring to those inaccessible heights in the rocky, mountainous country of Judea where he had often found refuge from Saul. What those rocks were to his physical safety, God was to his soul.

*“My deliverer”* - The One who causes me to escape. When surrounded, Jehovah made a way of escape. So it is with man and sin; when tempted, God will provide a means of escape. It is essential, however, that when the way is open, man must act upon the opportunity.

*“My God”* - The word here is *‘Eli’* as the One who puts strength in the soul. There is great comfort in these words. The blessings that we enjoy come in knowing God in a personal and intimate relationship.

*“My rock”* - The word is different than that translated with the same English word in the first part of this verse. Clarke points out that *‘tsur,’* when applied to God, signifies fountain, source, origin, et al. God is our rock, our strength, because He is an inexhaustible fountain of goodness. Clarke also suggests that “this fine idea is lost in our translation; for we render two Hebrew words of widely different meaning, by the same term in English” (Clarke).

*“My shield”* - The *‘maginni’* or shield to protect us from the darts of the enemy. Paul describes our “shield” as the “faith,” the definite article actually preceding the word “faith” (Eph. 6:16). It is the word of God which serves as our shield. This is not to deny the fact that God is our shield, for He is the very One Who gave us the words to serve as the shield against the fiery darts of Satan.

*“The horn of salvation”* means a powerful salvation. The allusion is to the horns of animals which are used in defense and offense as well.

*“My high tower”* - Any battle field commander will seek to gain high ground, or to build some tower, so as to be able to see the enemy as he approaches. Trust and confidence in God will enable us to see the enemy before he attacks. It has been said that to know the enemy is to defeat him. Paul encouraged familiarity with the

devices of the devil, “that no advantage may be gained over us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). God is still our High Tower.

God will provide adequate protection if we will but obey His will and walk in the path of righteousness. What a wonderful God we serve!

**18:3:** In view of the marvelous strength that one can derive from the Almighty, is it any wonder that David would thus call upon Him? What value would there be in having a refuge in which to flee, and then refuse to use it when the enemy approached? Barnes points out that the text more literally means “Him who is to be praised I will call upon, Jehovah.” The cause and effect is noted. When one calls upon the Lord, he will then, and only then, be saved from his enemy.

### **Peril, Verses 4-5**

- 4 *The cords of death compassed me, And the floods of ungodliness made me afraid.*  
5 *The cords of Sheol were round about me; The snares of death came upon me.*

**18:4:** These two verses provide a description of the dangers from which the Psalmist had been rescued, appropriately entitled “Peril.” We agree with Spurgeon: “the Messiah our Saviour is evidently, over and beyond David or any other believer, the man and chief subject of this song; and while studying it we have grown more and more sure that every line here has its deepest and profoundest fulfillment in Him” (Spurgeon).

The dangers David faced must have been life threatening, and multitudinous in their number. As a result David had become fearful. The word translated “ungodliness” is *‘Belial’* and it means “without profit or use” (Barnes). The word came to mean someone who was worthless to society, “low vulgar, useless to mankind” (Barnes).

The word “floods” is suggestive of a great multitude of these vulgar men coming upon the Psalmist as if a flood had overwhelmed him. As a result of such threatening, David was fearful of losing his life. The repeated reference to death and the grave suggest that the possibility of loss of life must have been eminent. It was as if he were in a trap, as if death had a grip upon him. “*Sheol*” was the

common word for the grave, and though not limited to this usage that seems to be the meaning here. The KJV uses the word “prevented” but the word does not convey the meaning here. The ASV (quoted here) is the idea of death rushing upon the author and seizing him. Only in that sense could it be said that death “prevented” him in any way.

Spurgeon makes this observation regarding the peril in which David found himself: “According to the four metaphors which he employs, he was bound like a malefactor for execution; overwhelmed like a shipwrecked mariner; surrounded and standing at bay like a hunted stage; and captured in a net like a trembling bird” (Spurgeon).

### **Protection Verses 6-19**

- 6 *In my distress I called upon Jehovah, And cried unto my God: He heard my voice out of his temple, And my cry before him came into his ears.*
- 7 *Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations also of the mountains quaked And were shaken, because he was wroth.*
- 8 *There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, And fire out of his mouth devoured: Coals were kindled by it.*
- 9 *He bowed the heavens also, and came down; And thick darkness was under his feet.*
- 10 *And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; Yea, he soared upon the wings of the wind.*
- 11 *He made darkness his hiding-place, his pavilion round about him, Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.*
- 12 *At the brightness before him his thick clouds passed, Hailstones and coals of fire.*
- 13 *Jehovah also thundered in the heavens, And the Most High uttered his voice, Hailstones and coals of fire.*
- 14 *And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; Yea, lightnings manifold, and discomfited them.*
- 15 *Then the channels of waters appeared, And the foundations of the world were laid bare, At thy rebuke, O Jehovah, At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.*
- 16 *He sent from on high, he took me; He drew me out of many waters.*
- 17 *He delivered me from my strong enemy, And from them that hated me; For they were too mighty for me.*
- 18 *They came upon me in the day of my calamity; But Jehovah was my stay.*

19 *He brought me forth also into a large place; He delivered me, because he delighted in me.*

These verses contain some of the most beautiful language in all of the Old Testament regarding the power of God to deliver. The language is, of course, poetic, and must be interpreted in light of the style of language the writer is using.

**18:6:** *“In my distress...”* - All of God’s children have moments in their life when the trials and tribulations come crashing in upon them. While such occasions are not the ONLY times when we may call to God, they are certainly acceptable reasons for beseeching heaven’s aid. Man is little help in times of distress; our request for deliverance should always be directed toward Jehovah God. In this verse you have David’s cry. This is followed in verses 7 through 15 with a poetic description of God’s answer.

*“In my distress I called upon the Lord”* – David was not suggesting that he had neglected praying to God prior to his distress. He sought to emphasize rather that prayer played an essential role in his deliverance.

**18:7:** Concerning the next few verses Barnes noted:

The description which follows here is one of the most sublime that is to be found in any language. It is taken from the fury of the storm and tempest, when all the elements are in commotion; when God seems to go forth in the greatness of his majesty and the terror of his power, to prostrate everything before him. We are not to describe this as anything which literally occurred, but rather as expressive of the fact of the Divine interposition, as if he thus came forth in the greatness of his power” (Barnes).

Notice similar language in Psalms 144:5-7; 46:6-8; and chapter 29. Also see Job 37:21-24; Nahum 1:3; and Habakkuk 3:3-16. The language is hyperbolic, designed to express the power of God’s intervention in deliverance. Much of the language here is reflective of the marvelous power that God manifested in Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

Observe how the most solid and immovable things feel the force of supplication. Prayer has shaken houses, opened prison doors, and made stout hearts to quail. Prayer rings the alarm bell, and the Master of the house arises to the rescue, shaking all things beneath his tread (Spurgeon).

*“because he was wroth”* or *“because of his wrath”* (KJV). The contemplation of the wrath of God, unmixed of His mercy, should cause every man to tremble before the Almighty. Indeed, “How shall puny man be able to face it out with God when the very mountains quake with fear? Let not the boaster dream that his present false confidence will support him in the dread day of wrath” (Spurgeon).

**18:8:** Regarding verses 8-9, Barnes quotes Herder: “He inclines the canopy of the heavens, as it were, towards the earth; wraps himself in the darkness of night, and shoots forth his arrows; hurls abroad his lightnings, and wings them with speed” (Barnes).

*“Smoke out of his nostrils”* is an oriental way of expressing fierce wrath. It is important to note that the cause of God’s wrath was the mistreatment of His children. We recall that when Stephen was being stoned that his glimpse into heaven revealed Jesus “standing,” rather than sitting. It is to be noted that while God is not subject to the passions that often govern mankind He often uses anthropomorphic language suitable to human understanding.

**18:9:** *“He bowed the heavens also, and came down”* - Here the Psalmist describes God’s action. Special action was taken in response to David’s plea. It was not David’s wrath, but the wrath of God in view here. The enemy may have had their armament, but it is the prayer of a godly man that will bring victory. A trusting heart may, by enlisting divine aid, turn the tables on its enemies.

**18:10:** The *“cherubim”* were an order of angelic beings for service to God. They are first mentioned as guarding the gates of Paradise (Genesis 3:24). Ezekiel presents them as bearing the throne of God upon their wings through clouds (chapters 1 and 10). See also Exodus 25:18 and 1 Kings 6:23- 28. God is represented as “dwelling between the cherubim” (Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89; Psalms 80:1; 99:1). Barnes does not believe the cherubim were real, but rather merely “an imaginary representation of majesty, as emblematic of the power and glory of God” (Barnes). We prefer to accept them as angelic beings.

The imagery of this verse is one of the swiftness of God. In order for an army to be victorious they must be mobile, able to move from one point to another with the greatest of ease and in the least amount of time. The Psalmist is describing God’s wrath being poured out upon the enemy, and the final defeat is inescapable. God’s judgment is

sure, and it is swift.

**18:11-15:** The imagery in these verses is quite astonishing. In poetic language the writer sets forth the wrath of God against the hosts of wickedness. We see in this the complete and final defeat of David's enemies, as also the enemies of any and all of God's people at any time in the history of Israel. "If the 'blast of the breath of thy nostrils,' O Lord, be so terrible, what must thine arm be? Vain are the attempts of men to conceal anything from him whose word unbars the deep, and lifts the doors of earth from their hinges. Vain are all hopes of resistance, for a whisper of his voice makes the whole earth quail in abject terror" (Spurgeon).

**18:16-19:** These three verses conclude this particular section, and express the deliverance that the Psalmist experienced in answer to his prayer. Note the action of God: "*He sent...he took.... he drew... he delivered...he brought...he delivered.*" All of these manifestations of God's deliverance were from above. Barnes' comments are worth consideration:

David, valiant and bold as he was a warrior, was not ashamed, in the review of his life, to admit that he owed his preservation not to his own courage and skill in war, but to God; that his enemies were superior to himself in power and that if God had not interposed he would have been crushed and destroyed. No man dishonors himself by acknowledging that he owes his success in the world to the Divine interposition (Barnes).

**18:19:** "*because he delighted in me*" – One of the most astonishing traits of our God is the fact that He "delights" in us. The Psalmist earlier asked, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Why God should delight in us is a mystery. The very fact that He DOES delight in us ought to motivate us to deep adoration and appreciation for the God Who created this universe with the sound of His voice.

### **Purity** **Verses 20-30**

20 *Jehovah hath rewarded me according to my righteousness;  
According to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.*

21 *For I have kept the ways of Jehovah, And have not wickedly departed from my God.*

22 *For all his ordinances were before me, And I put not away his statutes from me.*

- 23 *I was also perfect with him, And I kept myself from mine iniquity.*  
 24 *Therefore hath Jehovah recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.*  
 25 *With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; With the perfect man thou wilt show thyself perfect;*  
 26 *With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; And with the perverse thou wilt show thyself froward.*  
 27 *For thou wilt save the afflicted people; But the haughty eyes thou wilt bring down.*  
 28 *For thou wilt light my lamp: Jehovah my God will lighten my darkness.*  
 29 *For by thee I run upon a troop; And by my God do I leap over a wall.*  
 30 *As for God, his way is perfect: The word of Jehovah is tried; He is a shield unto all them that take refuge in him.*

The deliverance that David received vindicated his character so as to show that his cause was just and right. We cannot help but see in these verses a prophetic glimpse of the Son of Man who was perfect in all His ways, tempted in all points as we, yet without sin.

**18:20-21:** The important thing to notice here are the words “*wickedly departed from my God.*” Rawlinson has this comment:

“I have kept the way of the Lord.” The parallel line here is, “And have not wickedly departed from my God.” “Departed wickedly” implies willful and persistent wickedness, an entire alienation from God. Not even in the humblest of the penitential psalms, in which David bewails his offenses against God, does he use such terms as “departed wickedly” concerning himself (Rawlinson, page 117).

Righteousness is not obtained in and of one’s own volition, as if he could merit his salvation, or in some way determine his own plan of salvation. One simply cannot merit salvation. But this is a far cry from suggesting that our actions and deeds “do not contribute one whit to our salvation,” as some are suggesting today.

**18:22:** “*For all his ordinances were before me, And I put not away his statutes from me*” - The NT equivalent of this verse is 1 John 3:9 where John wrote, “Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is begotten of God.” Though the child of God sins occasionally, his is not a life of high handed rebellion. Such “wicked departure” is the

result of failing to keep the word of God(the “seed,” His “ordinances”) before us at all times. It is only when men lay aside God’s word that sin can enter into the heart.

**18:23:** *“I kept myself from mine iniquity”* - The human aspect of salvation is set forth in this verse, as well as portions of the preceding. The reason why David was “perfect” with God was because he (David) KEPT himself separate from iniquity. He took the initiative to STAY AWAY from sin. Coffman has this note: “A fact not often stressed is that any Christian still in fellowship with the Lord may say ANYTHING that the Psalmist here has said of himself. How so? ‘That I may present every man PERFECT in Christ’ (Colossians 1:28). Perhaps we should be a little more eager in our stress of this magnificent truth” (Coffman, page 125).

**18:24:** One of the Divine principles of judgment is that all men will be judged “according to” their deeds. This is plainly set forth in passages like Romans 2:6-11; 2 Corinthians 5:10, and Acts 17:30-31.

**18:25:** *“With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful”* - It is a curious thing that mankind will perceive of God in precisely the manner of life that the individual chooses to live. The eternal truth here is that “God deals with men according to their character; he will adapt his providential dealings to the conduct of men” (Barnes). If one chooses to live in rebellion to God’s word, he will perceive of God as harsh, overbearing, and unwilling to grant only the best for His children. The one-talent man was lazy and slothful. Consequently, he perceived of the master as a “hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter” (Matt. 25:24). Those who are themselves “merciful, perfect and pure,” will perceive of their God as possessing exactly the same characteristics. But the “perverse” will see God as being “froward.” The word “perverse” comes from *‘ikkaish,* and means “a man of a perverse and wicked mind” (Barnes). To such a one God would show himself “froward,” a word that means “to twist, to be crafty, deceitful.” It is not that God would ASSUME such a character, but that this is the way the wicked man PERCEIVES God to be. “As if he had said that their obstinacy and stubbornness would make him on his part forget his accustomed forbearance and gentleness, and cast himself recklessly or at random against them” (Spurgeon).

We should also note that even the merciful need mercy, and our Lord promised that such would be the reward of those who showed mercy unto others. See Matthew 5:7.



**18:27:** The NT equivalent of this passage is James 4:6-10. God will resist the proud and haughty.

**18:28:** God is our light. He dispels the darkness. Coffman suggests that “God’s lighting his lamp is a reference to the constant enlightenment available to the faithful in God’s word” (Coffman, page 126). Life’s pathway is fraught with dangerous obstacles. When men reject the word of God, they stumble over those things in the dark, to their own destruction. To the righteous, however, the path is lit, and the darkness has been dispelled. How grateful we should be that God has promised, and providentially provided, light to provide guidance to us as we travel life’s pathway.

**18:29:** David likely refers here to the wars that he had fought and the number of times that he had been victorious over the enemy. He attributes those victories to the power of God.

**18:30:** This verse would naturally lead into a description of God’s dealings with the Psalmist, and some have grouped verse 30 with the following section. But it seems to us that this verse serves as a fitting conclusion to the verses previous. Why could David declare his innocence as he did? For the simple reason that he maintained loyalty to the word of God, a guide that is “perfect” and “tried.” Indeed, God’s word is tested and true. It has survived all of the onslaught of the skeptics and has come forth victorious. Barnes has this:

It is settled that it will survive all the revolutions of kingdoms and all the changes of dynasties; that it will be able to meet all the attacks which shall be made upon it by its enemies; and that it will be an unfailing source of light and comfort to all future ages. If persecution could crush it, it would have been crushed long ago; if ridicule could drive it from the world, it would have been driven away long ago; if argument, as urged by powerful intellect, and by learning, combined with intense hatred, could easily destroy it, it would have been destroyed long ago; and if it is not fitted to impart consolation to the afflicted, to wipe away the tears of mourners, and to uphold the soul in death, that would have been demonstrated long ago (Barnes).

Examination of the word shows us that, indeed, it has been tried. God’s word has passed every test, and trial that has come its way. “The doctrines are glorious, the precepts are pure, the promises are faithful, and the whole revelation is superlatively full of grace and

truth” (Spurgeon).

**Power**  
**Verses 31-45**

- 31 *For who is God, save Jehovah? And who is a rock, besides our God,*  
32 *The God that girdeth me with strength, And maketh my way perfect?*  
33 *He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet: And setteth me upon my high places.*  
34 *He teacheth my hands to war; So that mine arms do bend a bow of brass.*  
35 *Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation; And thy right hand hath holden me up, And thy gentleness hath made me great.*  
36 *Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, And my feet have not slipped.*  
37 *I will pursue mine enemies, and overtake them; Neither will I turn again till they are consumed.*  
38 *I will smite them through, so that they shall not be able to rise: They shall fall under my feet.*  
39 *For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: Thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.*  
40 *Thou hast also made mine enemies turn their backs unto me, That I might cut off them that hate me.*  
41 *They cried, but there was none to save; Even unto Jehovah, but he answered them not.*  
42 *Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind; I did cast them out as the mire of the streets.*  
43 *Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; Thou hast made me the head of the nations: A people whom I have not known shall serve me.*  
44 *As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me; The foreigners shall submit themselves unto me.*  
45 *The foreigners shall fade away, And shall come trembling out of their close places.*

These verses are a recapitulation of God’s deliverance. The Psalmist challenges his audience to find another “god” as great as Jehovah. Truly there is none likened unto our God. The Psalmist zeroes in on the saving power of God. The same trait of Jehovah shines clearly throughout the New Testament.

**18:31:** Indeed, who else creates, sustains, foresees, and overrules as does Jehovah God? Who but He is perfect in every attribute, and glorious in every act? No other being has manifested the power, the wisdom, and the goodness which belong to our God.

*“For who is God save the Lord?”* - Here first in the Psalms, occurs the name *Eloah*, rendered *God*. It occurs more than *fifty* times in the Scriptures, but only *four* times in the Psalms. It is the singular of *Elohim*. Many have supposed that this name specially refers to God as an object of religious worship. That idea may well be prominent in this place.

Indeed, *“Who is a rock save our God?”* There is no one who can provide safety for the troubled soul as can Jehovah God. In times of trouble, sorrow, sickness and setbacks, men desire to pray to God. Bibles are opened and the help of Jehovah is sought.

**18:32:** In this verse David thanks God for the armor with which he has been girded. It is God, and God alone, Who provides the necessary protection from our enemies. We have been given the spiritual armor necessary to repel the darts of Satan and engage the battle under the leadership of Jesus our Captain. See Ephesians 6:10 ff. The word *girdeth* contains an allusion to the mode of dress among the Orientals, the long flowing robe, which was girded up when they ran or labored, that it might not impede them. The robe which we wear is one of strength, provided by God. As a result, it is said that “he maketh my way perfect,” providing success in our undertakings.

**18:33:** In his pursuit of the enemy, David likened his swiftness as unto that of a young roe. Rather than placing his confidence and pleasure in the strength of men, he ascribes his success to the Lord alone (Cf. Habakkuk 3:19). “The ‘hind’ is the female deer, remarkable for fleetness or swiftness. The meaning here is, that God had made him alert or active, enabling him to pursue a flying enemy, or to escape from a swift-running enemy” (Barnes).

As a result, the Psalmist says that God *“setteth me upon my high places.”* Barnes points out that “swiftness of foot, or ability to escape from, or to pursue an enemy, was regarded as of great value in ancient warfare” (Barnes). Coffman shares this interesting anecdote: “We remember the report of how an old Holiness preacher interpreted this verse. He reads it as follows: ‘He setting my feet like *hen’s* feet.’ ‘Now,’ he said, ‘We all know that a hen has four toes,

three in front and one behind; so that when she is going up a steep, slippery hill, that toe on the back keeps her from slipping back! This, of course, illustrates the fact that we cannot fall from God's grace. God has given us feet like a hen's feet, so we can't slip backwards" (Coffman, page 127). But the Psalmist writer did not say "hen's feet," but "hind's feet." And even if

**18:34:** The Psalmist says that it was God who "teacheth my hands to war." The Holy Spirit was his drill sergeant. When we lay up the word of God in our hearts, the bows of Satan will be broken and the fiery darts of the wicked one will miss their mark, falling harmlessly to the ground.

**18:35:** *"thy right hand hath holden me up"* -- The enemy did not understand the source of the Psalmist's strength. The "right hand of God" suggests not only power, but close fellowship with the Father.

*"thy gentleness hath made me great"* - Notice the varying renderings in the ASV, RSV, etc. David ascribes his greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in heaven. Whatever greatness God may grant us in this life, we must recognize that His power is that which saves and lifts us up to stand with Him and with Jesus in heavenly places.

**18:36:** Life's crises call for stability. Anyone who has ever attempted to walk on ice or muddy ground realizes the value of a steady and sure footing. God enlarged the Psalmist's steps so he could stand firm. David attributed his firm stand to God, not himself. "Instead of threading the narrow mountain paths, and hiding in the cracks and corners of caverns, he was able to traverse the plains and dwell under his own vine and fig tree...To stand upon the rocks of affliction is the result of gracious upholding, but that aid is quite as much needed in the luxurious plains of prosperity" (Spurgeon). Barnes points out that the Hebrew word rendered "*feet*" (and so rendered in the margin) means "a joint; small joint; especially the ankle" (Barnes). The meaning would be that the Psalmist was able to walk firmly, without a limp. "The Divine favour given to him was as if God had given strength to a lame man to walk firmly" (Barnes).

**18:37-40:** The interesting thing about these verses is the victory of which the Psalmist was confident. His past experiences were projected into the future. He was confident that they would not rise again. Their fall was final and complete.

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

*William Cowper, 1731–1800.*

**18:41:** In the moment of defeat, the enemy cried out for mercy, but none was granted. They may have even called out to God or mercy and deliverance. But God does not hear the prayers of the wicked. They may call upon Him, but “*he answered them not.*” In their time of despair there was “*none to save.*” How utterly frustrating that in the time of need there is no help available. But oh what strength there is in prayer for the child of God; for him who fears God. “Prayer is so notable a weapon that even the wicked will take to it in their fits of desperation... There are prayers to God which are no better than blasphemy, which bring no comfortable reply, but rather provoke the Lord to greater wrath...How much less will Jehovah regard the cruel desires of the enemies of the church, who dare to offer their prayers for its destruction calling its existence schism, and its doctrine heresy” (Spurgeon). Coffman sees in this verse a reference to the final judgment when men shall cry for the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them, but all in vain.

**18:42:** As the fine dust is driven by the wind, so the enemies fled before the Psalmist. “The idea in the place before us is, that he *poured them out*, for so the Hebrew word means, as the dirt or mire in the streets. As that is trodden on, or trampled down, so they, instead of being marshaled for battle, were wholly disorganized, scattered, and left to be trodden down, as the most worthless object is” (Barnes). The same kind of language is used in Isaiah 10:6.

**18:43:** There is no way these words can apply to David, except in a very limited sense. David subdued the Philistines, Moab, Syria, and Edom, but the language seems to be more universal than could apply to these few countries that David brought into subjection. He was never made the “*head of the heathen,*” barely maintaining control of his own kingdom. We agree with Spurgeon that “surely there is far more of Jesus than of David here” (Spurgeon).

**18:44:** There are some who, upon hearing the Gospel for the first time, embrace it with hearty thanksgiving. We experienced something akin to this in the mid 90's while doing mission work in Russia and Ukraine. Those precious souls who had endured more than 70 years of darkness were anxious and ready to accept and obey the Gospel.

*"shall submit themselves unto me"* - Barnes had this significant note regarding this passage: "The Hebrew word here used - '*chah-hash*' - means properly *to lie*, to speak lies; then to feign, to flatter, to play the hypocrite. It is manifestly used in this sense here, as referring to those who, awed by the terror of his name and power, would come and profess subjection to him as a conqueror" (Barnes). Yes, there are a large number of the enemies of God who have feigned submission to Him in the name of tradition or denominational dogmas, but who have not truly submitted.

**18:45:** The precise meaning of this verse is not certain. Spurgeon had two comments: "Out of their mountain fastnesses the heathen crept in fear to own allegiance to Israel's king, and even so, from the castles of self-confidence and the dens of carnal security, poor sinners come bending before the Saviour, Christ the Lord...This with remembrances of conquests in the past, and with glad anticipations of victories yet to come the sweet singer closes the description, and returns to exercise of more direct adoration of his gracious God" (Spurgeon).

### **Praise** **Verses 46-50**

- 46 *Jehovah liveth; And blessed be my rock; And exalted be the God of my salvation,*  
47 *Even the God that executeth vengeance for me, And subdueth peoples under me.*  
48 *He rescueth me from mine enemies; Yea, thou liftest me up above them that rise up against me; Thou deliverest me from the violent man.*  
49 *Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah, among the nations, And will sing praises unto thy name.*  
50 *Great deliverance giveth he to his king, And showeth lovingkindness to his anointed, To David and to his seed, for evermore.*

**18:46:** God lives, and He is our Rock. These two character traits of

the Almighty God are the significant things in this verse. God is often described as the living God in contradistinction to idols, which are pictured as having no value and without life. Honours *die*, pleasures *die*, the world *dies*; but ‘*The Lord liveth*’ (Spurgeon). Refer also to Deuteronomy 5:26, Joshua 3:10, 2 Kings 14:4, Psalms 42:2, Matthew 16:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 for example of passages speaking of the “living God.” “We should publish abroad the story of the covenant and the cross, the Father’s election, the Son’s redemption, and the Spirit’s regeneration. He who rescues us from deserved ruin should be very dear to us. In heaven they sing, ‘Unto him that loved us and washed us in his blood;’ the like music should be common in the assemblies of the saints below” (Spurgeon).

**18:47:** God has declared that He will render vengeance to evil doers. It is not our place to do so. God is the only One Who can know all the circumstances and render equitable justice.

**18:48:** It is comforting to know that God will rescue us from our enemies.

**18:49:** “I admire King David a great deal more when I see him in the choir than when I see him in the camp; when I see him singing as the sweet singer of Israel, than when I see him fighting as the worthy warrior of Israel. For fighting with others he did overcome all others; but singing, and delighting himself, he did overcome himself.—*Thomas Playfere*” (Spurgeon).

**18:50:** “This is the winding-up verse into which the writer throws a fullness of expression, indicating the most rapturous delight of gratitude” (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. God is strength only to those who make him their strength.
2. God is going to recompense - notice Gal 6:7-9, 2 Thess 1:7-8, etc.
3. To fight against God’s chosen is to fight against God Himself.
4. It seems that the main scope of the Psalm is to set forth David’s thankfulness for all his victories. We should be thankful when we are victorious over our enemies. How many times have we bowed in deep appreciation for our victory over sin through Jesus Christ our Lord?
5. “Fundamental Message: If the King is properly concerned about God and His will, God will abundantly bless the King and his people. God is the only right ruler of man. He intends that

earthly rulers be instruments in His hand” (Deaver, page 159).

6. Love of God is a definite decision arising from one’s will to do what is right (verse 1).
7. God is our refuge, rock, fortress, deliverer, strength, buckler, horn of our salvation, and our high tower. All such terms express the absolute dependability of our God and the reward of those who place their trust in Him.
8. Fear, in and of itself, is not wrong. It is how men react to fear that determines whether or not they are pleasing in the sight of God (verse 4).
9. God answers the cries of His children when they are in distress. He responds forcefully, quickly, and powerfully (verses 6-17).
10. God will reward us according to our individual response to His commands. Righteousness, cleanliness of hands, and obedience to His will are essential elements involved in appropriation of Divine blessings (verses 20-23);
11. God is our source of spiritual light in a world of darkness (verse 28).
12. With God on our side, no man can defeat us (verses 36-39).



## *“God’s Marvelous Two-Fold Revelation”*

### **Introduction**

The subtitle (uninspired) attributes the Psalm to David, and there is no reason to doubt this. The language is certainly that of David. There is nothing in the Psalm itself to suggest the time of the writing.

### ***Analysis***

Spurgeon has called this Psalm the “world book” and the “Word book,” and noted that “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’” (Spurgeon). The Psalm naturally divides itself at verse 7. The first six verses address evidences for the existence of God. The message is clear and universal. There is a God in heaven! The second half of the Psalm (verses 7-14) speaks of God’s word: its value, and its need in the lives of every human being. Thus, in the Psalm we have God’s marvelous two-fold revelation to man:

- I. The revelation of God in his works (verses 1-6).
  1. The heavens declare the existence of a Maker (verse 1).
  2. As each day and each night passes, this declaration of a Divine Creator is evident (verse 2).
  3. This declaration of God’s existence can be seen in every place that man exists (verse 3).
  4. This design extends throughout the world, thus this “voice” of testimony extends to the end of the world (verse 4).
  5. An illustration: the sun, set in its place, is majestic in its sunrise and sunset, and its influence is felt in all places (verses 5-6).
- II. The higher and more glorious revelation of Himself in His law (verses 7-11).
  1. Characteristics and accomplishments of the word (verses 7-9).
  2. The great value of the word of God (verse 11).
- III. The bearing of these truths on the present character and conduct of the author, and on others (verses 12-14).

1. It warns men of the nature, extent, and depth of sin, and thereby keeps them from transgression (verse 12).
2. It leads men to pray earnestly that they might be kept from sin, whether secret or presumptuous (verse 13).
3. It leads men to pray for acceptance in the sight of God (verse 14).

## **Commentary**

### ***“God’s Revelation in Nature”***

#### **Verses 1-6**

- 1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament showeth his handiwork.*
- 2 *Day unto day uttereth speech, And night unto night showeth knowledge.*
- 3 *There is no speech nor language; Their voice is not heard.*
- 4 *Their line is gone out through all the earth, And their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,*
- 5 *Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, And rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course.*
- 6 *His going forth is from the end of the heavens, And his circuit unto the ends of it; And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*

**19:1:** *“The heavens”* - Why the plural? Barnes suggests that “the original idea may have been that there was one heaven above another - one in which the sun was placed, another in which the moon was placed, then the planets, the fixed stars, etc. Above all was supposed to be the place where God dwells” (Barnes). A more reasonable suggestion would be (1) the heavens wherein the sun, moon, and planets are placed, (2) the immediate heavens consisting of the sky and clouds wherein the birds fly, and (3) the spiritual realm wherein God resides. The first two of these, visible to the human eye, would serve as witness to the existence of a Creator. God is arguing that design demands a designer.

*“glory”* – God’s wisdom, power, skill, and compassion are but a few of the attributes which constitute the glory of God. Of particular emphasis would be his POWER. The heavens provide us with a strong argument for an intelligent, controlling, and governing God.

*“handiwork”* - All things are the result of God’s design and purpose. “For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things

is God” (Heb. 3:4).

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 that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him. He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down as atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar” (Spurgeon).

In what way do the “heavens declare the glory of God”? Just a sampling would include the following:

- (1) The sheer vastness of the universe in which we live. As Coffman noted, “there are not merely trillions of heavenly bodies, but trillions of trillions of them; no man, however learned, has ever declared to guess just how many there actually may be” (Coffman, page 134).
- (2) The orderliness of the heavenly bodies declares that there is a Designer. This entire solar system travels through space at incredible speed, yet operating according to precise and predictable laws.
- (3) The visible beauty of the heavenly bodies. Who has sat under the starry skies on a clear evening and viewed the constellations without being impressed with their magnificent beauty?
- (4) There is the uniqueness of this earth itself when compared with the other planets of this solar system. Coffman calls attention to the very existence of water, and asks, “Why is there no water anywhere else in the universe?” (Coffman, page 135).

**19:2:** *“day unto day...night unto night”* - As each day and each night passes, the aforementioned declaration of a Divine Creator is evident. Each day passes along, leaving the evidence that there is a God in heaven. It is “as though the contemplation of the starry firmament awakened deeper, more spiritual, thoughts than the brightness of day” (Rawlinson, page 129).

*“uttereth speech”* – This is personification. The message of God’s physical universe is not in words. God is not giving some sort of a speech. But the message is just as clear as if it were shouted from the rooftops. Someone has said that if every blade of grass, and every leaf had the name of God engraved thereupon, the evidence would not be any greater for the existence of a God. Indeed, the passing of every day “showeth knowledge.”

**19:3:** *“There is no speech nor language”* - Some would suggest that

this verse continues the argument set forth in the previous verse. Thus “without these” (that is, without voice or speech) the message is just as powerful. But we are convinced that there is actually an additional argument set forth, namely, that wherever man is found (wherever speech or language exists), then these “voices” are heard. Barnes agreed: “There is no nation, there are no men, whatever may be their language, to whom the heavens do not speak, declaring the greatness and glory of God” (Barnes). The KJV inserts the word “where,” reading “There is no speech nor language WHERE their voice is not heard.” This is precisely what the Psalmist was arguing. “There are no men anywhere on earth, regardless of what language they use, who are beyond the reach of what the heavens are continually saying in the ears of all men” (Coffman, page 135). It is astonishing that anyone would fail to hear this voice crying forth from heaven. And why do they not hear? Is it not possible that “such deafness could be due to man’s having ‘Stopped their ears with the clay of earthly appetites and occupations, or stuffed them with scientific wadding of the most modern kind’ (Coffman, page 134). ‘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’ (Spurgeon).

**19:4:** *“line”* - The Hebrew word means (1) a measuring line, such as in Ezekiel 47:3; (2) a cord or string as of a lyre or other instrument of music; and hence, a sound. We think that herein lies the understanding of this verse. Their “voice” (of verse 3) is now referred to as a musical sound. The “sounds” conveying instruction of verse 2 and 3 are here connected with the idea of sweet or musical sounds. The analogy is like that of a well coordinated orchestra. The movements of the heavens are smooth, well orchestrated, and orderly in their movement. This can be observed “through all the earth” and “to the end of the world” (verse 4).

*“in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun”* - This actually begins an illustration of the “visible” nature of this evidence of God. The “sun” would seem to be the more prominent and more visible body. Casual observance would suggest that the sun is “set” in the heavens, as one might sit in a tabernacle. Of interest here is the fact that the “sun” is indeed the center of our physical universe.

**19:5:** *“as a bridegroom..”* - Barnes concluded: “The allusion is to the bright, joyful, and cheerful aspect of the rising sun. The image of the bridegroom is employed because we associate with a bridegroom

the idea of hilarity, cheerfulness, joy” (Barnes). This serves as yet another illustration of visibility of the evidence. There is yet one more illustration to be employed.

*“as a strong man..”* - As the sun moves through the universe, it is like a strong man running a race. The orderly movement of the sun through its yearly cycle is evidence that design demands a designer. “No other creature yields such joy to the earth as her bridegroom the sun; and none, whether they be horse or eagle, can for an instant compare in swiftness with that heavenly champion” (Spurgeon).

**19:6:** *“his going forth”* - From one end of the heaven to the other, the sun makes its “circuit” on an orderly basis.

*“nothing hid from the heat thereof”* - Barnes: “It is not a mere march for show and splendor; it is not an idle and useless journey in the heavens; but all things feel the effect of his vital warmth and are animated by his quickening influence” (Barnes). The whole of the illustration of the sun is used to emphasize the overwhelming natural evidence that is available to prove the existence of a Divine Creator. All men KNOW beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is a sun in the heavens. If they cannot see it, they can feel it. The conclusion of the author is forceful. To deny the existence of a God in heaven is just as foolish as denying that there is a sun in the skies above.

### ***“God’s Revelation In The Word”*** **Verses 7-11**

- 7 The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul: The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple.*
- 8 The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes.*
- 9 The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever: The ordinances of Jehovah are true, and righteous altogether.*
- 10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb.*
- 11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: In keeping them there is great reward.*

**19:7:** One cannot help but notice the change in the Psalm beginning with verse 7. Do we have two separate Psalms here? Hardly! There is great beauty and harmony between the parts of this Psalm. As Rawlinson noted, “It is the law and order that pervade the material universe which constitute its main glory; and the analogy between

God's physical laws and his moral laws is fully evident, and generally admitted" (Rawlinson, page 129).

Beginning with this verse and extending through verse ten, there follow SIX descriptive phrases of the Word of God. These terms have reference "to some distinct view of the truths themselves, or of their effect on the soul" (Barnes). The term is given describing the truth itself, an adjective describing that term used for truth, then followed by the effects of each corresponding term upon the soul. A quick overview reveals the following:

<b><u>The Term</u></b>	<b><u>Adjective</u></b>	<b><u>Effect</u></b>
"law"	"perfect"	"converts the soul"
"testimony"	"sure"	"makes wise the simple"
"statutes"	"right"	"rejoicing the heart"
"commandment"	"pure"	"enlightening the eyes"
"fear"	"clean"	"enduring forever"
"judgments"	"true and righteous"	"thy servant is warned"

*"law"* - The word used here properly means instruction, or precept, from a verb signifying to teach. The "law" then, is that means by which man comes to KNOW the very basics of spiritual matters. All that we know about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, heaven, etc. comes from God's divine revelation. This, then, introduces the next major section of the Psalm, that of the "revelation" through communication, i.e. the revealed word. Barnes says that "it is thus applied to all that God has communicated to guide mankind" (Barnes). It refers here to "revealed truth" as distinguished from the truth made known by creation.

*"perfect"* - The meaning is that it lacks nothing with regard to its completeness. As a body of truth, the word of God is complete as a rule of conduct. It might be argued that when this was written that the New Testament had not yet been given, thus the body of truth was not complete. To this we would respond that (1) the principle is here set forth; (2) that insofar as CONDUCT is concerned, the principles of behavior for a godly life ARE contained within the Old Testament. There is no greater body of moral regulations than those given in the law of Moses; (3) It was not the argument of the author to present the completion of the present amount of law, but the capability of the law when applied to the soul. It is still true that "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" (Spurgeon).

*“converting the soul”* - God’s word turns the soul from the ways of sin to the way of holiness. By placing this first, it may have been the Psalmist’s intent to suggest that this is, in fact, the primary design of God’s revelation to man. It should be noted that it is not truth revealed by science which converts men, but truth revealed by God that addresses the needs of the spiritual man!

*“testimony”* – The idea is that the word of God is that to which God bears witness. There seems to be an imagery of a courtroom setting wherein God is the witness with regard to the truth. He bears witness to the reliability of the truth, and substantiates it with evidence, such as that mentioned in verses 1-6. But what about the “testimony” of God? What about such witness? Is it reliable?

*“sure”* - It is established, firm. It is not unsettled, vacillating, or uncertain. “It is so well established that it cannot be shaken” (Barnes). This entails the whole realm of evidences and apologetics, a study too lengthy to include here. Coffman has pointed out that “a single sentence of it outweighs the opinions of a thousand of the most learned men who ever lived. The word of God has withstood the unrelenting attacks of Satan for thousands of years; but every single word of it is not merely intact; it is still believed, trusted, and accepted as truth by millions of devoted people” (Coffman, page 137-138). What great comfort to know that in a world where so much is uncertain, that we have something so absolutely sure that we can rest upon it.

*“making wise the simple”* - The imagery is continued. You and I are members of the jury. It is the responsibility of the Witness to convince the jury of the reliability and truthfulness of His claims. In that fashion, He “makes known” what He thus knows, and convinces the jury of the truth. Those who are “simple” are “inexperienced.” The testimony of God with regard to the truths He sets forth are so convincing and so plain as to make the “inexperienced” understand that truth.

**19:8:** *“precepts”* (ASV) or *“statutes”* (KJV) are mandates, precepts, or rules given to any one to guide them. There are certain “rules” that we must live by; certain guidelines that we cannot cross over. It is precisely at this point that so many in the world balk at God’s instructions. They do not want any rules restricting their freedom. They want to “break their bonds,” and “cast away their cords” (Psalms 2:3). It is important to note here the distinction between the “statutes” and commandments. The “statutes” are those laws

regulating life in general, thus producing a happy and contented existence upon this earth. The “commandments” on the other hand (same verse) would seem to point to those commands that, at least in our mind, have no connection to the blessings attached. Wherein, for example, is the logical and reasonable connection between forgiveness and cleansing from sin and the act of being buried in water for remission of sins? We do this for no other reason than the fact that it is a command of God (Mark 16:15-16).

*“are right”* - That is, these precepts or statutes are just and proper. They are not the mere result of arbitrary appointment. The idea seems to be that God has not given us rules just for the sake of giving us rules. These rules are designed to give greater enjoyment to life, so that we “might live long upon the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3). Just as the physician gives the “right” medicine, and the counselor gives the “right” advice, so the word of God provides us with ALL that is right. When genuinely and sincerely applied, the heart rejoices.

*“rejoicing the heart”* - Keeping of the laws of God produces a happy and contented life, as proven by thousands through the centuries.

*“commandment”* - The emphasis seems to be upon those laws that are right, for the simple reason that they are ordered by God. It is a term that often applies to the laws of God in regard to the Temple and sacrifices. It appears that the Psalmist is speaking about “positive laws” as opposed to “moral laws.” Moral laws are those laws that regulate behavior in society, producing orderliness and peace in a social sense. The “commandments,” on the other hand, are those laws that are “positive.” That is, they are to be obeyed JUST because God said to obey them. Laws pertaining to those conditions that are necessary for one to enter into the Kingdom of God would be included here. As is the case with parents in offering guidance to their children, an “explanation” for parental action is not always appreciated by the child due to his immaturity and lack of experience. Our heavenly Father has given direction to our lives which include “commandments” which we may never appreciate this side of heaven.

*“pure”* - Free from stain; free from imperfection; free from any corrupt tendency. “No mixture of error defiles it, no stain of sin pollutes it; it is the unadulterated milk, the undiluted wine” (Spurgeon).

*“enlightening the eyes”* - There is some connection between the



“positive” commands under consideration and the enlightenment of the eyes, or mind as the case may be. It may be said that one is not “enlightened” in the true sense of the word until he studies God’s word. “Whether the eye be dim with sorrow or with sin, the Scripture is a skillful oculist, and makes the eye clear and bright” (Spurgeon).

Notice the progression in this verse: He who was CONVERTED was then made WISE, and consequently HAPPY! Truth will first make the heart RIGHT and then provide JOY to the soul!

**19:9:** “*fear of the Lord*” - Kept in context, it would seem that in some way the “fear” here mentioned has some connection with the word of God. The Hebrew means fear or terror. But it also means “reverence” (cf. Psalms 2:11). By metonymy it would mean any PRECEPT OF PIETY. It would refer to the revealed truth in the sense that it promotes proper reverence for God. Hence, the truth of God’s word is described by its effect, namely proper fear of the Lord. Abundant are the passages which describe God’s power, omniscience, and omnipotence, and when contemplated, will produce a deep sense of reverence for God.

“*is clean*” – This means properly clean, or clear, as opposed to soiled (physically), or that which is profane (ceremonially), or pure (morally speaking). There is nothing in the word of God that would in any way lend itself to the breakdown of morals. If one will compare this characteristic with the many spiritual “revelations” today, he will find that many of them promote immoral behavior. The word of God, on the other hand, in speaking of the holiness of God, strikes awe on the part of the follower of God. But that fear is not the product of IMMORAL precepts, but of CLEAN, HOLY, and PURE precepts.

“*enduring forever*” - It stands firm now, and it will stand firm forever. The idea is that we can count on it. It will not change with the passing of time, nor will it prove inconsistent or unreliable.

“*judgments*” are those things determined to be right and true. There are some things that are best for man. God in his wisdom knows what these things are more so than man, just as a parent knows what is right for his child so much more than the child.

“*are true*” - The marginal note suggests the word “truth.” In other words, these things are a correct representation of the reality of

things. They are the very embodiment of truth. And it is precisely because they ARE TRUE, that they appear in Holy Scripture.

*“And righteous altogether”* - As a whole, and individually, God’s judgments are righteous. There is not a part of these “judgments” of God which would fall into the realm of things unrighteous. By the keeping of the things revealed herein, one is classified as “righteous” before God, and considered blameless in His Holy eyes.

**19:10:** *“more to be desired”* - The value of the words of God are here set forth. Two items are then presented to illustrate the value of God’s word.

*“gold...fine gold”* - That precious metal for which men labor has been recognized universally as something of value. Men will rob for it, sacrifice for it, labor for it, yea even give their lives in pursuit for it. But of much greater value is the word of God. “As spiritual treasure is more noble than mere material wealth, so should it be desired and sought with greater eagerness. Men speak of solid gold, but what is so solid as solid truth? For love of gold pleasure is forsworn, ease renounced, and life endangered; shall we not be ready to do as much for love of truth? ” (Spurgeon).

*“honey and the honeycomb”* - The marginal reading in the ASV for “honeycomb” is “dropping of honeycombs.” The allusion is to honey that oozes out of the honeycomb and drops, void of the bee bread and wax. That which naturally flows from the honeycomb will be pure. “The truth of God is more grateful to the heart, or affords more pleasure to the soul, than that which is esteemed as the highest luxury to the palate. It is loved; it is pleasant; it is agreeable; it is not regarded merely as necessary, and admitted to the soul because it is needful, as medicine is, but it is received into the soul because it is delighted in, or is more agreeable and pleasant than the most luscious article of food is to the taste” (Barnes).

Coffman has observed: “Walking in the statutes and ordinances of the Lord makes a noble and beautiful person in the sight of God and man; but gold never had any such ability; but on the other hand has betrayed some who either had it or sought it into the most shameful deeds, disastrous both to its owners and to others” (Coffman, page 139).

**19:11:** *“by them is thy servant warned”* – God’s word sheds light on something so as to make it plain, revealing the consequences and

blessings that are derived there from (Cf. Leviticus 15:31; Ezekiel 3:18; and 2 Kings 6:10). Men are prone to fall into error. They need to be “warned.” The Psalmist found certain joy in receiving just such a warning. How opposite the rank and file of men who would suppress the truth, hide from it, and ignore it. “On the sea of life there would be many more wrecks, if it were not for the divine storm-signals which give to the watchful a timely warning” (Spurgeon).

*“in keeping them there is great reward”* - The blessings that come from application of these laws and commandments to one’s life provide great reward not only in this life, but in eternity.

**19:12:** *“who can discern his errors”* - It would appear that the Psalmist had one of two thoughts in mind. (1) Separate and apart from the law, no man is able to see the error of his ways. Only through a knowledge of the law can one come to understand what sin is, and the magnitude of sin. Notice in this connection Romans 7:6-8. (2) The extent of man’s sins, though known to him, cannot be numbered. Man knows the law. He recognizes that he has broken the law. Those violations are so numerous that no man can discern or number them. The first explanation seems to be the more reasonable. The second part of this verse seems to lead to this conclusion. The word makes known sin, and apart from that law, man cannot “discern” or come to a knowledge of that sin. But as perfect as the law is, man is weak, and even in his study of the law, it may be that there is some sin in his life of which he is unaware. Thus the Psalmist asks that God cleanse or clear him from those “hidden faults” that may be in his life; namely those sins of which one may not be aware or those things that might have been forgotten.

“He best knows himself who best knows the Word, but even such an one will be in a maze of wonder as to what he does not know, rather than on the mount of congratulation as to what he does know” (Spurgeon).

**19:13:** The *“presumptuous sins”* are sins of pride. The Hebrew means that which is “boiling, swelling, inflated; then proud, arrogant” (Barnes). Included in this class of sins is the willful sin, engaged in upon the supposition that God either does not see, or He does not care. Here are sins which proceed from self confidence. It is of interest that such “sins” can “have dominion over” the individual. He can be brought into bondage, becoming a servant to pride. This particular sin is, in fact, one of the most deadly of all

sins. It will blind a man to his own shortcomings; it will cause him to look down on others with a sense of arrogance and superiority. In the final end, it separates man from his God.

*“Then shall I be clean...upright...clear from great transgression”* - The state of uprightness is the result of the absence from all sin, not just the sin of pride. It would appear that the Psalmist is simply saying that when an individual has come to a knowledge of his sin through the word of God, sought forgiveness of his secret sins, and been purged of pride and arrogance, then and only then is he said to be clean and upright. The “great transgression” would appear to be any sin that might beset the individual. Each wrestles with his peculiar weaknesses and shortcomings. To each man, at any given time, wrestling with his particular sin that threatens his spiritual well being, THAT is the great transgression.

**19:14:** This verse has been memorized by many a Saint and sung in the worship services of the Lord’s church. “This last verse echoes the theme of the poem: the outward word and the inward meditation (coming from the contemplation of the heavens) of the Psalmist” (Coffman, page 141).

*“the meditation of my heart”* – It is the meditations of the heart that produce either faithfulness or sins. The abundance of the heart is manifest in the way and manner the mouth speaks. The Psalmist prays that his heart would be right, and that the words of his mouth would be acceptable in the sight of God. It is important to realize that the words of our mouth which pour forth praise unto our Creator are mere mockery if the heart does not meditate upon the words which He speaks to us.

## ***Lessons***

First, God has made Himself known to man. This He has done by the order and design of the universe around us, and more specifically, through His inspired word. When man rejects heaven’s revelation, he stands condemned, without excuse for his foolish and arrogant denial of those things that obviously appear.

Second, the Word of God is able to make us complete, furnished unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).

Third, this Psalm begins with a contemplation of God’s marvelous works, and closes with a contemplation of God’s redemptive work.

Both glorify the Father. Together they provide us with abundant evidence of our Creator's existence and His marvelous power.

## *“Trust In Jehovah”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David, and there is no reason to doubt that he wrote it. It would seem from the Psalm that it was composed on some occasion when the king was about to go to war, and that it was designed to be used by the people and the king to express their confidence in God and in one another. “The particular occasion which suggested it, it would be mere folly to conjecture, for Israel was almost always at war in David’s day. His sword may have been hacked, but it was never rusted” (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

Morgan points out that there is a close connection between this Psalm and the one that follows. While this one is a prayer of the people on behalf of the king, the later is a song of victory. The Psalm may be divided into three strophes, or parts.

- I. The First Strophe (1-5)
  - 1. The People (1-4);
  - 2. The King (5a);
- II. The Second Strophe (5b-6)
  - 1. The People (5b);
  - 2. The King (6);
- III. General Chorus of All (7-9).

It would appear that the intent of the Psalmist was this Psalm be used by the people and the king in alternate responses. It closes with a type of chorus in which all join in. The first five verses would be sung in chorus and express the consciousness of the supreme need in the day of trouble. The enemy had gathered, the battle was at hand. The first part of the next verse is a solo. The voice of the king is heard announcing his confidence in Jehovah. The people immediately take up the chorus in the second half of verse 5. To this the king responds with a confident affirmation that goodness shall follow. The Psalm ends with the grand chorus of all.

## Commentary

### The First Strophe: The People Verses 1-4

- 1 *Jehovah answer thee in the day of trouble; The name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high;*
- 2 *Send thee help from the sanctuary, And strengthen thee out of Zion;*
- 3 *Remember all thy offerings, And accept thy burnt-sacrifice; Selah*
- 4 *Grant thee thy heart's desire, And fulfil all thy counsel.*

**20:1:** The people, in recognition of the battle that their king is about to embark upon, wish him God's protection and providence. The "*name of the God of Jacob*" is another way of referring to God. "There may be much in a royal name, or a learned name, or a venerable name, but it will be a theme for heavenly scholarship to discover all that is contained in the divine name" (Spurgeon). The desire on the part of the people was that God would set the king on high. This could refer to (1) the physical advantage that he would gain over his enemy, or (2) the honor he would receive from the victory. The later seems the more probable.

The name, '*God of Jacob*,' is suggestive of God's relationship to the patriarch. Jacob had his day of trouble, he wrestled, he was heard, and he was defended by God. In due time he was exalted.

*"In the day of trouble"* - Every child of God will have his "day of trouble" (2 Tim. 3:12). It is still true that every child of God must "through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

**20:2:** The "*sanctuary*" and "*Zion*" designate the dwelling place of Jehovah. There is no help quite like that which our God can offer and no deliverance like that which comes out of his sanctuary. The reference here to Zion suggests that the Psalm is pre-exilic since the temple was still standing.

**20:3:** The word for "*offerings*" means a thank offering, while the "burnt-sacrifice" has reference to the bloody animal sacrifice used to make atonement for sin. Clarke points out that the burnt sacrifice "implied a consciousness of sin in the offerer" while the "other implied a sense of mercies already received and was offered in the way of gratitude" (Adam Clarke). The sacrifice was offered before

the king would engage in war.

The word “accept” has some interesting and significant implications. The ASV marginal note renders “accept as fat” and is the proper meaning of the Hebrew word ‘*dashain*’ (Barnes). It would mean “to be fat or satisfied, or abundantly satisfied, Prov xiii.4” (Barnes). The Psalmist desired that God would regard his sacrifice as favorable, accept it, and bless him with victory. Do not lose sight of the abundant satisfaction that is inherent in the word.

**20:4:** We have selected to include this verse among those things spoken by the people. While we admit that the ‘*Selah*’ suggests a break in thought, it would appear that we have a continuation of the refrain of verses 1-3. Here is a request that “Jehovah” might “answer thee” [the king], and “send thee help...strengthen thee...remember thy offerings...accept thy burnt sacrifice...[and] Grant thee thy heart’s desire.”

*“all thy counsel”* – The people were desirous that the king’s plans be carried out. As soldiers in the Lord’s army, our request should be that the “counsel” of our King Jesus be fulfilled. This begins with a determination that we will keep the commandments of Jesus.

### **The First Strophe: The King Verse 5a**

*5 We will triumph in thy salvation, And in the name of our God we will set up our banners:*

**20:5:** Most agree that at least the first part of this verse belongs to the king. It is an expression of confidence that he would be delivered. While Clarke sees the entire verse as belonging to the king, it would appear that the second half is similar to the previous section and is more properly the response of the people. It should be noticed that the king did not place his trust in chariots or military might. Instead, he declared that the victory would be accomplished “in the name of our God.” It was through the strength of the Almighty that the “banner” would be erected. The “banner” was the flag that was raised following victory over the enemy, something that is still practiced today.

### **The Second Strophe: The People Verse 20:5b**



5 ... *Jehovah fulfil all thy petitions.*

To this promise the people respond. They, like the king, place their trust in Jehovah, and express their desire that Jehovah fulfill all the petitions of the king. Spurgeon's comments were encouraging:

The people in this Psalm, before their king went to battle, felt sure of victory, and therefore began to rejoice beforehand; how much more ought we to do this who have seen the victory completely won! Unbelief begins weeping for the funeral before the man is dead; why should not faith commence piping before the dance of victory begins? Buds are beautiful, and promises not yet fulfilled are worthy to be admired (Spurgeon).

### **The Second Strophe: The King**

**20:6**

6 *Now know I that Jehovah saveth his anointed; He will answer him from his holy heaven With the saving strength of his right hand.*

**20:6:** If we are correct that these are the words of the king, the meaning seems easily discernible. The words express the king's confidence in delivering and protecting His people. But his confidence came as a result of submission to God, and a willingness to increase knowledge and Godly fear.

"*Now I know*" shows that the Psalmist was ever ready to learn. Something "unknown" previously was now "known" unto him. Spiritual growth includes increase in wisdom and knowledge. The man who thinks he knows all there is to know is to be pitied. Such a one will miss the joy of learning new truth and rob himself of eternal life.

The "*right hand*" of God is figurative language and it describes the mighty power of Jehovah.

### **General Chorus of All**

**Verses 20:7-9**

7 *Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God.*

8 *They are bowed down and fallen; But we are risen, and stand upright.*

9 *Save, Jehovah: Let the King answer us when we call.*

**20:7:** The “*chariot*” was one of the most dependable pieces of battle machinery and “these constituted a main reliance in determining the result of a battle” (Barnes). The power of a nation’s army was determined by her “chariots” and “horses.” The most dreaded piece of armament that an enemy might possess was the war-chariot. It could mow men down like grass. While the heathen trusted in their chariots, David would trust in his God. Military might makes a great show, but in the final analysis military might has never saved a nation. It is still true that “righteousness exalteth a nation” (Pro 14:34). Had “chariots and horses” been adequate to save, Rome would never have fallen. Our politicians have lost sight of this truth. Our own nation continues to increase armament with which to protect from invasion while internally we ignore the very enemy that will destroy us. Until America places her trust in the “name of Jehovah” she will continue to go down, down, down.

Many an army equipped with the most advanced weapons of the day has fallen before far inferior forces, because it was the will of God. Biblical examples of this are the armies of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and that of Sennacherib before the walls of Jerusalem, which “melted like snow in the glance of the Lord,” as stated in Byron’s immortal poem (Coffman, page 147).

**20:8:** “*They are bowed down and fallen*” - Those who trust in their chariots and horses are doomed for defeat. The language is in the past tense, implying that the outcome is so certain that it is spoken of as if it had already occurred. “Confident of the results, the speaker represents it as already achieved. He sees the enemy bowed down to the earth, and fallen; he sees the host of Israel erect and triumphant” (Rawlinson, page 140). The language is prophetic. The word for “bowed down” (*chara*) means to bend or to bow, and it refers to one who has been subdued before an enemy. On the other hand, those who trust in God will stand before their enemies. Instead of falling or being subdued, the victors will stand “upright.”

**20:9:** “*Save Jehovah*” - The confidence of victory issues forth in a call for God to now answer their request. There is no doubt that God WILL answer, and that the enemy will be defeated. May our prayer ever be that God will “answer us when we call.” This He has promised. We cannot doubt His graciousness and willingness to fulfill that promise for His saints.

## ***Lessons***

1. The Psalm suggests Divine assistance for God's children. We should never hesitate to seek God's strength and protection. We ask for wisdom (James 1:5); we should ask for protection.
2. God grants the desires we have so long as they are in accordance with His will. Notice James 4:3 in this connection.
3. We can win the battle so long as we remember that we are dependent upon God.
4. We are assured of the victory even before the battle starts. Notice in this connection verse 6, and Romans 8:35-39.
5. True strength is not in the military power of a nation, but in their relationship to God (verse 7).
6. We should pray for those in positions of authority (verse 9). Notice 1 Timothy 2:1-2.
7. The man who trusts in God will be blessed; but the man who does not trust in God, but rather places his confidence in "chariots" and "horses," will be lost eternally.

## *“The Song of Victory”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David and, again, there is no reason to doubt this. The time and occasion of the Psalm is not known. It might be pointed out, however, that Psalm 20 and 21 are closely connected. While chapter 20 is the request on the part of the king for victory, chapter 21 is thanksgiving for deliverance and victory. Psalm twenty anticipates what this regards as realized. “Psalm 20 constitutes an intercession for Jehovah’s help, while Psalm 21 is an expression of gratitude for that help” (Tom Warren, page 116). Notice 20:4 and 21:1-2 for this distinction. We will use the title, “The Song of Victory.”

There are overtones of Messianic prophecy in this marvelous chapter. Certain portions of this Psalm “cannot in the wildest employment of the imagination be ascribed to anyone else except the Messiah” (Coffman, page 160). In verse four reference is made to the King being granted life, and “length of days for ever and ever.” Such certainly did NOT apply to David, for he has died, and his tomb continues to contain the remains of that great man. Rawlinson has this note: “In the full sense, the promise was, of course, Messianic, being fulfilled only in Christ, the God-man, who alone of David’s posterity ‘liveth forever’” (Rawlinson, page 145).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalms has three divisions. Roy Deaver divides the Psalm into five parts. We will adapt his outline as follows:

- I. Thanksgiving for success, 1-7;
  1. Joy, 1-2;
  2. Reasons, 3-6;
  3. Explanation, 7.
- II. Assurance that all of the enemies of God would be overcome, 8-12;
- III. Doxology, 13.

Morgan summarized the Psalm, “The battle is over, the victory is won, and the assembled people sing the song of victory... They had prayed (20:4), the prayer had been answered and now they sing (21:2). They sang the song of victory because their trust was in the name of Jehovah (20:7-8). Victory has been won and now they celebrate it (21:7-12)” (Morgan, page 228).

## **Commentary**

### **Thanksgiving for Success**

#### **Verses 1-7**

- 1 *The king shall joy in thy strength, O Jehovah; And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!*
- 2 *Thou hast given him his heart's desire, And hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah*
- 3 *For thou meetest him with the blessings of goodness: Thou settest a crown of fine gold on his head.*
- 4 *He asked life of thee, thou gavest it him, Even length of days for ever and ever.*
- 5 *His glory is great in thy salvation: Honor and majesty dost thou lay upon him.*
- 6 *For thou makest him most blessed for ever: Thou makest him glad with joy in thy presence.*
- 7 *For the king trusteth in Jehovah; And through the lovingkindness of the Most High he shall not be moved.*

**21:1:** “*The king shall joy in thy strength*” - The “king” is king David, presented here in the 3rd person. It has been suggested that this verse contains the language of the people rather than the king, but it is not uncommon for the Psalmist to speak of himself in the 3rd person. Either way the point is that the king would rejoice because of the deliverance given. We must remind ourselves that “THE KING” finds its ultimate fulfillment only in the reign of the Messiah. Notice also that the Psalmist refers to THE King rather than A king. Indeed, Jesus is “King over minds and hearts, reigning with a dominion of love, before which all other rule is but mere brute force” (Spurgeon).

*“how greatly shall he rejoice”* - It would be to the king a constant rejoicing. “When we once have evidence that God has interposed to save us, it is accompanied with the confident anticipation that this will continue to be the source of our highest joy for ever” (Barnes).

**21:2:** *“Thou hast given his heart’s desire”* - God is anxious to grant unto us our requests. The specific requests under consideration are contained in Psalm 20. “He manifested that his heart longed to redeem his people, and now in heaven he has his desire granted him, for he sees his beloved coming to be with him where he is” (Spurgeon).

*“not withholden the request of his lips”* - Those things which were expressed in an audible fashion. Simply, those things for which he prayed. God answers prayer. How much have we robbed ourselves of tremendous blessings for no other reason than that of neglect. “Ye have not because ye ask not” (James 4:1-3). Our Lord presented His petitions before the Father’s throne. If the Psalm is prophetic of our Lord, then we only wonder how often Jesus prayed for the salvation of mankind; and, gratefully, that prayer was answered.

**21:3:** The KJV renders the first part of this verse as “thou preventest him with...” The word (*‘tekadenennu’*) actually means to proceed, or anticipate. If this be the meaning here, the Psalmist was simply pointing out that God knew, or anticipated, the good blessings. God knows before we ever ask those things which we desire, and certainly those things that are good for us. The “crown” referred to here does not refer to David’s original coronation, but either (1) the establishment of his power and kingship, or (2) the crown of the king of Rabbah, which David took and put on his own head. See 2 Sam. 12:26-30. In the deeper sense, our Lord was crowned with the greatest of all crowns, here fittingly represented by a “crown of fine gold.” “Jesus wore the thorn-crown but now wears the glory-crown...This crown is set upon his head most firmly, and whereas other monarchs find their diadems fitting loosely, his is fixed so that no power can move it, for Jehovah himself has set it upon his brow. Napoleon crowned himself, but Jehovah crowned the Lord Jesus; the empire of the one melted in an hour, but the other has an abiding dominion” (Spurgeon).

**21:4:** Going into battle necessarily implies danger of loss of life. It could apply as well to a time of sickness, or a danger of any kind. This verse has caused some commentators to see this as Hezekiah’s prayer for recovery from his sickness, but it is not unreasonable that David often prayed for life. How did God answer that prayer? David was given more than he asked. There is a Messianic implication here, in view of the fact that David, like those kings before and after him, died. The idea seems to be that there would be an indefinite continuation of his posterity upon the throne. That was and is

fulfilled with the reign of Christ.

**21:5:** David's victory on this particular occasion was not due to his own power and ability, but to the power and strength of Jehovah. David's "glory" was in the "salvation" granted by his God. So with the child of God today. Honor and majesty has been laid on every Christian in that (1) God has redeemed him, (2) the manner in which he was redeemed, (3) he has been adopted into the family of God, (4) he possesses the hope of eternal life beyond the grave. All of this is due to the "salvation" provided by God's grace. Clarke has these comments: "There is no true nobility but of the soul, and the soul has none but what it receives from the grace and salvation of God" (Adam Clarke).

**21:6:** The Messianic overtones are certainly discernible. Barnes points out that "the expression...as commonly understood would mean that God had made him happy or prosperous. This does not seem to be the sense of the original. The idea is, that he had made him a blessing to mankind or to the world" (Barnes). If this be the meaning here, it could only be fulfilled completely in the Christ. Barnes continues: "The word 'for ever' here undoubtedly, as it was used by the Spirit of inspiration, was designed to refer to the eternal blessings which would descend on mankind through the Messiah" (Barnes).

Quoting Kinder, Coffman makes this observation: "The true meaning of 'in thy presence' is explained by Hebrews 12:2. That passage states that 'Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.' There indeed is the REAL presence of God, which in fact is not actually anywhere else" (Coffman, page 153).

**21:7:** The blessings spoken of in this Psalm are the direct result of the Psalmist trusting in Jehovah. Consequently the Psalmist would be firmly established, immovable, firm. Notice that these extended blessings are the result of God's "lovingkindness." There is implied in this verse the appropriation of God's blessings through trust and obedience to the will of the Father.

There is a great deal of comfort derived from this verse. The blessings that we receive are the result of God's lovingkindness upon us. Knowing this, any reverses that we suffer in life, and whatever setbacks that we may experience with regard to temporal matters, are all in the hand of God.

Our Lord, like a true King and leader, was a master in the use of weapons, and could handle well the shield of faith, for he has set us a brilliant example of unwavering confidence in God. He felt himself safe in his Father's care until his hour was come, he knew that he was always heard in heaven; he committed his spirit into the same hands. The joy expressed in the former verses was the joy of faith, and the victory achieved was due to the same precious grace. A holy confidence in Jehovah is the true mother of victories. This Psalm of triumph was composed long before our Lord's conflict began, but faith overlaps the boundaries of time, and chants her 'To triumphe,' while yet she sings her battle song (Spurgeon).

### **Assurance That All Of The Enemies Of God Would Be Overcome Verses 8-12**

- 8 *Thy hand will find out all thine enemies; Thy right hand will find out those that hate thee.*
- 9 *Thou wilt make them as a fiery furnace in the time of thine anger: Jehovah will swallow them up in his wrath, And the fire shall devour them.*
- 10 *Their fruit wilt thou destroy from the earth, And their seed from among the children of men.*
- 11 *For they intended evil against thee; They conceived a device which they are not able to perform.*
- 12 *For thou wilt make them turn their back; Thou wilt make ready with thy bowstrings against their face.*

**21:8** - Beginning with this verse and extending through the 12th the Psalmist expresses his assurance that the enemies of God would of certainly be overthrown. None can hide, and any attempt to evade the all searching eye of the Almighty is vain. We can but conclude that there are overtones of the final judgment in this verse. Any attempt to hide from God is futile. "The finding out relates, we think, not only to the discovery of the hiding-places of the haters of God, but to the touching of them in their tenderest parts, so as to cause the severest suffering. When he appears to judge the world hard hearts will be subdued into terror, and proud spirits humbled into shame. He who has the key of human nature can touch all its springs at his will, and find out the means of bringing the utmost confusion and terror upon those who aforetime boastfully expressed their hatred of him" (Spurgeon).



**21:9:** Still contemplating judgment, the Psalmist expresses the wrath of God which the enemies will some day face. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. Contemplated here is the utter destruction of the enemy. They would be so completely destroyed AS IF they were consumed in a fiery furnace. The enemy would be swallowed up in God's wrath. There may be here an allusion to the destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in Numbers 16:32. In the final analysis, however, we have here a glimpse of the destruction of God's enemies in the fires of hell. "These are terrible words, and those teachers do not well who endeavor by their sophistical reasonings to weaken their force. Reader, never tolerate slight thoughts of hell, or you will soon have low thoughts of sin. The hell of sinners must be fearful beyond all conception, or such language as the present would not be used" (Spurgeon).

**21:10:** "Their fruit" is synonymous with "their seed," having reference to their children. This is an example of poetic parallelism in which the first and second part of the verse express the same idea, though in different words. Those attempting to usurp the throne would not be allowed to succeed. They, as well as their children, would be defeated by God. It is implied here that the children would suffer the CONSEQUENCES of the sins of their parents, though not the guilt of those sins. "The truth taught here is, that the wicked will ultimately be destroyed, and that God will obtain a complete triumph over them" (Barnes). "Doubtless the blessing of God is often handed down by the righteous to their sons, as almost a heirloom in the family, while the dying sinner bequeaths a curse to his descendants" (Spurgeon).

**21:11:** The best laid plans of mice and men ner' come to fruition. Though they INTENDED evil, they could not follow through on those plans, no matter how well devised. The absolute high handed rebellion of the enemy is seen in this verse. The enemy had "intended evil," and then carried out those intentions in well laid schemes which, the Psalmist noted, they were not able to perform. Barnes has noted that "if all the devices and the desires of the wicked were accomplished, righteousness would soon cease in the earth, religion and virtue would come to an end, and even God would cease to occupy the throne" (page 188). But God DOES overrule the wicked devices of men, and their wicked and evil schemes perish in the dust and ashes of their own foolishness. "Want of power is the clog on the foot of the haters of the Lord Jesus. They have the wickedness to imagine, and the cunning devise, and the malice to

plot mischief, but blessed by God, they fall in ability; yet they shall be judged as to their hearts, and the will shall be taken for the deed in the great day of account” (Spurgeon).

**21:12:** There are a number of occasions when God in His providence turned back the enemy of Israel with a most astonishing defeat. One cannot help but think of the utter destruction of the armies of Sennacherib, and his eventual death upon his return home (2 Kings 19). Oh what folly when men find themselves facing the bowstrings of the Almighty! “He would meet them as they seemed to be marching on to certain conquest, and would discomfit them” (Barnes).

### **Doxology**

#### **Verse 13**

*13 Be thou exalted, O Jehovah, in thy strength: So will we sing and praise thy power.*

**21:13:** To praise the power of God is the praise God. The ultimate defeat of God’s enemies will exonerate the Almighty and prove His word true.

### ***Lessons***

1. God answers prayer. Notice, “Thou hast given...and hast not withholden” (vs 2). Again, “he asked...thou gavest” (verse 4).
2. God will be victorious over His enemies. None shall be able to stand.

## *“The Psalm of the Cross”*

### ***Introduction***

We have borrowed the title for this Psalm from Charles Spurgeon. This Psalm could only have been written by David. Every attempt to rob the Psalm of its Davidic authorship falls under the simple observation of the prophetic nature of this Psalm. David was not writing of himself, but of the Messiah. Of this Psalm Spurgeon has noted that

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’ (Spurgeon).

It would seem that the New Testament references to this Psalm would carry some weight in interpreting the verses. There are at least nine references in the New Testament that connect this Psalm specifically to the crucifixion. Notice Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:24 along with Luke 23:34; Matthew 27:43 and 48; John 20:25 and Hebrews 2:12. Roy Deaver provides the following parallels between this Psalm and passages in the New Testament: (Deaver, page 73).

- 1) Verse 1 and Matthew 27:46;
- 2) Verse 6 and Matthew 27:39-44;
- 3) Verse 8 and Matthew 27:39, 43, Mark 15:29-30, and Luke 23:35;
- 4) Verse 16 and John 19:37;
- 5) Verse 17 and Luke 23:27 and 35;
- 6) Verse 18 and John 19:23-24;
- 7) Verse 22 and John 20:17, Romans 8:29 and Hebrews 2:12;
- 8) Verse 31 and John 19:30.

Coffman makes this interesting observation: “There is another important reason why Christ alone is depicted here. The words here are free of any consciousness whatever of sin; there is no hint of confessing wrongs; there is no call for vengeance against enemies,

only unfaltering trust and faith in God” (Coffman, page 159). What an astonishing Psalm we now have before us. Here is a “description of both the darkness and the glory of the cross, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow. We should read reverently, putting 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” (Spurgeon).

## ***Analysis***

The Psalm finds at least one major division between verses 21 and 22. Sub-divisions are somewhat more difficult. The Pulpit Commentary divides the Psalm into two portions, a “complaint and prayer of a sufferer (verses 1-21), and a song of rejoicing after deliverance (verses 22-31)...the first of these two portions is also itself divided into two parts (verses 1-10 and 12-21), which are linked together by a single ejaculatory verse (verse 11)” (Rawlinson, page 151). Roy Deaver sees basically the same division consisting of the “Needs” of the Suffering Servant (verses 1-21), and “Hopes” of the Suffering Servant (verses 22-31). With these thoughts in mind, we will divide the Psalm as follows:

- I. The CONDITION of the sufferer (verses 1-21);
- II. The CONSOLATION of the sufferer (verses 22-31).

## ***Commentary***

### ***The CONDITION of the sufferer Verses 1-21***

- 1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my groaning?*
- 2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou answerest not; And in the night season, and am not silent.*
- 3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.*
- 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: They trusted, and thou didst deliver them.*
- 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: They trusted in thee, and were not put to shame.*
- 6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised of the people.*
- 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,*
- 8 Commit thyself unto Jehovah; Let him deliver him: Let him rescue*

*him, seeing he delighteth in him.*

*9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb; Thou didst make me trust when I was upon my mother's breasts.*

*10 I was cast upon thee from the womb; Thou art my God since my mother bare me.*

*11 Be not far from me; For trouble is near; For there is none to help.*

*12 Many bulls have compassed me; Strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.*

*13 They gape upon me with their mouth, As a ravening and a roaring lion.*

*14 I am poured out like water, And all my bones are out of joint: My heart is like wax; It is melted within me.*

*15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd; And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; And thou hast brought me into the dust of death.*

*16 For dogs have compassed me: A company of evil-doers have inclosed me; They pierced my hands and my feet.*

*17 I may count all my bones; They look and stare upon me.*

*18 They part my garments among them, And upon my vesture do they cast lots.*

*19 But be not thou far off, O Jehovah: O thou my succor, haste thee to help me.*

*20 Deliver my soul from the sword, My darling from the power of the dog.*

*21 Save me from the lion's mouth; Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen thou hast answered me.*

**22:1:** The tone for this Psalm is set with this opening verse. The writer was in deep despair, being overwhelmed by his enemies. Deliverance eluded him; he thus cried out, asking why God had forsaken him. We may surmise that, at least for the moment, it would appear that God was not answering his prayers; God had removed Himself far from the Psalmist.

The question we must entertain is this: Was the Psalm written as a PROPHECY of the suffering of the Messiah, or did Jesus, while upon the cross, use this Psalm as His meditation, and thus quote heavily from it? The former seems the more likely, especially since a number of the things within the Psalm that the servant suffered were never, strictly speaking, applicable to David.

Twice the author cries out, "My God"! These very words were uttered by Christ while upon the cross. He had been forsaken by men, and now it seems as if God had forsaken Him as well. Often men turn to God when in despair. How assuring to know that,

although it may seem that God at times does not see our plight, He in fact will not abandon us (cf. Hebrews 13:5 ff).

Though the author seeks the answer, never does he lose sight of the faithfulness of God. Every word of the Psalmist's enquiry is worth noting: "WHY?" What is the cause of God leaving His own Son in such a time of need? "HAST"? The deed was done. "THOU"? God Himself! Betrayal by Judas and Peter may be understood, but to be abandoned by His Father was beyond comprehension. "FORSAKEN"? Chastening may have been accepted, but to forsake Him? Finally, "ME"? God's only begotten!

*"my groanings"* - This might suggest that the suffering had robbed him of his speech. He was so exhausted that his voice had grown hoarse.

**22:2:** His cry was incessant and constant. In the daytime he continued to pray. The night in the Garden had passed; He was now upon the cross. Yet his cry unto the Father continued.

*"But thou answerest not"* - At least it appeared as if there were no answer. If we might assume that this is prophetic of the cries of the Savior, most likely we have reference here to his prayer in the garden of Gethsemane the evening prior to His crucifixion, and during the day while upon the cross. Barnes pointed out: "If Christ experienced this, who may not?" (Barnes).

**22:3:** The Psalmist still had unwavering confidence in God. He recognized that Jehovah dwelt among his people and would not allow them to suffer defeat at the hands of the enemy. Despite the apparent forsaking of the Father, the suffering Savior still trusted in the absolute holiness of God. "If prayer be unanswered it is not because God is unfaithful, but for some other good and weighty reason" (Spurgeon). In spite of all our suffering, the reason for it must be interpreted in light of the holiness of God.

**22:4:** David based his confidence upon past action of God. The faithful had been delivered in the past. It would be natural to expect deliverance of the faithful in the future. This is a principle that will build faith and confidence in our God. He has always kept his promises. There is no reason to expect anything less today. The "key" to deliverance is, of course, the fact that they *"trusted."* Three times in two verses it is stated that they trusted. Here is faith manifested in action. Defeat of Israel at the hands of the enemy

occurred frequently when Israel disbelieved. The period of the Judges, and the Divided kingdom, demonstrate this truth. But whenever a child of God trusts, the deliverance was his. To “trust” in something is to be confident of its dependability, and to so act as to manifest that trust. We trust a bank with our money, believing it to be dependable, and thus deposit our earnings with the expectation that they will remain safe and secure.

**22:5:** *“They cried”* would suggest earnestness in their plea. As a result, they were *“not put to shame.”* Barnes noted that “when men put their trust in anything and are disappointed, they are conscious of a species of shame as if they had been foolish in relying on that which proved to be insufficient to help them; as if they had manifested a want of wisdom in not being more cautious, or in supposing that they could derive help from that which has proved to be fallacious” (Barnes). It is important to note here that God does not always follow man’s time-table. Israel suffered captivity in Egypt, and at times it must have seemed as if God had abandoned them. But God eventually fulfilled His promise, and deliverance was given. Jehovah was working on His own time-table here, and the Psalmist felt that he had been abandoned.

**22:6:** Spurgeon says that “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 man. What a contrast between ‘I Am’ and ‘I am a worm’ (Spurgeon). We must agree with Coffman, however, that “Jesus is not speaking here of his own estimate of his own true importance and worth, but of the estimate that his enemies have made concerning him, as proved by the second half of the verse” (Coffman, page 161). Compare with Isaiah 53:3.

**22:7:** We think Albert Barnes’ comments on this are worth passing along to our readers:

One of the most remarkable instances of blindness and infatuation that has ever occurred in the world, that the Jews should have used this language to taunt the dying Redeemer, without even suspecting that they were fulfilling the prophecies, and demonstrating at the very time when they were reviling him that he was indeed the Messiah (Barnes).

*“Let him deliver him: Let him rescue him”* - Here the taunting is aimed at the Savior’s faith in God. This particular mockery is mentioned because it is the most bitter of all. When we consider the

ridicule that our Savior received, how can we ever again complain about the trials we must suffer for our Lord?

**22:8:** *“Commit thyself unto Jehovah”* - The enemies of Jesus spoke words similar to this while Jesus hung on the cross: “He trusteth on God; let him deliver him now, if he desireth him: for he said, I am the Son of God,” Matthew 27:43. Although these very words spoken by the enemies of our Lord were intended as ridicule, they nevertheless expressed an undeniable truth. Indeed, God “delighteth” in the Christ. Cf. Matthew 3:17; 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17.

**22:9:** Here we get a prophetic glimpse of the birth and early childhood of the Messiah. He was born “in the fullness of time,” and reared under the law by godly parents (Gal. 4:4). “Though he were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). He was taught to “trust” in God from infancy. Early spiritual emphasis by godly parents will provide strength and faithfulness in the later years.

**22:10:** *“Cast upon thee”* - This suggests the complete dependence that David had in the Lord. While the words may be applicable to David, we still maintain that the Psalm is prophetic and finds its greater application in our Lord. When we consider His birth, the threats of Herod, the flight into Egypt and the safe return to Nazareth, one cannot help but see the protection of the Almighty with regard to Joseph, Mary and Jesus. Charles Spurgeon wrote:

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...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 (Spurgeon).

**22:11:** The double occurrence of the word “for” suggests that faith was giving “a double knock at mercy’s gate” (Spurgeon).

*“There is none to help”* - Those who WOULD have helped did not have it within their power to do so, and those who COULD have helped had no inclination to do so. His friends stood helpless about the cross. His enemies, though able to help, left Him to suffer and die. But He who is abandoned by men found solace in the Father. Our plea should ever be that of the Psalmist: “Be not far from me.” Those who draw near to God, have the promise that He will draw near to us. See Hebrews 7:25; James 4:8.



**22:12:** *“many bulls”* - The unholy men of the religious elite were nothing more than raging bulls seeking to destroy the Lord’s anointed. “Conceive of the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, cast into the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls” (Spurgeon). One can hardly imagine the vicious hatred that was manifested at the cross of Jesus by the very people who should have bowed with great reverence before the Messiah. The enemy had the fierceness and fury of bulls. Barnes notes that the “bulls of Bashan are here alluded to as remarkable for their size, their strength, and their fierceness; and are designed to represent men that were fierce, savage, and violent” (Barnes).

**22:13:** Literally they “opened their mouths against me.” “They could not vomit forth their anger fast enough through the ordinary aperture of their mouths, and therefore set the doors of their lips wide open like those who gape” (Spurgeon).

*“as a ravening and roaring lion”* - “The Hebrew word is to the lion as he tears his prey, rending it in pieces to devour it” (Barnes). God has delivered His saints from the mouth of the lion in the past, and can do so again, whether it be a literal lion or those embodied in the enemies of God.

**22:14:** The Psalmist now turns his attention toward the effect of all these outward persecutions that were coming upon him. Here is language that should bring tears to every loving eye. The picture of our Lord on the cross, even in this prophetic glimpse, is enough to move us to deep appreciation for His love for us.

*“Poured out like water”* - The idea is that all of his strength was gone. A similar expression is seen in Joshua 7:5, “The hearts of the people melted, and became as water.” When our Lord hung on the cross, He suffered physical and mental anguish that robbed Him of His strength. His whole being was made a sacrifice, like a libation poured out before Jehovah God.

*“my bones are out of joint”* - It is not inconceivable that the very joints of our Lord may have suffered damage when the cross was lifted and dropped into place. Even if this did not literally occur, the language expresses the great suffering of our Lord. The words describe the complete absence of power, the loss of strength; and as well, the complete dependence upon Jehovah God.

**22:15:** A “*potsherd*” is a fragment of a broken pot. So dry and fragile was the Psalmist’s strength that it would crumble easily.

*“my tongue cleaveth to my jaws”* - His mouth was dry. His tongue adhered to the roof of his mouth so that he could not use it. It was not uncommon for the victim of crucifixion to suffer extreme thirst. Among the last words that our Lord spoke from the cross were, “I thirst” (John 19:28). “Who can show that the Redeemer when on the cross may not in his own meditations have gone over these very expressions in the psalm as applicable to himself?” (Barnes).

**22:16:** Here is the picture of a hunter surrounding the prey with a ring of dogs, gradually closing in for the kill. And in the “center stand, not a panting stag, but a bleeding, fainting man, and around him are the enraged and unpitying wretches who have hounded him to his doom” (Spurgeon).

*“They pierced my hands and my feet”* - The word “pierced” has been questioned on the part of some. The Hebrew occurs only here and in Isaiah 38:13 where it means “as a lion.” But Barnes points out that the “verb (*kur*) properly means to dig, to bore through, to pierce” (Barnes). The prophetic nature of the verse is clear when we consider that this particular piercing occurred only in the hands and feet. The words could not be applied to David for there is no record of this ever having taken place. We agree with Barnes that “this must have had original reference to the Messiah” (Barnes).

**22:17:** *“I may tell all my bones”* or *“count all my bones”* (NASV). These words would denote the effect of our Lord’s protracted suffering and anxiety.

*“They look and stare”* - Not His bones, but the enemies. This would be in accord with Isaiah 53:2-3 and 52:14. Matthew tells us, “they sat and watched him there” (27:36). “The indifference and oblivious insensibility of his executioners to the magnitude of the deed in which they were incidental participants staggers the imagination. This is a fair example of the attitude of all men who live and die as if Christ had not died for their sins” (Coffman, page 177). No doubt these soldiers were stationed there to guard the body and prevent someone from attempting to remove Jesus (and others) from the cross. But at the foot of that cross, those who hated Jesus, and those who were simply “doing their duty,” stared upon our Lord. It was not uncommon for a victim of crucifixion to be stripped of His clothing, and hung naked in the presence of all who might have

attended the execution. This added to the shame and humiliation of the one suffering on the cross. “Let us blush for human nature and mourn in sympathy with our Redeemer’s shame. The first Adam made us all naked, and therefore the second Adam became naked that he might clothe our naked souls” (Spurgeon).

**22:18:** *“They part my garments”* - This is the FACT of what occurred at our Lord’s death. The manner was that they “cast lots upon my vesture.” This was literally fulfilled at our Lord’s crucifixion. “He who gave his blood to cleanse us gave his garments to clothe us” (Spurgeon). One should note the plural reference to the garments, and the singular reference to the “vesture.” “By remarkable circumstances which no human sagacity could have foreseen or anticipated, there occurred a general division of a portion of his raiment, without an appeal to the lot, among the soldiers who were engaged in crucifying him, and specific disposal of one article of his raiment by the lot” (Barnes). Notice these New Testament passages: Matthew 27:35; Luke 23:34; and John 19:23-34. “This verse furnishes the fullest proof that the psalm refers to him. At the same time it should be observed that these circumstances are such that an impostor could not have secured the correspondence of the events with the prediction. The events referred to were not under the control of him whose garments were thus divided. They depended wholly on others; and by no art or plan could an impostor have so arranged matters that all these things should have appeared to be fulfilled in him” (Barnes).

What an astonishing scene the Psalmist sets before us. While our Lord suffered, His executioners gambled. Such indifference to the agonies of one of their fellow men, much less the Son of God, manifests a degree of insensitivity far beyond our ability to comprehend.

**22:19:** A plea of help! Here was the burden of the Psalm. He was asking that God not abandon Him.

**22:20:** *“from the sword”* – The sword was the instrument of death. Was the Lord desirous of escaping death? Barnes suggests that it may mean “those extreme mental sufferings that were like the piercing of a sword” (Barnes).

*“my darling”* – The ASV marginal reading is, “my only one.” The Hebrew word (*‘yahhid*) means one alone, only, as of an only child; then one alone, forsaken, solitary, wretched. The ASV renders it,

“My only life, ” and is likely correct. How blessed men would be if they would but expend the same effort on their one and only life as they so often do on trivial matters.

**22:21:** *“thou hast answered me”* - Is this a reference to some past victory and/or deliverance, or a confident faith that God WOULD deliver the author from his present trial. We are not certain, but there is no doubt that the author was confident that God would eventually give him victory.

The “horns of the unicorn” (KJV) are here rendered “wild oxen.” Having been delivered from the enemies of the past, our Lord now cries out for deliverance from death which now surrounds Him like a lion or a wild oxen. The answer to our Lord’s request came with the glorious resurrection.

### ***The CONSOLATION of the sufferer*** **Verses 22-31**

- 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: In the midst of the assembly will I praise thee.*
- 23 Ye that fear Jehovah, praise him; All ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; And stand in awe of him, all ye the seed of Israel.*
- 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; Neither hath he hid his face from him; But when he cried unto him, he heard.*
- 25 Of thee cometh my praise in the great assembly: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.*
- 26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied; They shall praise Jehovah that seek after him: Let your heart live for ever.*
- 27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah; And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.*
- 28 For the kingdom is Jehovah's; And he is the ruler over the nations.*
- 29 All the fat ones of the earth shall eat and worship: All they that go down to the dust shall bow before him, Even he that cannot keep his soul alive.*
- 30 A seed shall serve him; It shall be told of the Lord unto the next generation.*
- 31 They shall come and shall declare his righteousness Unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it.*

There is a marked transition at this point in the Psalm. Out of the

tempest comes the calm. The Psalmist is now looking beyond the cross to the triumphant resurrection. The prayer of the Savior has been answered.

**22:22:** *“I will declare”* - This is an expression of what the Psalmist would do upon deliverance. He would make the name of God known among men. This our Lord is doing through His representatives even today. Notice this verse is quoted in Hebrews 2:10-12, providing support for our position that the Psalm is prophetic of our Savior.

**22:23:** We must imagine the Savior now addressing the congregation. We are instructed to “praise him.” Such praise comes out of a heart of reverent fear for the magnificence of the Almighty. “Holy fear should always keep the key of the singing pew” (Spurgeon). There is a progression here that actually feeds upon itself. The more we praise God, the more we fear Him; and the more we fear Him, the greater our reverence; and the greater our reverence, the more intent the song of praise.

**22:24:** *“neither hath he hid his face from him”* – The Psalmist was confident that God had not abandoned him. Though it may seem that God had left him to suffer, he was sustained by the realization that it was only for a brief period of time, while the fire tested the metal. This is often the case. Though our God may allow persecutions to come upon us, He has promised that at no time will He forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Our Lord suffered affliction far beyond that which any man shall ever suffer, yet He never lost His faith in the Father. Such suffering was allowed because God loved Him, not because God abhorred Him. As Spurgeon noted, “It shall never be said that any man’s affliction or poverty prevented his being an accepted suppliant at Jehovah’s throne of grace” (Spurgeon).

**22:25:** *“Of thee”* suggests the heavenly origin of our praise. The most beautiful of refrains are useless unless they come from a heart sanctified by humble obedience to the word of God.

*“I will pay my vows”* – The Psalmist would keep the promises that he had made in his affliction. We learn that making vows unto God is not wrong, but once made, those vows should be kept with all diligence!

**22:26:** *“meek”* - The usual meaning of this Hebrew word is “distressed, miserable.” The spiritual truth that comes out of this

verse is that “as the result of the Redeemer’s work, blessings in abundance would be imparted to the poor and the distressed - those who had been destitute, forsaken, and friendless” (Barnes). Though once famished in spiritual want, the meek now find themselves feasting on the dainties provided by the heavenly Host. It is only in Christ and the “eating” of His body and His blood that genuine satisfaction shall ever be ours to enjoy.

**22:27:** “*all the ends of the world*” - The Psalmist is certainly looking unto the universal reign of our Lord. The missionary spirit of our Lord was evident in His life. But here the Psalmist gives his audience a glimpse of that evangelistic spirit, and the heavenly plan for the salvation of the gentile nations. The OT often speaks of the conversion of the nations unto the Messiah. Both Jew and Gentile are envisioned as worshipping before God, a thing completely unheard of among the Jews.

Before leaving this verse, we might notice the order of conversion suggested. First, the writer tells us that “*the earth shall remember.*” This is reflection that leads to repentance. Like the prodigal who “came to himself,” so shall the nations remember their God. Second, having reflected upon God’s graciousness, they shall next “*turn unto Jehovah.*” This is obedience to God’s holy will. Without application of the purpose and intent of the heart there is no genuine conversion. Finally, “*the nations shall worship before thee*” refers to the adoration, reverence, and service that is rendered to the Father in grateful appreciation for His wonderful grace.

**22:28:** “*The kingdom is the Lord’s*” - It is significant that the kingdom IS Jehovah’s, at precisely the same time that souls feast and are satisfied. Our Lord IS the “ruler over the nations,” not “shall be” in some future earthly reign.

**22:29:** “*All they that be fat*” - Who are these “*fat ones*”? The New Testament counterpart to this verse was spoken by our Lord: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). There will never be genuine satisfaction and/or happiness short of complete commitment to God.

“*All they that go down to the dust*” – The Psalmist is speaking of those who are threatened with life and death situations. There is great consolation in bowing before God when our situation might appear hopeless to us, “casting all your anxiety upon him, for because he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). “Even amid the dust of

death prayer kindles the lamp of hope” (Spurgeon).

*“he that cannot keep his soul alive”* - Futile are the efforts of man to devise and achieve his own salvation. God created life and only God can sustain it. All the efforts of modern medical science may prolong life, but all such efforts are only temporary at best. Extend that to the spiritual realm, and there is not a man living or who shall ever live who can “keep his soul alive” separate and apart from God’s gracious gift of life through His Son.

**22:30:** *“A seed shall serve him”* – If this is not a prophecy of the perpetual nature of the Lord’s kingdom, we are at a loss as to what the Psalmist referred. Our Lord promised to build His church and assured us that the “gates of hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). Each and every successive generation will hold aright the banner of truth, and “a seed shall serve him.” The message of salvation SHALL be told to the next generation.

**22:31:** *“They shall come and...declare”* – Who shall come and declare these things? Those who are taught shall teach others. “But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak” (2 Cor. 4:13). Those who are drawn to the cross by God’s love will not remain silent. They shall tell of the righteousness of their God so that future generations shall know the truth, and obey their Lord.

The Psalm closes with the words, *“he hath done it.”* Some have rendered this, “It is finished.” It is fitting that the Psalm would begin and close with the very words our Lord spoke upon the cross. The great work of salvation has been completed. It is left up to man as to what he shall do with it. Barnes comments are noteworthy:

I cannot but feel that we have here a most interesting and affecting account, given long before it occurred, of what actually passed through the mind of the Redeemer when on the cross...Other statements pertain more particularly to the external events of the crucifixion; here we have a record in anticipation of what actually passed through his own mind in those hours of unspeakable anguish when he made an atonement for the sins of the world” (Barnes).

Indeed, what we have here “is the photograph of our Lord’s saddest hours, the record of his dying words, the lachrymatory of his last tears, the memorial of his expiring joys” (Spurgeon).





## *“The Shepherd Psalm”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle ascribes the Psalm to David. Nothing suggests otherwise. While most commentators believe that it was written in David's youth while he was tending sheep for his father, it might just as well have been written at a later age after he had experienced the hardships of life and God's guidance through those troubled times. “Yes,’ the king might have thought, ‘I was watching over my father's sheep in those days; but I am now keenly aware that Someone was watching over me’” (Coffman, page 171).

While the Psalm contains a metaphor of a Shepherd, it may be that there are actually TWO metaphors here: (1) that of the shepherd (vv.1-4), and (2) that of the gracious and generous host (vv.5-6). To be certain, the language of verses 5-6 come much closer to describing a great feast supplied by a gracious host than the work of a shepherd. Of this Psalm Spurgeon has noted: “This is the pearl of Psalms whose soft and pure radiance delights every eye... Of this delightful song it may be affirmed that its piety and its poetry are equal, its sweetness and its spirituality are unsurpassed” (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

Of this Psalm one has pointed out that “the world could spare many a large book better than this sunny little psalm” (Terry Casy, page 130). It is probably the most popular Psalm, and certainly among the most sublime insofar as language and poetry are concerned. Roy Deaver points out that “this Psalm should be studied in relationship to Psalm 22 and Psalm 24. These constitute a ‘trptych’ - the Savior, the Shepherd, and the Sovereign. Or, the cross, the crook, and the crown (Deaver, page 75). “It is only after we have read, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!’ that we come to ‘The Lord is my Shepherd.’ We must by experience know the value of the blood-shedding, and see the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly know the sweetness of the good Shepherd's care” (Spurgeon).

A more beautiful piece of literature does not exist than the 23rd Psalm. This Psalm has been read at the grave of many a faithful saint and meditated upon by untold myriads of the sick and infirm. As Spurgeon noted, “Oh that we may enter into the spirit of the Psalm as we read it, and then we shall experience the days of heaven upon the earth!” (Spurgeon).

The few verses which compose this psalm would leave but a small blank on the page, if blotted out; but suppose all translations which have been made of them into all languages, all references to them in literature, all remembrance of them in human hearts, could be effaced, who can measure the blank, the void, the loss? What libraries have these few lines survived? Yet they are as fresh as if written yesterday. They make themselves at home in every language. They touch, inspire, comfort us, not as an echo from three thousand years ago, but as the voice of a living friend. The child repeats them at his mother's knee; the scholar expends on them his choicest learning; the plain Christian loves them for their simplicity as much as for their beauty; they fall like music on the sick man's ear and heart; the dying Christian says, ‘That is MY psalm,’ and cheers himself with its words of faith and courage as he enters the dark valley (Rawlinson, page 164).

Roy Deaver has a very simple three point outline of this Psalm which we will follow for our study:

- I. Affirmation (verse 1a);
- II. Explanation (verses 1b-5);
- III. Consolation (verse 6);

Before leaving our introduction, we include the following from Clovis Chappell on this wonderful Psalm:

If this Psalm could write its own biography, what a thrilling story it would have to tell! There is no sea that it has not crossed, no land it has not visited, no road that it has not traveled. It has been thumbed by beggars and kings, by little children and silver-haired pilgrims. White-souled mothers have rejoiced over it, and sinsick harlots have clung to it as their one hope. Sheltered souls have sung it amidst the peace of God's house and in the warmth and glow of the home fireside. Tempest-tossed souls have also sung it as they were being pounded by the fists of persecution, or as they were braving the heartbreak of lonely exile. Dying saints, surrounded by loved faces, have found it a soft pillow upon which to rest as they slipped into their last sleep. Martyrs have found in it calm and comfort as they went to meet God in winding sheets of flame (Clovis Chappell, page 24).

## **Commentary**

### ***Affirmation*** **Verse 1a**

*23:1a - The LORD is my shepherd;*

**23:1:** We will deviate from our normal use of the American Standard Version in our study of this Psalm, and quote instead from the more frequently used King James Version. Coffman's opinion is that "The word 'Lord' is far preferable in every way to the synthetic word 'Jehovah'" (Coffman, page 173). The beauty and power of this verse lie very much in its composure. There is a certain calmness in it which almost reproduces itself in the mind whenever we say it.

*"The Lord is my shepherd"* - Here is the affirmation. The care which God extends over His people is compared to that of being a shepherd. If the Psalm was written in the later part of David's life, it is only natural that this analogy would be used. Our Lord's self-description that "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11) is a bold affirmation of His deity. But there is more to this statement than immediately meets the eye. The analogy that God has selected by the pen of David to thus represent Himself shows that our God is concerned about His people. We are "sheep," and the Lord our "Shepherd." There is a unique relationship that exists here. The sheep are property; we are owned by our Lord, and the price paid was the very blood of the Son of God. And note also, that the Psalmist says the Lord IS my Shepherd; not IF, or MIGHT BE, but IS!

### ***Explanation*** **(1b-5)**

*1b - I shall not want.*

*2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

*3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

*4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

*5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

*"I shall not want"* - Barnes points out that this is "the main idea in the psalm" (Barnes). A little boy quoted the first verse of this Psalm as follows: "The Lord is my friend - I don't need anything else." God is my friend. He does care for me. That care is so adequate, so complete, that I do not need anything else. Our affluent society must learn to determine what are its NEEDS, and its WANTS. "The words...would embrace everything that could be a proper object of desire, whether temporal or spiritual; whether pertaining to the body or the soul; whether having reference to time or to eternity" (Barnes). Notice in this connection, Psalms 34:9: "There is no want to them that fear him." Then notice also the future tense here. Not only does the sheep not PRESENTLY want, but neither shall he want in the future. "Come what may, if famine should devastate the land, or calamity destroy the city, 'I shall not want.' ...Old age with its feebleness shall not bring me any lack, and even death with its gloom shall not find me destitute. I have all things and abound; not because I have a good store of money in the bank, not because I have skill and wit with which to win my bread, but because 'the Lord is my Shepherd'" (Spurgeon).

There are a couple of other verses that beg consideration when it comes to this matter of "wanting" and "not wanting." The first of these is 1 Timothy 6:6-10, and the second is Philippians 4:11. Observe that contentment is something that must be "learned." So how do we go about learning contentment? (1) Study the book that lends itself to a revelation of God's divine providence and care for His children; (2) Come to learn the temporary nature of THINGS; (3) Fix your heart on the things that are above, and not on the things upon the earth (Col. 3:2).

**23:2:** There is a concentrated effort on the part of the "Shepherd" to "make" his sheep to lie down. In fact, "any person who knows anything about sheep know that they will never lie down when they are hungry" (Coffman, page 173). The "green pastures" would suggest ample supply and providential care. The Hebrew word is sometimes rendered "tender grass" and refers to the first shoots of vegetation from the earth, that which is a most delicate food for cattle and sheep. There is the idea of calmness and repose present in these words. In addition, the Shepherd "leads" us beside "still waters." The American Standard Version marginal reading is "waters of rest," as opposed to waters that are tempestuous or stormy. Our God is not asking us to go where He has not gone. He leads us. The "still waters" suggest the peace that is ours when we

follow the lead of the Savior. When we follow our Lord we are promised “peace that passeth understanding” (Phil 4:7).

**23:3:** Complete reconciliation is noted. We are “*restored*” in the sense that we are brought back to God. Literally, “He causes my life to return” (Barnes). The exact meaning is not certain, and could mean either (1) the restoration of the soul following sin and separation from God, or (2) the quickening of the spirit when it is exhausted, weary, or sad. In the prophetic sense, the “restoring” refers to the “deeper renewal of the man of God, spiritually perverse or ailing as he may be” (Coffman, page 174). While the words would find application to David, certainly we cannot ignore the deeper meaning of these words in the life of every child of God. Consider the words of Paul: “but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor 4:16).

*“he leadeth me”* - Going before, our God leads the way. Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should walk in His steps (1 Peter 2:21).

*“the paths of righteousness”* are those ways that are right. The paths of the Lord are such as to keep one right before God. The Proverb writer pointed out that if we acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, “he shall direct thy paths” (Pro. 3:6). When the child of God strays from the path of righteousness, he has taken his eyes off the Master.

*“for his name’s sake”* simply means that his name will be honored. There also may be a sense in which the integrity of God with regard to the keeping of His promises is in mind here.

**23:4:** There is a cause and effect under consideration in this verse. The absence of the fear of evil is due to the assurance that comes from following God. It may be that God’s guidance will take us through the valley of the shadow of death. The confidence and assurance that God will not betray us will give courage so that we fear no evil when following him, even if it leads us into situations that threaten our lives. Barnes has these notes: “The idea is that of death casting his gloomy shadow over that valley...Hence the word is applicable to any path of gloom or sadness; any scene of trouble or sorrow; any dark and dangerous way. All along those paths God will be a safe and certain guide” (Barnes).

*“though I walk”* - The believer does not quicken his pace when he comes to the end of his earthly sojourn. He is still calm; he is still

under the control of his God.

*“through the valley...”* It is not IN the valley, but THROUGH it! We are not overwhelmed by the last enemy, but we pass through the experience and emerge on the other side safely on eternity’s shore. “The dying article is called a valley. The storm breaks on the mountain, but the valley is the place of quietude, and thus full often the last days of the Christian are the most peaceful in his whole career; the mountain is bleak and bare, but the valley is rich with golden sheaves, and many a saint has reaped more joy and knowledge when he came to die than he ever knew while he lived” (Spurgeon).

And what about this *“shadow...”*? It is not the valley of death, but rather “the shadow of death.” Men do not fear the shadows; nor does the Christian fear that which has no more power than a shadow that is cast by turning. Death has been defeated. To the child of God it can only cast its long shadow on the road to heaven, but it cannot block the gate that will usher us into eternity’s bliss. Consequently, the child of God can boldly claim, “I will fear no evil...”

*“for thou art with me”* -- I have often contemplated the meaning and significance of these words, especially as the moment of death approaches for the child of God. When facing death we have our loved ones and friends to comfort us, but the extent of their comfort is limited as we walk through that valley. Into the realms of the eternal they cannot enter. The Psalmist was confident that when it came his time to walk through that valley, God would be with him. We have been told by our Savior that we will not “see death.” When that time comes to cross the bar into the eternal realms beyond, Jesus will take our hand and guide us through the valley unscathed by death’s evil influence. The hope that we have as God’s children is a source of comfort that is available to none other. The uncertainty of what lies beyond, and the ultimate journey through that valley on the part of the unbeliever is bleak indeed. That fear and uncertainty is reflected in the statements they make with regard to death and the hereafter.

The *“rod”* and *“staff”* were instruments of the shepherd for protection and guidance. Barnes points out that the “rod” is the “crook” that the shepherd used to guide the flock, and the “staff” was used in walking, and protecting the flock. It may be that the “rod” and “staff” are actually one tool, used for both purposes.

**23:5:** The word for “*table*” could easily be “*feast*.” It suggests that at some point in time God had provided for David, yea, even in great abundance, in the very presence of those who were seeking to destroy David. “They were compelled to look on and see how God provided for him” (Barnes). The servants of God are made to triumph in such a manner as to make it abundantly evident that they have won the victory. In spite of all efforts to overthrow it, Christianity has not only triumphed, but has excelled.

“*mine enemies...*” The Christian cannot help but have enemies. It is implied here and clearly stated in other passages. Jesus warned us, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). What a remarkable comfort it is to know that God will give us peace even in THE MOST TRYING OF CIRCUMSTANCES! EVEN IN THE PRESENCE OF OUR ENEMIES!

“*Thou anointest my head with oil*” suggests abundant provisions, and divine approval. Notice such passages as Exodus 29:7; Lev. 21:10; 8:12; 1 Sam. 10:1; 15:17; 2 Kings 9:6; Luke 7:38; and 7:46.

“*My cup runneth over*” means not only is it full, it runs over. From these abundant blessings the Psalmist infers God’s favor toward him. Our cup will run over when we maintain the right relationship with our God and fellow man. Notice Luke 6:38.

### ***Consolation*** ***Verse 6***

*6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*

**23:6:** David was confident that these blessings would continue. His anticipation of dwelling in the house of the Lord forever most likely has reference to his maintaining fellowship with God as long as he should live; however, we cannot help but think that there is a glimpse of the eternal abode under consideration. Coffman has provided us with the rendering of the Anchor Bible: “Surely goodness and kindness will attend me, all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of Yahweh for days without end” (Coffman, page 177).

In applying this to our lives, it is significant that we cannot utter the sentiments of the Psalmist in this verse, unless we can truly claim the

truth in verse 1. “While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper story of the house of the Lord for ever” (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. The fundamental lesson is the providential care of our God for those who follow Him. The Psalmist says confidently, “I shall not want.” Here are just a few of those “wants” that shall be supplied:
  - (1) He shall not want for rest and refreshment. Our Shepherd makes us to “lie down in green pastures.” Jesus invited us, “Come unto me all ye that labor, and I shall give you rest.” Though life may disappoint us, certainly our God will not. If the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall have genuine rest and comfort.
  - (2) He shall not want for leadership and guidance. The Psalmist affirms, “He leadeth me beside the still waters.” The Lord “leads” us. One has called attention to the fact that old geographers, after they had mapped the oceans and seas, they would write on the map, “Here be dragons. Here be demons that devour men.” But the Psalmist was confident that his God would lead him safely beside the still waters. Indeed, we need such guidance for we know not what the morrow may bring. Our vision is limited, as is our knowledge of what the future holds.
  - (3) He shall not want for restoration. Indeed, there is a balm in Gilead. The Psalmist understood the value and joy of the morning’s restoration after the dark night of sin. David may very well been speaking out of experience here.
  - (4) He shall not want for companionship and comfort in times of sorrow. Though our Shepherd leads us beside the still waters, the path is oft times rough. The road changes from time to time, as we traverse hills and valleys. Even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we know that there is light at the end of the tunnel.
  - (5) Finally, he will not want for a home at the end of the journey. Shall our merciful and wonderful Shepherd guide us in this life only to abandon us in the cold clay of the earth? We think not. When this life comes to an end, we shall dwell with our God in that mansion prepared for us by the Master Builder Himself.



2. For every want of life, our God supplies, supplies fully, and supplies adequately. Consider the following:
- (1) In times of want, He supplies the need so that I may say “I shall not want.”
  - (2) In times of weariness, He provides rest so that I may “lie down in green pastures” and “beside still waters.”
  - (3) In times of movement or travel, he guides me.
  - (4) In times of weakness he gives me strength.
  - (5) In times of “fear generating circumstances” he gives me courage so that I need not fear even though I walk the valley of the shadow of death.
  - (6) In reflection of the future, he gives me faith so as to proclaim “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”
  - (7) When contemplating what lies beyond the grave, he assures me that I “will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”
3. Our God wants to lead us. He desires that we follow Him in the person of Jesus, our perfect example. But God does not COERCE. He will not force Himself upon us; but with the loving beckoning call, He invites us to accept His love and walk in the path that leads to eternal life.
4. The man or woman who follows God is a person of dauntless courage. Such a one will “fear no evil.”
5. God is “with me.” More comforting words cannot be found in all of literature. When I come face to face with my enemies, or walk through the valley of shadow of death, I want God by my side. Though there are many whom I love dearly in this life, none can go with me all the way. Only God can do that!
6. When this life is over and the battles have been fought, I shall lay my armor down at the feet of my Jesus and live with Him forever in the mansion that He has prepared for me.
7. Goodness has been mine to enjoy in this life. I have never been in want, nor have I, as wrote the Psalmist, ever seen any of God’s people begging bread. My material status in life as been far greater than I had ever dreamed it would be. I have been blessed with a wonderful family who loves me, and I can honestly say that

goodness has been mine “all the days of my life.” But then, in addition to that goodness, I have added God’s marvelous “lovingkindness.” The KJV has “mercy,” perhaps the better rendering. All that I have is due to God’s mercy and grace which He has bestowed upon me. With such goodness and mercy, how can I do anything else but serve him “all the days of my life,” and look forward with great expectation to that eternal abode that shall be mine; and not only mine, but for all those who have loved his appearing!

## *“Christ Exalted to Glory”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is believed to be David and there is no reason to doubt that conclusion. The content of the Psalm suggests that it was composed on some public occasion of great solemnity. Barnes concluded that it was at the time when the ark of the covenant was taken to its place of permanent abode in Jerusalem. A number have seen in this Psalm a reference to the exaltation of Christ. Accordingly, Coffman points out that the “language of this psalm, to us, sounds far too exalted and extravagant for any complete application to anything David ever did. It may be best to view the entire psalm as a Davidic prophecy of the Ascension of Christ into Glory” (Coffman, page 180).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains the following:

- I. An ascription of praise to God as maker and Upholder of all things, verses 1-2 [PRAISE].
- II. The question as to who would enter into the hill of the Lord and stand in his holy place, verse 3 [PROBLEM].
- III. The answer, verse 4-6 [PARTICULARS].
- IV. A responsive song on the entrance of the procession with the ark into the city, verse 7-10 [PRAISE].

Clarke has an interesting analysis of the Psalm, suggesting that the “subject of this Psalm is Christ, called the King of glory” (Adam Clarke). Note the two part division in the Psalm:

- I. The first part of the Psalm shows that God is King of all the world, with two subjects:
  1. All men in general, 1-2.
  2. A people whom He has called to be His subjects in another manner, namely the church, 3-6.
    - (1) People of cleanness of hands;

- (2) People of purity of heart;
- (3) People of truth of the tongue;
- II. The second part is considered by some as an exhortation to all men to receive the King and worship Him, 7-10.
  - 1. An admonition to lift up the heads, suggesting the need for knowledge.
  - 2. Identification of who the King is - Jehovah, mighty, strong, King of glory.

Certainly the spiritual application is true, and we see no reason to discount this particular interpretation.

## ***Commentary***

### **PRAISE Verses 1-2**

- 1 The earth is Jehovah's, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein.*
- 2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, And established it upon the floods.*

**24:1:** The whole earth belongs to God in a sense somewhat similar to the proprietorship of one who owns land or possessions. He has a right to use it as He sees fit. All of our rights are subordinate to the claims of God. A realization of this one truth would go a long way to alleviate the mad rush to attain the perishable things of this world. Gone would be the covetousness, greed, and lust that goes with seeking to gather around one's self those things that are vain and empty. "The title deeds which men treasure are merely the written permission of the societies in which they live, conveying the right of use for the brief period of their earthly lives" (Coffman, page 181).

*"the world and they that dwell therein"* - Not only does the world belong to God, but so do its inhabitants. We are not our own; and all the little plans we make are vain if God is not included therein (cf. James 4:15). And yet what a paradox. While we are indeed God's possession, He has graciously consented to render control of our willpower to ourselves, and given unto us the choice, yes the choice, to either reject Him, or bow in humble submission unto Him.

**24:2:** It is God who laid the foundations. All things exist as the product of creation, not evolution.

*“Upon the seas”* might have some connection with Genesis 1:9-10 where the waters are said to have been gathered together and that the dry land appeared. The world is God’s by right of creation.

*“and established it upon the floods”* - The earth has been elevated above the seas so as to provide safety and protection for man and land dwelling animals.

Let us notice the feeble foundations upon which this earth is established, namely the “seas” and the “floods.” It is only by God’s fiat that the oceans do now swallow up the land. With such instability men should place their trust in the Rock of Ages. “Oh! ye worldlings, who have built your castles of confidence, your palaces of wealth, and your bowers of pleasure upon the seas, and established them upon the floods; how soon will your baseless fabrics melt, like foam upon the water’s” (Spurgeon).

### **PROBLEM** **Verse 3**

*3 Who shall ascend into the hill of Jehovah? And who shall stand in his holy place?*

**24:3:** This is similar to the question asked in chapter 15:1-2. It is a question that men who are conscious of spiritual matters most surely ask in their deepest meditations. It is a most important question, and none should be satisfied until they have learned the answer to that question.

*“the hill of Jehovah”* – There is no doubt in our mind that the Psalmist is speaking of the very presence of God. What a joy to ascend to the hill of Jehovah and enjoy fellowship with Him. It is an uphill climb to enter into the presence of Jehovah. But God will provide the strength if we will but determine to come before our Creator in His “holy place.”

*“who shall stand in his holy place?”* – Setting upon the hill of Jehovah is the Holy Place wherein God dwells. Here is the man who is allowed to not only climb the hill where the mansion is located, but to actually enter into the house of God.

The Psalmist is asking, “Who shall ascend there with the view of abiding there? Who will be acceptable to God?” And it is notable

that the “men who shall stand as courtiers in the palace of the living God are not distinguished by race, but by character” (Spurgeon).

## PARTICULARS

### Verses 4-6

- 4 *He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; Who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood, And hath not sworn deceitfully.*  
5 *He shall receive a blessing from Jehovah, And righteousness from the God of his salvation.*  
6 *This is the generation of them that seek after him, That seek thy face, even Jacob. Selah*

**24:4:** “*he that hath clean hands*” - See also 15:2. The hands are the instruments by which good is accomplished. Hence, having clean hands is equivalent to being upright. Pilate washed his hands in a symbolical gesture that he thought would clear him of all guilt in the crucifixion of the Lord. The deeds of our lives are what the Psalmist has in mind. How odd that many of the educated “theologians” of our age so decry the God given place of works of obedience in man’s salvation.

“*and a pure heart*” - While the outward actions are extremely important, so is the inner man, and “clean hands” are of no value apart from a clean heart. Notice Matthew 5:8 in this connection. “The pure in heart shall see God, all others are but blind bats; stone-blindness in the eyes arises from stone in the heart. Dirt in the heart throws dust in the eyes” (Spurgeon).

“*who hath not lifted up his soul unto falsehood*” - Some versions have, “unto vanity.” The end lesson is the same. It would appear that the Psalmist had in mind vain worship and/or life. He who would enter before Jehovah must put aside the trivial. To “lift up one’s soul” is to offer up one’s praise to his object of worship (Isaiah 41:24; 1 Corinthians 8:6). What is your object of worship, dear reader? Do the trinkets of life draw you to idol worship? Or do you love those eternal values that are more substantial than the “pleasures of sin for a season”?

“*and hath not sworn deceitfully*” - The child of God is a man of honor, and his word is his bond. Those who would make false accusations, defraud a statement, or slander another have no place in God’s presence. While the usual explanation of these verses is that of the “procession” approaching the gates of Jerusalem, and the

question of exactly ‘Who shall enter in’ being on the lips of the singers, Coffman concludes that these traits describe the Messiah as He approached and entered heaven in His ascension. His conclusion is based upon (1) the fact that these characteristics have only been fulfilled in one, namely the Christ, and (2) that the “only righteousness that this world ever achieved was that which was wrought by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Coffman, page 183). Though certainly Christ is the perfect embodiment of these things, the Psalmist writes of those who would enter into the presence of God. Although no man is sinless in any sense of the word, he can and must strive for perfection nonetheless.

**24:5:** *“he shall receive a blessing from Jehovah”* - But what of those who do NOT demonstrate such traits? What shall be their lot? For such a one there shall be no blessing beyond what they may enjoy in this life! Barnes suggests that the “blessing” is that “he shall be recognized and treated as his” (Barnes).

*“and righteousness from the God of his salvation”* - Seeing that righteousness is the state of being right with God, the man who meets the conditions set forth in scripture can be said to have received righteousness from God. Those who fail to meet the conditions set forth by God find themselves unrighteous, “separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

**24:6:** Evidently the word “*generation*” is used to describe the people that seek God.

*“This”* - the characteristics listed in the previous verses - describes those that seek God. Once again we can see a vital link between mental assent or desire, and application of what we know. But what of this word “seek”? Such is not a casual consideration of things spiritual, but an earnest endeavor to embrace those things that are lasting and eternal. “Oh to hunger and thirst more and more after a clear vision of the face of God; this will lead us to purge ourselves from all filthiness, and to walk with heavenly circumspection” (Spurgeon). Such people are a “generation” of their own, blessed of God, and bowing in His presence with reverence and awe.

*“that seek thy face, even Jacob”* - The Psalmist seems to be making a distinction between false and true Israel; between those who merely profess to be God’s people, and those who actually are God’s people.

Notice in this connection Romans 9:6-8; Romans 2:28-29. But what shall we make of this reference to Jacob? Does it not suggest that our God condescended to be called Jacob, and take upon himself the name of his chosen people? Or do we have what might be called an ellipsis, where the Psalmist was actually saying, "this is the generation of them that seek thy face, even as did Jacob"?

### **PRAISE** **Verses 7-10**

- 7 *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: And the King of glory will come in.*
- 8 *Who is the King of glory? Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle.*
- 9 *Lift up your heads, O ye gates; Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors: And the King of glory will come in.*
- 10 *Who is this King of glory? Jehovah of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah*

**24:7:** This verse begins the "song of praise." There is an allusion to the type of gates that might have been found in the old castles. Rather than gates that swing open, they were "lifted" so as to permit entry. "There seems to be a reference here to something like our portcullis which hangs by pulleys above the gate, and can be let down at anytime so as to prevent the gate from being forced" (Adam Clarke). But to what or who does the passage refer? We think Coffman is right on target: "Any real application of these words to David's entering Jerusalem with the ark of the covenant could be only in a dimly typical sense of the far more wonderful Ascension of Christ into Heaven after his resurrection from the dead" (Coffman, page 185). Or as Spurgeon put it, "We have here a picture of our Lord's glorious ascent. We see him rising from amidst the little group upon Olivet, and as the cloud receives him, angels reverently escort him to the gates of heaven" (Spurgeon). This being true, all things are to honor Him as He ascends to His rightful position upon the throne, as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

**24:8:** The first part of this verse is a response by the people within the gate, asking for information as to WHO this King is that is seeking entrance. The watchers of the gate ask, "Who is the King of glory?" And notice the answer. This is "Jehovah strong and mighty, Jehovah mighty in battle." Those watching the gates of heaven recognize Jesus for Who He is, none other than Jehovah Himself! He has demonstrated power over His enemies in battle - an allusion



no doubt to the victories that had been won in the presence of the ark of the covenant. But it is much more than this, yea much more. Jesus won the battle over sin, temptation, death, and the bars of hades itself. How could we do anything else but sing praises unto His name?

**24:9:** This could be a repeat for the sake of emphasis, or it could be a second call upon the inhabitants of the city to open the gates. The wording is somewhat different, the “King of glory” being the strong and mighty one.

**24:10:** Barnes has this interesting comment: “In the close of the psalm, therefore, there is an exact accordance with the thought in the beginning, that God is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and that he should everywhere be recognized and regarded as such” (Barnes).

### ***Lessons***

1. There are marvelous lessons on giving:
  - (1) All that we have belongs to God;
  - (2) Our “giving” to God is used only in an accommodative sense;
  - (3) We are stewards of what God has given us;
2. The last part of this Psalm refers to the Christ, representative of man, Who alone has met the full qualifications of those who shall enter into God’s holy hill. Only those who are “in Christ” can ever expect to attain unto the same reward.
3. God’s gift of salvation is not unconditional. Those who have sweet fellowship with Him here, and who hope to enter into life eternal, are the very ones who have met the conditions set forth in this Psalm, and much, much more.
4. “The Suffering Savior who endured the cross, and who has the task of leading His sheep to the eternal home, is *now* the King of Glory. As our Shepherd, and our King, He can and will guide us *safely* home” (Deaver, page 79).

## *“Calm Meditations”*

### ***Introduction***

The authorship of this Psalm is attributed to David in the subtitle. There is nothing that would suggest otherwise, either internal or external. The occasion of the Psalm cannot be determined. It would appear that it was written at a time of meditation and calm deliberation by the author. This Psalm is the first in that class of Psalms that are known as ‘*alphabetical Psalms*,’ in which the first word of each verse begins with one of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This particular Psalm does not strictly follow the pattern of an acrostic Psalm, however, in that “some letters are omitted and some are used twice in this psalm” (Coffman, 188). In this Psalm we have a considerable variety of subjects introduced, all suggestive, or all indicating the kind of thoughts that might pass through a person’s mind in moments of relaxation, when the thoughts are allowed to flow freely or without restraint from the will. Such thoughts might occur when men are meditating on things as they might enter his mind indicate the true state of the heart and character. We will entitle the Psalm, “Calm Meditations.”

### ***Analysis***

The Psalms contains the following elements:

- 1) Confident trust in God, 1-3;
- 2) A desire to be led in the way of truth, 4-5;
- 3) A desire that God would be merciful and not remember the sins of the writer’s youth, 6-7;
- 4) A belief that God will guide those who trust him, 8-9;
- 5) Confidence in the paths of God, 10;
- 6) Prayer for the forgiveness of sins, 11;
- 7) An expression of belief that God will teach and guide those who fear him, 12-13;
- 8) Assurance that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, 14;
- 9) Prayer for deliverance, 15-21;
- 10) Prayer for the redemption of the people of God, 22.

The underlying message of the Psalm is that of guidance. The author was facing some dire circumstance and, not knowing which way to turn, he turns to Jehovah. Abraham Lincoln was credited with admitting, "I have often been driven to God by the overwhelming sense that I had nowhere else to go." The Psalmist must have felt that way when he penned this Psalm.

Morgan divides the Psalm into three points. He introduces the Psalm with these words: "The sob of a great sorrow sounds through this psalm. The circumstances of its writings were desolation, affliction, distress, travail, as the latter part especially shows. Yet the main content is full of help to all who are in sorrow. It is far more than a wail saddening all who read it. It is the voice of hope and confidence and tells of succor and of strength" (Morgan, 230).

We found a number of good outlines on this Psalm. Harold Willmington provided an excellent homiletic outline:

- I. Protect Me! (25:1-3, 15-22): David asks that his enemies would not be allowed to defeat him.
- II. Pilot Me! (25:4-5, 8-10): David asks God to guide him in the right path.
- III. Pardon Me! (25:6-7, 11)
  - A. What (25:6-7): David asks God to forgive the sins of his youth.
  - B. Why (25:11): David begs forgiveness for the honor of God's name.
- IV. Prosper Me! (25:12-14): David asserts that God blesses those who fear God. (Willmington, 232)

Roy Deaver has the following simple outline, which we will follow:

- I. Prayer, 1-7;
- II. Proclamation, 8-15;
- III. Prayer, 16-22. (Deaver, 82)

## ***Commentary***

### **Prayer Verses 1-7**

- 1 Unto thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul.*
- 2 O my God, in thee have I trusted, Let me not be put to shame; Let not mine enemies triumph over me.*

- 3 *Yea, none that wait for thee shall be put to shame: They shall be put to shame that deal treacherously without cause.*
- 4 *Show me thy ways, O Jehovah; Teach me thy paths.*
- 5 *Guide me in thy truth, and teach me; For thou art the God of my salvation; For thee do I wait all the day.*
- 6 *Remember, O Jehovah, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness; For they have been ever of old.*
- 7 *Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: According to thy lovingkindness remember thou me, For thy goodness' sake, O Jehovah.*

**25:1:** The first section of this Psalm contains one of the most beautiful prayers in the Bible. It originates in a heart of humility and genuine faith. The Psalmist desired to rise above the things of this earth, and concentrate on the heavenly realm. Notice Colossians 3:1-2. He declares his trust in Jehovah, and asks that he not be “put to shame.” There is some question as to the meaning of this request. It could be (1) a petition for God to hide his iniquity and guilt, or (2) the desire that he never be forsaken as to give rise to an occasion for shame that he had trusted in Jehovah. The latter seems more probable, especially in view of the next phrase that his enemies not “triumph over” him. The idea is that his enemies might not be victorious and thus bring him to shame for having placed his trust and confidence in God.

When the storm winds are out, the Lord's vessels put about and make for their well remembered harbour of refuge...It is mockery to uplift the hands and the eyes unless we also bring our souls into our devotions. Pure prayer may be described as the soul rising from earth to have fellowship with heaven; it is taking a journey upon Jacob's ladder, leaving our cares and fears at the foot, and meeting with a covenant God at the top. (Spurgeon)

**25:2:** “*O my God*” - The Psalmist did not trust in men. His confidence did not lie in the wisdom or strength of men, but in Jehovah. In all his trials and tribulations he would trust in God to provide the deliverance. It should be observed that the Psalmist believed that he had a proper relationship with God. There was no haughtiness in his heart. Like any child of God he had an assurance based on confident expectation that God would keep His promises.

“*Let me not be ashamed*” - The idea seems to be that the writer desired that no occasion arise that might cause him to be ashamed for having trusted in God.

*“Let not mine enemies triumph over me”* - He prayed that he might not be defeated by his enemies, that it would not appear that he trusted in God Who could not defend him.

**25:3:** Clarke gives this rendering: “Let not them that wait upon and worship thee be ashamed: but they shall be ashamed who vainly worship, or trust in false gods” (Adam Clarke). He bases this upon the Hebrew word for “transgressors” (*bogedim*), which means idolatrous persons. To “wait” for or on Jehovah is an expression denoting submission to His will, and allowing Him to work in our lives. Barnes points out that it involves looking “to him for the command that is to regulate our conduct and for the grace needful to protect and save us” (Barnes). It is significant that David prays for others as well as himself. What he sought for himself, he sought for others.

*“They shall be put to shame”* - The KJV reads, “LET them be ashamed,” suggesting the Psalmist’s desire that the enemies of God suffer shame and defeat. “A man may be certain that he is acting out the principles of benevolence when he endeavours to prevent the consummation of the plans and the desires of the wicked” (Barnes).

**25:4-5:** *“Show me thy ways...teach me thy paths”* - The sentiments of David should be in the heart and on the lips of every single child of God. Israel of old was destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). The Biblical illiteracy of our age, both in and out of the church, is appalling. Here David recognizes the need to be SHOWN the way of God, TAUGHT its precepts, and then to be shown HOW to follow that way (“guide”). Surely “he cannot discern the way unless God show it; he cannot learn the path unless God teach it” (Adam Clarke). Barnes suggests that “The idea evidently is that he might understand so much of this as to regulate his own conduct aright; that he might not lean to his own understanding, or trust to his own guidance” (Barnes). Before leaving this verse take note of the Psalmist’s willingness to be led by God. His heart was open to God’s instructions.

**25:5:** *“Guide me in thy truth”* - The desire of every child of God should be that God guide him in truth. Successful guidance demands that we love the truth and that we have a willingness to be taught. The Psalmist’s submissiveness is expressed by the words, *“For thee do I wait all the day.”* Spurgeon wrote, “We shall not grow weary of waiting upon God if we remember how long and how graciously he once waited on us” (Spurgeon).

**25:6:** *“Remember”* - It is not as though David thought God might FORGET. David was asking that God remember how He had treated David in time past and treat him in the same manner in the future. The words suggest satisfaction and appreciation on the part of David for God’s gracious watch care over him in times past. The word for “tender mercies” is *‘rachamim’* and means the “commiseration that a man feels in his bowels at the sight of distress” (Adam Clarke). The “lovingkindness” signifies those “kindnesses which are the offspring of a profusion of benevolence” (Adam Clarke). Such has been God’s nature from of old. God has always been that way, and there is no reason to suggest that He will change. “The language is that of a heart deeply impressed with a sense of the goodness of God” (Barnes).

**25:7:** *“Remember not the sins of my youth”* – David concludes his prayer in a most worthy manner. How many of us have committed wrongs in our earlier years that we wish could be completely forgotten. Lack of experience and absence of wisdom have caused many a person to do things they regret in later years. Some suffer lifetime consequences as a result of their folly. “Perhaps he had found, as so many others have discovered, that ‘the sins of youth’ are never terminated automatically with the arrival of maturity. On the other hand, sins have a way of fastening themselves upon the sinner and increasing as the years go by” (Coffman, 190). David asked God not to remember those transgressions of early years, but instead to “remember thou me” in a more favorable light. Why do this? “For thy goodness sake,” in order that the goodness or benevolence may be displayed and honored; that God’s character might be vindicated.

Those offenses which we remember with repentance God forgets, but if we forget them, justice will bring them forth to punishment. The world winks at the sins of young men, and yet they are not so little after all; the bones of our youthful feastings at Satan’s’ table will stick painfully in our throats when we are old men. He who presumes upon his youth is poisoning his old age. (Spurgeon).

### **Proclamation Verses 8-15**

- 8 *Good and upright is Jehovah: Therefore will he instruct sinners in the way.*
- 9 *The meek will he guide in justice; And the meek will he teach his way.*

- 10 *All the paths of Jehovah are lovingkindness and truth Unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*
- 11 *For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great.*
- 12 *What man is he that feareth Jehovah? Him shall he instruct in the way that he shall choose.*
- 13 *His soul shall dwell at ease; And his seed shall inherit the land.*
- 14 *The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear him; And he will show them his covenant.*
- 15 *Mine eyes are ever toward Jehovah; For he will pluck my feet out of the net.*

**25:8:** “*Good and upright is Jehovah*” - Two traits of our God are goodness and justice. Both are essential in dealing with man, and represent our God in a most fitting way. It is because of God’s goodness that He has revealed His will unto us, and thereby instructs us in the way. “These three verses [8-10, TW] are a meditation upon the attributes and acts of the Lord. He who toils in the harvest field of prayer should occasionally pause awhile and refresh himself with a meal of meditation” (Spurgeon).

**25:9:** What a marvelous verse. The New Testament counterparts are passages such as Matthew 5:3-8; 11:25; 1 Corinthians 1:20-25; et al. While the previous verse noted the WILLINGNESS of God to lead men, this verse qualifies exactly WHO He will lead and guide. It is the meek, and only the meek, who shall walk in the paths of God which lead to life eternal. That man who supposes he already knows enough cannot be taught. Charles Spurgeon caught the idea: “Trouble puts gentle spirits to their wits’ ends, and drives them to act without discretion, but grace comes to the rescue, enlightens their mind to follow that which is just, and helps them to discern the way in which the Lord would have them to go” (Spurgeon).

**25:10:** Every verse of God’s word has a storehouse of treasure. This is certainly no exception. The paths that lead to God are marked clearly. They are paved with lovingkindness and truth. When one is walking on the road to heaven, God’s great love overshadows us like the cloud and fire that stood above the tabernacle in the wilderness. A small child will find security in the arms of a mother or father who loves him. He can sense that love even from a small age. So it is with God’s children. The love of God motivates us, assures us, comforts us, and provides hope in an age of hopelessness. In addition, the path of God is marked with truth. Truth will make us free (John 8:32), the road to heaven being the road to freedom from

the bondage of sin, tyranny of the devil, and fear of death. But there is a **CONDITION** to walking upon that road. The traveler must “*keep his covenant and his testimonies.*” Obedience is an essential ingredient to walking in the paths of Jehovah; any walk short of obedience placing us off that narrow road that leads to heaven. See in this connection Matthew 7:21-23. “Gracious souls, by faith resting upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus, *keep the covenant* of the Lord, and, being sanctified they walk in *his testimonies*...Keepers of the covenant shall be kept by the covenant; those who follow the Lord’s commands shall find the Lord’s mercy following them” (Spurgeon).

**25:11:** All that David was, or all that he did, was for the “name of Jehovah.” David would not allow Goliath to defy the armies of God because the name of Jehovah was at stake. David sought to overcome his enemies, not for David’s sake, but for God’s sake. For that same reason, David wanted to stand justified before God, to be pardoned of his sin, so that the name of Jehovah might be exalted. And how, might you ask, does pardon from sin glorify God? In every way! It shows the lovingkindness of our God; it shows the forgiveness of our God; and it shows the holiness and purity of God.

**25:12:** This sounds much like Proverbs 1:7, “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge.” The Psalmist is still describing that man who walks in the pathway of Jehovah, that receives guidance from God. Is it the proud who do this? Is it the wise of the world? Is it the haughty? To ask is to answer. Those who shall be instructed are the ones who “feareth Jehovah.” It is not a matter of the willingness of God that the Psalmist addresses, but the ability of the individual heart to receive that instruction. It is only when men are **willing** to receive instruction that their mind is capable of **receiving** such.

**25:13:** Blessings are heaped one upon the other. Peace shall be ours if we follow the Lord, yea, the “peace that passeth understanding” (Phil 4:7). Bertrand Russell, famed agnostic and humanist, admitted that, after a life of toil and woe, he had not found one moment’s peace in his life. The evil are like the troubled sea that can find no rest (Isa. 57:20). But the righteous, those who keep the commandments of God, will inherit the land; they will prosper, and enjoy that “land” where cometh no night.

“*His soul shall dwell at ease*” - The child of God enjoys peace now and rest when this life is over. Many a man has sought contentment,



ease, and happiness. Unfortunately, they have sought it in all the wrong places. While it evades them, it remains within reach - the reach of one's hand and heart to the word of God. "He shall lodge in the chamber of content. One may sleep as soundly in the little bed in the corner as in the Great Bed of Ware; it is not abundance but content that gives true ease" (Spurgeon, 1.395).

**25:14:** The KJV reads, "*The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.*" True friendship with God Almighty is not capable of being understood by the unholy and profane. Barnes explains this verse like this: "The sense is, that those who fear the Lord are admitted to the intimacy of friendship with him; are permitted to come into his presence, and to partake of his counsels; are allowed free access to him; or, as it is more commonly expressed, have fellowship with him" (Barnes).

**25:15:** Hope is found when we turn our eyes "ever toward Jehovah." Those who seek the things that are upon the earth have no hope. Those who seek the things above have God as a refuge, and He will "pluck my feet out of the net."

### **Prayer** **Verses 16-22**

- 16 *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; For I am desolate and afflicted.*
- 17 *The troubles of my heart are enlarged: Oh bring thou me out of my distresses.*
- 18 *Consider mine affliction and my travail; And forgive all my sins.*
- 19 *Consider mine enemies, for they are many; And they hate me with cruel hatred.*
- 20 *Oh keep my soul, and deliver me: Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in thee.*
- 21 *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, For I wait for thee.*
- 22 *Redeem Israel, O God, Out of all of his troubles.*

**25:16-17:** "*I am desolate and afflicted*" – An unknown author wrote the following:

Christ leads me through no darker rooms  
Than he went through before;  
He that into God's kingdom comes,  
Must enter by this door.

*“Desolate”* - The word means properly *one alone; only*; and then, one who is alone, or who is solitary, forsaken, wretched. Many a man has learned that there is no deeper sadness that comes over the mind than comes thinking that we are alone in the world. “When the darkest hour of the night arrives we may expect the dawn; when the sea is at its lowest ebb the tide must surely turn; and when our troubles are enlarged to the greatest degree, then may we hopefully pray, *‘Oh bring thou me out of my distress’*” (Spurgeon).

**25:18:** *“Forgive all my sins”* - The Psalmist realized that his sins had led to his distress in one way or another. Here is “the cry of a soul that is more sick of sin than of pain, and would sooner be forgiven than healed. Blessed is the man to whom sin is more unbearable than disease, he shall not be long before the Lord shall both forgive his iniquity and heal his diseases. Men are slow to see the intimate connection between sin and sorrow, a grace-taught heart along feels it” (Spurgeon).

**25:21:** *“Let integrity and uprightness preserve me”* - How many men may lay claim to these great virtues of integrity and uprightness? Integrity describes a man who is right with others, while uprightness speaks of one who is right with God.

*“I wait for thee”* -- Patience in the life of the child of God will bring blessings immeasurable. Any attempt to wait on God while living an unholy life is mere hypocrisy. Integrity and uprightness go hand in hand with patience.

## ***Lessons***

1. “The kind of sinners who may expect God’s forgiveness appear in this psalm as (1) those who repent, (2) those who seek God’s forgiveness, (3) the meek, or humble, and (4) those who keep the Lord’s commandments” (Coffman, 191).
2. One should take a close look at the words used to describe the effect of sin upon the heart and life of the Psalmist: “desolate, afflicted, troubles enlarged, distresses, affliction, travail, enemies,” etc. See verses 16-19. Sin has its fruit; it is that which leaves the soul ruined by its taskmaster.
3. Those who “wait” for Jehovah will not be put to shame. There will be no occasion for shame or sorrow at the choice they have made. This author has never heard a man express regret for faithfully serving the Lord. On the other hand, we have heard of

many a man who has expressed grief at having once served the Lord, and then turned away.

4. "Show, teach, and guide" ought to be the benchmarks of every man's life. Without God's guidance, a man will stumble in darkness with no idea where he came from, why he is here, or where he is going. The following has long been one of my favorite tributes to the Word of God:

The Bible reveals the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts binding, its histories true, and its decisions immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. The Bible contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here heaven is opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good is its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill your memory, rule your heart, and guide your feet in true righteousness and true holiness. Read it slowly, frequently, prayerfully, meditatively, searchingly, devotionally, and study it constantly, perseveringly, and industriously. Read it through and through until it becomes a part of your being and generates faith that will move mountains. The Bible is a mine of wealth, the source of health, and a world of pleasure. It is given to you in this life, will be opened at the judgment, and will stand forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the least to the greatest of labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

5. Truth is the standard for behavior (verse 5). The truth shall make us free (John 8:32-33); the truth will sanctify us (John 17:17). Truth will stand; error will fall. One author put it this way:

Truth never dies. The ages come and go.  
The mountain wear away, the stars retire.  
Destruction lays earth's mighty cities low;  
And empires, states, and dynasties expire;  
But caught and handed onward by the wise,  
Truth never dies.

Though unreceived and scoffed at through the years;  
Though made the butt of ridicule and jest;  
Though held aloft for mockery and jeers,  
Insulted by the insolence of lies,  
Truth never dies.

It answers not. It does not take offense,  
But with a mighty silence bides its time;

As some great cliff that braves the elements  
And lifts through all the storms its head sublime,  
And never dies.

As rests the Sphinx amid Egyptian sands;  
As looms on high the snowy peak and crest;  
As firm and patient as Gibraltar stands,  
So truth, unwearied, waits the era blessed  
When men shall turn to it with great surprise.  
Truth never dies.

6. Those who seek the Lord are promised that God WILL instruct us in the way, guide us in justice, and teach us His way (verses 8-9).
7. A humble heart that is filled with fear of Jehovah is the beginning of instruction from God (verse 12). The word “fear” suggests reverence and respect toward God.
8. Life’s afflictions and travail are the consequence of sin; either our own sin (as with the Psalmist here), or the sins of others as they might affect our lives.
9. One prayer that should ever be on our lips is that God might “redeem Israel out of all his troubles.”

## ***“Test Of Integrity”***

### ***Introduction***

David is believed to be the author, with nothing to suggest otherwise. “The psalm has all the notes of David’s style, is full of his thoughts and imagery, and is allowed to be his by almost all critics” (Rawlinson, 1.192). The occasion is not known, but it seems to have been at a time when the author was aware of his integrity before God, and had a desire to worship in view of that personal piety.

### ***Analysis***

Mike Vestal has given the following outline that we will follow:

- I. Profession of his integrity, 1-2;
- II. Proof of his integrity, 3-7;
- III. Prayer concerning his integrity, 8-10;
- IV. Persevering in integrity, 11-12. (Vestal, 146).

G. Campbell Morgan suggests verse 6 as the central theme: “The central word of the song may be said to be verse 6, ‘So will I compass Thine altar, O Jehovah’ - suggesting the idea of worship” (Morgan, 230). He then provides the following analysis:

- I. The conditions of personal life necessary to worship, verses 1-6;
- II. The true exercise of worship described, verses 7-8;
- III. A prayer for preparation, verses 9-11;
- IV. Declaration of assurance, verse 12.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Profession of his integrity*** **Verses 1-2**

*1 Judge me, O Jehovah, for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in Jehovah without wavering.*

2 *Examine me, O Jehovah, and prove me; Try my heart and my mind.*

**26:1:** “*integrity*” is the general word for “single hearted devotion,” and according to Barnes, “uprightness, sincerity.” David affirms that he has walked with integrity. In an age when integrity is a passing virtue, God places great importance on it. It is a quality attributed to Job (1:1, 8, and 2:3, 9). Those who profess faith in God should be men and women of integrity. Regarding David’s confidence in his standing with God, Spurgeon commented: “If there be peace within the soul, the blustering storms of slander which howl around us are of little consideration. When the little bird in my bosom sings a merry song, it is no matter to me if a thousand owls hoot at me from without” (Spurgeon).

*trusted in the Lord*” - Barnes notes, “Trust in Jehovah, and an upright life, constituted the evidence of piety, or were the constituents of true religion according to the views of the Hebrews, as they are the constituents of true religion everywhere” (Barnes). The result of such trust will produce steadfastness, “without wavering.”

**26:2:** “*Examine me*” - Three words are used to express the same idea: “*examine, prove, try.*” The use of these together would suggest the most thorough investigation was to be made. He felt that it was essential to his welfare that the most rigid examination should be made. The purpose in this desire for testing might have been to confirm his standing with Jehovah. David wanted to know if there was anything in his life that would prevent him from receiving divine blessings. This attitude is demanded of God’s people today. Notice John 3:20-21. We must have a “love for the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

The “*reins*” (KJV) is simply the heart; the seat of desires and affections. The desire for the proving of the “mind” would suggest the center of understanding. We might inquire, “Do I have the right information? Have I deciphered that information correctly? Is there any error which I might have embraced?” These things must be proven, for only the “truth” can make one free. In addition, is there any affection, or bias, that I might have toward any specific action in my life? All of these, the whole of my life, is to be “proven,” or “tested.” This is of utmost importance if we are to serve God.

### ***Proof of his integrity***

### Verses 3-7

- 3 *For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes; And I have walked in thy truth.*  
4 *I have not sat with men of falsehood; Neither will I go in with dissemblers.*  
5 *I hate the assembly of evil-doers, And will not sit with the wicked.*  
6 *I will wash my hands in innocency: So will I compass thine altar, O Jehovah;*  
7 *That I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard, And tell of all thy wondrous works.*

**26:3:** “The favour or the friendship of God was an object of intense desire with him. The object was so great, the matter was so important, the danger of self deception was so imminent, that he did not dare to trust his own judgment, and he prayed that God would search him” (Barnes). He could reflect upon God’s goodness in the past, and that would thus motivate him to faithfulness. If men would but reflect upon the blessings they receive from God on a daily basis, and be THANKFUL for the bounty of God’s blessings, that would certainly motivate them to seek and serve Jehovah.

It is of utmost importance, that if we are to remain steadfast, God must ever be set before us. Paul the apostle wrote, “Think on those things that are above” (Col. 3:1-2). But not only must we “think” about those things, we must make the application to our lives, and “walk in thy truth.” There are limitations beyond which we cannot go (2 John 9).

**26:4:** These verses (3-5) offer the following reasons as to WHY David felt he deserved justification: (1) God’s lovingkindness, (2) David’s faithfulness to God, “walking in thy truth,” (3) avoiding improper associations, and (4) refusal to join the assembly of evil doers.

Those of “*falsehood*” were not his companions. He knew the danger of having evil companions (1 Cor 15:33). The “dissemblers” are those who “hide their purposes or designs from others, or who conceal their real character and intentions” (Barnes). With these the Psalmist had no association.

“*Neither will I go in with dissemblers*” -- The dissembler plays the hypocrite. They say one thing while practicing another. We cannot allow such men to be role models for our behavior. “Those who

would be transfigured with Jesus, must not be disfigured by conformity to the world. We must needs see, and speak, and trade with the men of this world, but we must on no account take our rest and solace in their empty society.” (Spurgeon).

**26:5:** This is a continuation of the thoughts above. The REASON for his actions toward evil-doers is because he “hates” their assembly. Until men come to hate sin, the appearance of sin, and participation in it, they will not turn away from transgression. Any man who does not hate evil, does not love good to the fullest. It would seem, therefore, that those who “sit” with the wicked, make it clear whose side they are on.

**26:6:** “*Wash my hands*” is symbolic of purity of action; innocence; cf. Pilate who “washed his hands” of the matter at hand. David was expressing his intention to take whatever action was necessary to justify himself before God. It is only thorough proper “washing” that one can ever hope to “compass” the altar of God, or come into His presence. Clarke points out that “it is a mark of respect among the Hindus to walk several times round a superior, and round a temple” (Adam Clarke).

**26:7:** Having (1) examined his past and present life, (2) refused association with the evil, (3) and “washed” his hands in preparation for approach to God, the Psalmist expresses his intentions of speaking to others of his thanksgiving. He would not remain silent; he would tell of the wondrous works of Jehovah. Here is the natural result of faith; “I believed, and therefore did I speak” (2 Corinthians 4:13). “Practice gives no lie to my profession” (Adam Clarke). This verse concludes the PROOF of his integrity; he now expresses a PRAYER unto Jehovah.

### ***Prayer concerning his integrity*** ***Verses 8-10***

8 *Jehovah, I love the habitation of thy house, And the place where thy glory dwelleth.*

9 *Gather not my soul with sinners, Nor my life with men of blood;*

10 *In whose hands is wickedness, And their right hand is full of bribes.*

**26:8:** “*I love the habitation of thy house*” - Those who love God, and fellow believers, will have a strong desire to be at every assembly of the saints. David had a delight in being in the house of God. The



“habitation” here is the tabernacle, but God’s dwelling place in this dispensation is the church of the living God. It is sad that some do not have a desire to come into the assembly of the saints. That desire to assemble with God’s people is an evidence of genuine piety. If a soul does not find pleasure in worshipping God, then he is not really prepared for heaven.

**26:9:** *“Gather not my soul with sinners”* - The idea seems to be that David did not want to be united with the wicked, or in any way be regarded as being among their number. There is danger in association with bad companions (1 Cor. 15:33). Too much company with the wicked will cause us to become corrupted morally and spiritually.

**26:10:** The Psalmist says this about wicked men:

- (1) They are vain and irreligious;
- (2) They are hypocritical;
- (3) They are selfish;
- (4) They are irreligious;
- (5) They are anxious and willing to carry out the wicked schemes with their hands;
- (6) They pervert judgment with bribery.

No wonder David refused to be found in their company, and desired not to be gathered with them in his death.

### ***Persevering in integrity*** ***Verses 11-12***

*11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: Redeem me, and be merciful unto me.*

*12 My foot standeth in an even place: In the congregations will I bless Jehovah.*

**26:11:** David’s assurance of his own integrity is clear. But it is important to notice that David did not stand on his integrity alone. He relied instead upon the mercy of God. It is also important to note that David expressed his intention to “walk” in integrity. Faith finds perfection in an active walk IN that faith. The consequence of a proper walk is Divine blessings of redemption and mercy from the Almighty.

**26:12:** The word rendered “place” is literally “a level region, a

plain,” and the “idea is, either that he was now on smooth and level ground; or that he was walking a straight path, in contradistinction from the crooked and perverse ways of the wicked.” (Barnes).

### ***Lessons***

1. Fellowship with God is only possible when there is NO fellowship with the wicked (verse 4). Notice also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
2. The voice is an important part of worship (verse 7).
3. Preparation is an essential phase in worship (verse 11). So many take worship lightly and make no preparation for it. In fact, they do just the opposite by allowing themselves to stay out late at night, party until the early hours of the morning, fail to read and study the Bible during the week, or neglect a whole host of other things that feeds the soul and prepare it to come into the presence of God on the first day of the week.
4. John Phillips had this interesting homiletic outline:

This psalm is interesting because it gives a rare glimpse of David's personal spiritual life. There are six movements to the psalm as we see a soul under the searchlight of the Almighty. The psalm tells us six things we should ever bear in mind as we journey through life.

- I. A Divinely OPEN life (26:1-2);
- II. A Divinely OBEDIENT life (26:3);
- III. A Divinely OVERCOMING life (26:4-6);
- IV. A Divinely OVERFLOWING life (26:7-8);
- V. A Divinely OBSTRUCTED life (26:9-10);
- VI. A Divinely ORDERED life (26:11-12). (Phillips, 196)

## *“Faith Of The Soldier”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David. Beyond this, there is nothing in the Psalm itself that might lend help in determining the author or occasion of the Psalm. We can judge from the Psalm itself that David was being pursued by his enemies, that he was shut out from the house of the Lord, that he was being subjected to cruel slander. Various titles have been suggested. Among these, “Wait in Confidence” (Roy Deaver, 88), and “Sunshine and Shadow” (Burton Coffman, 205) are among the best we found. Mike Vestal gives the Psalm the title, “Wait On The Lord,” and the Pulpit Commentary offers a similar title, “The Triumph of a Warrior’s Faith.” Spurgeon comments that “it is a song of cheerful hope, well fitted for those in trial who have learned to lean upon the Almighty arm” (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

Mike Vestal has the following four- point outline, which we will follow:

- I. The Soldier Warring, 1-3;
- II. The Soldier Worshipping, 4-6;
- III. The Soldier Walking, 7-12;
- IV. The Soldier Waiting, 13-14. (Vestal, 152)

One might also consider Roy Deaver’s outline: Confidence, 1-3; Desire, 4; Blessings, 5-6; Prayer, 7-12; Confidence, 13; and Admonition, 14 (Deaver, 88).

### ***Commentary***

#### ***The Soldier Warring*** **Verses 1-3**

- 1 *Jehovah is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear?  
Jehovah is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?*

- 2 *When evil-doers came upon me to eat up my flesh, Even mine adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.*
- 3 *Though a host should encamp against me, My heart shall not fear: Though war should rise against me, Even then will I be confident.*

**27:1:** These three verses describe the “soldier” of God facing the enemies that would destroy him and blaspheme the name of God. There was a plurality of “enemies” and “foes” desiring to pounce on David as a wild animal upon its prey. Martin Luther’s hymn, ‘A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,’ is from the Psalm.

*“The Lord is my light”* - See also Micah 7:8 and Psalms 84:11. The soldier of God is provided light to guide him. Psalms 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Notice that it is said that the Lord IS the light, not merely that He supplies light unto us. While darkness suggests distress, trouble, and sorrow, the word “light” stands for all that is the opposite of these.

When I served in the Coast Guard, each soldier was issued an M-1 rifle along with its Manual of Operation. One can only imagine the complete uselessness of the M-1 without the manual to guide him. So it is with life. Without a compass to guide man, there is no direction.

*“and my salvation”* - In the Old Testament, ‘salvation’ had reference to deliverance from physical danger. But there was also the spiritual element present (cf. Psalms 51:14 and 79:9). We must not forget that the salvation that is offered by God to the creature man can only be attained on God’s terms.

*“the strength of my life”* - The expression describes a stronghold or fortress which the enemies could not penetrate. Notice Psalms 18:2 and 46:1.

*“of whom shall I be afraid?”* - The powers of darkness are not to be feared. Light dispels darkness and removes the fears that lurk in the dark corners of the unknown. When I was a child I would envision those little “monsters” that hide in the closet, only to see them for what they were when the light was applied thereto. “If God be for us, who can possibly be against us?”

**27:2-3:** The overthrow of the enemy is in view here. Like ravening wolves seeking to devour David, it was they who were overcome, who

“stumbled and fell.” David gives an honest evaluation of the enemy. The literal rendering (according to Barnes) would be “in the drawing near against me of the wicked to eat up my flesh.” From these verses we learn several important truths relative to the enemies of God:

- 1) *They are legion* - There is a great host of the enemy. They are not minuscule, but massive. The one great enemy is our adversary the Devil, but he has a host of angels, and he uses men who love not the truth as his agents in order to accomplish his purpose.
- 2) *The enemy is vicious* - They came upon David “to eat up my flesh.” When one considers the enemies of David, and the lengths to which they went to shame and destroy him, one is encouraged by this man’s faithfulness in the face of all odds. Absalom committed fornication with the concubines of David in the sight of all Israel. Saul hounded David, mercilessly and with wicked intent. “The enemies of our souls are not deficient in frocity, they yield no quarter, and out to have none in return” (Spurgeon).
- 3) *The enemy is wicked* - The Hebrew (*ra’a*) suggests something that is spoiled, good for nothing. The connotation that goes with this word suggests the worst in a person.
- 4) *The enemy has waged war* - This in verse 3. Those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).
- 5) *The enemy will be overthrown* - Those who came upon David stumbled and fell. Mike Vestal suggests “the language employed has parallels with that used in the story of David’s fight with Goliath” (Vestal, 153).

Spurgeon points out that “it is a hopeful sign for us when the wicked hate us; if our foes were godly men it would be a sore sorrow, but as for the wicked their hatred is better than their love” (Spurgeon).

*“my heart shall not fear”* - Though the enemy should “encamp against” the soldier of God, David said he would not fear. In view of the deliverance that God had provided in the past, David was confident that victory would be his. Courage is the suppression of fear. The confidence deep in the heart enables us to overcome our doubts to the glory of God.

*“though war should rise against me”* - Though preparation should be made, and the armies of the enemies array themselves against God, “even then will I be confident.” The servant of God must recognize that his lot in life will not be all peaceful harmony and coexistence with those of the world. Truth and error simply cannot

coexist. Light and darkness cannot occupy the same room. When error faces truth, the result will be confrontation.

“Doubtless the shadow of anticipated trouble is, to timorous minds, a more prolific source of sorrow than the trouble itself, but faith puts a strengthening plaister to the back of courage, and throws out the window the dregs of the cup of trembling” (Spurgeon, 2.2).

### ***The Soldier Worshipping*** **Verses 4-6**

- 4 *One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of Jehovah, And to inquire in his temple.*
- 5 *For in the day of trouble he will keep me secretly in his pavilion: In the covert of his tabernacle will he hide me; He will lift me up upon a rock.*
- 6 *And now shall my head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. And I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Jehovah.*

**27:4:** A man in David’s position could easily be overwhelmed by fear and discouragement. When one reflects upon the life of David, he is impressed with the steadfast faith that David had in God, IN SPITE OF THE TRIALS he faced. At a young age, his own brethren despised him. As king to be, he was hounded by Saul. When he finally acquired the throne, his own children sought to rob him of his rightful position. The Psalms reflect the emotional highs and lows that this man faced. How could anybody go through so much, and maintain his strength and confidence? Here is the key!

“*one thing have I asked of Jehovah*” - He was not a man of divided aims or allegiance. There was “one thing” which filled his innermost thoughts and desires, and that was that he might “dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days” of his life. Paul used similar language when he wrote to the Philippians, “This one thing I do...” (Philippians 3:13). “The man of one book is eminent, the man of one pursuit is successful” (Spurgeon). Spurgeon also quoted John Stoughton:

Some interpreters vary concerning what the Psalmist aims at; I understand thus much in a generality, which is clear, that he means a communion and fellowship with God, which is that *one thing*, which if a Christian had, he needs desire no more: that we should all desire and desire again and be in love with, and that is enough

even to satisfy us, the fruition of God, and the beholding of him in his ordinances, in his temple, to have correspondence and fellowship and communion with him there. O God, vouchsafe us that! Now this is so infinitely sweet, that it was the Psalmist's only desire, and the sum of all his desires here, and therefore much more in the tabernacle of heaven which doth make up the consummation and completeness of all our happiness. (Spurgeon).

*that will I seek after*" – Cf. Matthew 6:33; 7:7; Colossians 3:1. Seeking is not a casual, passive approach to the desired end, but rather the laborious, intent, exhaustive search to attain the goal.

*"dwell in the house of the Lord..."* – We agree here with Mike Vestal: "To dwell in God's house was not merely to frequent His sanctuary as a place of worship (although the idea is definitely included), but to be a member of his household, and as such to have intimate communion with Him" (Vestal, 154). Barnes says that "the language here is obviously taken from the employment of those who had their habitation near the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple, whose business it was to attend constantly on the service of God, and to minister in his courts" (Barnes, 214). David was saying here (and in other Psalms as well, cf. 23:6; 26:8; 64:4; 84:4, et al) that he would live as if he were constantly in the presence of God, engaged in the holy things of God. Should this not be the desire of every child of God, especially those of us who live this side of the cross with its greater blessings and privileges? Indeed. One cannot help but see the determination on the part of the Psalmist to live eternally with God.

*"all the days of my life"* – Barnes comments here are on the mark: "To him the service of God on earth was not burdensome, nor did he anticipate that he would ever become weary of praising his Maker. How can a man be prepared for an eternal heaven who finds the worship of God on earth irksome and tedious? (Barnes). Suggested in this statement is the perseverance needed to enter that heavenly home. One must remain faithful "until death" or even "in the face of death."

*"to behold the beauty of the Jehovah and to inquire in his temple"* – David loved to go to the place of public worship and to praise God (cf. Psalms 122:1, "I was glad when they said, Let us go up to the house of God"). David enjoyed the privilege of meditating upon God's loving kindness and delighted in contemplating the character of the Almighty. How needed is this attribute today! Few seem to

appreciate the importance of worshipping God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Rather than a reverent approach to God, in simplicity of heart and according to His directions, many are enamored with sensationalism and gimmickry. The worship to God has become polluted, even among those who are supposed to be members of the body of Christ. Since the temple had not yet been built, we must take the word as a reference to the tabernacle. The ASV marginal note renders the words, “consider his temple.”

**27:5:** *“For in the day of trouble”* – For the soldier of God, days of trouble will most certainly come. When we are in need of God’s closeness, we have a promise that it will be supplied. It is precisely during the moment of trouble that God will *“keep me secretly.”* The comfort and consolation that is available to the child of God, even during trials and tribulation, is not readily apparent to those of the world. Not only will God keep me in *“his pavilion,”* but He will also keep me *“in the covert of his tabernacle.”* What language could more fittingly describe the closeness that we have with God? The thought of protection and strength abounds.

**27:6:** Still in the context of dwelling in the tabernacle of God, of offering praise to the Almighty, the Psalmist expresses a great sense of security.

*“Now shall my head be lifted up”* - Coffman’s comments on this verse are worthy of repetition in full:

There is no safety or security on earth that can be compared with the confident stability of the soul that is truly anchored ‘in the Lord.’ If a government forbids Christians, they may reply with Peter, ‘We must obey God rather than men.’ If obstacles are multiplied, we may say with Paul, ‘None of these things move me.’ If our lives are threatened, we may remember the words of the Christ who said, ‘Be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell’ (Matthew 10:28) (Coffman, 207).

*“I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy”* - David had said to Araunah, “Nay, but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing” (2 Sam. 24:24). Of his own monetary wealth, David contributed to the building of the temple (1 Chron 29:3).

*“I will sing praises unto the Lord”* - The sacrifices and singing were signs of thanksgiving and gratitude. Mike Vestal notes, “We must be



careful lest we plead with the Father for assistance in the midst of our battles and then forget to praise Him after He gives us the victory” (Vestal, 154-155).

### ***The Soldier Walking*** **Verses 7-12**

- 7 *Hear, O Jehovah, when I cry with my voice: Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.*
- 8 *When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; My heart said unto thee, Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.*
- 9 *Hide not thy face from me; Put not thy servant away in anger: Thou hast been my help; Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*
- 10 *When my father and my mother forsake me, Then Jehovah will take me up.*
- 11 *Teach me thy way, O Jehovah; And lead me in a plain path, Because of mine enemies.*
- 12 *Deliver me not over unto the will of mine adversaries: For false witnesses are risen up against me, And such as breathe out cruelty.*

**27:7:** There is an obvious change of mood of the Psalm at this point. In fact, the mood change is so dramatic that some writers have supposed there were originally two separate Psalms, joined together by some editor. But the change in language does not really present a problem. “Every Christian has experienced that swift transition from jubilation to fearful apprehension, and it is not unreasonable to suppose such a swift change on the part of the author here” (Coffman, 204). The world of experience is made up of mountains and valleys. “There are times when one’s faith might soar, and there are occasions which really put one’s faith to the test. So it was with David. It was his great concern that God not forsake him but ‘hear,’ ‘have mercy,’ and ‘answer’ his cries” (Vestal, 155).

*“Hear, O Jehovah when I cry with my voice”* - With all the deep-felt conviction of his heart, and with the strong belief that God would answer and that He was willing to assist and help, the Psalmist still felt that he had no reason to hope for God’s aid unless he called upon Him. The “cry with my voice” suggests that David prayed audibly or aloud. “So-called ‘silent prayer’ indulged upon many occasions is in no sense equal to one that is vocalized” (Coffman, 208). We dare not forget, however, that the silent prayer that arises from a sincere and pure heart is of far greater value than that audible prayer that is but

a pretense and a show in the presence of men. “Pharisees care not a fig for the Lord’s hearing them, so long as they are heard of men, charm their own pride with their sounding devotions; but with a genuine man, the Lord’s ear is everything” (Spurgeon).

**27:8:** The passage is most difficult in the Hebrew as indicated by the various renderings one might find. The order of the words in the original is as follows: “To thee said my heart -Seek ye my face - thy face, Lord, will I seek.” Barnes points out the marginal reading, “My heart said unto thee, Let my face seek thy face” (Barnes, 238). The King James has inserted three words to render it, “When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” The ASV is essentially the same. This seems to be the smoothest rendering and carries more sense than the others. The verse emphasizes the determination of the Psalmist to pursue God and to trust in Him. There are two thoughts that emerge from this verse: (1) God had communicated with David, instructing him to search out the face of the Almighty. We learn that God is a communicating God, intent on finding man, and thus extending to each human being intimate fellowship with the Creator. (2) The Psalmist determined to take advantage of the overtures of God, and put forth the initiative to thus find God. What great and marvelous encouragement this verse holds forth for all who would come to find God. The New Testament equivalent of this verse is found in the immortal words of Paul on Mars Hill: “And he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:26-27). An important lesson to be learned from this verse is that if we would have the Lord hear our voice, we must be careful to respond to HIS voice.

**27:9:** The reference to the “face” of Jehovah signifies God’s favor. To “hide” the face is to turn away in displeasure; to turn the face toward one is to indicate favor. David did not want to be “put away,” but desired free access to God; he longed for that fellowship that comes from being in God’s favor. There is a note of despair in the writer’s words, but the reason for this cannot be determined. It is likely that fear may have contributed to such urgency. “A smile from the Lord is the greatest of comforts, his frown the worst of ills” (Spurgeon).

**27:10:** “*When my father and my mother forsake me*” – The Psalmist is not suggesting that his parents DID this, but is rather

stating his confidence SHOULD they ever act in this way. The commitment of the Psalmist to follow God at all costs seems to be the meaning of these words. "Though every other tie that binds heart to heart should dissolve, this will remain; though a case might occur in which we could not be sure of the love that naturally springs out of the most tender earthly relationships, yet we can always confide in his love" (Barnes, 241). This view is supported by Gaebelien, here quoted by Coffman: "For had my father and my mother forsaken me, Then had Jehovah taken me up" (Coffman, 209). Yes, it is true: "If the milk of human kindness should dry up even from their breasts, there is a Father who never forgets" (Spurgeon).

**27:11:** "*because of mine enemies*" - The marginal rendering is, "those which observe me." The word here translated "enemies" is derived from a verb that signifies "to twist; to twist together; and then, to oppress; to treat as an enemy" (Barnes, 241). The enemies were harsh and cruel and sought to charge David with any possible immorality or inconsistency. Thus, David sought to be instructed in the correct way.

*"lead me in a plain path"* - Several things of interest here:

- 1) "*Lead*" suggests proper instruction, example, training; all that goes into reaching a goal in the proper way.
- 2) "*Me*" suggests the personal aspect. Each individual must be sure he, personally and individually, desires to be led properly and is determined to make the application to his life.
- 3) "*Path*" suggests a standard; herein lies the great tragedy of our age, that men have cast off the only standard that can lead to any quality of life at all. Without God's word as a standard, society is like a ship without a rudder.
- 4) "*Plain*" suggests the simplicity of that path, that of instruction. Used as a moral term, it implies that which is right or proper. "It is wonderful to observe how honest simplicity baffles and outwits the craftiness of wickedness. Truth is wisdom. Honesty is the best policy" (Spurgeon).

**27:12:** "*Deliver Me not over unto the will of mine adversaries*" - In other words, "Don't allow the enemy to accomplish their desires, and do not allow them to carry out their plans and purposes concerning

me.”

*“False witnesses”* - There are a remarkable number of references in the Psalms to this particular tactic of the enemy of God and His people. Lies are the weapons of the Devil’s warfare, and false witnesses the soldiers in his army. We should not be surprised, therefore, to see the same tactics used against God’s people today.

*“such as breathe out cruelty”* - It was said of Saul of Tarsus that he “breathed out threatenings and slaughter” against the disciples of the Lord. Barnes says that this means “they meditate on this; they pant for it” (Barnes).

### ***The Soldier Waiting*** **Verses 13-14**

13 *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah In the land of the living.*

14 *Wait for Jehovah: Be strong, And let thy heart take courage; Yea, wait thou for Jehovah.*

**27:13:** Here the Psalmist expresses his faith in God. Though some of the Psalms suggest immediate answer to prayer, this does not seem to be the case here.

The words *“I had fainted,”* though not in the original, are supplied to smooth out the language and express the meaning of the passage. The meaning seems to be, “I would have lost my faith, had I not believed that God would deliver me from the trials and tribulations of this life.” Faith consists of seeing the unseen, and believing that God will keep His promises. Indeed, all of us would have “thrown in the towel” long ago if we did not believe that God would eventually take care of us. It is the realization that divine justice and retribution will eventually be meted out to the wicked that keeps the tormented soul from giving up in despair. Compare with Job 19:25-27.

**27:14:** *“Wait for Jehovah”* - Barnes suggests “this is the main lesson which the psalm is designed to convey. The object is to induce others, from the experience of the Psalmist, to trust in the Lord; to rely upon him; to wait for his interposition when all other resources fail” (Barnes, 242).

Notice that the Psalmist encourages, *“let thy heart take courage.”*

When the heart attains courage, the hand will rise in support.

The underlying message to all of God's people is, "BE STRONG! THE BATTLE IS WELL WORTH IT, AND THE REWARD WILL BE YOURS!" See also 1 Corinthians 15:58, and Galatians 6:9.

### ***Lessons***

1. We are soldiers of God. We have been enlisted from the day we took the pledge by confessing the name of Christ before men. The enemy has been waging war since the Garden of Eden, and with each passing generation, the torch is passed on to those who follow. We are locked in a battle with the enemies of God. What will assure us victory? (1) A confident look to the Captain of our souls, (2) an honest evaluation of the enemy, and (3) courage to press the battle.
2. When God is our strength, there is no fear of men. "*Whom shall I fear?*" "Neither spiritual nor military heroes do exploits through cowardice. Courage is a necessary virtue. In Jehovah is the best possible foundation for unflinching intrepidity" (*William S. Plumer*).
3. A focused life on the "one thing" that is of most importance is a life of peace, happiness, and strength.
4. The seeker of truth will look to God for his guidance, verse 11.
5. "*The Lord is my light.*" - "*Light*" which makes all things visible, was the first made of all visible things; and whether God did it for our example, or no, I know not; but ever since, in imitation of this manner of God's proceeding, the first thing we do when we intend to do anything, is to get us "*light*" (*Sir Richard Baker*).
6. "If a man, travelling in the King's highway, be robbed between sun and sun, satisfaction is recoverable upon the county where the robbery was made; but if he takes his journey in the night, being an unseasonable time, the it is at his own peril, he must take what falls. So, if a man keep in *God's ways*, he shall be sure of God's protection; but if he stray out of them, he exposeth himself to danger" (*Robert Skinner*, 1636).

## *“Prayer and Praise”*

### ***Introduction***

Roy Deaver entitles this Psalm, “An Urgent Plea In Time Of Peril” (Deaver, 91). Coffman follows Kyle Yates with “An Answered Prayer” (Coffman, 211). There is no reason to doubt the Davidic authorship, although the exact occasion for its composure cannot be discerned. Mike Vestal suggests that “the circumstances may have been David’s flight from Absalom’s army, since mischief and treachery are involved (verse 3), and the concluding verses would be fitting for a king whose land was torn by civil war” (Vestal, 158). Whatever the occasion, “It is another of those ‘songs in the night’ of which the pen of David was so prolific” (Spurgeon, 2.20).

### ***Analysis***

As the Psalm opens the cry is urgent. Death evidently threatened the Psalmist. He cries out for deliverance. Evidently the prayer was answered, and the prayer gives way to praise. Hence, we find in the Psalm (1) a plea, verses 1-2, (2) a prayer, verses 3-5, and (3) praise, verses 6-9. Willmington provided the following homiletic outline:

- I. David’s Dependence (28:1-5), wherein David asks the Lord to do two things:
  - A. Protect me! (28:1-2);
  - B. Punish them! (28:4-5).
- II. David’s Delight (28:6-9).

We will use the three-fold division of Plea, Prayer and Praise.

### ***Commentary***

#### **Plea Verses 1-2**

- 1 Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I call: My rock, be not thou deaf unto me; Lest, if thou be silent unto me, I become like them that go down into the pit.*

2 *Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.*

**28:1:** “unto thee will I call” – David was aware of the extreme danger that he faced. “God, please do not turn a deaf ear!” David’s faith sustained him, and he sought help from God, “my rock.” The term “rock” occurs more than two dozen times in the Psalms and is suggestive of strength. Men must rely upon the Rock of Ages for their strength in this life, lest they call upon the rocks to fall on them on the Judgment Day.

*“be thou not deaf unto me”* – The language is anthropomorphic. Should God fail to hear and answer his prayer, it would be AS IF God were deaf, at least unto David. “God is said to hear prayer when he grants it, to be deaf to prayer when he withholds the boon requested” (Rawlinson, 1.208).

*“I become like them that go down into the pit”* - If David did not receive help from God, he would be crushed, without hope, and his situation would be most desperate. He could not bear up under the troubles he was facing. The “pit” is a metaphor for death, much like Sheol. The verse suggests that there was a very real threat upon David’s life.

**28:2:** The “voice of my supplication” would suggest audible prayer on David’s part. The lifting up of the hands denotes supplication and request. The word “oracle” comes from ‘*debir*’ and means the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle or temple. God would meet men at the mercy seat. No wonder David lifted his hands “toward the holy oracle” or the holy place.

*“When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.”* Originally, the idea was probably that the hands would be outstretched to receive the blessings from God. But as Rawlinson noted, “later on, the lifting up of the hands seems to have been regarded as symbolizing the lifting up of the heart (Lam. 3:41)” (Rawlinson, 1.207).

### **Prayer Verses 3-5**

3 *Draw me not away with the wicked, And with the workers of iniquity; That speak peace with their neighbors, But mischief is in their hearts.*

- 4 *Give them according to their work, and according to the wickedness of their doings: Give them after the operation of their hands; Render to them their desert.*
- 5 *Because they regard not the works of Jehovah, Nor the operation of his hands, He will break them down and not build them up.*

**28:3:** Notice the reference to the “wicked,” the “workers of iniquity,” and the “mischief” in the hearts of these enemies of David. The three words, when combined in this verse, clearly describe the wicked forces that David was facing. The “wicked” had no rest, for they are like the “troubled sea...whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa. 57:20). The “workers of iniquity” have cast off all rules; they are in open rebellion to their God. Mischief is in their heart. David did not want to be drawn away with such evil men. He recognized the danger of association with the wicked. Such are hypocritical, and their influence toward the wrong is certainly strong. This verse has led some to conclude that the reference was to Absalom. “He maintained his usual acceptance around David’s palace by such friendly greetings at the same time while he was plotting the overthrow of his father the King” (Coffman, 213).

There is as much in this verse a request that he not share in the fate of the evil workers. “David fears lest he should be bound up in the their bundle, drawn to their doom; and the fear is an appropriate one for every godly man. The best of the wicked are dangerous company in time, and would make terrible companions for eternity; we must avoid them in their pleasures, if we would not be confounded with them in their miseries” (Spurgeon).

There is a line of demarcation between the righteous and the wicked, and it runs through the Bible like a fine thread. This passage is one of a legion of passages that make this distinction. Here the Psalmist mentions the “workers of iniquity,” which implies the opposite group who are the workers of righteousness.

**28:4:** The presence of such imprecatory language throughout the Psalter should not trouble the child of God. There is nothing wrong with praying that God would render justice upon men, and that according to their works and deeds. “In itself considered, there is no impropriety in praying that justice may be done to the violators of law” (Barnes). David’s request was a righteous request.

**28:5:** *“regard not the works of Jehovah”* - The idea is, they take no notice of God; He is not in their thoughts, much less their lives. It is



precisely because these workers of iniquity regard not the works of Jehovah that makes David's request a reasonable one. "This was no wild, wrathful curse, but the plea of a man who knew God's Word, knew something of the rights and wrongs of human life and society, and who saw the law of cause and effect in God's moral government of the world" (Phillips, 213).

There is in verses 4 and 5 a contrast between the "operation of their hands" and the "operation of his (God's) hands." While men do evil, God does only good. While they are hypocritical, God is absolutely true, not capable of telling a lie. While they cry peace, while planning mischief, God offers peace that is pure, peaceable, and of Divine origin. The wicked do not pay attention to what God HAS DONE ("the works of Jehovah") nor the things He is PRESENTLY DOING ("operation of his hands").

### Praise 6-9

- 6 *Blessed be Jehovah, Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.*  
7 *Jehovah is my strength and my shield; My heart hath trusted in him, and I am helped: Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; And with my song will I praise him.*  
8 *Jehovah is their strength, And he is a stronghold of salvation to his anointed.*  
9 *Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: Be their shepherd also, and bear them up for ever.*

There is a noticeable change in the tenor of the Psalm at verse 6. It is a change from a humble and plaintive entreaty to rejoicing and thanksgiving. "The cause of the change would seem to have been a confident assurance, arising out of the very act of prayer, that the prayer is heard and granted, so that the happy results prayed for are certain to follow" (Rawlinson, 1.208).

**28:6:** This verse and the next contain a statement of praise unto Jehovah. It would appear that the prayer was offered to God, and the answer was immediate. The Psalmist does not provide us with any details, but it is confidently affirmed that God has "*heard the voice of my supplication.*"

**28:7:** Note the progress: (1) First there is trust; (2) second, he was helped; (3) third, there was rejoicing; (4) finally, the Psalmist

praised God. It is significant that there is no help from Jehovah until we place our trust in him. Likewise, men cannot rejoice unless they have a proper standing with Jehovah. Genuine joy is found in reconciliation unto God. The Psalmist's praise is the outpouring of a thankful heart. Adam Clarke gave this sense of the verse: "I have the fullest persuasion that God hears, will answer, and will save me" (Adam Clarke). When we come to appreciate the greatness of our God, we will naturally respond in song and praise unto Him.

**28:8:** The writer proclaims Jehovah as "their" strength. But whose strength? It is none other than "his anointed." "But they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint." (Isa. 40:31).

**28:9:** Notice the numerous metaphors used in this Psalm. God is a "rock" (verse 1), our "strength" and "shield" (verse 7), a "stronghold" (verse 8) and "shepherd" (verse 9). It is also significant to note that Israel was possessed by God. They are referred to as "thy" people. We do not own ourselves; we belong to God; notice 1 Cor 6:19-20.

### ***Lessons***

1. The fundamental message is one of praise to, and trust in, Jehovah. Even in times of what may seem to be insurmountable odds, we are to keep our trust in God and believe that He will work things out to the fulfillment of His purpose and our eternal good.
2. God is the only true source of strength. Those who rely upon their own power to overcome the problems of life will be dashed upon the rocks of disappointment. The last number of years we have heard of "American pride," and "Yankee ingenuity." Our military is the strongest in the world, and we, through sheer determination, are convinced that there is no barrier too big that we cannot overcome. But true strength lies in a proper fear of Jehovah God. Unfortunately, this is one area in which our nation is woefully lacking.
3. There is nothing inherently wrong with asking God to render vengeance upon those who are evil. The souls under the altar, beheaded for the cause of Christ, continue to cry out, "How long...?" Can we do less?
4. Beware of the wicked; the false teacher! They are smooth with the tongue, but they bite like a serpent. Association with them will lead to ruin for the child of God.

5. God will only help those who trust in Him.

## *“The Voice of God In The Thunderstorms of Life”*

### ***Introduction***

David is the author of this Psalm. The occasion is uncertain, but it appears to have been during a time of trouble in the life of David, perhaps during his flight from either Saul or Absalom. One of the unique features of this Psalm is that the name Jehovah appears eighteen times in eleven verses, more than any other of the Psalms in this first book of Psalms.

### ***Analysis***

A good title for this Psalm could be, “The Voice Of God In The Thunderstorms of Life.” We will divide the Psalm as follows:

- I. A Call to praise the Lord, as the thunderstorms draw near, verses 1-2;
- II. The Storm described, verses 3-9;
- III. God gives strength, and peace during the time of need, verses 10-11.

Winfred Clark had this comment: “This has been called a ‘nature psalm.’ Such grows out of the description of the thunderstorm that we find within these verses. One is made to wonder if the writer was looking at a storm, or had just seen one pass, at the time of this writing” (Winfred Clark, 162). Brother Clark then gives the following outline:

- I. Praise That Is Due Him, verses 1-2;
- II. Power Demonstrated, verses 3-9;
- III. Protection Is Available, verses 10-11.

“Just as the eighth Psalm is to be read by moonlight, when the stars are bright, as the nineteenth needs the rays of the rising sun to bring out its beauty, so this can be best rehearsed beneath the black wing

of tempest, by the glare of the lightning, or amid that dubious dusk which heralds the war of elements. The verses march to the tune of the thunderbolts” (Spurgeon).

### **Commentary**

#### **A Call to praise the Lord, as the thunderstorms draw near Verses 1-2**

- 1 *Ascribe unto Jehovah, O ye sons of the mighty, Ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength.*
- 2 *Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name; Worship Jehovah in holy array.*

**29:1-2** - The “*sons of the mighty*” is the Hebrew plural form of one of the names of God. This has led some to believe that reference is to the angelic host, pictured here as having power and strength. Coffman suggests that the reference is to the “rich, the powerful, the rulers and authorities of the world. The angels of heaven need no such exhortation, but the mighty of earth stand in the utmost need of it” (Coffman, 221).

“*in holy array*” is rendered “*in the beauty of holiness*” in the KJV. Reference is to the state of the heart, that beauty that exists in holiness and purity. Winfred Clark takes this phrase to mean in the “right manner” (Winfred Clark, 164). It would seem that both of these principles must find application in acceptable worship. There must be “spirit” and “truth” (John 4:24). The last part of this verse supports the interpretation that the mighty are the renowned of the earth. It is time that our own congressmen and senators, our justices on the Supreme Court, and even the President himself recognize that they have been placed in positions to serve God by serving our country justly and with equity.

#### **The Storm described Verses 3-9**

- 3 *The voice of Jehovah is upon the waters: The God of glory thundereth, Even Jehovah upon many waters.*
- 4 *The voice of Jehovah is powerful; The voice of Jehovah is full of majesty.*
- 5 *The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars; Yea, Jehovah breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.*

6 *He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild-ox.*

7 *The voice of Jehovah cleaveth the flames of fire.*

8 *The voice of Jehovah shaketh the wilderness; Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.*

9 *The voice of Jehovah maketh the hinds to calve, And strippeth the forests bare: And in his temple everything saith, Glory.*

**29:3:** When a thunderstorm is present, it cannot be ignored. The sound of the waters falling, and the noise of the thunder, evidence power. It is there, and cannot be ignored. In like manner, God is present, and when He speaks, one dare not ignore! Like mighty thunder, God's voice demands attention.

The word "is" has been supplied by the translators. Literally it would read, "The voice of Jehovah upon the waters." The writer may have been looking to the west from whence a great storm was rolling in from the Mediterranean Sea.

**29:4:** The word of God is powerful; it has strength. It is majestic in its tone and message. Coffman makes this interesting observation: "That voice is here metaphorically presented as the thunder, bringing to mind instantly the reference in Revelation to the effect that 'The seven thunders uttered their voices'" (Coffman, 222). This Psalm actually makes reference to the "voice of Jehovah" seven times in verses 3- 9.

**29:5:** "*the cedars*" - These trees were used to construct the temple of Solomon and were famous for their strength and beauty. See 1 Kings 4:33, Psalms 92:12 and Ezra 3:7. The voice of God is like a powerful storm that can twist the limbs off these great cedars or splinter them into a thousand pieces of kindling wood with one bolt of lightning.

**29:6:** The storm that the writer was observing tore off the large branches, uprooted even the largest of the cedars, and tossed these trees about like calves dancing in the field. Such is the power and majesty of Jehovah God. The strongest enemy cannot stand! The "wild ox" has been rendered "unicorn" by some.

**29:7:** "*cleaveth*" is from a Hebrew word (*ḥhatzab*) which means "to cut, to hew, to hew out" (Barnes). Reference is to the lightning that accompanied the storm. "The image is either that it seems to be cut out, or cut into tongues and streaks, or, more properly, that the

clouds seem to be cut or hewed so as to make openings or paths for the lightning” (Barnes, 250).

**29:8:** The word “*shaketh*” used here means to “dance; to be whirled or twisted upon anything; to twist, or writhe; and then to tremble, to quake” (Barnes). Forests are made to “tremble” at a violent storm. The forest of Kadesh was on the southeastern boarder of Edom. There does not appear to be anything special in the reference to this forest, but simply a suggestion of an image familiar to his readers. The last part of this verse suggests that David was seeking to emphasize the power and might of Jehovah, not the storm. The storm merely served as a means by which the power of the Almighty could be illustrated.

**29:9:** “*hinds to calve*” is a reference to the animals of the forest, and the consternation produced because of the storm. “Plutarch stated that the shepherds reported that ‘Sheep left alone in a thunderstorm do indeed cast their young’ (Rawlinson, 1.213). The forests are “stripped bare” because of the storm. The author once observed a storm come through Ada, Oklahoma in which the spring leaves were stripped from some of the trees as if fall had arrived in full. The voice of God makes the fearful and ungodly to tremble, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, joint and marrow (Hebrews 4:12).

**God gives strength, and peace  
during the time of need  
Verses 10-11**

*10 Jehovah sat as King at the Flood; Yea, Jehovah sitteth as King for ever.*

*11 Jehovah will give strength unto his people; Jehovah will bless his people with peace.*

**29:10:** This verse, along with the next, constitute a statement of care and strength for His people. He is KING, and as a King, He rules over His people. There is a reason why the word Flood is capitalized in the ASV. “The word for Flood here is significant, for it is found elsewhere only in Genesis 6:11, and only to the Flood in the days of Noah” (Coffman, 227). There are, therefore, suggestions of the judgment of God upon man, that “DAY” being likened unto the power demonstrated in a raging storm.

The Psalmist reassures his readers that in spite of the force and power of God’s word upon men, God, as King, will care for His

people and keep them safe from the flood. In addition, David assures his readers that God's reign is eternal, "for ever."

**29:11:** The calm disposition of the Psalmist is reflected in the absence of fear in the midst of this storm. God would take care of him, and the realization of this care produced peace in the mind of the writer. So it is with the storms of life. Those who have placed their confidence in Jehovah will be able to weather the storms. While all about them is "thunder," and "lightning," and "floods" of destruction; deep inside, the believer will be confident in the providence of God, and serenity will surround the soul.

### ***Lessons***

1. "The storms of life do come. If we watch carefully, even in the storm, we can see the majesty and power of Jehovah. He is our King. He will give us strength. And, when the storm is over, He will give us peace - wonderful peace" (Deaver, 95).
2. The tremendous power of a thunderstorm is but a minuscule amount of the power of our God. In fact, His power is unlimited, absolute, and eternal.
3. God is the King of our lives. He rules over us, for our good, and for His glorification.



## *“Remembering God In Times Of Sickness ”*

### ***Introduction***

This is a song of praise for deliverance from some trying situation. Coffman entitles this Psalm, “Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Death,” (Coffman, 231) reflecting his understanding of its background. Various opinions have been given as to the occasion for the Psalm, and the possibilities would include (1) a reflection of David in older years on his past mistakes and deliverance; (2) the dedication of the “house” of David (as per the KJV subscript); (3) the numbering of the people and the pestilence which followed and David’s building of the altar (1 Chron. 2:1). It is believed to have been written by David, as stated in the subtitle. The language of the Psalm does not forbid the second position, and in view of the subtitle, it would appear that this is the more reasonable position. The occasion for the writing was some illness from which the writer had just recovered. This is evident from verses 2, 3, and 9. Also from 3 and 9 it is certain that the disease was serious, of such nature that the writer anticipated death. It was only through his prayer that healing was granted. Together it would suggest that upon completion of his house, and moving in, David dedicated it to God in view of a recent recovery from a severe illness.

### ***Analysis***

We found a number of good outlines on this Psalm. Albert Barnes divides the Psalm in such a way as to reflect the Psalmist’s personal experience before, as well as throughout the distress that he was facing. Consequently he does not follow a verse by verse outline, but one that is more topical. Thus, he sets before us the Psalmist and....

1. His former state of self-confidence or security when he was in health, and when he thought his “mountain” stood strong, verses 6-7;

2. His sickness as a means of humbling him, and teaching him his dependence, verses. 2-3;
3. His prayer for deliverance when he was sick, verses. 2, and 8-10;
4. His deliverance as an act of God, verses. 2-3, and 11;
5. His obligation to give thanks to God for his mercy, verses 1, 4, and 12. (Barnes)

Brother Winfred Clark provided the following outline, which we will use in our study of the chapter:

- I. The Writer's Perception, verses 1-3;
- II. The Writer's Praise, verses 4-5;
- III. The Writer's Presumption, verses 6-7;
- IV. The Writer's Prayer, verses 8-10;
- V. The Writer's Peace, verses 11-12. (Winfred Clark, 168)

Here is another good homiletic outline on the Psalm. We do not recall the source from which we obtained this outline, but give credit to William Jay as per our notes. In this ode we may see the workings of David's mind before, and under, and after, the affliction. (1) Before the affliction, 1-6. (2) Under the affliction, 7-10. (3) After the affliction: 11, 12.

## ***Commentary***

### **The Writer's Perception Verses 1-3**

- 1 I will extol thee, O Jehovah; For thou hast raised me up, And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.*
- 2 O Jehovah my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.*
- 3 O Jehovah, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol; Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.*

**30:1:** The writer is aware that God has delivered him from some terrible circumstance, believed to be a sickness of some sort.

*"Thou hast lifted me up" and "healed me"* - The Psalmist wants others to know that it was God who healed him. As a result, his enemies would not find occasion to rejoice over him.

The word for "raised up" has a marginal rendering of "drawn me up," and was used for pulling up a bucket from a well. Coffman points

out that such is “an expression more appropriate for an acute state of depression and fear than it would be for some kind of an illness” (Coffman, 231). Such language could, however, refer to being raised up to health from the depths of sickness.

**30:2:** Observe the personal note in the Psalm. David refers to Jehovah as “*my God*.” It is comforting to know that God is near to each of us, and is indeed the God of each one of us. David recognized the need to “cry” unto Jehovah in order to receive Divine blessings, in this case physical healing. The same Divine healing is granted to the sin-sick soul who will carry his burden to the Lord in prayer.

**30:3:** “*Sheol*” is equivalent to the New Testament word “hades,” or the realm of the disembodied spirits. Evidently the sickness from which the Psalmist suffered was so serious that his life was threatened. God kept him alive. The true source of all blessings, yea even life itself, is our God. He is the One in whom we “live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28). The “*pit*” is synonymous with the grave. Barnes points out that the Hebrew is literally, “thou hast caused me to live from them which go down to the pit; thou hast distinguished me from them by keeping me alive” (Barnes).

### **The Writer’s Praise Verses 4-5**

*4 Sing praise unto Jehovah, O ye saints of his, And give thanks to his holy memorial name.*

*5 For his anger is but for a moment; His favor is for a life-time: Weeping may tarry for the night, But joy cometh in the morning.*

**30:4:** “*Sing praise...give thanks*” - In view of the deliverance spoken of, the Psalmist calls for others to join him in praise. The people of God are called “*saints*”; those separated from the world, and so characterized by their distinctive lives. Holiness is an absolute must if we are to enter into the presence of God. Adam Clarke has pointed out that “most so-called Christians hate the doctrine of holiness, never hear it mentioned without pain; and the principle part of their studies, and that of their pastors, is to find out with how little holiness they can rationally expect to enter heaven” (Adam Clarke). It should be noted that blessings bestowed are dependent upon the proper life lived in service to God.

To “*give thanks to his name*” is synonymous to giving thanks unto Jehovah, the “name” often standing for the Divine nature itself.

**30:5:** “*For his anger is but for a moment*” - God’s anger is for our good, and it is but for a moment. It might be good to reflect upon Hebrews 12:5-11 in connection with God’s chastisement upon His children. While God’s anger is but for a moment, it “yieldeth peaceable fruit” for a lifetime. “Sometimes there has to be the pain before we can have the cure. Better the pain than never a cure” (Winfred Clark, 169). One translation put it this way: “For death is in his anger, life eternal in his favor; in the evening one falls asleep crying, but at dawn there are shouts of joy.”

“*His favor is for a life-time*” - The KJV reads, “in his favor is life.” Though we prefer the ASV rendering, there is a certain truth contained in the words, “in his favor is life.” Charles Spurgeon put it this way:

As soon as the Lord looked favourably upon David, the city lived, and the king’s heart lived too. We die like withered flowers when the Lord frowns, but his sweet smile revives us as the dews refresh the fields. His favour not only sweetens and cheers life, but it is life itself, the very essence of life. Who would know life, let him seek the favour of the Lord. (Spurgeon).

The verse sets forth a contrast between God’s anger, which is only temporary, with His favor, which is everlasting. We must note, however, that Divine favor is extended only to those who are His saints; faithful and obedient saints we might add.

### **The Writer’s Presumption Verses 6-7**

6 *As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved.*  
7 *Thou, Jehovah, of thy favor hadst made my mountain to stand strong: Thou didst hide thy face; I was troubled.*

**30:6:** There was evidently a time when the Psalmist placed his trust in his prosperity. It took a calamity in his life to bring him back to reality and drive him to turn to Jehovah. “Many a vessel flounders in a calm. No temptation is so bad as tranquility” (Spurgeon). David was reflecting on his past. When secure in his wealth, he did not depend upon God as he should have. Having reflected upon his folly he comes to realize that his strength was to be found only in Jehovah. It was David’s honesty that led him to repent and turn

back to God, a trait that led to his being called the “man after God’s own heart.” “This is an acknowledgment on David’s part that in those days of prosperity and egotistical pride, he had not been fully conscious that it was God’s favor which had elevated him, not his own ability or skill” (Coffman, 233).

*“I said in my prosperity”* - Many a man has spoken foolishly when things are going good. Abundance breeds satisfaction and complacency. Woe to the man who puts his trust in riches, for he shall soon fall. Charles Spurgeon stated it well:

Ah! David, you said more than was wise to say, or even to think, for God has founded the world upon the floods, to show us what a poor, mutable, movable, inconstant world it is. Unhappy he who builds upon it! He builds himself a dungeon for his hopes. Instead of conceiving that we shall never be moved, we ought to remember that we shall very soon be moved altogether. Nothing is abiding beneath the moon. Because I happen to be prosperous today, I must not fancy that I shall be in my high estate tomorrow. As in a wheel, the uppermost spokes descend to the bottom in due course, so is it with mortal conditions. There is a constant revolution; many who are in the dust today shall be highly elevated tomorrow; while those who are now aloft shall soon grind the earth. Let us beware lest the fumes of intoxicating success get into our brains and make fools of us also. (Spurgeon)

**30:7:** There were two things that David acknowledged. First, the power of God in bringing him to his present state. Second, his own failure to glorify God led to his present troubles. “This sudden hiding of God’s face shook David out of his attitude of self-confidence and sufficiency and led to his casting himself upon the mercy of God” (Coffman, 233). There was no need to openly chastise David. It was enough for God to simply hide His face. It should be noted that this proves David was indeed a saint, for there is not a sinner on the face of this earth who would fret should God hide His face from them. They would just as soon that God DID hide His face and simply leave them alone.

### **The Writer’s Prayer Verses 8-10**

- 8 *I cried to thee, O Jehovah; And unto Jehovah I made supplication:*  
9 *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?*

10 *Hear, O Jehovah, and have mercy upon me: Jehovah, be thou my helper.*

**30:8:** *“I cried”* - His heart was penitent. He sought refuge in God, and willingly confessed his dependence upon Jehovah. Turning to the Lord in prayer he sought deliverance. Oh, the power of prayer. All too often we rob ourselves of tremendous blessings, simply because we do not take it to the Lord in prayer.

**30:9:** *“What profit”* - Essentially, “What benefit is there if I die?” The “pit” is a reference to the grave. “This is a bold statement indeed. It is as if David is saying, ‘If I did die and go to the grave God would be the loser for then I could not praise him’ (Winfred Clark, 170). The Old Testament ancients believed in life after death, and a future resurrection. This was confirmed by the writer of Hebrews when he spoke of Abraham, who looked to that city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10, 19, and 35).

*“shall the dust praise thee?”* - David’s desire for deliverance from his enemies as expressed oft in the Psalms was not for selfish ambition, but that God might be praised and extolled.

**30:10:** *“be thou my helper”* - David was expressing his total dependence upon God for healing and forgiveness. Help follows forgiveness; mercy opens the door for Jehovah’s helping hand upon the humble.

### **The Writer’s Peace Verses 11-12**

11 *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;*  
12 *To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O Jehovah my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*

There is a sudden change in the tone of the Psalm. Deliverance must have come suddenly and completely. The explanation for this sudden change in tone is to be found in 1 Chronicles 21:16. David received a glimpse into the spiritual realms and observed an angel of the Lord standing between heaven and the earth.

**30:11:** What a marvelous verse we have before us. God does not just comfort us; He turns our mourning into dancing. When we are

clothed with the garments of sackcloth, with sorrow and suffering, He clothes us with gladness. “This is better than to wear garments of silk or cloth of gold, bedight with embroidery and bespangled with gems. Many a poor man wears this heavenly apparel wrapped around his heart, though fustian and corduroy are his only outward garb; and such a man needs not envy the emperor in all his pomp” (Spurgeon).

**30:12:** Blessings call for thanksgiving and praise to the One Who giveth to all liberally. An unknown poet put it so succinctly:

I'll praise him in life; I'll praise him in death;  
I'll praise him as long as he lendeth me breath;  
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow.  
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

### ***Lessons***

It is comforting to know that our God is the Great Physician. “Is any among you sick, let him call for the elders...and the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick” (James 5:14-15). While we recognize and appreciate the wonderful talents of those who serve in the field of medicine, let us never forget that our God is the One Who grants health. Nor let us forget that once healed, we should offer praise to He Who restored us to strength and health. Once healed we should then offer praise and thanksgiving.

God's chastisement should be received with humility and submission, knowing that it is for our good, yea for a “life time” of blessing. It is our opinion that God chastises through His word and providentially through the circumstances that God allows to come our way.

“The Psalmist's praise was reasonable. He had a reason to give for the praise that was in his heart. He had been drawn up like a prisoner from a dungeon, like Joseph out of the pit, and therefore he loved his deliverer. Grace has uplifted us from the pit of hell, from the ditch of sin, from the Slough of Despond, from the bed of sickness, from the bondage of doubts and fears: have we no song to offer for all this? How high has our Lord lifted us? Lifted us up into the children's place, to be adopted into the family; lifted us up into union with Christ, ‘to sit together with him in heavenly places.’ Lift high the name of our God, for he has lifted us above the stars” (Spurgeon).

## *“Trust Trial and Triumph”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David. We see nothing in the Psalm that might suggest otherwise. The occasion is uncertain. Barnes commented, “Most of the Jewish and Christian interpreters have supposed that it was written when David was in the wilderness of Maon, and when, having been betrayed by the Ziphites, he was hotly pursued by Saul and his host, 1 Samuel 23:19-26” (Barnes). There is no evidence, however, that this conclusion is certain. Spurgeon had this comment: “Some have thought that the occasion in his troubled life which led to this Psalm, was the treachery of the men of Keilah, and we have felt much inclined to this conjecture; but after reflection it seems to us that its very mournful tone, and its allusion to his iniquity demands a later date, and it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and his courtiers were fled from him, while lying lips spread a thousand malicious rumours against him. It is perhaps quite as well that we have no settled season mentioned, or we might have been so busy in applying it to David’s case as to forget its suitability to our own” (Spurgeon). There are, in fact, a number of occasions in David’s life in which the words of this Psalm could easily have been written.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have an example of human experiences often repeated in the history of the people of God. There are three divisions: In the first division (verses 1-8) there is the trust and trial of the author. It is a prayer of deliverance from his sufferings and his enemies, based on the grounds of his confidence in Jehovah and his previous experiences of God’s mercy. In the second division (9-18) the trial seems, at least for the moment, to almost have overcome the trust. In the last (19-24), trust has completely triumphed and the sense of the singer is the sense of perfect safety. Hence, we derive the following outline:

I. Trust, 1-8;



- II. Trial, 9-18;
- III. Triumph, 19-24.

We have selected as the title of this Psalms the three points here suggested.

## **Commentary**

### **Trust Verses 1-8**

- 1 *In thee, O Jehovah, do I take refuge; Let me never be put to shame: Deliver me in thy righteousness.*
- 2 *Bow down thine ear unto me; Deliver me speedily: Be thou to me a strong rock, A house of defence to save me.*
- 3 *For thou art my rock and my fortress; Therefore for thy name's sake lead me and guide me.*
- 4 *Pluck me out of the net that they have laid privily for me; For thou art my stronghold.*
- 5 *Into thy hand I commend my spirit: Thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah, thou God of truth.*
- 6 *I hate them that regard lying vanities; But I trust in Jehovah.*
- 7 *I will be glad and rejoice in thy lovingkindness; For thou hast seen my affliction: Thou hast known my soul in adversities;*
- 8 *And thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; Thou hast set my feet in a large place.*

**31:1:** In a number of the Davidic Psalms, the author refers to God as his “refuge.” In these first eight verses we have words like refuge, rock, house of defense, stronghold, fortress, etc. We will notice these as we encounter them.

*“In thee...do I take refuge”* - God will not protect us if we do not desire that protection. Those who would find safety must take the initiative to take the refuge available to them. In this connection, note 1 Corinthians 10:13. The “way of escape” is available if we will only take the time to look for it. The amazing thing in this verse is the promise that God stands ready to rescue us. “Let other things be doubtful, yet the fact that he relies upon Jehovah, David lays down most positively; and he begins with it, lest by stress of trial he should afterwards forget it. This avowal of faith is the fulcrum by means of which he labours to uplift and remove his trouble; he dwells upon it as a comfort to himself and a plea with God” (Spurgeon).

*“Let me never be put to shame”* - That is, ‘Let me never have occasion to be ashamed for having put my confidence and trust in Thee.’ This is not a reflection of lack of faith, but rather a sincere plea for deliverance. The last part of the verse would suggest this.

*“Deliver me in thy righteousness”* - It was because of God’s righteousness that David could trust in his God. Deliverance was a foregone conclusion, based upon faith on the part of David. Spurgeon had this comment concerning God’s deliverance: “Faith dares to look even to the sword of justice for protection: while God is righteous, faith will not be left to be proved futile and fanatical” (Spurgeon).

**31:2:** *“Bow down thine ear unto me”* - The picture is of one who inclines his ear so as to hear more carefully. The first part of David’s request is that God would hear him. This implies David’s belief in a PERSONAL God. The Almighty is not some FORCE, but a personal, living, listening God.

*“Deliver me speedily”* - Or, as it may be, without delay. There is a sense of urgency in the words. Twice in as many verses our writer pleads for deliverance.

The *“house of defense”* has a marginal note in the ASV, “fortress.” This prayer of David is so simple. Yet the trust of the writer shines through every single word.

**31:3:** David’s recognition of the absolute supremacy and power of God is evident in these verses. Such an attitude is common in David’s writings and life. It was not for his own sake that he sought deliverance, but for God’s sake; for the glory of the Almighty. His submissiveness is seen in the request that God would “lead” him, and “guide” him. Both words suggest the idea of being led by God. “To lead and to guide are two things very like each other, but patient thought will detect different shades of meaning, especially as the last may mean *provide for me*. The double word indicates an urgent need - we require double direction, for we are fools, and the way is rough. Lead me as a soldier, guide me as a traveller! lead me as a babe, guide me as a man; lead me when thou art with me, but guide me even if thou be absent; lead me by the hand, guide me by thy word” (Spurgeon).

**31:4:** The enemy had *“concealed”* their evil schemes. There is an allusion to the capture of a beast by digging a pit covering or

“concealing” the opening so that the animal is entrapped. In the same way, the enemies of David had laid a trap. Once again the urgency of the situation is suggested, in that David is asking that God “pluck” or “pull” him out of the net. It could be that he was in a strait with no escape. Defeat was imminent.

The enemies of God are as crafty as they are powerful. If they could not conquer David by power, they would do so by craft and cunning devices. The devil’s greatest power is that of deception.

**31:5:** *“into thy hand I commend my spirit”* -- These words were repeated by Jesus on the cross (Luke 23:46). The absolute trust of David in God’s providential care and deliverance is depicted. The reason for such trust is noted: *“thou hast redeemed me”* - God owns us; we are not our own; we were purchased with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).

It is truly astonishing that more do not commend their spirit to the Lord for safekeeping. Trusting in their own power, or seeking to walk by their own wisdom, they ignore the great refuge that is available in God. As valuable as the soul is, yea, more valuable than all the treasures of the earth combined, to whom or what would we dare commend our spirit, other than unto God Almighty?

*“God of truth”* - God cannot lie; in fact, it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb. 6:18). His promises will come to pass. Here is the basis for placing the care for our souls into the hands of our God.

**31:6:** *“I hate them that regard lying vanities”* - To “regard” is to observe, to keep, to attend to. Barnes believed the “lying vanities” to be idols. This is highly probable since Israel was steeped in idolatry during that period of time. The Hebrew word is *‘hebel’* which refers to that which is meaningless, or of empty breath. But it is possible that the words may refer to the schemes and plans of evil men. Any plan or purpose that is contrary to God’s design is a “lying vanity.” Barnes notes that the words mean “vanity of emptiness” (Barnes). In contrast, David would “trust in Jehovah.” This is the safeguard against idolatry, namely to trust in Jehovah God.

**31:7:** David was looking at the past. Experience had taught him that God would care for him.

*“thou hast known my soul in adversities”* - There is great comfort in these words. The Hebrew for “adversities” is *‘tsarah,’* which has

reference to narrowness, straitness, or those things that cramp a person in a narrow place. From this we learn (1) that God is fully aware of all the circumstances that we face in life - He sees, He takes notice; (2) there is more to man than the physical; there is the spiritual, particularly the soul; (3) adversities will come; but through it all, God will take care of us.

**31:8:** *“And thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy”* - There is a most evident contrast here. Rather than being “shut up” by the enemy, he has been placed in open spaces, a “large place.” Rather than captivity, there is freedom. The spiritual application of this is certainly noted. One who serves sin has been “shut up,” while the one who has obeyed the Lord enjoys freedom. “Blessed be God for liberty: civil liberty is valuable, religious liberty is precious, spiritual liberty is priceless. In all troubles we may praise God if these are left. Many saints have had their greatest enlargements of soul when their affairs have been in the greatest straits. Their souls have been in a large room when their bodies have been lying in Bonner’s coalhole, or in some other narrow dungeon. Grace has been equal to every emergency; and more than this, it has made the emergency an opportunity for displaying itself” (Spurgeon).

### **Trial** **Verses 9-18**

- 9 *Have mercy upon me, O Jehovah, for I am in distress: Mine eye wasteth away with grief, yea, my soul and my body.*
- 10 *For my life is spent with sorrow, And my years with sighing: My strength faileth because of mine iniquity, And my bones are wasted away.*
- 11 *Because of all mine adversaries I am become a reproach, Yea, unto my neighbors exceedingly, And a fear to mine acquaintance: They that did see me without fled from me.*
- 12 *I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.*
- 13 *For I have heard the defaming of many, Terror on every side: While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.*
- 14 *But I trusted in thee, O Jehovah: I said, Thou art my God.*
- 15 *My times are in thy hand: Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.*
- 16 *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: Save me in thy lovingkindness.*

17 *Let me not be put to shame, O Jehovah; For I have called upon thee: Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol.*

18 *Let the lying lips be dumb, Which speak against the righteous insolently, With pride and contempt.*

**31:9:** “*Have mercy upon me*” - The persecution that David was suffering was due to some “iniquity” which he keenly felt (verse 10). We are not told what this might have been, but we are given insight into David’s penitent heart by the language in these verses. The wicked seldom feel grief over sin, much less the weariness of both body and soul as a result of sorrow for sin. Certainly David would be among those who “mourn,” a prerequisite for God’s blessings. See Matthew 5:4. “Soul and body are so intimately united, that one cannot decline without the other feeling it. We, in these days, are not strangers to the double sinking which David describes; we have been faint with physical suffering, and distracted with mental distress: when two such seas meet, it is well for us that the Pilot at the helm is at home in the midst of the waterfloods, and makes storms to become the triumph of his art” (Spurgeon).

**31:10:** The “*iniquity*” to which David refers might be a single event in his life of which he was deeply sorrowful. It could as easily refer to the totality of sin. In either case his sorrow is certainly manifest. Of interest is David’s repeated reference to the effect that his sin had upon him physically. Anyone who has ever felt the burden of sin knows for certain that it drains one physically, and is reflected in the countenance.

**31:11:** David was subject to the reproach of his enemies. There must have been some way in which he was reviled by them. The reproach by the enemy was so effective that David had become a “reproach” unto his neighbors. One cannot imagine the slander and lies that this enemy must have heaped upon David. But even more amazing is the fact that those close to David could be made to believe those vicious lies. As to why the people were afraid to be seen with David, consider the fate of Abimelech and the priests of Nob (1 Sam. 22). It is no wonder that the people avoided any association with King David. Spurgeon noted, “The more intimate before, the more distant did they become. Our Lord was denied by Peter, betrayed by Judas, and forsaken by all in the hour of his utmost need. All the herd turn against a wounded deer. The milk of human kindness curdles when a despised believer is the victim of slanderous accusations” (Spurgeon).

**31:12:** While David fled from this enemy his former glory and honor must have vanished from public circles. Any influence he might have had may have been rendered null and void. Like a dead man who has been buried, the memory soon fades and society moves on. The bitter truth remains that the memory of each one of us will last no longer than the length of time it takes for those with whom we were acquainted to pass away. “For a short period a vacancy is created which attracts attention and causes regret. But the world moves on. Another comes to fill his place, and soon his absence ceases to be a subject of remark, or a cause of regret; the world says little about him, and soon he altogether ceases to be remembered. At no distant time the rude board with his name written on it, or the marble sculptured with all the skill of art, falls down. The passing traveller casts an eye upon the name of him who slept his last sleep there, and neither knows nor cares who he was” (Barnes). David must have felt that such a time had already arrived for him. So far as the public was concerned, David was dead and buried, forgotten by those who once admired and served him. “A man had better be dead than be smothered in slander. Of the dead we say nothing but good, but in the Psalmist’s case they said nothing but evil. We must not look for the reward of philanthropy this side of heaven, for men pay their best servants but sorry wages, and turn them out of doors when no more is to be got out of them” (Spurgeon).

**31:13:** David had (1) been reproached by his friends (verse 11), then (2) forgotten by those who should have remembered him (verse 12), and now (3) he had been viciously slandered.

These verses give an accurate description of the CAUSE for David’s plea unto Jehovah. He had had enough; sorrow filled his life; he wanted relief. Jeremiah expressed precisely the same sentiments (Jeremiah 20:10). No doubt Jeremiah was a student of the Psalms, as he quoted them often in his writings.

**31:14:** *“But I trusted in thee, O Jehovah”* - Where else could David turn? Men had forsaken him; his enemies slandered him; his friends deserted him. When we find ourselves in similar situations we should remember, “There is always One who will not leave or forsake us; and the friendship and favour of that One is of more value to us than that of all other beings in the universe combined” (Barnes). When asked if the disciples would leave Jesus, Peter replied, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). “When everything goes wrong, when all of our

dreams come crashing down around us, when friends and neighbors shun and forsake us, when even the consciousness of our sins presses heavily upon our conscience, what is to be done? These verses are the answer” (Coffman, 243).

**31:15:** *“My times are in thy hand”* - David was in essence saying, “God, my life is in Your hands. Do with me as You please!” Should this not be our attitude? When we feel threatened it would do us well to remember that God is in control. And what if He should choose to end our life? Have we not then won the battle?

**31:16:** The request for God’s *“face to shine upon”* him was a request for blessings and favor. It finds its origin in the Aaronic Benediction of Numbers 6:24-26.

**31:17:** Had the enemies of David succeeded in overthrowing the Kingdom, David knew it would bring shame upon him for having placed his confidence in God. His request was one that would ultimately honor and glorify God rather than himself. On the other hand, the defeat of the enemy would put them to shame and magnify the cause of God in Israel. The criticism often received by such “imprecatory Psalms” is unjustified. The writers of such Psalms were not motivated by personal vengeance, but an earnest desire on the part of the Psalmist for God to carry out justice and give unto His faithful servants (and unfaithful as well) their just reward. To pray for the victorious overthrow of God’s enemies is not improper.

**31:18:** The “lying lips” were merely the outward manifestation of a wicked heart. His enemy was filled with “pride and contempt,” and their attempts to discredit David via their lying lips were the outward manifestations of their wicked heart.

### **Triumph Verses 19-24**

- 19 *Oh how great is thy goodness, Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, Which thou hast wrought for them that take refuge in thee, Before the sons of men!*
- 20 *In the covert of thy presence wilt thou hide them from the plottings of man: Thou wilt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.*
- 21 *Blessed be Jehovah; For he hath showed me his marvellous lovingkindness in a strong city.*

- 22 *As for me, I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: Nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications When I cried unto thee.*
- 23 *Oh love Jehovah, all ye his saints: Jehovah preserveth the faithful, And plentifully rewardeth him that dealeth proudly.*
- 24 *Be strong, and let your heart take courage, All ye that hope in Jehovah.*

This section speaks of the triumph over the enemy. From this verse we note that (1) God's goodness is great. Even beyond man's wildest imaginations does the goodness of God pour forth. (2) God's special goodness is channeled toward a certain group of people, namely those who (a) fear Jehovah, and those who (b) take refuge in Him. God's blessings have always been conditional. This in no way removes the fact that they are of His grace. Were God's grace completely unconditional, then all men would receive those blessings of goodness regardless of how they might live in regard to His law and commandments. Finally, (3) God's goodness is evident for those who would but look; it is "before the sons of men."

**31:19:** Regarding the words "laid up," the better rendering would be "treasured up." Goodness and mercy had been, as it were, treasured up for such an emergency as the Psalmist now faced. Here is a treasure that is never used up, always accessible, and incapable of being exhausted. Indeed, how great is the goodness of our God.

**31:20:** The theme in this verse is God's protection from the wicked schemes and lying tongues of those who would seek to destroy God's elect. And He provides such protection in such a way that God's saints are ever before His face, while at the same time hidden from the enemies.

*"from the plottings of man"* is preferred over the KJV, "the pride of man." The Hebrew word (*'rokes'*) means "properly 'league' or 'conspiracy,' and the idea is, that when the wicked form a conspiracy, or enter into a league against the righteous, God will take them, as it were, into his own immediate presence, and will protect them" (Barnes).

**31:21:** The Psalmist had witnessed the great lovingkindness of his God. The *"strong city"* likely has reference to that occasion when David took refuge with Achish, who in turn gave him Ziklag. It was in this city that David dwelt with his men during his fight from Saul. But it is altogether possible that the Psalmist may not have had any



particular city in mind, and the reference to such a “city” was to illustrate God’s protection AS IF He had placed him in a walled and fenced city.

**31:22:** It is often difficult to see the victory in the heat of the battle. The Psalmist had reached such a low ebb that he believed that he had been cut off from the Lord. But in his cry, deliverance was granted. Barnes made this interesting observation: “God’s mercy went beyond the Psalmist’s faith, as is often to his people now, far beyond what they hope for; far beyond what they pray for; far beyond what they believe to be possible” (Barnes).

**31:23:** There are two classes of men who are in view of the Psalmist. There are the “faithful,” and there are the proud and arrogant. Concerning the faithful, God will preserve them. Concerning the proud, God will “reward” them in great abundance, but that according to their wicked deeds.

And who are the faithful? “Those who put their trust in him; who do not give up in despondency and despair in time of danger and trouble; those who do not forsake him even though for a time he SEEMS to forsake them. What God looks for mainly in his people is confidence; faithfulness; trust; fidelity” (Barnes).

**31:24:** What a marvelous conclusion to this Psalm. In view of the past deliverances granted, the Psalmist can confidently exhort all of those who hope in Jehovah to “let your heart take courage.” As Barnes concluded, “Hope in God cheers him, sustains him, comforts him; makes life happy and prosperous; and makes death calm, serene, triumphant” (Barnes). No wonder the inspired writer of Hebrews spoke of hope as the anchor of the soul.

### ***Lessons***

1. Even though it seems that the evil in this world is winning, you can be assured that God sees all, and He will recompense. In any and all circumstances, it can be confidently affirmed with regard to our God, “Thou hast seen...” (verse 7).
2. Sorrow is a part of life. David had more than his share of sorrow. This made him a fitting antitype of Christ, the man of sorrows.
3. God will render judgment on them that persecute the saints (verses 23-24).
4. G. Campbell Morgan has this summary: “In this song we find the seasons of the soul as we know them all sooner or later. First,

autumn with its winds and gathering clouds, yet having sunlight and a golden fruitage even though the breath of death is everywhere (1-8). Then follows winter, chill and lifeless, full of sobs and sighing (9-13). After that the spring with its hope and expectation and its sweeping rains and bursting sun gleams (14-18). At last the glad and golden summer (19-24). We need them all to complete our year" (Morgan, 232).

## *“The Blessedness of Forgiveness”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is, without doubt, a Psalm of David. Some may suggest otherwise, but we are convinced that no other author could possibly have produced this Psalm. Like Psalms 51, it arises from the terrible burden of guilt he felt following his sin with Bathseba and the murder of Uriah. The joy manifested in this Psalm arises from the knowledge that the Psalmist had been forgiven. While Psalm 51 emphasizes the height from which he had fallen, this Psalm addresses the forgiveness granted. Indeed, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” (verse 1).

### ***Analysis***

This is the second of what is commonly called the “penitential” Psalms (the others being 6, 51, 102, 130 and 143). It is the song of a man rejoicing in the assurance of forgiveness. He opens with a statement of forgiveness (1-2), followed by a description of the deep inner feelings while still in sin (3-4). The way of restoration through confession is set forth (5). On the basis of such restoration, the soul then has access to God and the assurance of His help in times of trouble (6-7). The message of God to the forgiven is set forth, in which the promise of guidance is made and the condition of submission is stated (8-9). Finally, the joy of forgiveness is expressed (10-11). We have entitled this Psalm, “The Blessedness of Forgiveness.” The following outline was obtained a number of years ago while attending school. Unfortunately the source is no longer available.

- I. Clemency (1-2);
- II. Concealment (3-4);
- III. Confession (5);
- IV. Care (6-7);
- V. Condition (8-9);

## VI. Contentment (10-11).

The so-called “problem” in this Psalm, and others like it, is how to harmonize the obvious sinfulness of David with the numerous statements wherein David declared his own righteousness, as well as the declaration on the part of inspiration that David was a “man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22). Notice David’s defense of his righteousness in the following passages: Psalms 7:3-8; 17:1-5; 18:20-24; and 6:1-14. This seeming paradox is solved when we consider (1) the fact that David’s claims for righteousness may have been made prior to his great sin, (2) the fact that there is a difference between “willful sin” and “sins of weakness,” and (3) the fact that, comparatively speaking, David stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries. We realize that this third point might be misconstrued as “measuring ourselves by ourselves,” but nonetheless, his heart and attitude toward God, when compared with others, was certainly exemplary. Brother Coffman had this note: “David was an absolute monarch; and when his response to Nathan the prophet, wherein he freely admitted that, ‘I have sinned against the Lord,’ is compared with what any other king in that whole millennium would certainly have done in the same situation, we may see the relative nature of David’s righteousness. Any other king of that era would have beheaded Nathan and continued in his sin” (Coffman, 249).

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Clemency*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.*  
*2 Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no guile.*

**32:1:** “*blessed is he*” - The “blessed” man is the one who enjoys a state of happiness and inner peace. He is genuinely happy because, having been pressed down with the burden of guilt, he now enjoys forgiveness; because he now has hope as a child of God. Literally the text reads, “O how happy is he.” Blessedness is not ascribed to the man who lives a sinless life, for then happiness would elude all men. Let us take a closer look at the truly blessed man. He is one...

1) *“whose transgression is forgiven”* - His sin has been lifted, carried away. David enjoyed “forgiveness” in a prophetic way, looking forward to the time of the Christ and His atonement and shedding of blood. The word rendered “forgiven” is “in the original *taken off, or taken away*” (Spurgeon). Notice in this verse, as well as the next, the words *“forgiven,” “covered,”* and *“imputeth not,”* all of which emphasize God’s wonderful mercy granted to the penitent sinner.

2) *“[whose] sin is covered”* - Barnes wrote: “This is the idea in the Hebrew word which is commonly used to denote the atonement (*‘kaphar’*); the strict meaning of the word is to cover, to overlook, thus to forgive” (Barnes). The idea, in light of other passages, is that the sin is covered, overlooked, until the time of the Christ. The Hebrew writer reminds us that there was a “remembrance” of sins each year (Hebrews 10:1- 3).

3) *“Jehovah imputeth not iniquity”* – The blessed man’s sin is not “reckoned” or “charged” to him. The sinner is thus treated “as if he had no guilt; that is, as if he were innocent” (Barnes).

4) *“in whose spirit there is no guile”* - The man who receives these blessings of forgiveness, is happy; but he is characterized as one in whom there is *“no guile”* - he is sincere, truthful. The context would suggest that the man is honest with himself with regard to the sin he has committed. While the majority will proudly deny any sin their lives, the man who might ever hope for forgiveness must be honest. “The idea is not who are innocent, or without guilt, but who are sincere, frank, and honest in making confession of their sins; who keep nothing back when they go before God” (Barnes). The person who is forgiven here is only he that man in whose spirit there is no deceit, who does not attempt to deny, hide or excuse some favorite sin. Any such sin will stand between a man and justification.” Indeed,

He who is pardoned, has in every case been taught to deal honestly with himself, his sin, and his God. Forgiveness is no sham, and the peace which it brings is not caused by playing tricks with conscience. Self-deception and hypocrisy bring no blessedness; they may drag the soul into hell with pleasant dreams, but into the heaven of true peace they cannot conduct their victim...Treachery, double-dealing, chicanery, dissimulation, are lineaments of the devil’s children, but he who is washed from sin is truthful, honest, simple and childlike (Spurgeon).

These verses were quoted by Paul (Rom. 4:7-8) to describe the Christian, specifically those who “live by faith.” It is important to keep in mind that the words of the Psalm describe one who is in a proper relationship with God, and is “unrelated in any sense whatever to the salvation of alien sinners” (Coffman, 247).

Notice the four words used to describe sin:

- (1) Transgression: Generally speaking, this means breaking the law. The word suggests willful violation of God’s will.
- (2) Sin: This means to “miss the mark.” It denotes a path, a life-style, or an act that deviates from that which God has marked out. We can miss the mark by either omitting what God has told us to do, or commit a transgression against a command God has given.
- (3) Iniquity: This is gross wickedness. It means to be bent, bowed down, twisted, perverted...[and] portrays sin as a perversion of truth (a twisting into error), or a perversion of intent (a bending of rectitude into willful disobedience).
- (4) Guile: This is deceitfulness, or hypocrisy.

**32:2:** “*Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity*” - Twice in as many verses the writer calls this man “blessed.” When our sins are “forgiven,” they are covered, and there is no iniquity “imputed” unto that soul. The word “imputed” is translated from the Hebrew, ‘*chashah*.’ It appears 123 times in the Old Testament, and implies a mental process involved in planning or thinking. It is variously translated, “to think,” “devise,” “purpose,” “esteem,” “count,” “imagine,” and, as here, “impute.” It is likely that the Psalmist is using a style of writing known as “parallelism,” in which the thought of one verse is expressed in a different way in the following verse. Notice the three fold description of this “blessed” man. (1) His transgression is “**forgiven**,” (2) his sin is “**covered**,” and (3) his iniquity is not “**imputed unto him**.” When Jehovah “imputeth not iniquity,” He has forgiven the man of his transgressions. There is no super-charged sanctification, no transference of righteousness, or direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the heart and soul of this “blessed” man. Very simply, he has been forgiven of his sins.

### **Concealment Verses 3-4**

- 3    *When I kept silence, my bones wasted away Through my groaning all the day long.*

4 *For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer. Selah*

The Psalmist proceeds to discuss his condition prior to this forgiveness; before his confession, when he “kept silence.” His “bones wasted away.” The word actually denotes decay. Many a man has prostrated himself as a result of unresolved guilt. “*Day and night*” the “hand” of God was upon him. It might be that God KEPT it before him, prodding his conscience, pricking his heart. There was no escape from the constant awareness of sin. David’s tender heart made this possible. Many a man hardens his heart, pushes the thought of guilt to the far recesses of the mind rather than acknowledge that sin and guilt.

In addition, this man’s “moisture was changed.” The word for moisture (*leshad*) means juice, or sap of a tree. It came to stand for the very life-blood of that which was under consideration. David was saying, “My life blood, my vitality, was taken from me.” Like the summer drought that has sucked the moisture out of the ground, leaving it dry, cracked, hardened, and useless, so his guilt had sapped him of his life giving energy. “Nothing could more strikingly represent the distress of mind under long continued conviction of sin, when all strength and vigor seem to waste away” (Barnes, 273). The ugliness of sin is not often seen by men. The fruits are disastrous; the end is certain death (Rom. 6:23). As Charles Spurgeon noted: “What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease! a fire in the bones! While we smother our sin, it rages within and like a gathering wound swells horribly and torments terribly” (Spurgeon).

God’s chastising hand is designed to bring the sinner to repentance, and restore the man to a proper relationship with his God. Unconfessed transgression, like poison, dries up the fountain of a man’s strength, and makes him like a tree blasted by the lightening, or a plant withered by the scorching heat of a tropical sun.

### **Confession** **Verse 5**

5 *I acknowledged my sin unto thee, And mine iniquity did I not hide: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah; And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

**32:5:** Sin can only be forgiven when sin is “*acknowledged*.” Any attempt to hide sin will wear a man down. A full, heart-felt confession is the remedy for a heart crushed by the guilt of sin. In the final analysis, the only sin that will ever be forgiven is that sin which man confesses. Hence, the “unpardonable sin” is that sin, any sin, which man will not confess. The words “sin,” “iniquity,” and “transgression” are all used to describe the same thing. There may be a shade of difference in definitions, but we do not see any significant difference in David’s use of the words. David had sinned, he had transgressed, or gone beyond God’s law, and thus he was guilty of iniquity, or immorality. It should also be noted that confession is unto Jehovah, not men. The modern “confessional” wherein we acknowledge our sins before men has no authority in the scriptures.

### **Care** **Verses 6-7**

*6 For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him.*

*7 Thou art my hiding-place; Thou wilt preserve me from trouble; Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah*

**32:6:** The “*godly*” are those in proper relationship with God. The implication is that forgiveness is a blessing granted to those who are righteous. The opportunity for seeking God is, and always has been, “*in a time when thou mayest be found*.” “Procrastination may rob one of eternal life; and we may speculate that of the myriads who die without God and without hope, doubtless a great many of them intended to make their peace with God ‘later’! (Coffman, 255). There is a set time for confession and prayer, and that time is between the sin and reconciliation. But let the sinner be warned, that once the Bridegroom cometh, the doors shall forever be shut, and no man, however sorrowful he may be, will not be able to enter therein. “The godly pray while the Lord has promised to answer, the ungodly postpone their petitions till the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, and then their knocking is too late” (Spurgeon, 2.83).

The “*great waters*” is a reference to the judgment of God at the time of the flood. It is, of course, representative of the impending judgment that all men will face. In that day the wrath of God will be poured out upon the disobedient. Those who are “godly,” and who



seek God at the appropriate opportunity will not face the wrath of God; the great waters *“shall not reach unto him.”* And why? Because such have fled for refuge in God. This is the only safe abode which men may enter to escape that judgment. There is in verse 7 an allusion to the cities of refuge where men could flee for protection from the avenger.

**32:7:** *“Thou art my hiding place”* - The only escape from sin is in Christ. Our Lord serves as a “hiding place,” a refuge in time of need. It is astonishing that men would cast off the only refuge to which they can flee when the spiritual man longs for safety from the storms of life.

### **Condition Verses 8-9**

*8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:  
I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee.  
9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no  
understanding; Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold  
them in, Else they will not come near unto thee.*

**32:8-9:** *“I will instruct...teach thee...counsel thee”* - In this verse, God speaks. He provides adequate instruction for those who are willing to heed. The admonition here is negative. Do not be like the horse and the mule who resist being led. Because of their stubbornness they have to be forced into submission. Consequently, when one refuses to be taught by God and guided by His holy word, he is not better than the brute beast of the field. Two great classes of men are here pictured. The first, the majority, are those who are in rebellion to Jehovah God. The later, the humble in spirit, are those ever willing to submit and obey.

### **Content Verses 10-11**

*10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he that trusteth in  
Jehovah, lovingkindness shall compass him about.  
11 Be glad in Jehovah, and rejoice, ye righteous; And shout for joy,  
all ye that are upright in heart.*

**32:10:** What a contrast! The wicked will never find genuine happiness. *“Many sorrows”* will fill their lives. On the other hand, those who trust in Jehovah will be surrounded with lovingkindness

from God, and joy from deep within. Thus the closing admonition to *“rejoice...and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”* It is a lie of Satan that suggests the way of sin is one of true liberty and freedom. The Psalmist warns us that the sinful way is the way of sorrow, failure, heartache and death.

**32:11:** *“Be glad in Jehovah”* - Happiness is a duty as much as a consequence. But since it is here enjoined upon those who are God’s people, we can only conclude that genuine happiness is not dependent upon circumstances, for no man can control the circumstances of life but he can, and must, determine whether or not he will be happy. Charles Spurgeon was right on target:

Note how the pardoned are represented as upright, righteous, and without guile; a man may have many faults and yet be saved, but a false heart is everywhere the damning mark. A man of twisting, shifty ways, of a crooked, crafty nature, is not saved, for the ground which bring forth a harvest when grace is sown in it, may be weedy and waste, but our Lord tells us it is honest and good ground (Spurgeon).

## ***Lessons***

1. There is indescribable joy when a person receives forgiveness of sins. He is provided the opportunity to “begin again.” We do not recall the author of this poem, but it expresses the joy that comes with forgiveness.

"The Land of Beginning Again"

"I wish that there were some wonderful place  
Called the Land of Beginning Again,  
Where all our mistakes and all our heartaches  
And all of our poor selfish grief  
Could be dropped like a shabby old coat at the door  
And never be put on again.  
For what had been hardest we'd know had been best,  
And, what had seemed lost would be gain:  
For there isn't a sting that will not take wing  
When we've faced it and laughed it away.  
And I think that the laughter is most what we're after  
In the Land of Beginning Again!"

2. Confession of sin is a prerequisite to forgiveness. The Psalmist refused to “hide” his sin. James wrote, “Confess therefore your sins one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be

healed" (Jas. 5:16).

3. We should take advantage of every opportunity that comes our way. This is especially true when it comes to opportunities beneficial to the spiritual man. The Psalmist admonished us to pray to God "in a time" when God could be found. Someone wisely pointed out,

The stairs of opportunity  
Are sometimes hard to climb;  
And that can only be well done  
By one step at a time.  
But he who would go to the top  
Ne'er sits down and despairs;  
Instead of staring up the steps,  
He just steps up the stairs.  
--author unknown

4. Some years ago this author wrote the following article regarding time and opportunities:

***"Time: How Are You Using It?"***

by Tom Wacaster

While doing mission work in South Africa, we had opportunity to make a trip to Zimbabwe. One thing that impressed me about the "local" citizens (by local, we mean those who still lived in remote areas of the country), was the absence of any concern about time and/or schedules. You might tell them that worship would be at 9:00 in the morning, but that did not mean anything to them. Oh, they would do their best to abide by the "white man's" time frame, but most of them did not own a watch, taking the events of the day as they got to them. But somehow the absence of watches did not stand in the way of their arrival on time. In fact, for the most part, the brethren would get there before we missionaries, and would be waiting for you when you arrived. I asked brother Mitchell, local missionary in Mutare, if their lack of concern for hourly appointments ever presented any problems. He assured me that the bushmen probably got more done in a day's time without their watches, than you and I got done with our watches. Why was that the case? It was a matter of proper management of time. The local bushman realized that there was only a limited amount of time between sunrise and sunset, and he would use it wisely and prudently as the day progressed. The following recently came to me via the internet. "Imagine there is a bank that credits your account each morning with 86,400. It carries over no balance from day to day. Every evening deletes whatever part of the balance you failed to use during the day. What would you do? Draw out every cent, of course!!!! Each of us has such a bank. Its name is TIME.

Every morning, it credits you with 86,400 seconds. Every night it writes off, as lost, whatever of this you have failed to invest to good purpose. It carries over no balance. It allows no overdraft. Each day it opens a new account for you. Each night it burns the remains of the day. If you fail to use the day's deposits, the loss is yours. There is no going back. There is no drawing against the 'tomorrow.' You must live in the present on today's deposits. Invest it so as to get from it the utmost in health, happiness, and success! The clock is running. Make the most of today." That is precisely what those native Zimbabweans did. They made the most of today. Another has made this observation:

"To realize the value of ONE YEAR, ask a student who failed a grade.

To realize the value of ONE MONTH, ask a mother who gave birth to a premature baby.

To realize the value of ONE WEEK, ask the editor of a weekly newspaper.

To realize the value of ONE HOUR, ask the lovers who are waiting to meet.

To realize the value of ONE MINUTE, ask a person who missed the train.

To realize the value of ONE-SECOND, ask a person who just avoided an accident.

To realize the value of ONE MILLISECOND, ask the person who won a silver medal in the Olympics."

The Psalmist writer put it this way: "So teach us to number our days, That we might get us a heart of wisdom" (Psalms 90:12). If a man in some remote corner of the world can "number his day" without the aid of a watch, or a calendar, so as to make the most of every moment, why is it that you and I, with the assistance of precise clocks, fail to get done what needs to be done? Perhaps the problem lies not in the awareness of time increments, with its hours and minutes, but in how we use that which has been given to us.

## ***“Praise Unto Jehovah”***

### ***Introduction***

It is not possible to determine with any degree of certainty who wrote the Psalm. The LXX ascribed the Psalm to David. There is no subtitle affixed, nor is there any information within the psalm itself to help us. As to the time or occasion, Darwin Hunter comments: “It may be that God intended that no distinctive historical setting be tied to it in order that the truth set forth might be understood to be perpetually relevant and needful for God’s holy people in every age and circumstance. The need for God’s elect to trust Him for deliverance (33:18-20), praise Him for His goodness (33:1-3), and rejoice in their happy lot as His people (33:12) is a constant requirement” (Hunter, 190). We have entitled the Psalm, “Praise Unto Jehovah,” for the simple reason that this is precisely what the Psalm admonishes the reader to render unto God. It is rather surprising that otherwise knowledgeable commentators failed to see this in the Psalm.

### ***Analysis***

In the Psalm we have...

- I. An EXHORTATION to the righteous to praise God (verses 1-3);
- II. An EXPLANATION showing why Jehovah is indeed worthy of praise (verses 4-19);
- III. An EXPRESSION of joy and gladness (20-22), in which the Psalmist concludes with a fervent expression of confidence.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Exhortation Verses 1-3***

- 1 *Rejoice in Jehovah, O ye righteous: Praise is comely for the upright.*

- 2 Give thanks unto Jehovah with the harp: Sing praises unto him with the psaltery of ten strings.
- 3 Sing unto him a new song; Play skillfully with a loud noise.

**33:1:** “*Rejoice in Jehovah*” - The Psalmist opens with an admonition to rejoice, the reason being that it is “comely.” Likely “rejoice” and “praise” are equivalent here, suggesting the great joy that should be ours in worshipping God. Praise is not to be given grudgingly or out of a sense of duty, but as a joyful response to what God has done for us.

“*Praise is comely for the upright*” - Praise is appropriate, natural, and becoming to the upright. Praise is the response of a grateful heart. Of significance here is the use of “righteous” and “upright.” These are descriptions of those whose praise is accepted by God. Notice Psalms 24:3-4. In every generation, no matter what dispensation they may have lived under, those who have exhibited faith in God by doing His will have been accepted by God the Father and thus classified as being “righteous” and “upright.” God looks upon the faithful saint with great delight. The songs we sing from the depths of our heart are pleasing in His sight. Albert Barnes noted:

A man who is upright, or who is a righteous man, has in this very fact much which lays a foundation for praise, for the fact that he has such a character is to be traced to the grace of God, and this in itself is a more valuable possession than gold or kingly crowns would be. (Barnes).

Praise from those who ARE upright in heart will be accepted by God. Those who are disobedient will have their praise rejected. This is a fundamental lesson throughout the Bible. It is important to keep in mind that the “righteous” are not “sinless.” They are, however, not living IN sin. They are making every attempt to walk in the light of God’s word (1 John 1:6-10).

**33:2-3:** Various instruments are called into the praise of God. It is an undisputed fact that David used instruments of music in worship. Passages like 2 Samuel 6:3-5; Amos 6:5, etc. could be brought to bear. It is also clear that David initiated the practice, 1 Chronicles 23:5; 1 Chronicles 15:16. Ezra 3:10 says that “they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel.” There is a passage, however, which appears to attribute the use of the instrumental music to God Himself. Notice 2 Chronicles 29:25,

where it is said, "...for the commandment was of Jehovah by his prophets." Any conclusion on this matter must take into account the following:

- 1) The law, received at Sinai, made no provisions for the use of instruments of music;
- 2) Moses plainly wrote that "ye shall not add unto the word...neither shall ye diminish ought from it" (Deut 4:2);
- 3) There is no record of the use of instruments in praise to God for more than 400 years after the giving of the law;
- 4) If God had desired instrumental music to be used in praise to Him, why were there no details in any of the books of the Pentateuch? Other aspects of the law were outlined in minute detail, but nothing is ever said about the use of instruments.

It is our studied conviction that the instrument of music, introduced into worship by David, was TOLERATED due to the hardness of the hearts of the people. The same might be said about many provisions that God allowed, which He did not authorize, but simply tolerated - polygamy, the national King, marriage and divorce, etc. Adam Clarke has this interesting comment relative to 2 Chronicles 29:25.

Moses had not appointed any musical instruments to be used in the divine worship; there was nothing of the kind under the first tabernacle... But David did certainly introduce many instruments of music into God's worship, for which we have already seen he was solemnly reproved by the prophet Amos, chap vi. 1-6. It was by the hand or commandment of the Lord and his prophets that the Levites should praise the Lord; for so the Hebrew text may be understood: and it was by the order of David that so many instruments of music should be introduced into the Divine service (Adam Clarke).

We also like Spurgeon's conclusion on this matter: "Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days, when Jesus gives us spiritual manhood, we can make melody without strings and pipes. We...do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity" (Spurgeon). Some otherwise intelligent folks would be surprised to learn that many of the denominational preachers of a century ago were opposed to the use of instrumental music in worship.

*"Sing unto him"* - Here is God's command; and we might comment that there is no praise as sweet and lovely as the heart lifted up in

melodious song using the only instrument God has given us, namely our voices.

**33:3:** *“Sing unto him a new song”* - One might ask how the song to be sung is “new.” Coffman quotes Maclaren: “To any one who has (in the preceding Psalms) been traveling through the heights and depths, the storms and sunny gleams, its sorrows for sin and rejoicing from forgiveness, this Psalm is indeed a ‘new song’” (Coffman, 260-261).

An important lesson to be noted from these verses is the importance of putting our best into worship. David admonished his audience to “play skillfully,” giving it their best. Worship under the new dispensation of Christ is to be in “spirit and truth,” and no less than our best is acceptable to our God.

### ***Explanation For Praising God*** **Verses 4-19**

- 4 For the word of Jehovah is right; And all his work is done in faithfulness.*
- 5 He loveth righteousness and justice: The earth is full of the lovingkindness of Jehovah.*
- 6 By the word of Jehovah were the heavens made, And all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.*
- 7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: He layeth up the deeps in store-houses.*
- 8 Let all the earth fear Jehovah: Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.*
- 9 For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.*
- 10 Jehovah bringeth the counsel of the nations to nought; He maketh the thoughts of the peoples to be of no effect.*
- 11 The counsel of Jehovah standeth fast for ever, The thoughts of his heart to all generations.*
- 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, The people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.*
- 13 Jehovah looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men;*
- 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh forth Upon all the inhabitants of the earth,*
- 15 He that fashioneth the hearts of them all, That considereth all their works.*
- 16 There is no king saved by the multitude of a host: A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.*



17 *A horse is a vain thing for safety; Neither doth he deliver any by his great power.*  
18 *Behold, the eye of Jehovah is upon them that fear him, Upon them that hope in his lovingkindness;*  
19 *To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine.*

**33:4:** Beginning with this verse there is a catalogue of some of the great works of God. In this section the Psalmist simply sets forth reasons why God is to be praised. **The first reason** for praise unto Jehovah is the fact that His very words are the embodiment of truth. The very “word of Jehovah” is right - He cannot lie, nor misrepresent. All that He says is right! **The second reason** for praise is due to His fidelity and faithfulness. Deuteronomy 32:4 says he is “a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he.” As Barnes noted, “Whatever he does is, from the very fact that *he* does it, worthy of the confidence of all his creatures” (Barnes).

**33:5: Third,** God is described as loving righteousness and justice. The world may have crooked judges, and those who render inequitable decisions, but God is the embodiment of righteous judgment; there is no partiality or bias in His decisions. **Fourth,** God deserves to be praised **because of His compassion and love** for mankind.

**33:6: Fifth,** God deserves to be praised **because of His great power.** It is by the “*word of his power*” that the creation is sustained (Heb. 1:3). The vastness of the universe is enough to confound even the most educated. Astronomers recognize that they have only touched the hem of the garment. Hundreds of thousands of stars can be seen with the aid of telescopes, but high-powered instruments now reveal that there are perhaps millions more. Beyond our galaxy there are perhaps hundreds of thousands of planets. And GOD MADE IT ALL WITH THE SIMPLE SPOKEN WORD!

“*the host of them*” -- The stars are here represented as armies marshaled and led forth at God’s command, and under His direction. All of this “*by the breath of his mouth.*” Because of such, our God deserves praise.

**33:7: Sixth,** God is to be praised because of His control of the universe. **Man cannot control the waters.** Out of control, water can produce damage beyond imagination. But God “gathereth” them

up; he “layeth up the deeps in store-houses.” The word for “gathereth” (*kanas*) is a participle “connoting the ongoing work of God in keeping the ocean waters from overspreading the earth” (Hunter, 194). Were it not for the decree of God, the waters of our oceans would invade the earth and devour the land. Burton Coffman makes an interesting observation regarding the water being gathered together as a heap. “The answer lies in the polar ice-caps, both of which are miles deep in solid ice, of which scientists have warned us that, if they were all melted at one time, practically all of earth’s greatest cities would lie several hundred feet submerged in the ocean” (Coffman, 263). Barnes agrees that there is a continual control of these massive amounts of water by our God: “The design is to represent this as a continuous act; an act not merely of the original creation, but constantly occurring” (Barnes). The fact that the seas were gathered together in a heap “denotes the absolute control which God has over the waters, and is thus a most striking illustration of his power” (Barnes).

*“He layeth up the deeps in store-houses”* - The simple fact is that God places the waters where He wants them. The caverns of the ocean are vast reservoir of the waters of this earth, and our God collects them, restrains them, and controls them as He so desires.

**33:8:** This verse serves as a pause giving us the time to reflect upon what has gone before. In view of what the Psalmist has noted, what else might the righteous do but “*fear Jehovah*”? Indeed, we DO “*stand in awe of him*.” Barnes points out that the words “stand in awe” are equivalent to worship (Barnes).

**33:9: Seventh,** God is deserving of praise for the simple reason that **He is the Creator** and Sustainer of the universe. He spake the word, and it came to pass. He commanded, and it stood fast. The absolute control of God over all the forces of the universe is implied in the words “*He commanded, and it stood fast*.” The word “done” does not express the full import of the Hebrew. It is better rendered “He spake, and it was” (Barnes).

**33:10: Eighth,** God deserves the praise of men because His plans always take preeminence over the counsel of men, and especially those of the wicked. God, by His providence and power, will frustrate the most well laid plans of the wicked so as to bring about the best for His chosen people. God’s “counsel” will stand, and His plans will come to pass. This is most comforting to those who have placed their trust in Him. The realization that no one can defeat the

purpose of God provides great strength for endurance. "The idea is that God, by his own overruling purpose and providence, frustrates the designs of the nations of the earth; that he carries forward his own designs and purposes in spite of theirs; that their plans avail nothing when they come in competition with his" (Barnes). Notice that this theme was introduced in the second Psalm. Not only are the "counsels" of the ungodly brought to naught, but their "devices" are made "of none effect." Plans and actions of the ungodly are kept in check by the power of the Almighty.

Before they come to action he vanquishes them in the council-chamber; and when, well armed with craft, they march to the assault, he frustrates their knaveries, and makes their promising plots to end in nothing....The persecutions, slanders, falsehood, are like puff-balls flung against a granite wall - they produce no result at all; for the Lord overrules the evil and bring good out of it. The cause of God is never in danger: infernal craft is outwitted by infinite wisdom, and Satanic malice held in check by boundless power. (Spurgeon).

**33:11:** *Ninth*, God deserves praise because His decrees will not fail; they will stand forever. His word will not return unto Him void (Isaiah 55:11). God's decree is never frustrated; His designs are always accomplished. Generations may come and go, but the plans and purposes of God move on in unbroken fashion obtaining the Divine results with absolute certainty. "There can be no *superior* counsel or will to change it, as is the case with the plans of men; and no purposes of any being *inferior* to himself - angels, men, or devils - can affect, defeat, or modify his eternal plans" (Barnes).

*"The thoughts of his heart to all generations"* - The idea here is the inability of the passing of time to alter God's plans and purposes. Most of the plans of men, with very few exceptions, do not last beyond the generation in which they are first introduced. We cannot be certain that today's order of things will last beyond tomorrow. God, on the other hand, will continue to live, and consequently will continue to carry out His plans and purposes though millenniums may come and go.

**33:12:** Darwin Hunter concluded, "this beautiful verse seems to be the hub around which the rest of the psalm revolves" (Hunter, 195). The truth is applicable to the individual as well as the nation. And why is that nation which lays claim to Jehovah as their God so blessed? For one thing, His laws are equitable and just. By following the commands of God, and by applying the principles of His law to

social life, men will be happier, and certainly more blessed, than if these things are ignored. There is a reference here, we think, to the spiritual nation, the church. In the absolute sense of the word, the only “nation whose God is Jehovah” is the Kingdom of Christ. The Psalmist identifies the “nation” under consideration in the last half of the verse. It is *“the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.”* We know of no other “nation” that can lay claim to being God’s “inheritance” other than Israel; physical Israel of Old, and Spiritual Israel today.

**33:13: Tenth,** God deserves praise because of His omniscience. He “looketh” and “beholdeth” ALL the sons of men. The New Testament equivalent of this verse is Hebrews 4:12-13. God’s sees our every action. No sin escapes His watchful eye. On the other hand, He is fully aware of the needs of His children and will respond accordingly. “The sentiment is repeated here to show that no one can escape his eye; that the condition, the characters, the wants of all are intimately known to him, and that thus he can watch over his people” (Barnes).

**33:15: Eleventh,** God deserves our praise because He knows our innermost feelings. He *“fashioneth the hearts of them all.”* “As he has formed the hearts of all men, he must see what is in the heart, or must behold all the purposes and thoughts of men” (Barnes, 283). Indeed, “There is no one who is not under the responsibility and accountability to Almighty God, whether or not he may be willing to acknowledge it” (Coffman, 265).

**33:16: Twelfth,** God is worthy of praise because it is He Who delivers us from our enemies. Worldly nations would do well to pay close attention to this verse. Military might does not assure strength. The Psalmist plainly says, *“there is **NO** [emphasis mine, TW] king saved by the multitude of a host.”* “The most numerous and the best organized armies cannot secure a victory. It is, after all, wholly in the hands of God ... God has power so to arrange events that mere strength shall be of no avail” (Barnes). Or, as brother Coffman concluded, “This is another way of saying that no king is ever saved merely by the size of his army” (Coffman, 266).

**33:17:** *“A horse is a vain thing for safety”* - The horse under consideration is the war horse. Brother Coffman thinks “this is a clue to when the psalm was written... It hardly seems plausible that a remark such as this would have been written during or after the reign of Solomon” (Coffman, 266). Solomon had “forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots” (1 Kings 4:26), but this in no way

nullifies the truth the Psalmist was seeking to express. If the Psalm was written in the time of David, it should have served as a warning to Solomon that he not put his trust in horses and chariots, but rather in Jehovah God.

*“Neither doth he deliver”* - The difficulty here is determining to whom “he” refers. We happen to think that “he” refers to the “mighty man” of verse 16. This being the case, the Psalmist reminds us that kings will not find security in (1) the size of their armies, (2) the military strategy of their armies, (3) the equipment available to their respective generation, or (4) their own power or intellect.

**33:18: Thirteenth**, God is worthy of praise because of His providential care for *“them that fear him.”* This thought has, of course, been present throughout this entire section, but here the Psalmist identifies the loving and protective “eye” of God. Here is the eye of compassion and concern; not the eye of displeasure or wrath.

*“The eye of Jehovah is upon them”* - While it is true that God makes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust, the scriptures plainly teach that there is a special providential care extended to those *“that fear him,”* and who *“hope in his lovingkindness.”*

**33:19:** This section ends presenting a contrast to the absolute futility of men in their efforts to overcome the very things that have long plagued mankind, namely death and famine. The only answer to victory over these dual enemies of mankind is the refuge available in God. The “superpowers” of recent times that have come and gone are a living testimony to these truths. Any nation that places its trust in anything other than the living God for its protection and guidance will find themselves “weighed in the balances and found wanting” (Dan. 5:27).

### ***Expression*** **Verses 20-22**

*20 Our soul hath waited for Jehovah: He is our help and our shield.  
21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, Because we have trusted in his  
holy name.  
22 Let thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, be upon us, According as we  
have hoped in thee.*

This section is an expression of joy and a plea for God's continued blessings.

**33:20:** *"Our soul hath waited for Jehovah"* - The child of God cannot become impatient. With full confidence that God is "our help and our shield," he must give God time to work in his life.

**33:21:** The blessing of joy precedes the obligation to trust only in the order of words selected by the writer. It is "***because***" we have "trusted in his holy name" that we can thus rejoice.

**33:22:** The Psalmist closes with a plea that God's lovingkindness might "be upon us." But neither does the Psalmist lose sight of the importance of hoping in God. Blessings and responsibility are inseparably connected. What better way to close this Psalm than to remind the readers that God wants to bless His people, but He will not do so arbitrarily.

### ***Lessons***

1. The very nature of God demands adoration and praise from those who love Him and who place their confidence and trust in Him. Such a man is, in the final analysis, the only truly "blessed" man.
2. This Psalm provides us with the only viable explanation for origins. All things were made by the "breath of His mouth." This Psalm is an elaboration upon Genesis 1:1 ff.
3. "A profane man stuck with God's praise is like a dunghill stuck with flowers. Praise in the mouth of a sinner is like an oracle in the mouth of a fool: how uncomely is it for him to praise God, whose whole life is a dishonoring of God? It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God, who goes on in sinful practices, as it is for an usurer to talk of living by faith." - *Thomas Watson*
4. The only acceptable worship is that which arises out of the depths of a heart filled with appreciation for God, and with a determination to worship as God would direct.
5. The word of God is right at all times. That is because His word is TRUTH (John 17:17).
6. A nation finds its strength in a proper relationship with God. There is no king that will be saved by the size of his army, or the wisdom of his counselors. But "the eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear him" (vs. 18).

## *“Protection For The Righteous”*

### ***Introduction***

The uninspired heading attributes the Psalm to David. Since the most ancient traditions regarding David as the author have never been questioned, we accept the Davidic authorship as being reliable. The occasion (according to the subscript) is David’s behavior before Abimelech, recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10-15. The actual time for the writing may have been at some later point when David had time to reflect upon the deliverance provided by God. Darwin Hunter makes this observation: “If the heading is accurate as to the origin of this psalm, David does not credit his disguise as the source of his deliverance, but Jehovah as the one who saved him out of his troubles” (Hunter, 201). Our title seems most appropriate in view of the background of the Psalm. This is, most assuredly a Psalm of Divine protection for the righteous. Morgan concluded, “It is a song which tells of the nearness, the tender sensitiveness, the ready help, the mighty power of Jehovah on behalf of all who trust Him” (Morgan, 233). But in addition, this Psalm expresses the great desire on the part of the writer to have others enjoy the benefits of Divine protection. The Psalm is the second of the “alphabetical” Psalms, the twenty-fifth being the first.

### ***Analysis***

Roy Deaver has the following excellent outline, which we have adapted for this study: (Deaver, 111).

- I. Praise, 1-3;
- II. Provisions, 4-10;
- III. Precepts, 11-14;
- IV. Providence, 15-18;
- V. Protection, 19-22.

The Psalmist presents the righteous life as one worthy of imitation. Verse 8 is an invitation to “taste and see that Jehovah is good.” The plea is that the writer and his audience might “exalt his name

together.” Spurgeon suggests that the Psalm is divided between verse 10 and 11. The first portion is a hymn, the later a sermon.

## **Commentary**

### **Praise Verses 1-3**

- 1 I will bless Jehovah at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth.*  
*2 My soul shall make her boast in Jehovah: The meek shall hear thereof, and be glad.*  
*3 Oh magnify Jehovah with me, And let us exalt his name together.*

These verses set forth the writer’s personal praise and gratitude, as well as an invitation for his hearers to join him in that praise.

**34:1** - *“I will bless the Lord at all times”* - In every circumstance, whatever the situation that might arise, the writer affirms that he would bless the Lord, whether in times of adversity, times of prosperity, times of safety, times of danger; times of joy, or in times of sorrow. *“His praise shall continually be in my mouth.”* The idea is that of steadfastness. We agree with brother Coffman, “what is required is a life of consistent prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, not that a child of God should remain on his knees constantly. Any life that remembers and honors God morning, noon, and evening is fulfilling what is required here” (Coffman, 271).

Albert Barnes was concise in summing up this passage:

With a truly pious man the praise of God is constant; and it is an indication of true religion when a man is disposed always to bless God, whatever may occur. Irreligion, unbelief, skepticism, worldliness, false philosophy, murmur and complain under the trials and amidst the dark things of life; true religion, faith, love spirituality of mind, Christian philosophy, see in God always an object of praise. Men who have no real piety, but who make pretensions to it, are disposed to praise and bless God in times of sunshine and prosperity; true piety always regards him as worthy of praise - in the storm as well as in the sunshine; in the dark night of calamity, as well as in the bright days of prosperity (Barnes).

**34:2**: *“my soul shall make her boast”* – This is a reference to the one thing in the life of the Psalmist that was of utmost importance. David would boast in Jehovah. He would not glory riches, power, or



human achievements. He was also determined that “*the meek shall hear thereof and be glad.*” It was exactly this CLASS of individuals who WOULD hear. The haughty and proud will not hear God, nor will they be inclined to exalt the name of Jehovah God. The “meek” here refers to those who have “learned endurance or patience in the school of affliction” (Hunter, 202).

**34:3:** “*Oh magnify Jehovah with me*” - God’s glory is infinite, and nothing man does can or will increase that glory. The idea in this verse is that our ACTIONS will either magnify God or diminish Him in the eyes of those about us. Indeed, “his character will stand higher in the sight of men as he becomes more and more the supreme object of trust and love” (Coffman, 272). The Psalmist was not satisfied until he had extended the invitation unto others to join him in praise.

### ***Provisions*** **Verses 4-10**

- 4 I sought Jehovah, and he answered me, And delivered me from all my fears.*
- 5 They looked unto him, and were radiant; And their faces shall never be confounded.*
- 6 This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him, And saved him out of all his troubles.*
- 7 The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that fear him, And delivereth them.*
- 8 Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good: Blessed is the man that taketh refuge in him.*
- 9 Oh fear Jehovah, ye his saints; For there is no want to them that fear him.*
- 10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; But they that seek Jehovah shall not want any good thing.*

These verses can be further divided into (1) deliverance, verses 4-7, and (2) supply, verses 8-10.

**34:4:** “*I sought...he answered*” - David spoke by experience. If the subtitle is correct, then it is significant that David did not attribute his behavior before Abimelech as the CAUSE of his deliverance. It was God who heard, and God who delivered. It is also important to note that David was delivered from “fear.” Courage is recognition that He who is for us is greater than he who is against us, and then acting upon that recognition. The key in David’s deliverance was the

fact that he “sought” Jehovah. God would have all men come unto Him, but only those who “seek” will “find.”

**34:5:** Those who accompanied David likewise put their trust in Jehovah. The KJV reads, *“they were lightened”* rather than *“radiant.”* When burdens are lifted the countenance is lifted, and there is a distinct outward appearance of confidence. When David and his men were delivered from their trouble, their countenance was changed as well.

*“Their faces shall never be confounded”* - The words simply mean that those who put their trust in God shall never find occasion for shame; they shall not be confounded, “ashamed” (KJV). We agree with brother Coffman: “There is a radiance in the countenance of Christians that is clearly discernible, contrasting sharply with the ‘fallen countenances’ of the wicked” (Coffman, 272).

**34:6:** *“This poor man cried”* - The writer returns to his own personal experience. He was “poor” in the sense that he was persecuted and afflicted. The word for poor (*‘ani*) does not mean poor in a monetary way, but poor in the sense of being crushed, forsaken, and afflicted. The word “miserable” might be a better word. God heard his cries, and delivered him from his troubles. David carried his troubles to Jehovah. Only when men cry out to God does He then deliver. Prayer is essential to receiving blessings from the Lord.

**34:7:** *“The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about”* - There is an allusion to the protection that Israel received while in the wilderness. The Old Testament provides us with repeated examples of God’s deliverance of that nation. In a sense, there is a “barrier” or “hedge” about those who fear God. A realization of God’s protection of His people is a great source of comfort and encouragement. We may never know the full extent of God providential watchfulness bestowed upon His people. We can only trust that such is the case to them that love Him and obey His will (cf. Rom. 8:28).

**34:8:** *“Oh taste and see that Jehovah is good”* - The Psalmist continues the thought of God’s providential care for His people. The righteous life is the best life. The writer is inviting his audience to prove this to be the case. The amazing thing here is that God has made it POSSIBLE for men to know, and thereby to PROVE that our God is good. This, in and of itself, is a manifestation of God’s wonderful providential care for all men. Try it; test it; prove Jehovah, and see if it is not true that He will abundantly bless the life

of one who seeks and serves Him. “If we could but get men to make trial of religion; to enter upon it so as really to understand and experience it, we may be certain that they would have the same appreciation of it which we have, and that they would engage truly in the service of God” (Barnes). While this is generally true, we must recognize that there will always be those who will not obey, despite the evidence. While in South Africa another American missionary and I visited an older lady who had been “converted” some twenty years earlier, but had never actually become active in her new found faith. She remarked that she had “read the Bible once, but never got anything out of it.” For those who merely read the scriptures without deep study and meditation coupled with application, nothing will ever be gained from such superficial approach to this religion. The word “taste” means to “try the flavor of anything,” and is suggestive of more than a mere taking in of the aroma. One must “assimilate” and experience faith in God before he can genuinely say he has given it a chance to work in his life. “There is the banquet with its oxen and fatlings; its fat things full of morrow, and wines on the lees well refined; but their sweetness will be all unknown to you except you make the blessings of grace your own, by a living, inward, vital participation in them” (Spurgeon).

*“Blessed is the man that taketh refuge in him”* - This describes a man who is genuinely happy; possessing a sense of peace and confidence that cannot be found by putting one’s trust in mammon.

**34:9:** *“There is no want to them that fear him”* - Their “wants” would be abundantly supplied. Later (37:25) David would confess, “I have been young, and now an old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” This author once made the remark that he had experienced the same in his life, and a gentleman replied that he had known of several Christians who had, indeed, suffered hunger, or who had felt keenly the “want” of physical necessities. We would respond with the following considerations: (1) It is impossible to determine the inner heart of a man, and it may well be that one is claiming to fear God while failing to do so with the whole heart. In such a case it may be that the one was not, in reality, being faithful to God and hence the blessings were withheld. (2) Even if it could be proven that some who faithfully followed God were suffering from physical want that would still not nullify the truth of that passage. David had simply set forth his observation, and any exception would be that and nothing more. Verses 12-15 expand upon this principle and present the general truth that behavior is linked to length of life. While we have all witness young

men and women, of all ages, taken from this life in a moment of tragedy, it is still true nonetheless, that longevity of life will, for the most part, be the lot of those who refrain from evil. Barnes has noted, "If anything is withheld, it is always certain that it is not because God could not confer it, but because he sees some good reasons why it should not be conferred" (Barnes). We, like the Psalmist, will trust in our God to providentially take care of us. But we will at the same time submit to Him no matter what He may give us. And we will remain confident that "Jehovah will not allow his faithful servants to starve. He may not give luxuries, but the promise binds him to supply necessities, and he will not run back from his word. Many whims and wishes may remain ungratified, but real wants the Lord will supply" (Spurgeon).

**34:10:** *"shall not want of any good thing"* - This verse is akin to the 23rd Psalm in which the writer expressed the same thought with the words, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." That is, "I shall not be in want." Coffman quotes Dahood that the Hebrew here will bear the rendition "shall not have a deficit," and that "it is an economic term" (Coffman, 274). Men often confuse necessities with luxuries, and complain when their every want is not supplied. We are promised that God will supply those things essential to life, both physical and spiritual (Matt. 6:33). We are likewise promised that all things will work together for our good (Rom. 8:28). We would note in passing that God's definition of what is "good" may not correspond to our concept of the same.

### ***Precepts*** **Verses 11-14**

*11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of Jehovah.*

*12 What man is he that desireth life, And loveth many days, that he may see good?*

*13 Keep thy tongue from evil, And thy lips from speaking guile.*

*14 Depart from evil, and do good; Seek peace, and pursue it.*

**34:11:** *"Come, ye children, hearken unto me"* - This passage (verses 11-14) was quoted by Peter (1 Pet. 3:10). The word rendered "children" means "sons." "It is thus a most interesting address from an aged and experienced man of God to those who are in the morning of life, suggesting to them the way by which they may make life prosperous and happy" (Barnes). It is interesting that David, though King, took the time to teach children. The mind of a child is

so moldable, capable of being taught the most wonderful of truths. The man who wishes to be wise will take time to teach the principles in God's word to those who are young.

I was in a large grocery store in Humble, Texas, and observed two mothers, each accompanied by a single child. As they passed down the various aisles the tendency of each child was somewhat similar. The packages of cereal, candy, and otherwise attractive foods drew the attention of each child. The little hands would, quite naturally, reach for that which appealed to them. It was, however, the reaction of the mothers that stood in stark contrast one to another. One mother did not exercise any disciplinary action upon her child. Verbal warnings were the extent of any attempt to corral the child (to no avail I might add). What the child wanted, he got. Any attempt to bring the child under control was met with harsh resistance on the part of the young tyke. He was determined to have, and did have, his way. Our second mother, on the other hand, was stern. After one (and only one) verbal warning, the child was put in his place. Tears? Oh yes! But the immediate obedience on the part of the child sent a clear signal as to who was in control. As I observed these two mothers with their accompanying child, I wondered to myself what each child would be like in 15 more years. While one mother would have the respect of her loved one, the other will be telling her friends and neighbors, "Well, I just can't do anything with the brat." Solomon has told us to "Train up a child in the way he should go..." The promise of proper behavior is the reward of a job well done.

**34:12:** "*What man*" was designed to draw the reader's attention to what he was about to say, and not to suggest doubt that any would, in fact, NOT desire length of life. And what must one do in order to enjoy this length of life? He must first refrain from every form of evil speech and sin characterized by an abuse of the tongue. Passages abound regarding the proper use of the tongue. James 3:1ff is just one example. Barnes noted: "Be a man characterized by the love of truth; and let all your words convey truth, and truth only...The way to avoid the enmity of other men, and to secure their favour and friendship, is to deal with them truly, and thus to live in peace with them" (Barnes).

*"life"* - The life which the Psalmist speaks of is not mere existence. The man who submits to God's teaching is the wise man, indeed, and such a one has learned the "art" of living.

**34:13:** *“keep thy lips from evil”* - The evil that you might speak will come back upon you. Genuine happiness comes to the man who controls the tongue, holding back from speaking evil, and guarding his lips from speaking guile.

*“speaking guile”* – The writer was saying, “Do not deceive others by your words. Do not make any statements which are not true, do not make promises that you cannot keep (or will not keep), do not flatter others to win their approval, and do not slander your fellow man.” We are to be people characterized by the love of truth. No doubt this, like all other virtues, would tend to lengthen life and to make it more prosperous, peaceful, and pleasant. Clean and honest conversation promotes happiness, but lying and wicked talk “stuffs our pillow with thorns, and makes life a constant whirl of fear and shame” (Spurgeon).

**34:14:** *“depart from evil”* – The Psalmist is speaking of moral integrity. It includes abstinence from every form of evil vice. “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:19-21). The Christian is obligated to maintain holiness of life (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1, 1 Pet. 1:15, 1 Pet. 2:11-12). He must flee evil as Joseph fled the temptation in Potiphar’s house.

*“and do good”* - Having cleansed his life of all impurities, he must then “do good.” Here is the active ingredient in the Christian’s life. Too many Christians are willing to rid their lives of vice, but they then assume that this is the whole of their Christian duty. Faithfulness includes advancing the borders of the kingdom by being zealous of good works.

Finally, he should *“seek peace,”* and in fact *“pursue it”* diligently. As much as is possible, we are to live at peace with all men (Romans 12:18). But in addition, we are to take the initiative in that we actively “seek peace and pursue it.”

**Providence**  
**Verses 15-18**

- 15 *The eyes of Jehovah are toward the righteous, And his ears are open unto their cry.*
- 16 *The face of Jehovah is against them that do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.*
- 17 *The righteous cried, and Jehovah heard, And delivered them out of all their troubles.*
- 18 *Jehovah is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, And saveth such as are of a contrite spirit.*

**34:15:** The application of those things mentioned in the previous verses are part and parcel of being “righteous.” To such individuals our God turns both His eyes and His ears. There is great comfort knowing that God watches over us, that His eyes are “*toward the righteous.*” Even if we should be slighted by all men we can rest assured that our God watches over us.

**34:16:** While the previous verse speaks of the face of the Lord being “*toward the righteous,*” it is here noted that His face is “*against them that do evil.*” While He blesses the former, He will judge the latter and will “cut off” those who disobey. The Proverb writer said, “The memory of the righteous is blessed; But the name of the wicked shall rot” (Pro. 10:7). These two verses (15 & 16) serve as a motivation to the youth to desire a life of righteousness.

**34:17:** “*The righteous cried...Jehovah...delivered*” - One of the blessed privileges of being a Christian is that of prayer. It may be true that “no one has ever yet fully appreciated the privilege of being permitted to call upon God” (Barnes). Our lives would be utterly miserable were there no God to Whom we could bring our petitions. It is a tragedy that so many members of the Lord’s body never take advantage of the power that is available to them through prayer. James told us that the “supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working” (5:16).

**34:18:** “*them that are of a broken heart*” - The broken heart is the heart of submission. It is the antithesis of a proud and arrogant heart. A heart is “broken” by the realization of sin and its consequences. Sometimes a broken heart may not be able to see that God is near, but the divine promise is that when we are “poor in spirit” we will inherit the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3).

**Protection**  
**Verses 19-22**

*19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous; But Jehovah delivereth him out of them all.*

*20 He keepeth all his bones: Not one of them is broken.*

*21 Evil shall slay the wicked; And they that hate the righteous shall be condemned.*

*22 Jehovah redeemeth the soul of his servants; And none of them that take refuge in him shall be condemned.*

**34:19:** This last section addresses the providential care that God offers His children. Notice the words “*delivereth*,” “*keepeth*” and “*redeemeth*.” The Christian will face numerous afflictions in his lifetime. This is because of the incompatibility of light and darkness, truth and error, sin and righteousness. Concerning persecution Barnes has properly noted, “Religion does not exempt them FROM it, but it sustains them IN it” (Barnes). It is comforting to know, therefore, that God will deliver us from every affliction. He may not remove the affliction, but will, by our faith in Him, see us through that affliction.

**34:20:** “*His bones...broken*” – There is a hint of our Lord’s death upon the cross in these words, though we cannot be dogmatic. Barnes sees the application of these words as something very general, meaning that “religion conduces to safety, or that the righteous are under the protection of God” (Barnes). While it is true that these words provide great comfort to the saint suffering affliction, we cannot but help see in these words something of a prophetic utterance of our Lord upon the cross. Spurgeon likewise applied this to the saint suffering persecution but left room for the broader, and might we add, prophetic, application: “No substantial injury occurs to the saints. Eternity will heal all their wounds. Their real self is safe; they may have flesh-wounds, but no part of the essential fabric of their being shall be broken...Not a bone of the mystical body of Christ shall be broken, even as his corporeal frame was preserved intact” (Spurgeon).

**34:21:** “*Evil shall slay the wicked*” - These words of the Psalmist are interesting. It is not unusual to observe the unrighteous being destroyed by their own ungodly behavior. This verse stands in opposition to verses 12-14. While the righteous, because of their godly behavior, see length of days, the wicked, by their ungodly behavior, actually destroy themselves. Ungodly men need only



enough rope to hang their self. They sow seeds of destruction, and more often than not bring upon themselves unhappiness and sorrow by the very life they live.

*“They that hate the righteous”* - Unfortunately there will always exist that element that hates all that is good and right. It is difficult to imagine someone actually hating a righteous individual, but such has been the case from the very moment when Cain slew his brother Abel for no other reason than the fact that Abel’s works were righteous (1 John 3:12). But such hatred will not go unpunished, and in the end all haters of the righteous will have their share in the lake of fire; they will be *“condemned.”*

**34:22:** The contrast between the wicked and the righteous began in the previous verse and continues in this one. The righteous will be redeemed. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). All who take refuge in him will be saved. It is significant that the responsibility is laid squarely upon the shoulders of every individual to *“take refuge.”* Only a fool would stand in the path of an oncoming storm and refuse to take refuge. The wise man sees the need and is determined to “take refuge” in God. Coffman noted that this reference to Jehovah redeeming His saints “is a metaphor depicting Jehovah as paying ransom money (to Death) to assure his saints life” (Coffman, 278).

### ***Lessons***

1. No matter what circumstance we might find ourselves in, it is appropriate and fitting that the child of God will, in all situations, “bless the Lord” and “praise Him” with their mouth. William Dunlop so noted:

Should the whole frame of nature be unhinged, and all outward friends and supporters prove false and deceitful, our worldly hopes and schemes be disappointed, and possessions torn from us, and the floods of sickness, poverty and disgrace overwhelm our soul with an impetuous tide of trouble; the sincere lover of God, finding that none of these affects his portion and the object of his panting desires, retires from them all to God his refuge and hiding place, and there feels his Saviour incomparably better, and more than equivalent to what the whole of the universe can ever offer, or rob him of; and his tender mercies, unexhausted fulness, and great faithfulness, yield him consolation and rest; and enable him, what time he is afraid, to put his trust in him (as quoted by Spurgeon).

2. The wonderful providence of God, and especially such as He extends to His children, is seen throughout the Psalm. God is the protector, provider, sustainer, and guide of the faithful saint.
3. God has invited men to “taste and see that the Lord is good”(v. 8). It is unfortunate that too many have no desire to test God’s word, investigate His promises, or give heed to His counsel. Those who have so “tasted” have proven God’s promises to be true, and are “blessed” indeed. Those who have refrained have robbed themselves of immeasurable riches.
4. God has promised to provide us with the things necessary to life. Indeed, “they that seek the Lord shall not want of any good thing” (vs. 10). The same promise was made by our Lord in His sermon on the mount (Matt. 5:24-35).
5. If a man would desire long life, and see good while living on this earth, he must conform to the directions that God has given in His word. The tongue must be controlled, and evil must be eschewed. On the positive side, peace must be pursued with great diligence.
6. Humility of heart is a must if we are to draw near to God (vs. 18).

## *“In The Midst Of His Enemies”*

### **Introduction**

This Psalm is an earnest plea for God to deliver this Psalmist from his enemies; to rise up and show Himself all-powerful, and to render vengeance upon the very enemies that threaten both the Psalmist and Jehovah God. The author is David, based on the subscript and lack of evidence to suggest otherwise. The occasion is not certain. It was a time when David's friends had evidently opposed him and had turned away from him, joining the ranks of his enemies. Such may have occurred many times in the life of David, making it difficult to determine the exact time or occasion in which he may have written this Psalm. One thing is certain: David trusted in God, even in the midst of his enemies. And so we have entitled this Psalm, “In The Midst Of His Enemies.”

Seeing that David was a type of our Lord, it is not surprising to see in this Psalm a type of the suffering Jesus endured at the hands of His enemies. Spurgeon detected this in the Psalm and concluded, “The whole Psalm is the appeal to heaven of a bold heart and a clear conscience, irritated beyond measure by oppression and malice. Beyond a doubt David's Lord may be seen here by the spiritual eye” (Spurgeon). There is no evidence, however, to suggest that this was the intention of the author.

The main problem the critics have with this Psalm is the author's call for divine vengeance. But G. Campbell Morgan had this note: “Before we criticize the singer for his attitude toward his foes, let us imagine ourselves in his place. In no sense is the level of spiritual realization in this psalm equal to that in many others. One of the greatest values of the collection is its revelation of how, under all circumstances, the soul may turn to God” (Morgan, 234). When studying the ***Imprecatory Psalms*** (those in which the Psalmist calls for judgment upon his enemies) it is important to keep in mind that the author was not seeking any vengeance of his own, but relying upon God's judgment concerning his enemies.

### **Analysis**

The Psalm naturally divides itself into three parts, with slight variation among the commentators.

- I. A Prayer, verses 1-10;
- II. The Character and Conduct of his enemy, 11-16;
  - A. False witnesses against him, 11;
  - B. They had rendered him evil for good, 12;
  - C. In their troubles he had been to them as a brother, 13-14;
  - D. They had forgotten all this in his adversity and had joined with those who reproached him, 15-16.
- III. Appeal to God to interpose and deliver him, 17-28.
  - A. Because God SEEMED to be looking on with no interest, 17;
  - B. The Psalmist would still render praise, 18;
  - C. His enemies were at ease, 19-21;
  - D. God's knowledge of such would naturally lead Him to act, 22-23;
  - E. It was inconsistent for the wicked to triumph over the righteous, 24-26;
  - F. God's action would bring rejoicing on the part of God's people, 27-28.

Though his precise division of the Psalm differs, Spurgeon has this analytical note: "The most natural mode of dividing this Psalm is to note its triple character. Its complaint, prayer, and promise of praise are repeated with remarkable parallelism three times, even as our Lord in the Garden prayed three times using this same words. The first portion occupies from verses 1-10, the second from 11-18, and the last from 19 to the close; each section ending with a note of grateful song" (Spurgeon).

## **Commentary**

### **A Prayer Verses 1-10**

- 1 Strive thou, O Jehovah, with them that strive with me: Fight thou against them that fight against me.*
- 2 Take hold of shield and buckler, And stand up for my help.*
- 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that pursue me: Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.*

- 4 *Let them be put to shame and brought to dishonor that seek after my soul: Let them be turned back and confounded that devise my hurt.*
- 5 *Let them be as chaff before the wind, And the angel of Jehovah driving them on.*
- 6 *Let their way be dark and slippery, And the angel of Jehovah pursuing them.*
- 7 *For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit; Without cause have they digged a pit for my soul.*
- 8 *Let destruction come upon him unawares; And let his net that he hath hid catch himself: With destruction let him fall therein.*
- 9 *And my soul shall be joyful in Jehovah: It shall rejoice in his salvation.*
- 10 *All my bones shall say, Jehovah, who is like unto thee, Who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, Yea, the poor and the needy from him that robbeth him?*

In verses 1-10 we have (a) an earnest appeal for God to interpose, 1-3; (b) a plea for vengeance on his enemies, 4-6; (c) the reason stated, 7; (d) the plea for vengeance continued, 8; (e) an expression of triumph in God, 9-10. We will note each of these more closely.

### *An earnest appeal for God to interpose*

1-3

**35:1:** The enemies of David were fighting against him. He was evidently in need of help, and without God's assistance the situation was hopeless. Thus David pleads for God to "pull out all the stops," so to speak. Take up the shield, the spear, and be a buckler to me! He asks God to "*plead my cause...*" (KJV). The ASV reads, "*Strive with them,*" and the phrase has the meaning in the original of "contend before a judge, to manage or plead a cause" (Barnes). His enemies were striving against him. They had brought accusations against him that were false. David was simply asking God to come to his defense. Specifically, David wanted God to go forth as a warrior might go to battle. "What is here asked for as a boon, may be regarded as a promise, to all the saints; in judgment they shall have a divine advocate, in warfare a divine protection" (Spurgeon).

**35:2:** The terms that are used (buckler, shield, spear) are characteristic of a warrior. The Psalmist asks God to come to his defense. In times of peril God will preserve His people.

**35:3:** The word “draw out” is the act of emptying, and is used to describe the emptying of the sacks in Genesis 42:35. David did not want God to leave the sword in the sheath. The “spear” was a weapon of attack, suggesting that David was requesting God to be on the offensive. The word for “stop” (verse 3) is ‘segor’ and means to close, as in closing a door or gate. David wanted God to close the way against those that were persecuting him. In all of this David was seeking some kind of assurance.

“Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation,” either in verbal assurance, by actions, or a combination of both. The spoken and written word of God stands as a monument to the believer that God will deliver.

*A plea for vengeance on his enemies*

4-6

After beseeching God’s help, David then asks God to take vengeance upon those who are his enemies. It is not unusual to find such requests in the Psalms. We can conclude that it is right to ask God to render vengeance to those who have hurt the cause of God. The souls under the altar cried out, “How long, O God?” It is God’s place, not man’s, to render vengeance, and we should leave it in His hands altogether. We learn that the enemy (1) sought the soul of David, meaning they determined to destroy him; (2) they devise his hurt, implying premeditation on their part. David asks that they be (1) put to shame, (2) brought to dishonor, (3) turned back, and (4) caused to slip and fall in their evil intents. “Viewing sinners as men, we love them and seek their good, but regarding them as enemies of God, we cannot think of them with anything but detestation, and a loyal desire for the confusion of their devices” (Surgeon). It is unfortunate that the present generation seeks some sort of compromise with the enemy rather than a total overthrow. Truth cannot co-exist with error, and the soldier of the cross cannot cooperate with the very enemy that would seek to overthrow God’s kingdom. What else is there left to do but to pray for their overthrow and destruction?

David wanted them to be “confounded” and put to “shame.” In other words, let them be so overwhelmed that they are “ashamed they ever devised my hurt” or destruction. Let them be as “chaff,” that useless part of the grain that is blown away in the wind.

**35:5:** The succession of images and figures here is terrific. The representation is that of persons scattered as the chaff is before the

wind; pursued by the angel seeking vengeance; and driven along a dark and slippery path, with no guide, and no knowledge as to the precipices which may be before them, or the enemies that may be pressing upon them. Spurgeon concluded: "Let their own fears and the alarms of their consciences unman them so that the breeze of trouble shall carry them hither and thither. Ungodly men are worthless in character, and light in their behavior, being destitute of solidity and fixedness" (Spurgeon).

The word for "driving them on" is rendered "persecute" in the KJV. The ASV has the better rendering; the idea being that God would continue to pursue the enemy. The scene is that of the enemy being held at bay, then turned back, and finally chased by the heavenly messengers, from which there is no escape. In the whole process, the pathway of the enemy becomes dark and slippery until they finally fall into complete destruction.

**35:6:** Twice in as many verses reference is made to "*the angel of Jehovah*" pursuing the enemy and driving them on. When men seek to destroy and overthrow God's people they will find themselves fighting with God and facing the mighty power of the angel of Jehovah.

**35:7:** "*without cause....*" - Or, "without any provocation on my part, have they secretly laid their net for me [as in Psalms 9:16, TW], without cause have they digged a pit for my soul." David sought to justify his request. He declared his innocence, saying that they had no "cause" to treat him so. There was no justification, so far as he was concerned, for their evil plans against him. Like a hunter seeking his prey, these evil men had dug a pit and laid a trap, and all without cause. David had done nothing to justify their actions against him. Spurgeon observed, "Net making and pit digging require time and labour, and both of these the wicked will expend cheerfully if they may but overthrow the people of God. Fair warfare belongs to honorable men, but the assailants of God's church prefer mean, ungenerous schemes and so prove their nature and their origin" (Spurgeon).

**35:8:** David resumes his plea for God's divine retribution. It is often the case that men become the victims of their own evil scheming. Haman, for example, was hung on his own gallows. Here is a prayer that the Psalmist's enemies might be treated as they had intended to treat the Psalmist. Again from Spurgeon: "There is a *lex talionis* with God which often works most wonderfully. Men set traps and

catch their own fingers. They throw up stones, and they fall upon their own heads. How often Satan outwits himself, and burns his fingers with his own coals. This will doubtless be one of the aggravations of hell, that men will torment themselves with what were once the fond devices of their rebellious minds” (Spurgeon).

**35:9:** It is not certain whether these words were spoken in reflection of the Psalmist’s prayers being answered, or in anticipation of answered prayer based upon past experiences. If in anticipation, it shows David’s great faith in God. David’s joy was not in their destruction, but in his deliverance. Neither would it be a rejoicing in his own power or ability, but in the power of God. “Bones” is simply a figurative expression for the whole of man; particularly the deep inner feelings. In Psalms 32 his “bones” had been crushed; not literally, but in an emotional sense he had felt the weight of despair. Here his “bones” rejoice, expressing the lifting of the burden that so discouraged him.

### ***The Character and Conduct of His Enemy*** **Verses 11-16**

- 11 Unrighteous witnesses rise up; They ask me of things that I know not.*  
*12 They reward me evil for good, To the bereaving of my soul.*  
*13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I afflicted my soul with fasting; And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*  
*14 I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother: I bowed down mourning, as one that bewaileth his mother.*  
*15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: The abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; They did tear me, and ceased not:*  
*16 Like the profane mockers in feasts, They gnashed upon me with their teeth.*

These verses constitute a description of David’s enemies. Previous verses had given us some details, but for the most part, this section contains that information. It would serve as a justification of David’s plea.

**35:11:** False witnesses were gathered to testify against David. In this “court” David was asked to give an account of the charges brought against him. Not only were the charges false, but also David declares that he did not understand the charges. The Hebrew for



“false witnesses” is literally “witnesses of violence.” They were actually men who were guilty themselves of violence against him on occasion prior to this.

**35:12:** Not only had these enemies brought false charges against him, but they had rendered him evil for good. What man has never found himself in this situation? It is enough to bereave any man’s soul. There is a suggestion here that David had been forsaken by those in whom he might have placed his confidence and trust. It would be the equivalent of a situation in which our best friend, in whom we had confided and trusted, then turned upon us, rendering false witness against us. What discouragement David must have felt at this moment in his life. No wonder he turned to God for help. He KNEW God would not forsake him.

**35:13:** When his enemy was “sick,” the Psalmist prayed in their behalf. The earnestness of his prayer was manifest by his wearing of sackcloth, a common means of expressing grief and concern. His “fasting” was likely time used in prayer.

*“my prayer returned into mine own bosom”* - Barnes explains this as an earnestness of prayer: “The most simple interpretation is that which supposes that the prayer was offered under such a burden of grief on account of their sufferings, that his head sank on his bosom” (Barnes). Such posture is practiced to this day where our heads are bowed low as if our prayer is directed toward our very bosom. The genuine selflessness of the Psalmist is here demonstrated. While his enemies plotted his overthrow, he prayed in their behalf. This Psalm reveals a most noble trait in David. Rather than seeking to return evil for evil, David was content to offer good for any evil done unto him. Even when his enemy was sick, David mourned their physical plight.

Prayer is never wasted. If it does not bless those for whom we pray, then it will bless those who offer their petition unto God. “Clouds do not always descend in showers upon the same spot from which the vapours ascended, but they come down somewhere; and even so do supplications in some place or other yield their showeres of mercy” (Spurgeon).

**35:14:** *“I behaved myself as though it had been my friend”* - That is, when the enemy was sick, before he recognized their evil intents to him, he treated them as he would treat a friend. He was in effect saying, “My past life demonstrated genuine concern for them; I

prayed for them when they were sick, grieved over their predicament, bowed in earnest prayer in their behalf, as if they were my own brother or best friend. My concern for them was like one who mourns the passing of his mother. So I felt for them!"

The words "*bowed down mourning*" are rendered by Alexander as "Squalid I bowed down" (Barnes). Here is one so overcome by grief that he would collapse physically. Anyone who has stood by the side of a family member as he mourns the loss of one near and dear to him has witnessed this type of grief. This is especially so with regard to those who have no faith to give them strength. On more than one occasion I have witnessed those so overcome with grief that they had to be literally carried out of the funeral home, unable to walk on their own. The Psalmist here evidently desires to illustrate the depth of his own sorrow by a reference to the deepest kind of grief that we may never experience.

**35:15:** When the Psalmist was troubled, found to be in dire straits, these hypocrites rejoiced over his woes. This was not done singularly, but as it were in harmony; they "gathered themselves." Their gathering, however, was not to assist, but to destroy. The word rendered "*abjects*" is from a verb '*nachah*' which means to smite, to strike. It carries the idea of that class of people who have sunk to a low degree to achieve their ends; such are among the most worthless outcasts in society. While reference might then be to those who would smite him, the later part of verse 16 would suggest that they inflicted their harm by their vile use of the tongue. Other passages in the Psalms seem to indicate that the tongue was the chief instrument of villainy against David. They would "tear" him with their tongue, railing at him and gnashing with their teeth. Such language impresses us with the destructive power of the tongue. James described the destructive nature of the tongue, depicting it as (1) a rudder controlling a large ship, (2) as a fire out of control, (3) a restless evil, and (4) deadly poison (James 3:1-9). "A pack of dogs tearing their prey is nothing compared with a set of malicious gossips mauling the reputation of a worthy man" (Spurgeon).

**35:16:** Like those who would put on a show of jest toward the upright, these hypocritical mockers sought to discredit David by their constant and malicious gossip and slander of his good name. Though some have seen in these words a prophetic reference to our Lord's death upon the cross, we do not think there is enough evidence to draw any positive conclusion on the matter.

## Appeal to God to interpose and deliver him

17-28

- 17 *Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, My darling from the lions.*
- 18 *I will give thee thanks in the great assembly: I will praise thee among much people.*
- 19 *Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; Neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.*
- 20 *For they speak not peace; But they devise deceitful words against them that are quiet in the land.*
- 21 *Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me; They said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.*
- 22 *Thou hast seen it, O Jehovah; Keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.*
- 23 *Stir up thyself, and awake to the justice due unto me, Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.*
- 24 *Judge me, O Jehovah my God, according to thy righteousness; And let them not rejoice over me.*
- 25 *Let them not say in their heart, Aha, so would we have it: Let them not say, We have swallowed him up.*
- 26 *Let them be put to shame and confounded together that rejoice at my hurt: Let them be clothed with shame and dishonor that magnify themselves against me.*
- 27 *Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause: Yea, let them say continually, Jehovah be magnified, Who hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.*
- 28 *And my tongue shall talk of thy righteousness And of thy praise all the day long.*

In this section we notice:

- 1) God seemed to have no interest in the Psalmist's troubled situation, 17;
- 2) Were God to rescue him from his enemies, it would be an occasion for praise, 18;
- 3) The enemy was at ease, 19-21;
- 4) God's righteousness was grounds for action against the enemy, 22-24;
- 5) The Psalmist did not want his enemy to conclude they had "swallowed" him up, 25-26;
- 6) Such action would bring rejoicing on the part of God's people, 27-28.

**35:17:** “*Lord, how long wilt thou look on us?*” The Psalmist believed that God was aware of the situation. He just could not understand why God would not act. Sometimes amid trials and tribulations we may be tempted to think God is not aware of our situation. This Psalm teaches us that even though it may APPEAR that God is unaware of our plight, faith tells us that He looks on with care and concern.

“*My darling from the lions.*” The NIV renders this, “my precious life.” The marginal reading is “my only one.” Barnes thinks the “reference here is to ‘his own soul’ or life,” and then adds, “It is the language of tenderness addressed to himself. He had but one soul or life, and that was dear to him, as an only child is dear to its parent” (Barnes).

**35:18:** The Psalmist was not ashamed as a follower and worshipper of Jehovah (cf. Matthew 10:32-33). While most men will publish their griefs and hardships, good men will tell of the abundant blessings that they enjoy.

**35:19:** The enemy would “wrongfully” rejoice over the writer IF they thought that their cause had been successful. The last portion of this verse, “*hate me without a cause,*” is a vindication of the writer, indicating that he was indeed innocent. And why did they hate the Psalmist without a cause? For no other reason than the fact that he was righteous. It was noted that Cain hated his brother for the sole reason that Abel was righteous, his sacrifice acceptable. Yes, the wicked will hate the righteous “without a cause.”

**35:20:** The enemy did not speak peace; it was not in their nature to pursue a peaceful solution to their differences with the King. Instead, they would devise rumors, or lies, against those who were at peace. David asserts that he was a man who preferred peace to war, and who had no disposition to maintain strife with his neighbors.

**35:21:** In order to bolster up their lies, they would affirm that they had been eyewitnesses of some malicious deed committed by the Psalmist. None of their accusations were true, of course, and the declaration that “our eyes hath seen it” were lies as well. These wicked men were “glad to find out a fault or misfortune, or to swear they had seen evil where there was none. Malice has but one eye; it is blind to all virtue in its enemy” (Spurgeon). The language is that

which we use when we “detect” another in wrongdoing - doing what he meant to conceal.

**35:22:** God seemed to look on with unconcern. As we might say, he “said nothing.” He appeared to pay no attention to what was done, but suffered them to do as they pleased without interposing to rebuke or check them. But to the contrary, God was and is aware of all the things that befall His saints. Underlying the concern on the part of the Psalmist is the majestic omniscience of our God. We can take new hope in knowing that “Omniscience is the saint’s candle which never goes out” (Spurgeon).

**35:24:** Trusting God would do what is right, the Psalmist was not afraid to let God “judge” according to HIS righteousness. The writer was willing to stand the test, confident that he would succeed in being acquitted of any false accusations the wicked might bring against him. His plea was that God might awake and exercise that justice speedily.

**35:25:** The wicked often rest in their false assurance. We must never forget that the enemy tends to measure their success based upon the “here and now,” rather than looking at “the later end.”

**35:26:** It is the imprecatory tenor of this Psalm, and those that will follow, which give many critics some difficulty. All such critics fail to realize that any call for vengeance was based not upon any personal vendetta, but God’s righteousness. The Psalmist was aware that vengeance belonged to God, not man.

**35:27:** The righteous will rejoice; they will shout for joy. Note the last portion of the verse: “*Jehovah...hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.*” It would appear that God wants to bless us. We must be careful, however, to measure “prosperity” as God measures it. We rejoice in knowing that “the day is coming when shouts of victory shall be raised by all who are on Christ’s side, for the battle will turn, and the foes of truth shall be routed” (Spurgeon).

**35:28:** Once one is blessed by God, and once he recognizes that he has received a blessing, praise is the natural consequence. Such praise is not a momentary thing, but something that permeates the life of the individual.

## ***Lessons***

1. The Christian, like our Psalmist, will face persecution by his enemies (2 Tim. 3:12). This being the case, the child of God must be ready at all times to suffer persecution as a Christian (1 Pet. 4:16).
2. It is right and proper to pray for the destruction of the wicked and the overthrow of their evil schemes.
3. When this life is over, God will be the One Who is victorious. Those who have walked by His side will enjoy the reward of victory as well. This author's mom wrote the following:

### ***The Victor's Crown***

by Mary Esther Wacaster

When the days are dark and dreary,  
And the flesh is sick and weary,  
It takes all we have to withstand,  
The evils dealt at Satan's hand.  
But, in the darkness there is light,  
Glowing through our Saviour's might.  
Upon drops of blood on Emanuel's land,  
Beneath the Victor's crown we stand.  
And through all the days I walk to end,  
It is this crown I seek to win.

## *“The Wicked and the Righteous Contrasted”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript attributes this Psalm to David. The occasion is uncertain. G. Campbell Morgan notes, “One can easily imagine that the psalm was written on some natural height from which the singer looked out on a far-stretching scene in which he saw symbols of truth concerning his God. Note the sweep of vision. The heavens, the skies or clouds, the mountains, the great deep, the river, and, over all, the light” (Morgan, 234). In the Psalm the wicked are contrasted with the righteous, and God is extolled. Obedience is encouraged and rebellion is plainly condemned.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have:

- I. A Description Of The Wicked, 1-4;
- II. A Description Of The Mercy Of God, 5-9;
- III. A Prayer For Deliverance, 10-11;
- IV. The Overthrow Of The Wicked, 12;

Another interesting division was supplied by Paul Sain: Division I: God’s revelation of man to himself, verses 1-4; Division II: God’s revelation of himself to man, verses 5-12.

### ***A Description Of The Wicked Verses 1-4***

- 1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart,  
There is no fear of God before his eyes.*
- 2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes,  
That his iniquity will not be found out and be hated.*
- 3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit:  
He hath ceased to be wise and to do good.*

4 *He deviseth iniquity upon his bed;  
He setteth himself in a way that is not good;  
He abhorreth not evil.*

**36:1:** The difficulty in this verse can be seen in the different ways it is rendered. Dr. Kay (Pulpit Commentary) translates the verse, “Transgression’s oracle to the wicked is, In the interior of my heart.” The NIV renders it, “An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked.” The New American Standard has, “Transgression speaks to the ungodly within his heart.” The problem lies in whether it is “his heart” or “my heart.” One possible meaning would be that the sinfulness of the wicked man deludes him into the belief that his wickedness is known to no one but himself. Another suggests, “Thus saith depravity to the wicked man, ‘In the midst of my heart, there is no fear of God before his (i.e., God’s) eyes’” (Rawlinson, 274). What ever translation is favored, the message is the same. The meaning is that the wicked have no fear of God in their hearts. They have no regard for God’s will. They are daring and wanton seeking to break the bonds that would hold them from sin. They go right on sinning because they are listening to a lying voice within that has convinced them God does not exist, or at least God does not see their sin.

But what shall we make of the statement that “*transgression of the wicked saith*”? We must agree with Coffman that here “sin is personified, and whispers in the heart of the sinner all kinds of inducements for continuation in his evil way” (Coffman, 290). When sin is harbored in the heart there is no “fear of God before his eyes.” Spurgeon correctly noted: “If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his very presence? Whatever theoretical opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists, since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them for ever” (Spurgeon).

**36:2:** “*For he flattereth himself*” – The Pulpit Commentary points out that this is another obscure verse and suggests the meaning as “he flatters himself that he will conceal his sin from God, so that God will not discover it to hate it” (Rawlinson, 274). This wicked man places an exalted value upon himself. The meaning seems to be that he ascribes to himself great qualities. He overestimates his strengths. He flatters himself into thinking that his iniquity will never be discovered. He prides himself on his own goodness, and pursues his own course, trusting in himself. As a result his conduct



becomes hateful and abominable and he can no longer conceal the true nature of his character.

*“that his iniquity will not be found out”* - The wicked may attempt to conceal his iniquity, but rest assured his iniquity WILL be discovered. When men think they can conceal their iniquity and hide their wickedness from the Almighty, they flatter themselves; and it is flattery of the worse sort.

**36:3:** *“The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit”* – Having cast off God’s laws, the wicked man will use any means at his disposal to gain his desired end. He will speak words of iniquity and deceit and think nothing of it. Having opened his heart to deception, and having rejected heaven’s moral standard, there is nothing to keep him from lying to others if it helps him get what he wants. “This pair of hell dogs generally hunt together, and what one does not catch the other will; if iniquity cannot win by oppression, deceit will gain by chicanery” (Spurgeon).

*“he hath ceased to be wise and to do good”* - The wicked man has departed from the good way altogether. Men who fear God will increase from strength to strength as they walk in the path of righteousness, but godless men soon forsake what little good they may have once known. What a tragic and bitter end to those who attempt to hide their sins. We like John Phillips comments on this verse:

Rotherham renders that: “He hath ceased to act circumspectly.” His behavior is *learned* behavior adopted as a matter of deliberate choice. There was a time when he did act in a way which showed he was aware that God had claims upon his life, but no more. When I was a boy in Britain many homeowners surrounded their property with brick walls. Along the top of these walls they would place a layer of cement in which they would embed pieces of broken glass to discourage intruders from trying to climb over the wall. Sometimes an alley cat would walk along the wall studded with broken glass. He did not dash blindly along it. He walked circumspectly. He watched where he was going. He put his foot out gingerly and tested each step to make sure he wasn’t going to get hurt. That is how we ought to walk when our path is strewn with snares. That is how the sinful man used to walk. But now he has grown bold in unbelief. He no longer thinks there is any danger in dashing on through life pretending there is no God. He has become the victim of his own philosophy (Phillips, 273).

**36:4:** *“he deviseth iniquity upon his bed”* - In the nighttime meditations he is busy devising evil schemes. We can scarce imagine someone who spends his quiet moments meditating, not on things that are good and wholesome, but things that are here called “iniquity.” “His place of rest becomes the place for plotting... He has the devil for his bed-fellow who lies abed and schemes how to sin” (Spurgeon).

*“He setteth himself in a way that is not good”* - Having meditated on those things that are wicked, he then sets out to bring his wicked schemes to fruition. He travels the path of life that is “not good,” and he has no disdain of evil. Let the reader notice that one’s attitude toward evil determines the course of action he will follow. If we HATE sin, we will avoid it; if we do not hate it, we might first tolerate it, and eventually participate in it. The Psalmist describes a man who is set in his way; he has selected a direction that takes him away from all that is good and holy. “His conscious is deadened against evil; there is not a trace of aversion to it to be found in him; he loves it with all of his soul” (Coffman, 291). The depths of depravity to which this man sinks is beyond the imagination. Here is a man who “never hates a wrong thing because it is wrong, but he meditates on it, defends it, and practices it. What a portrait of a graceless man these few verses afford us. His jauntness of conscience, his licentiousness of speech, his intentness upon wrongdoing, his deliberate and continued preference of iniquity, and withal his atheistical heart, are all photographed to the life” (Spurgeon).

### ***A Description Of The Mercy of God*** **Verses 5-9**

*5 Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, is in the heavens;*

*Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.*

*6 Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God;*

*Thy judgments are a great deep:*

*O Jehovah, thou preservest man and beast.*

*7 How precious is thy lovingkindness, O God!*

*And the children of men take refuge under the shadow of thy wings.*

*8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house;*

*And thou wilt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.*

*9 For with thee is the fountain of life:*

*In thy light shall we see light.*

**36:5-6:** There are three traits of our God that come into view here: “lovingkindness,” “faithfulness,” and “righteousness.” The lovingkindness of God is often noted in the Psalms. Experience has proven God to be a benevolent God, merciful and compassionate in His dealings with man. The idea seems to be that the mercy of God is so far above man, that it is difficult to understand. His mercy is immeasurable. It is exalted to the heavens.

God’s faithfulness is unlimited, reaching “*unto the skies.*” In all circumstances, and in any circumstances, our God will be true to His word. He is a God upon Whom we can depend. Such lovingkindness and faithfulness is set forth here in striking contrast to the utter wickedness of sinful man.

Third, there is God’s righteousness. “*Thy righteousness is like the mountains.*” While His faithfulness is governed by His divine promises, His righteousness is inseparably connected to His holiness. The majestic righteousness of our God is beyond our comprehension. “Like the ethereal blue, it encompasses the whole earth, smiling upon universal nature, acting like a canopy for all the creatures of the earth, surmounting the loftiest peaks of human provocations, and rising high above the mists of moral transgression” (Spurgeon).

While the earth may dwell in the depths of darkness, our God’s wonderful mercy and lovingkindness is higher than the heavens. His “*faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.*” His wonderful promises and marvelous grace are beyond human comprehension.

Consequently, our God is just in dealings with man, just in his law, and in his plan for delivering man from sin. Justice is, in fact, part of His very character and nature. The allusion to the “mountains” is poetic language referring to the strength and stability of God. God’s righteousness is not wavering; it is stable, firm, unchanging. “As winds and hurricanes shake not an Alp, so the righteousness of God is never in any degree affected by circumstances; he is always just... Among great mountains lie slumbering avalanches, and there the young lightnings try their callow wings until the storm rushes down again from the awful peaks; so against the great day of the Lord’s wrath the Lord has laid up in the mountains of his righteousness dreadful ammunition of war with which to overwhelm his adversaries” (Spurgeon).

*“Thy judgments are a great deep”* -- The “judgments” are the manifestations of the righteous nature of God. It is because of His righteous character that God’s judgments are always right and proper. The “*great deep*” has reference to the ocean, and, like the unfathomable nature or depth of the ocean, so are God’s judgments upon men often beyond understanding.

*“Thou preservest man and beast”* is simply one area in which God’s mercy, righteousness, and judgments are manifested. Were God not to love man, life would not exist. We are alive because it is in God that we live, move and have our very being. Wretched is the man who fails to see the mighty hand of God’s providential care for the creation.

**36:7:** *“How precious is thy lovingkindness”* - The word for “*precious*” refers to costly stones used in building the temple (cf 2 Chronicles 3:6). The mercy of God is so precious that it is of inestimable value. “No gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord’s love...King’s regalia are a beggarly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercy of Jehovah” (Spurgeon). Because of that great mercy, the “*children of men*” take refuge with God. The reference is to “children of men” who take advantage of God’s mercy. The idea of protection is summed up in the words, “*shadow of thy wings*.” Like a little chick that is gathered under the wings of its mother, so God would gather us close to Him, and provide protection in times of danger. This Psalm may have been in the mind of Jesus in Matthew 23:37. The Deity of Jesus is certainly implied, for as one is gathered under the “shadow of thy wings” (referring to God’s protection), so Jesus offered protection of like nature. So sweet is this wonderful protection and heavenly willingness to provide for the “children of men” that Jesus wept when men refused heaven’s offer for protection.

**36:8:** *“They shall be abundantly satisfied”* - The idea here is one of satisfaction; fullness; lack of want. The words used express completeness, “abundant satisfaction,” and “fatness of thy house.” The Hebrew word for “abundantly satisfied” is ‘*ravah*’ meaning “to drink to the full” (Barnes). The weary and thirsty traveler on his journey across a desert would find satisfaction at an oasis. So it is with the man who delights in God. “Blessed is the man that hungers and thirsts after righteousness, for he shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6). Salvation is quite frequently presented as a feast. There is no lack.

We may partake to the full with every expectation of complete satisfaction.

Coffman has pointed out that the “word here rendered ‘pleasures’ (delights in the KJV) comes from the same root as the word Eden, the Paradise of God. The meaning is that God’s people shall have an abundance of all joys and satisfactions, suggestive of the very Garden of Eden itself” (Coffman, 293).

**36:9:** *“The fountain of life”* - God is the source from which life flows. The Psalmist’s use of the word “life” likely has reference to the quality of life as much as the mere existence of life.

*“In thy light shall we see light”* - Without the revelation of God’s word we are, indeed, in darkness. The most fundamental of man’s questions remain unanswered separate and apart from a knowledge of God’s word. Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where is it we are going? Take the Bible away and these questions will remain a mystery. But when men walk in the light of God’s word (1 John 1:6-8), there is illumination concerning life’s perplexities. “We need no candle to see the sun, we see it by its own radiance, and then see everything else by the same luster...Vain are they who look to learning and human wit, one ray from the throne of God is better than the noonday splendour of created wisdom. Lord, give me the sun, and let those who will delight in the wax candles of superstition and the phosphorescence of corrupt philosophy” (Spurgeon). The great tragedy of our generation is that men love the darkness more than the light. Meanwhile, the world rushes on in darkness without so much as a inkling of the wonderful light that is available to them.

### ***A Prayer For Deliverance*** **Verses 10-12**

- 10 Oh continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee,  
And thy righteousness to the upright in heart.*  
*11 Let not the foot of pride come against me,  
And let not the hand of the wicked drive me away.*  
*12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen:  
They are thrust down, and shall not be able to rise.*

**36:10:** The Psalm closes with a prayer for deliverance. As God had proven Himself faithful in the past, the writer beseeches God’s continued lovingkindness, and is confident that God will keep His promises.

*“Oh, continue thy lovingkindness”* - The Hebrew means “to draw, hence the sense of continuing or prolonging” (Barnes). The Psalmist prays for continued blessings. We should never take God’s wonderful love for granted. Prayer that is persistent is prayer heard and answered. Thanksgiving should follow received blessings, and spiritual maintenance of the soul will guarantee a home in heaven with God.

*“To them that know thee”* - Here is another one of those passages that marks the “great divide” between the saved and the lost. They are referred to the sheep and the goats, the saint and the sinner, the child of God and the child of the devil, those with hope and those without hope, the blessed man and the wicked man. Those who “know thee” have an intimate relationship with the Father. Prayer (conversation with God), study of the word, and walking in the light are only a few of the characteristics that mark the child of God as one who “knows” the Father. They are undoubtedly, *“upright in heart.”*

**36:11:** *“Let not the foot of pride come against me”* - The two-fold danger of pride (inward sin) and the hand of the wicked (outward persecution) are representative of the pitfalls that face every child of God. The Psalmist prays for stability. He did not want the efforts of the wicked to succeed. He wanted God to grant him stability in the midst of the attempts on the part of the wicked to destroy him. It is rather interesting that “every Psalm of David that speaks of danger points to the pride of his enemies as the source of it” (Coffman, 294). Pride was the condemnation of the devil (1 Tim. 3:6). While pride is the devil’s sin, humility is the garb of the righteous and the pathway to eternal life. It is precisely these two stumbling blocks by which *“are the workers of iniquity fallen.”* So great was their fall that they *“shall not be able to rise.”* When a warning is given that carries with it a fall so great the magnitude of which is eternal loss and ruin without the possibility of rising again, it would seem that the faithful child of God would seek to avoid that danger where possible, and flee to God for refuge at all times and in every circumstance.

**36:12:** *“There are the workers of iniquity fallen”* - The words suggest there was a quick response to the prayer of the previous verses. This is explained by either (1) the prayer having been answered, or (2) the faith of the Psalmist expressing his desire in terms suggestive of how the prayer would be answered, with confidence as to what the outcome might be. Observe, oh children of God! There, THERE are the workers of iniquity. Take note of their

spiritual plight. In the final end they are “*thrust down*” without any hope of being able to rise.

### ***Lessons***

1. When men cease to fear God, transgression increases and the heart becomes hardened.
2. The child of God must abhor that which is evil. There are too many who excuse, overlook, or accept it as a way of life.
3. Be sure that your sin will find you out.
4. Man has reached a new low of wickedness when he meditates on mischief upon his bed and sets himself in a way that is not good.
5. The mercy of God is beyond our comprehension. It extends to the heavens, and reaches unto the clouds.
6. Those who put their trust in God shall not be disappointed. Indeed, “They shall be abundantly satisfied.”
7. The fountain of life is found only in God.
8. Pride has destroyed many a man.
9. Consider the “blessings” that come to the righteous: (1) God’s lovingkindness; (2) protection under the “shadow of thy wings”; (3) abundant satisfaction; (4) drink from the river of God’s pleasures [note the plural]; (4) access to the fountain of life; (5) guidance from the light of God; (6) protection from the “foot of pride” and the “hand of the wicked.”

## *“Fret Not Thyself Because of the Wicked”*

### ***Introduction***

The New Century Bible Commentary entitles the Psalm, *“Nothing But God Is More Than Everything And No God.”* The author was an old man with considerable experience (cf. verse 25). He wanted to impress upon his readers that any seeming injustice in this life is of a transitory nature. “The object of the poem is to reassure men whose minds are disturbed by the fact of the frequent prosperity of the wicked, to convince them that in every case retribution will overtake the ungodly man at the last, and to impress upon them that the condition of the righteous, even when they suffer, is far preferable to that of the wicked, whatever prosperity they may enjoy” (Rawlinson, 285). The Psalm addresses essentially the same problem as the book of Job. The great riddle of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, which has perplexed so many, is here dealt with in the light of the future. Anxiety, fretfulness, and concern are forbidden. The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David. The contents and language of the Psalm support this view. The occasion is not certain. It could have been written at any of several occasions wherein David observed the prosperity of the wicked, and wondered about their state. The theme of this Psalm is set forth in the first verse: “Fret not thyself because of the wicked.” This will serve as our title for this Psalm.

### ***Analysis***

The most common divisions of this Psalm suggested are (1) exhortations to people perplexed, (2) the future of the wicked, (3) the blessings of the righteous, and (4) a contrast between the wicked and the righteous. Frank Dunn suggests, “The thoughts of the Psalm are not grouped according to subjects. It is like a chapter in Proverbs, with most of the verses complete in themselves” (Dunn, 222).



Some of our earliest notes on the Psalm contain the following outline:

- I. The main subject, “fret not,” 1-2;
- II. The state of mind that should be cherished - i.e., calmness and confidence in God, 3-8;
- III. The reasons for this state of mind, 9-40, consisting of
  - A. The future doom of the wicked, 9-15;
  - B. The ultimate prosperity of the righteous, 16-40.

## **Commentary**

### **The Main Subject: “Fret Not” Verses 1-2**

- 1 *Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, Neither be thou envious against them that work unrighteousness.*
- 2 *For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb.*

**37:1:** “*Fret not thyself because of evil doers*” - The Hebrew word for “fret” means “to burn, to be kindled, to be inflamed, and is often applied to anger” (Barnes). The apparent prosperity of the wicked, and their seeming success in this life, is not a cause for concern on the part of God’s people. These first three words can apply to much of life: “Fret not thyself” over material things, over our health, or over the forces of evil. We are not to worry or fret (1) at the presence of evil, (2) at the great numbers of evil men, (3) or at their apparent successful prosperity. These are the things that might cause God’s people concern. “Nature is very apt to kindle a fire of jealousy when it sees law-breakers riding on horses, and obedient subjects walking in the mire: it is a lesson learned only in the school of grace, when one comes to view the most paradoxical providences with the devout complacency of one who is sure that the Lord is righteous in all his acts” (Spurgeon).

“*Neither be envious against them that worketh unrighteousness*” - There must be a real danger that the righteous might in some circumstances actually envy the unrighteous. Envy is “pain, mortification, discontent, at the superior excellence or prosperity of others, accompanied often with some degree of malignant feeling, and with a disposition to detract from their merit” (Barnes). When the wicked are prosperous and seem to have the best of life, those who seek to live righteous lives might observe that state of those who

are both wicked and prosperous, and actually envy them. The temptation is particularly strong when trials and tribulations come upon us while the wicked seem to escape the hardships of life. Indeed, “Stormy weather may curdle even the cream of humanity” (Spurgeon).

**37:2:** *“They shall soon be cut down like the grass....”* When the wealthy man dies, he does not take his money with him. The wicked soon die, and everything “under the sun” continues as before. Prosperity is only temporary when measured by God’s calendar. Like grass that is soon cut down, the wicked will also be destroyed. The word rendered “soon” (*‘mehairah’*) has the idea of “haste or speed” (Barnes). The idea seems to be that when their destruction does come, it will be a quick and rapid judgment from God.

*“and wither as the green herb”* - George DeHoff’s comment on this passage is that “this Psalm teaches that the prosperity of the wicked is superficial and temporary, and that those who trust in God may be certain that, finally, they will be the ones who are blessed” (DeHoff, 130). Or, as Spurgeon put it, “The beauty of the herb dries up at once in the heat of the sun, and so all the glory of the wicked shall disappear at the hour of death” (Spurgeon).

### **The State of Mind Which Should Be Cherished Verses 3-8**

- 3 *Trust in Jehovah, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on his faithfulness.*
- 4 *Delight thyself also in Jehovah; And he will give thee the desires of thy heart.*
- 5 *Commit thy way unto Jehovah; Trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass.*
- 6 *And he will make thy righteousness to go forth as the light, And thy justice as the noon-day.*
- 7 *Rest in Jehovah, and wait patiently for him: Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, Because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.*
- 8 *Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: Fret not thyself, it tendeth only to evil-doing.*

**37:3:** There are so many words of comfort in this Psalm, and especially the verses now before us. “*Trust*” suggests absolute reliance upon our God to take care of us. There is a sense in which we “confide” in Him. We must learn to leave all in the hands of God,

for He will take care of us. Peter admonishes us to cast all our “anxiety upon him, because he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7). What comfort there is in realizing that we have one who will take care of us! “[Faith] cures fretting. Sight is cross-eyed, and views things only as they seem, hence her envy; faith has clearer optics to behold things as they really are, hence her peace” (Spurgeon).

But note that we are to “*do good*.” It is a two-way street. The child of God is a soldier, at war with the forces of evil. While trusting in Jehovah, we are to be busy with doing good so as to overcome what might otherwise be accomplished by those who are evil and wicked. As well, there is nothing more therapeutic for a worried mind, than being actively engaged in some worthwhile task. “Each one should have so much of his own to do that he will have no time to murmur and complain, to allow the mind to prey on itself, or to corrode for want of employment” (Barnes).

The “*land*” to an Israelite represented the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. It is a central part of the Abrahamic promise. To “*feed on his faithfulness*” means to “feed” upon God’s word, the truth. Those who do not make it a habit of studying from God’s word, tend more to anxiety than that child of God who is active in gaining strength from a constant feeding upon scripture. One will notice through the Psalm, as well as other passages, the constant reference to man’s responsibility in acquiring the blessings that God has to offer. While such actions certainly do not MERIT any obligation on God’s part, it does place us within His favor, and blessings are thus bestowed. I never cease to be amazed at the constant haranguing on the part of commentators that suggest that man can do nothing to obtain God’s blessings. It has always been true that blessings from Jehovah are **CONDITIONAL!**

**37:4:** There is a progression here that is not readily observable. He who was first bidden not to fret was then commanded to trust in the Lord. He is now told to “*delight...in Jehovah*.” The word for “*delight*” originally suggested a life of ease or pleasure. True peace is only to be found in a life that finds pleasure in association with God. In some of the other Psalms one will note that the writers found “pleasure” in (1) being in the house of God, (2) in meditating on His word, etc. There are many who feign religion, while they derive no pleasure whatsoever from serving God. Study is a burden to them, and so they neglect it. Attendance at public worship is boring, senseless, and a waste of time. Consequently, they do not attend on

a regular basis. The child of God who loves his Creator finds association with God and service unto Him to be a thing of delight.

It is significant, then, that *“he will give thee the desires of thy heart.”* But it is a divine axiom that the man who “delights in Jehovah” will have a heart that desires only those things that please his Lord. It is somewhat paradoxical that those who find pleasure in sin will likewise find the “desires of their heart,” though it be the devil who shall grant their evil propensities. The heart set on sin will not be held back by Jehovah. But one must remember that there will come a judgment.

**37:5:** The ASV marginal reading is “roll thy way upon Jehovah.” The idea is that of laying our burdens upon God. We are encouraged to roll the whole of our burden of life upon the Lord. Notice again 1 Peter 5:7. The “way” is one’s course of life, the manner in which he lives. All of our plans, our purposes, etc. are to be committed to Jehovah. It is a strange philosophy that views a certain portion of life as belonging to God, while we enjoy all else. Those who practice such generally dedicate only a small portion to Him, while keeping the greater for themselves. In the matter of time, for example, an hour or so on Sunday morning is “set aside” to give pretense of religion to God, while the remainder of the week is spent on selfish ambitions and satisfaction of the lusts of the flesh.

And what is it that God will *“bring...to pass”*? Read on.

**37:6:** Whatever the meaning of *“make thy righteous to go forth,”* and *“thy justice as the noonday,”* it is most definitely something that God brings to pass. By submitting to His will, our righteousness will be known to men. Our example declares unto others that we are either servants of God or Satan. The evidence should be so clear and precise that we are God’s people, that like the light at noontime, so our righteousness and justice will shine forth. “Even in the worst cases, where a good name is for awhile darkened, Providence will send a clearing like the dawning light, which shall increase until the man once censured shall be universally admired” (Spurgeon).

**37:7:** This is a positive effort to replace fretting and doubting by a trust in Yahweh. This calls for responsibility and action of the individual. The word for “rest” has the marginal rendering of “be silent to the Lord.” Barnes suggests that it means “that of waiting in silent patience or confidence for his interposition; or, in other words,

of leaving the whole matter with him without being anxious as to the result” (Barnes).

It is important to keep in mind that while we are waiting for God to work things out, He does not always work according to man’s timetable. In fact, there may be a purpose and value to His delaying response. We must continue to trust Him and allow Him to work in our lives. “God’s people are repeatedly warned not to ‘fret.’ That means not to become irritated, angry, disturbed, or upset by what must appear to many as an injustice” (Coffman, 300).

That the wicked oft escape the judgment of God in THIS life is no indication that justice will not be rendered. It is a fact that the wicked often prosper while on earth; this the Psalmist admits. We should not fret because they do prosper, but rather leave such matters in the hands of our Lord.

*“Rest in the Lord”* - There are times when we should calmly meditate upon the words of God. Our “hurry-up world” has robbed us of those moments that are most essential to effective communication with our God. “A silent tongue in many cases not only shows a wise head, but a holy heart” (Spurgeon).

*“and wait patiently for him”* - Spurgeon’s comments on this are as good as any: “Time is nothing to him; let it be nothing to thee. God is worth waiting for. He never is before his time, he never is too late. In a story we wait for the end to clear up the plot; we ought not to prejudge the great drama of life, but stay till the closing scene, and see to what a finish the whole arrives” (Spurgeon).

**37:8:** Undue concern about the prosperity of the wicked may eventually lead us to become angry, or even engage in the deeds of the wicked. Galatians 6:1 is the New Testament equivalent of this passage. Here is one reason why the child of God should not fret over the seeming prosperity of the wicked: It could very easily lead to one’s becoming entangled in evil-doing as he seeks to rectify the situation regarding the wicked.

### **The Reasons For This State of Mind Verses 9-40**

This section sets forth a number of reasons for acquiring and maintaining a patient state of mind. Two of these come to the

surface: A. *The future doom of the wicked* (9-15), B. *The ultimate prosperity of the righteous* (16-40).

*The future doom of the wicked*  
(9-15)

- 9 *For evil-doers shall be cut off; But those that wait for Jehovah, they shall inherit the land.*  
10 *For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and he shall not be.*  
11 *But the meek shall inherit the land, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*  
12 *The wicked plotteth against the just, And gnasheth upon him with his teeth.*  
13 *The Lord will laugh at him; For he seeth that his day is coming.*  
14 *The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, To cast down the poor and needy, To slay such as are upright in the way.*  
15 *Their sword shall enter into their own heart, And their bows shall be broken.*

It is the realization that the wicked will eventually receive their just reward that enables us to maintain a patient attitude toward life in general.

**37:9:** “*evil doers shall be cut off*” - Here is the key to overcoming anxiety and concern in these matters. The child of God fixes his eyes on the FINAL outcome. The evildoers will ultimately be punished, “cut off” the writer tells us. In contrast, those that “*wait on Jehovah*” will receive the promised blessings. Barnes points out that the idea “here is that wicked men will be cast down before they reach the ordinary term of human life, or before they would be cut off if they were not wicked.” But he warns us that “this is not indeed universally true, but there are instances enough of this kind to establish it as a general rule” (Barnes).

As for the righteous? “*They shall inherit the land*” - The “land” under consideration is not some physical real estate promised to those who are faithful to their God. “The land” is a metaphorical expression of ultimate blessing and inheritance. Genuine happiness is not measured by the “threescore and ten” years we may happen to enjoy in this life. It is measured by things eternal; things that are lasting, unseen with the human eye. “For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an

eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18). Spurgeon properly noted: “Even in this life they have the most of real enjoyment, and in the ages to come theirs shall be the glory and the triumph. Passion, according to Bunion’s parable, has his good things first, and they are soon over; Patience has his good things last, and they last forever” (Spurgeon).

**37:10:** “*a little while*” - In comparison to eternity, a full lifetime will seem but a “little while.” Notice Revelation 12:12. The Holy Spirit is looking at the brevity of life. The wicked shall not last forever! Once removed, the wicked will only be remembered for what might have been.

*“the wicked shall not be”* - The marginal reading here is, “It shall not be,” which means that in a relatively short period of time the wicked shall not be found. “His house shall be empty, his chair or office vacant, his estate without an owner; he shall be utterly blotted out, perhaps cut off by his own debauchery, or brought to a deathbed of penury by his own extravagance. Gone like a passing cloud - forgotten as a dream - where are his boasting and hectorings, and where the pomp which made poor mortals think the sinner blest?” (Spurgeon).

**37:11:** The “meek” stand in contrast to the haughty. They, and they alone, shall enjoy the “peace that passeth understanding.” The idea seems to be that the righteous will find the source of true happiness. “In the tranquillity and quietness in which they spend their lives, in contrast with the jealousies, the contentions, and the strifes which exist among the wicked even when prosperous” (Barnes).

Coffman substitutes “earth” for “land,” and gives the following explanation:

(1) The LXX renders it ‘earth’; and when Jesus Christ quoted from this chapter, he deliberately chose the reading. ‘The meek shall inherit the earth’ (Matthew 5:5). It is our opinion that the preference of the Blessed Saviour should be allowed here (and everywhere, for that matter). It could not possibly have been an accident that Jesus used the word ‘earth.’... It is not true that the ‘meek shall inherit that land of Canaan,’ the meaning usually assigned by scholars to ‘land’ in this context; but they shall inherit the ‘earth.’ Of course, there are suggestions in this of that ‘new heavens and new earth’

promised through the apostle Peter (2 Pet. 3:13). (Coffman, 301)

Above everything else, it is the meek who shall truly enjoy life to its fullest. “He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Pet. 3:10).

**37:12:** In great anger, and with envious hearts, the wicked would plan to overthrow the just. But as the previous verse teaches, they shall not succeed. It is a curious thing that the wicked simply cannot let the good man alone. This is to be the lot of the righteous, however, since it was prophesied from of old that there would be enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Notice also 2 Timothy 3:12.

*“gnasheth upon him with his teeth”* - Literally it is “grinding their teeth,” an expression of fanatical rage and hatred. See Acts 7:54.

**37:13:** Notice Psalms 2:4 in this connection. And why does God laugh at the wicked? It is because He sees the wicked’s day of destruction. “It is not that God is unfeeling, or that he is disposed to deride man, but that he regards all such efforts as vain, and as not demanding notice” (Barnes). The plans of the wicked are futile, for their calculations are based upon the assumption that God is ineffective in human affairs.

**37:14:** The fact that the wicked ever stand ready to bring destruction upon the poor and needy seems to be the thought in this passage. They have “prepared themselves with a full purpose to destroy the righteous” (Barnes). It is a strange mentality that would seek to slay those who are upright; but so long as this earth exists, the forces of wickedness will oppose that which is upright. Their goal is nothing short of the extermination of all that is good and holy. We have the counterparts of David’s enemies living even in our present age, as has every generation throughout history.

**37:15:** It is not literally true that the sword of the wicked shall pierce one who wields that sword, but simply that the wickedness of the wicked shall be turned upon their own head. They shall suffer what they had planned for others. The Psalmist believed that sin eventually destroys the sinner, and that wickedness recoils on its author. “Malice outwits itself,” as Spurgeon noted. “It drinks the poisoned cup which it mixed for another, and burns itself in the fire



which it kindled for its neighbor. Why need we fret at the prosperity of the wicked when they are so industriously ruining themselves while they fancy they are injuring the saints?" (Spurgeon).

*The ultimate prosperity of the righteous*  
Verses 16-40

- 16 *Better is a little that the righteous hath Than the abundance of many wicked.*
- 17 *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken; But Jehovah upholdeth the righteous.*
- 18 *Jehovah knoweth the days of the perfect; And their inheritance shall be for ever.*
- 19 *They shall not be put to shame in the time of evil; And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.*
- 20 *But the wicked shall perish, And the enemies of Jehovah shall be as the fat of lambs: They shall consume; In smoke shall they consume away.*
- 21 *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; But the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth.*
- 22 *For such as are blessed of him shall inherit the land; And they that are cursed of him shall be cut off.*
- 23 *A man's goings are established of Jehovah; And he delighteth in his way.*
- 24 *Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For Jehovah upholdeth him with his hand.*
- 25 *I have been young, and now am old; Yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his seed begging bread.*
- 26 *All the day long he dealeth graciously, and lendeth; And his seed is blessed.*
- 27 *Depart from evil, and do good; And dwell for evermore.*
- 28 *For Jehovah loveth justice, And forsaketh not his saints; They are preserved for ever: But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.*
- 29 *The righteous shall inherit the land, And dwell therein for ever.*
- 30 *The mouth of the righteous talketh of wisdom, And his tongue speaketh justice.*
- 31 *The law of his God is in his heart; None of his steps shall slide.*
- 32 *The wicked watcheth the righteous, And seeketh to slay him.*
- 33 *Jehovah will not leave him in his hand, Nor condemn him when he is judged.*
- 34 *Wait for Jehovah, and keep his way, And he will exalt thee to inherit the land: When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.*

- 35 *I have seen the wicked in great power, And spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil.*
- 36 *But one passed by, and, lo, he was not: Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.*
- 37 *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; For there is a happy end to the man of peace.*
- 38 *As for transgressors, they shall be destroyed together; The end of the wicked shall be cut off.*
- 39 *But the salvation of the righteous is of Jehovah; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble.*
- 40 *And Jehovah helpeth them, and rescueth them; He rescueth them from the wicked, and saveth them, Because they have taken refuge in him.*

**37:16:** The one who is righteous, and possesses little, is much happier than the wicked who has great possessions. Happiness does not consist in the abundance of things that a man possesses. Barnes has noted, “The small property of one truly good man, with his character and hopes, is of more value than would be the aggregate wealth of many rich wicked men with their character and prospects” (Barnes). The NT counterpart can be found in the words of Paul to the young evangelist, “Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8b). Again, “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). Indeed, “For a wicked heart, the whole world is not enough” (Spurgeon).

**37:17:** The “arms” signify the strength of an individual. The wicked, though appearing to be strong, are really weak; they shall be broken, suggesting that their power shall be taken away. To break the arm means to render its owner powerless. In contrast, the righteous shall be sustained by Jehovah God. This verse contains one of many contrasts which the scriptures set forth regarding the righteous and the wicked. “God often makes implacable men incapable men” (Spurgeon).

**37:18:** There are two things in this verse that are under the control of God. The first of these is TIME. While men make great plans, more often than not they assume that time is on their side. James warns against such presumptuousness, “What is your life? it is but a vapor...” The second of these is MATERIAL GAIN. God is the Giver of all things, and only such as God ALLOWS will be given to the control of each individual. The tragedy of our age is that men have forgotten that all they possess is a gift from God. Even the time

granted us to live upon this earth is a gracious gift from our Heavenly Father.

*“And their inheritance shall be for ever”* - The verse serves to prove the “inheritance” under consideration. Rather than a temporal, earthly inheritance, it is the heavenly inheritance that is under consideration.

**37:19:** The righteous will not be disappointed. There will never be an occasion in which the righteous shall be ashamed of the course upon which they have embarked. When all is said and done, they shall be “satisfied.” The word *ashamed* here refers to disappointment; as when one goes to a fountain or stream for water and finds it dried up. When the times of trouble come, the righteous will find their deep longings satisfied.

**37:20:** Here is the refrain of Heaven’s message: the wicked shall perish! If not in this life, certainly in eternity. The language likens the wicked to the fattest of animals selected for sacrifice. Coffman had this observation: “The genius of Hebrew poetry has the advantage of repeating the meaning in the next line; and here that settles the matter. The reason why God’s enemies are like the fat of lambs is that they shall eventually be burned up, just like the fat of the sacrifices was always burned up (Ex. 29:13-25). Notice how that thought is echoed in the next clause: ‘They shall consume; in smoke shall they consume away!’” (Coffman, 303). Barnes comments run along the same line: “The idea is, that the wicked in their pride, beauty, and wealth, shall be like the meadow covered with grass and flowers, soon to be cut down by the scythe of the mower, or by the frosts of winter” (Barnes). The Psalmist is describing, not so much the character, as the condition of the wicked. The wicked will be deprived of life’s essentials; but the righteous has not only an abundance, but in many instances an overflow to give unto others.

**37:21:** *“The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again”* - The wicked will not pay that which he owes, not only because he WILL not, but, according to the Psalmist, because he CANNOT. Want follows upon waste, and debt remains unpaid. The righteous, on the other hand, is not a borrower, but a giver. This is because he is blessed, and what little he may have increases because of the divine principles of stewardship have been exercised in his life. “Other things being equal, the honest, temperate, pure, pious man will be the most prosperous in the world; for honesty, temperance, purity, and piety

produce the industry, economy, and prudence on which prosperity depends” (Barnes).

**37:22:** Much of life’s circumstances are the consequence of one’s relationship to his Creator. If one would live long and see good life, he should seek to know God and submit to His will. As a result he shall *“inherit the earth,”* a reference not so much to a literal possession but to a proper appreciation for, and use of, that “earth.”

**37:23:** That is, the RIGHTEOUS man’s daily activities are determined by the will of God. Each one of us has some guide by which we chart our path through life. The child of God has his purposes and plans firmly ESTABLISHED by the Almighty. Consequently, the righteous *“delighteth in his way.”* “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). Some men have not the ability to be content. They are never satisfied, and they never “delight” with their lot in life.

**37:24:** The Psalmist was not referring to falling in sin, but to those occasional disappointments that we face from time to time; those temporary setbacks. The righteous shall not be “utterly cast down.” Echoed in the New Testament counterpart of this verse are the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 - “we are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed.”

**37:25:** The Psalmist had enjoyed a long life. From his youth to present old age he had contemplated the situations in life, with all its seeming inequities. Without doubt he had witnessed some in great need, physically and emotionally. Yet never had he witnessed the righteous forsaken by God, or deprived of the physical necessities of life. The promise of our Savior in Matthew 6:33 had already been proven true to those ancient men and women of faith. How comforting is this affirmation by the Psalmist. “Whether or not David intended this to be understood as an invariable law of God or not may be open to question; but many have accepted it as a valid promise” (Coffman, 304). A number of faithful brethren have expressed the same sentiments as the Psalmist. This verse is one of the most beautiful in the Psalter. Barnes’ comments on this verse are worth putting into our notes:

The joys, the hopes, the vigour of youth, are all gone. The mature strength of manhood is now no more. The confines of life are nearly reached. The next remove is to another world, and that now

must be near; and it is a solemn thing to stand on the shores of eternity; to look out on that boundless ocean, to feel that earth, and all that is dear on earth, is soon to be left forever. (Barnes).

**37:26:** *“he dealeth graciously”* - That is, the “righteous” deals graciously with those who are in need, lending to them as necessary. As the child of God is blessed, he goes about doing good unto others. As a result, *“his seed is blessed...”*

**37:27:** *“Depart from evil...”* - “The results of conduct are among the means which God employs to induce men to do right, and to abstain from what is wrong” (Barnes). If men sow their wild seeds, they will reap the appropriate harvest. The abandonment of a reckless life will go a long way to improving life, both in regard to time and quality.

**37:28:** *“Jehovah loveth justice....”* - This is because His very nature is one of justice and uprightness. When men demonstrate the same justice unto others, it is a delight to Jehovah.

*“And forsaketh not his saints”* - What an astonishing promise. But that promise was not limited to the Old Testament faithful. We enjoy the same assurance in this dispensation (Heb. 13:5-6).

*“But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off”* - As is the case throughout the scripture, there is a line of demarcation between the righteous and the wicked. All men are in one of two categories: the righteous or the wicked.

**37:29:** One must keep in mind that this Psalm is concentrating on the blessings in THIS life for those who are righteous. While the PRINCIPLE might find application when this life is over, the student must be careful to remember that the “land” is physical, and the promises predominantly those to David and physical Israel.

**37:30:** More often than not, conversation in social circles centers around the interests of those gathered. The righteous speaks of wisdom, justice, and the like. These are the things on his heart. Consequently, those things flow forth from the mouth. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”

**37:31:** *“The law of God is in his heart”* - Here is the reason why the mouth speaks of such things. As long as we allow the law of God to abide in our heart, our steps will not slide. It is only when we cast aside God’s word that sin comes forth in our lives.

**37:32:** Verses 32 through 40 present a marvelous contrast between the wicked and the righteous. The closing verses of this Psalm are among the most encouraging in the Psalter.

*“The wicked watcheth the righteous.”* This is an evil look. It is the look of Cain who slew Abel for no other reason than the fact that his brother’s works were righteous (1 John 3:12). “The wicked are the enemies of the righteous, and seek to do them wrong. It is a characteristic of the wicked that they seek to destroy the righteous. This was manifested in the case of the prophets; in the case of the apostles; in the case of the Savior; and it has been so manifest in the deaths of the martyrs” (Barnes). Our generation is witnessing an increased animosity toward religion in general and Christianity in particular. Were it not for the laws of the land that protect us as citizens we might even now be experiencing persecution not too unlike that of the early church. But why is it the case that the wicked are so opposed to the righteous? Rawlinson picked up on this:

The righteous thwart their plans, oppose their proceedings, often frustrate their counsels. Sometimes their opposition brings the wicked man into peril, as when it takes the shape of prosecution before a court, or of help given to one who has fallen among thieves. Hence the hatred felt by the wicked towards the righteous is not surprising. It leads the wicked to entertain murderous thoughts - to be ever “watching” for an opportunity when he may take the righteous man at a disadvantage, and, if no other means of removing him from his path present themselves, kill him. Modern civilization, with its precautions and “resources” prevents actual violence for the most part; but the murderous instinct remains, and even now, in his heart, many a wicked man is a murderer (Rawlinson, 288).

**37:33:** The idea is that God will not allow him to be found guilty when the time for judgment comes. “This is God’s promise to the effect that human judgments against the righteous are of no account. God is the final arbiter of what is right and wrong; and he will execute justice upon behalf of his people” (Coffman, 305).

**37:34:** *“Keep his way...”* - See 1 John 1:6-7. Keep His way, and He will *“exalt thee to inherit the land.”* The promise of reward awaits those who submit in loving obedience.

*“When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.”* - Coffman quotes Yates on this verse: “Here are contrasts of retribution. Whereas the wicked now watch for an opportunity to trap the righteous, in the future, the righteous will have their chance to watch. The end of the upright is peace, but the end of the wicked is destruction” (Coffman, 305).

**37:35-36:** *“In great power”* - The word means “terrible; it is applied to God in Jer 20:11; the idea that that power was wielded, not for purposes of benevolence, but for injustice, oppression, and wrong” (Barnes).

*“spreading himself”* - The word “means properly to be naked; to make naked; to empty; then, to pour oneself out; and then, to spread oneself abroad” (Barnes, 331). Man boasts of his great power and abilities. The wicked man prates and parades his “stuff,” only to perish as the grass of the field that is here today, and gone tomorrow. “No wicked man, who by definition is on a collision course with disaster, due to his rebellion against God, can rightfully anticipate anything else, other than destruction. It is only a matter of time, and not very much time at that, until someone may say, ‘I sought him, but he could not be found’” (Coffman, 305). His life has been spent in tranquil scenes, where everything seemed to be stable and secure; what his end will be, the Psalmist states in the next verse.

**37:37:** The word “perfect” is synonymous with “righteous.” It is not that he is sinless, but complete in his relationship to God in all essential characteristics. The word for “mark” means to “observe, or take notice.” In comparing the wicked and the righteous, the point of the Psalmist is the END of the righteous as compared to the END of the wicked.

**37:38:** The future of one, the wicked, is a cutting off; the future of the other, the righteous, is peace. Coffman concludes that *“the end of the wicked shall be cut off”* means that even the “posterity of the wicked shall be cut off.”

**37:39:** A number of commentators have pointed out that the last two verses are a sort of summation of the message of the Psalm. Rather than end the Psalm with a stern description of the

destruction of the wicked, the Psalmist chooses instead to provide the righteous with a glimmer of light in a world of darkness. Therefore, “he adds a sweet, long-drawn-out close, like the calm extended clouds, that lie motionless in the western sky after a day of storm” (Coffman, 307). Thus, verses 39-40 provide a most beautiful conclusion to this Psalm.

**37:40:** There is something about the words “*Jehovah helpeth them and rescueth them.*” Ours is not the help of mere man, but the help of Him Who created all men. Our salvation from the enemy is for the simple reason that we have taken “*refuge in him.*” What marvelous comfort there is in this Psalm. Let us study it for strength, meditate upon it in times of doubt and distress, and lean upon it in times of weakness.

## Lessons

1. Rawlinson summed up the fundamental message of this Psalm: “Just now you see the wicked prospering and the ungodly depressed. Do not fret over this. Trust, do right, rest in the Lord, wait and see. And by-and-by you will find that the righteous are brought out to the light, while the wicked are relegated to forgetfulness and shame. Even now to have God in the heart with a crust in the hand, is better than to have the riches of many wicked. God will, in his own time and way, appear for his faithful ones, and prove the truth of his ancient word, ‘Them that honor me, I will honor’” (Rawlinson, 291).
2. I wrote in 1972, “I would far rather be in favor with God with little of this world’s blessings, than to be out of favor with God with this world’s blessings.” This is the theme and fundamental message of this Psalm. I still feel as strongly about this now as I did when I first wrote those sentiments in my personal notes on the Psalms.
3. “The general course of thought in the Psalm is, that, whatever prosperity the wicked now have, it is temporary, for they will soon be cut off; and that whatever troubles now come upon the righteous, they too are temporary, and that their hereafter will be blessedness and peace” (Barnes, 334).
4. Psalms 73, though much like this one, deals with the end of the wicked in the future life; this Psalm deals with the wicked in THIS life. From this we learn that the righteous life is more blessed, and offers the greatest degree of happiness this side of heaven, and the eternal reward with the Father when this life is finished.
5. Observe “the rest of the soul.” If there was ever a time in the history of this sin-sick world when men needed true rest, it is



now. Ours is considered a “busy age,” with scarcely time to stop and meditate on God’s word and His wonderful providential care for me.

6. *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord”* - Conder and Clarkson had this note: “As a journey is made up of single steps, and one false step may be fatal; so life, of momentary experiences and acts of choice, of which the greatest may hinge on the least. Life or death may hang on a pair of damp sheets or wet shoes, or a whiff of poisoned air. The fate of an empire may turn on the flight of a bullet. A spider’s web spun across a dark opening has saved a fugitive from his persecutors. A successful career or a happy home may be owing to a chance meeting. If, therefore, God rules human affairs, he must foresee and control their most minute and secret causes” (Rawlinson, 290).

## *“A Psalm of Remembrance”*

### ***Introduction***

The language of this Psalm would suggest that the Psalmist was suffering from some physical ailment, brought on by a sincere sorrow for sin in his life. This led Rawlinson to suggest that “of all the penitential psalms it is the one which shows the deepest marks of utter prostration of heart and spirit under a combination of the severest trials, both mental and bodily” (Rawlinson, 297). The Psalmist’s mind is evidently racked by a sense of God’s displeasure (verses 1-2). He had been deserted by his closest friends (verse 11), and lived under the constant threat of his enemies (verses 12, 19 and 20). There is an awareness of some sin (verses 3-5), but the writer does not despair. He maintains his faith in God (verses 1, 9, 15, 21 and 22). He confesses his sorrow for sin and prays to God (verse 1 and 21). He finally calls upon God as his salvation (verse 22). The Psalm is ascribed to David and there is nothing that would suggest otherwise. Roy Deaver entitles this Psalm, “The Sorrowful Suffering Of The Sin Sick Soul.” He has concluded that it “is the vivid description of a man’s total suffering because of sin. The Psalmist was suffering physically, mentally, socially, politically, and spiritually. In suffering, he rightly turns to God” (Deaver, 125). The penitence produced by this disease is an example of a bad circumstance being used to the good. The early church considered this Psalm one of the seven Penitential Psalms, the others being 6, 32, 51, 102, 130 and 143. “The main point of this lament is that the Psalmist regarded his illness and suffering as a punishment inflicted upon him by God; consequently he was led to confess his sins” (Anderson, 301). The great value of the Psalm is the fact that it furnishes illustrations of the nature and power of one’s faith and religion in all of the varied circumstances of life. Barnes says that “there can be no doubt that the psalm had this design of making a permanent record of an important event in the life of the author, or of his experience in a time of great calamity” (Barnes). We have elected to entitle this “A Psalm of Remembrance” as it appears in the subtitle of most translations because in it the writer looked back on his plight, and remembered that God was his refuge.

## ***Analysis***

This following outline was entered into the margin of this author's Bible more than 25 years ago. Unfortunately we do not recall the source:

- I. The Psalmist's Plea, verses 1-2;
- II. The Psalmist's Suffering (physical, mental, and social), verses 3-14;
- III. The Psalmist's Confidence, verses 15-20;
- IV. The Psalmist's Prayer, verses 21-22.

## ***Commentary***

### **Plea Verses 1-2**

- 1 Jehovah, rebuke me not in thy wrath; Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*
- 2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, And thy hand presseth me sore.*

**38:1:** The plea of David is the outpouring of a contrite heart. He was aware of his sin, but more so, he was aware of God's great displeasure toward him. David was pleading for mercy. He deserved rebuke and chastening. We were particularly impressed with Spurgeon's summation of this verse:

Chasten me if thou wilt, it is a Father's prerogative, and to endure it obediently is a child's duty; but, O turn not the rod into a sword, smite not so as it kill. True, my sins might well inflame thee, but let thy mercy and longsuffering quench the glowing coals of thy wrath. O let me not be treated as an enemy or dealt with as a rebel. Bring to remembrance thy covenant, thy fatherhood, and my feebleness, and spare thy servant. (Spurgeon)

**38:2:** Of interest here is the dual use of the Hebrew word '*nahhath*.' It is translated "stick fast," and "presseth." This literally means "to descend, or to come down" (Barnes). David was afflicted AS IF arrows had descended upon him from God, as if the hand of God had pushed him down. The pressure of his guilt was bowing heavy upon him. If the Psalmist was suffering from some physical illness, it is certain that the spiritual sickness that afflicted him was even more keenly felt.

David began this Psalm by drawing attention to consequences of sin. From the human standpoint, there was **daily anguish**. It is amazing how much physical sickness is brought on by indulgence in sin. From sexually transmitted disease to mental suffering, the body often suffers the consequences of sinful conduct. Then there is the **divine anger** that overshadows those who walk in sin. The Psalmist cried that God might not “rebuke me in thy wrath.”

### **The Psalmist’s Suffering Verses 3-14**

The Psalmist’s suffering are (1) Physical, 3-8; (2) Mental, 9-10; and (3) Social, 11-14. We will note each of these.

#### **Physical (3-8):**

- 3 *There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine indignation;  
Neither is there any health in my bones because of my sin.*
- 4 *For mine iniquities are gone over my head: As a heavy burden  
they are too heavy for me.*
- 5 *My wounds are loathsome and corrupt, Because of my  
foolishness.*
- 6 *I am pained and bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day  
long.*
- 7 *For my loins are filled with burning; And there is no soundness in  
my flesh.*
- 8 *I am faint and sore bruised: I have groaned by reason of the  
disquietness of my heart.*

**38:3:** *There is no soundness in my flesh*” - The Psalmist begins with a description of his physical suffering. The extent of his suffering is expressed from the negative. “No soundness....neither any health....” Some loathsome disease had afflicted him, so much so that it appears even his friends had abandoned him.

**38:4:** *“mine iniquities are gone over my head”* - The interesting thing about this verse is the Psalmist’s view of sin. He viewed his sins as a “heavy burden.” They were “over [his] head.” It is unfortunate that the world fails to mourn for their sins. Those desirous of a right standing with God are aware of the depth of their sin, and as in this case, aware that in some cases their sin is associated with their suffering. Spurgeon was right on target: “Unawakened sinners think their sins to be mere shallows, but when

conscience is aroused they find out the depth of iniquity” (Spurgeon).

**38:5:** *“My wounds are loathsome and corrupt”* - The word for *“loathsome”* has reference to the swelling produced by stripes. The word for *“corrupt”* (*‘makak’*) means “to melt; to pine away; to flow; to run, as sores and ulcers do” (Barnes). While a number of commentators regard this passage as a figurative description of the deep sorrow that was produced by the Psalmist’s sorrow for sin, it seems more reasonable to view this as a description of the Psalmist’s physical distress.

*“because of my foolishness”* - Notice that the writer uses the words “foolishness” and “iniquities” and “sin” interchangeably. Sin is the height of foolishness. It is significant that David never seeks to blame others for his condition. He was convinced that his punishment was just. He was just as determined to confess his wrong.

**38:6:** *“I am pained and bowed down greatly”* - The Hebrew for “pained” is alternately rendered “troubled,” and “wearied.” It has the meaning of being “distorted, to writhe with pain, convulsions and spasms” (Barnes, 338). Picture the burdened sinner, “covered with sackcloth and ashes, bowed as in a heap, sitting amid squalor and dirt, performing contortions and writhings expressive of his grief; such is the awakened sinner, not in outward guise, but in very deed” (Spurgeon).

*“I go mourning all the day long”* - His mourning was a combination of sorrow for sin and suffering of physical pain.

**38:7:** *“For my loins are filled with burning; And there is no soundness in my flesh.”* If we take the verse literally it would suggest that the disease was something akin to an inflammation of the kidneys. In addition, the last part of the verse indicates a state of great deterioration, there being “no soundness” in his flesh.

**38:8:** *“I am faint and sore bruised: I have groaned by reason of the disquietness of my heart.”* The pain was so severe that he “groaned.” But of even greater concern was the pain of guilt. While the physical wounds might produce outward weeping, it is the wounds of the heart that produce the greatest of tears. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:4). The loud

wail of the Psalmist is the utterance of his physical pain burdened by the pain of guilt that was raging in his heart.

Notice four things about David's sufferings: They were **disgusting** (38:5), **distressing** (38:6), **diseased** (38:7), and **disturbing** (38:8).

**Mental** (9-10):

- 9 *Lord, all my desire is before thee; And my groaning is not hid from thee.*  
10 *My heart throbbleth, my strength faileth me: As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.*

**38:9:** *“Lord, all my desire is before thee; And my groaning is not hid from thee.”* Were we capable of hiding our sins, the burden of guilt would still weigh us down. But the realization that our sins have offended God, and that they are not “hid from thee” [God] increases the burden.

**38:10:** *“My heart throbbleth, my strength faileth me: As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.”* The alternate rendering appears in the KJV: *“My heart panteth.”* The word “panteth” means to go about, to travel around, and then, to “travel around as a merchant or peddler, or for purposes of traffic” (Barnes). The Psalmist is describing the pain and distress which he experienced and which is frequently accompanied by a rapid beating of the heart. As a result of his physical agitation, his “strength faileth” him.

*“The light of mine eyes...is gone from me”* - Was the Psalmist blinded? There is no indication that such ever occurred in the life of David. Likely the words express the thoughts of the heart when it acknowledges that apart from God, there is no light to illuminate the path of life. What mental anguish when one has nowhere to turn!

**Social** (11-14):

- 11 *My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague; And my kinsmen stand afar off.*  
12 *They also that seek after my life lay snares for me; And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, And meditate deceits all the day long.*  
13 *But I, as a deaf man, hear not; And I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.*

14 *Yea, I am as a man that heareth not, And in whose mouth are no reproofs.*

**38:11:** Was the Psalmist's disease so great that none would come near? The words would seem to indicate such. When sin has run its course, even those who once called for our companionship will abandon us to wallow in the pigpen of social solitude. "It is very hard when those who should be the first to come to the rescue, are the first to desert us" (Spurgeon).

**38:12:** Not only had David's friends and kinsmen abandoned him, but now the enemy does everything to crush him while he is down. This was a new and unexpected aggravation that had come into the Psalmist's life. Though it were more than enough to suffer from the consciousness of sin, and the consequences of his iniquity, now the Psalmist had to deal with his unscrupulous enemies. It is a remarkable trait of the wicked that they actually spend time meditating on all manner of deceit and harm that they might inflict upon the righteous. "When they could not act they talked, and when they could not talk they imagined, and schemed, and plotted. Restless is the activity of malice" (Spurgeon).

**38:13:** The words indicate the patience with which the Psalmist endured the sufferings and afflictions. "As if I were a man that could not speak. I was perfectly silent under all this persecution" (Barnes). See in this connection 2 Samuel 16:10. In support of much of this Psalm being figurative, Coffman has noted: "Deafness and muteness are clearly figures of speech in this passage; and it is quite likely that the same metaphorical meaning of maladies mentioned previously in the same passage is intended" (Coffman, 313).

**38:14:** "*Yea, I am as a man that heareth not, And in whose mouth are no reproofs.*" The words of the previous verse are repeated to give emphasis to the writer's patience and forbearance, "or to fix the attention on the fact that one who was so calumniated and wronged could bear it patiently" (Barnes). "The marginal alternative for 'reproofs' here is 'arguments,' indicating that David was in no mood whatever to attempt any self-justification" (Coffman, 313).

### **Confidence Verses 15-20**

15 *For in thee, O Jehovah, do I hope: Thou wilt answer, O Lord my God.*

- 16 *For I said, Lest they rejoice over me: When my foot slippeth,  
they magnify themselves against me.*  
17 *For I am ready to fall, And my sorrow is continually before me.*  
18 *For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.*  
19 *But mine enemies are lively, and are strong; And they that hate  
me wrongfully are multiplied.*  
20 *They also that render evil for good Are adversaries unto me,  
because I follow the thing that is good.*

**38:15** - There is a marked change in the Psalm at this point. It is as if something had occurred which caused him to shift his attention from his own suffering, and focus his attention on the source of his strength, after which he offers up his petitions and supplication. Here is the solution for a troubled mind, namely absolute trust in Jehovah God. The confidence of the Psalmist is expressed with the words *“thou wilt answer.”* It is the confident assurance that not only does God HEAR our plea, He has promised that He will ANSWER our prayers. Indeed, “Hope in God’s intervention, and belief in the power of prayer, are two most blessed stays to the soul in time of adversity...Reputation like a fair pearl may be cast into the mire, but in due time when the Lord makes up his jewels, the godly character shall shine with unclouded splendor” (Spurgeon). Coffman had this most interesting side note on this verse: “There are three different names for God in this single verse, indicating, as Kidner observed, that ‘David knew God by name (Yahweh), and by covenant (my God), and as Master and Savior (vs 22b)’ (Coffman, 314).

**38:16:** Throughout the Psalms, when the writer finds himself besieged by the enemy, it is the glory and honor of God that remains foremost in the mind of the writer. It is no different here. David did not want these wicked men to have any occasion to rejoice over his defeat, not because of his own self glory, but for the honor of God. Spurgeon observed:

The least flaw in a saint is sure to be noticed; long before it comes to a fall the enemy begins to rail, the merest trip of the foot sets all the dogs of hell barking. How careful ought we to be, and how importunate in prayer for upholding grace. We do not wish, like blind Samson, to make sport for our enemies; let us then beware of the treacherous Delilah of sin, by whose means our eyes may soon be put out (Spurgeon).

**38:17:** The Psalmist felt that he was ready to fall; that the burden was too heavy. He felt that his strength was almost gone, and that he was in danger of falling into sin, or sinking under his accumulated



burdens, and thus giving occasion for all his enemies to glory over both himself and God. The feelings of the writer are a common lot of man. When our cause for that which is right seems to be suppressed, or in danger of being overthrown, there is always the accompanying danger that one might “throw in the towel” so to speak.

In this verse, and the next, David presents at least three reasons why he was confident God would forgive him. First, he had reached his end, and he depended completely upon God for deliverance. He was “*ready to fall.*” If God does not help, he is gone. Second, he was sorry for his sin. Third, he was willing to make confession.

**38:18:** He acknowledges that (1) he would confess his iniquity, and (2) he would be penitent for sin. The writer seeks not to hide his sin, for he knows that it simply cannot be done. Confession of sin is the first step on the long road home to the Heavenly Father Who anxiously awaits our return. The underlying reason for his confession was the deep sorrow for the sin and offense against the Holy Father. Sorrow for sin leads to repentance. “A man is near to the end of his trouble when he comes to an end with his sins” (Spurgeon).

**38:19:** The enemy (1) was lively, (2) strong, (3) hateful, (4) great in number, (5) rendered evil for good, and (6) are the adversaries of the writer. What opposition. But the Psalmist firmly believed that with God on his side the victory would be his.

**38:20:** “*because I follow the thing that is good*” - As is often the case, the wicked persecute the righteous for no other reason than the fact that they ARE righteous. Men are not satisfied to wallow in sin themselves. They are not happy unless they can take others with them into the pigpen. And if they cannot persuade others to join them in their foolishness and rebellion, they often seek to intimidate them. This is because the righteous, by their holy lives, pronounce condemnation upon the ungodly. Cf. 2 Timothy 3:12; especially 1 John 3:12.

### **Prayer** **Verses 21-22**

*21 Forsake me not, O Jehovah: O my God, be not far from me.*  
*22 Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.*

**38:21:** The closing part of the Psalm is a prayer unto God beseeching Him to help. The Psalmist pleads that God draw near; that He not forsake the writer. God has promised the saint that He will draw near to the one who first draws near to God (Jas. 4:8). Strength awaits the penitent soul who takes that first down that long road toward home.

**38:22:** Here the cry is for God to recognize the urgency of the situation, and “make haste” to lend the Psalmist the needed help. Delay would bring nothing but destruction. At the same time the writer realizes that God is his salvation. Barnes summed up these verses and the Psalm:

The deeper our trouble, therefore, the greater may be the ultimate good to us; and at the end of life, when we come to look over all that has happened in our journey through this world, that on which we may look back with most satisfaction and gratitude may be the sorrows and afflictions that have befallen us - for these will be then seen to have been among the chief instrumentalities by which we were weaned from sin; by which we were led to the Saviour; by which we were induced to seek a preparation for heaven. No Christian, when he comes to die, ever feels that he has been too much afflicted, or that any trial has come upon him for which there was not occasion, and which was not designed and adapted to do him good (Barnes).

Coffman concludes this Psalm with these words: “The logic, the skill, the persistence, and the earnest urgency of this prayer have been the marvel of all who ever studied it. Elohim is the all powerful Creator; Jehovah is the covenant God of Israel, and Lord is the personal Master whom all of God’s people are pledged to serve, to honor, and to obey” (Coffman, 315).

## ***Lessons***

1. The primary lesson from the Psalm was expressed in other Psalms. “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Psa. 34:17). “The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa. 51:17). Also in Isaiah 66:2 - “For all these things hath my hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.” This Psalm is the manifestation of a heart that is humbled before God.

2. Sin can, and often does, affect us physically. There are more than a dozen sexually transmitted diseases, not to mention the mental anguish that comes with guilt.
3. When men forsake us, God will stand by our side. “For himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?” (Heb. 13:5-6).
4. Sorrow for sin is a prerequisite for a right relationship with God. The Psalmist declared that he would “declare” his iniquity, and “be sorry for...sin” (verse 18).

## *“My Hope Is In Thee”*

### **Introduction**

The Psalm is attributed to David in the subscript, and there is no reason to doubt this. It was composed at a time when the Psalmist was in trouble, wrestling in his own mind with the seeming inconsistencies that surrounded him. The exact occasion is not known. The circumstances appear to be the midst of some sorrow and affliction that the Psalmist was experiencing. He evidently felt that the physical distress he was facing was in some way associated with some particular sin in his life. Morgan pointed out

If the psalm be taken in connection with the preceding one, it marks an advance, perhaps a gain out of that experience. Then we saw a man crying out for Jehovah and His help. Here is a man still undergoing trial and acutely conscious of it, but he has found the secret place of communion and this conditions his attitudes (Morgan, 235).

### **Analysis**

Most of the commentaries consulted divide the Psalm similarly. The Psalmist is burdened down with sickness and sorrow that evidently led to some doubt or unbelief on his part. In his distress he refused to speak and express his thoughts and feelings (verses 1-2). But as hard as he tried, he could not keep silence, and he cried out in a prayer (verses 3-6). The next section is more submissive, and we see the Psalmist's faith shine through. The danger has evidently passed and his heart is relieved (verses 7-13). A number of years ago I entered the following outline into my notes, which I will retain in this study:

- I. The Afflicted Man's Perplexities, 1-6;
  - 1. He originally intended to keep silent, 1-2;
  - 2. He is compelled to speak out, 3-6.
- II. The Afflicted Man's Hope, 7-13.
  - 1. His hope is in God, 7;
  - 2. Plea for deliverance, 8;

3. His self restraint, 9;
4. Chastisement, 10-11;
5. Prayer, 12-13.

We have elected to use the closing words of verse seven to serve as the title of the Psalm: “My hope is in thee.”

## Commentary

### *The Afflicted Man's Perplexities* Verses 1-6

- 1 *I said, I will take heed to my ways, That I sin not with my tongue:  
I will keep my mouth with a bridle, While the wicked is before  
me.*
- 2 *I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; And  
my sorrow was stirred.*
- 3 *My heart was hot within me; While I was musing the fire  
burned: Then spake I with my tongue:*
- 4 *Jehovah, make me to know mine end, And the measure of my  
days, what it is; Let me know how frail I am.*
- 5 *Behold, thou hast made my days as handbreadths; And my life-  
time is as nothing before thee: Surely every man at his best  
estate is altogether vanity. Selah*
- 6 *Surely every man walketh in a vain show; Surely they are  
disquieted in vain: He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who  
shall gather them.*

*He originally intended to keep silent, 1-2*

**39:1:** The first six verses deal with the afflicted man's perplexities. Finding himself in some perplexing situation, he reasoned within that it would be best to guard his tongue while in the presence of the wicked. The tongue is a powerful instrument, and the sentiments expressed in this verse are common to David. Recognizing the danger of an unbridled tongue (cf. James 3), he refused to speak in the presence of the wicked. David, on this particular circumstance, recognized the need to control the tongue “*while the wicked is before me.*” “This qualifies the silence, and almost screens it from criticism, for bad men are so sure to misuse even our holiest speech, that it is as well not to cast any of pearls before such swine” (Spurgeon).

In taking “*heed to my ways,*” David was being very cautious. It seems that he did not want to offend someone else, or any way lend

to their discouragement. “The state of mind referred to here is that which often occurs when a man broods over his own troubled thoughts” (Barnes).

*“I will keep my mouth with a bridle”* - David would refrain from uttering what was passing through his mind. He would not express his discouragement lest he give his enemy occasion for ridicule. David would carefully guard his “tongue,” recognizing the power in the tongue to build or to destroy. The idea is not so much an attempt to “check” the tongue as it is the desire to muzzle the tongue altogether.

**39:2:** *“I was dumb with silence”* - The addition of the words “with silence” emphasize the author’s intent. Perhaps David felt that if he began to talk he would speak amiss, and therefore he abstained completely from speech in the presence of his enemies. There is a prophetic note here of the silence of our Savior in the face of false accusations being pressed against Him.

*“And my sorrow was stirred”* - The very fact of David’s attempting to suppress his feelings became the source of his increased anguish. “Inward grief was made to work and ferment by want of vent...Utterance is the natural outlet for the heart’s anguish, and silence is, therefore, both an aggravation of the evil and a barrier against its cure” (Spurgeon). It would appear that he had held his tongue but he was none the better for having done so.

*He is compelled to speak out, 3-6;*

**39:3:** The more he attempted to hold back his thoughts, the more agitated he became. His feelings eventually broke forth in the words given here. We get a glimpse into the human emotions which often overwhelmed David. Although he struggled with the emotions expressed within this Psalm, I can find great comfort in knowing that this man was considered a “man after God’s own heart.”

*“my heart was hot within me”* - Any attempt to suppress his emotions led to even greater agitation of his heart. “The door of his heart was shut, and with the fire of sorrow burning within, the chamber of his soul soon grew unbearable with heat. Silence is an awful thing for a sufferer, it is the surest method to produce madness” (Spurgeon).

*“While I was musing the fire burned”* -- Even while he was dwelling on the subject, he ached within. “It became harder every moment to be quiet; his volcanic soul was tossed with an inward ocean of fire, and heaved to and fro with a mental earthquake; an eruption was imminent, the burning lava must pour forth in a fiery stream” (Spurgeon).

**39:4:** Barnes points out that a literal rendering of the Hebrew would read, “that I may know at what (time) or (point) I am ceasing, or about to cease” (Barnes). The express desire of David was to know the “end,” and what was to be of *“the measure of my days.”* An awareness of the brevity of life is a strong motivation to keep our emotions in check and to guard against any misuse of the tongue. We agree with Spurgeon: “The Psalmist would know more of the shortness of life, that he might better bear its transient ills... That there is an end to life’s sorrow is the hope of all who have a hope beyond the grave” (Spurgeon).

*“and the measure of my days”* -- Every man is allotted a “measure” of days, and he spends his share from birth to death. David’s request was that he might be cognizant of the brevity of life, and live in view of that realization. “The ship on the stocks wonders that the barque springs a leak, but when it has tried the high seas, it marvels that its timbers hold together in such storms” (Spurgeon).

*“Let me know how frail I am”* - Dare any man deny his frailty? God’s test for Job contains many an unanswered question, even to this day and age. Consider the “gates of death.” God asked Job, “Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee? Or hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death?” (Job 38:17). When men consider their inability to deal with some of the most basic of life’s questions, he comes to realize that he is indeed “frail.” Spurgeon provided the following story: “Between Walsall and Iretsy, in Cheshire, is a house built in 1636, of thick oak framework, filled in with brick. Over the window of the tap-room is still legible, cut in the oak, the following Latin inscription: ‘You would weep if you knew that your life was limited to one month, yet you laugh while you know not but it may be restricted to a day’” (Spurgeon).

**39:5:** The *“handbreath”* is an extremely short measurement in comparison to such things as the foot, etc. David’s complaint was one of painful recollection of the apparent shortness of life which he felt was going to be his. There is a sense in which all men feel this way at one time or another. No matter where one may find himself

along the road of life, the years appear to have passed quickly. Consequently we often long for just a little more time to prepare ourselves for eternity. In the sunset of our years we may be tempted to say with David, "Every man at his best," so far as his number of years is concerned, "is altogether vanity." "Man is settled, as the margin has it, and by divine decree it is settled that he shall not be settled. He is constant only in inconstancy" (Spurgeon). Who has not been in a state of mind in sympathy with the feelings of the Psalmist? Who is there that does not often wonder what he could and would accomplish on earth if his life extended to a thousand years? Yes, life is but a "handbreath" when measured under the microscope of eternity.

**39:6:** Here is the plight of the man who puts his trust in riches. That man (1) walketh in a vain show; (2) he is disquieted in vain; (3) he heaps up riches; (4) he has no knowledge of who shall possess those riches once he is gone. It is an undeniable fact that "worldly men walk like travelers in a mirage, deluded, duped, deceived, soon to be filled with disappointment and despair" (Spurgeon).

*"Surely every man walketh in a vain show"* - The word here rendered "vain show" means "properly a shade, a shadow; and then, an image or likeness, as shadowing forth any real object... Here the idea seems to be that of an *image* as contradistinguished from a *reality*; the shadow of a thing, as distinguished from the substance" (Barnes). But what "man" is in the mind of the Psalmist? It is the man that *"heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."*

*"surely they are disquieted in vain"* -- The Psalmist was saying that men are actively engaged and consumed with the anxieties of this life, and that all such activities are nothing more than a vain show. Consequently these men are "disquieted," or busily engaged in pursuing these ends that, in and of themselves, have no lasting value. Barnes quotes Edmond Burke: "What shadows we are, and what shadows do we pursue" (Barnes). And again Spurgeon's thoughts were worth putting into our notes:

Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them. He who toils and contrives, and wearies himself for gold, for fame, for rank, even if he wins his desire, finds at the end of his labour lost; for like the treasure of the miser's dream, it all vanishes when the man awakes in the world of reality. Read well this text, and then listen to the clamour of the market, the hum of the exchange, the din of



the city streets, and remember that all this *noise* (for so the word means), this breach of quiet, is made about unsubstantial, fleeting vanities. Broken rest, anxious fear, over-worked brain, failing mind, lunacy, these are steps in the process of disquieting with many, and all to be rich, or, in other words, to load one's self with the thick clay; clay, too, which a man must leave so soon (Spurgeon).

*“He heapeth up riches”* - The word that is used here means to “heap up,” or store up, similar to that spoken of in Genesis 41:35, to store up grain; or that used in Job 27:16 to refer to treasures. Here it undoubtedly refers to the efforts of men in accumulating wealth and property.

*“and knoweth not who shall gather them”* -- In our Lord's parable, the fool who neglected his soul and instead hoarded up material possessions was asked this same question. “But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?” (Luke 12:20). “The facts on this subject; the actual distribution of property after a man is dead; the use often made of it, against which no man can guard - should, together with other and higher motives, be a powerful consideration with every one, not to make the amassing of wealth the great business of life” (Barnes, 349). It is an inevitable and undeniable truth, that we brought nothing into this world, and neither shall we take anything with us at our departure (1 Timothy 6:6-9). “Many work for others all unknown to them. Especially does this verse refer to those all-gathering muckrakes, who in due time are succeeded by all-scattering forks, which scatter riches as profusely as their sires gathered them parsimoniously... Men rise up early and sit up late to build a house, and then the stranger tramps along its passages, laughs in its chambers, and forgetful of its builder, calls it all his own. Here is one of the evils under the sun for which no remedy can be prescribed” (Spurgeon).

### ***The Afflicted Man's Hope*** **Verses 7-13**

7 *And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.*

8 *Deliver me from all my transgressions: Make me not the reproach of the foolish.*

9 *I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; Because thou didst it.*

10 *Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand.*

- 11 *When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: Surely every man is vanity. Selah*
- 12 *Hear my prayer, O Jehovah, and give ear unto my cry; Hold not thy peace at my tears: For I am a stranger with thee, A sojourner, as all my fathers were.*
- 13 *Oh spare me, that I may recover strength, Before I go hence, and be no more.*

In this second half of the Psalm, the author turns his attention to the hope that was his. It was as if David were asking, "Lord, what else is there to wait for? My hope is in Thee!" When the greater part of the disciples "went back and walked no more" with Jesus, our Lord asked the twelve, "Would you also go away?" Peter expressed the same sentiments as our Psalmist: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-68). Let us take a closer look at this passage.

***First, we see that his hope is in God*** (verse 7).

**39:7:** In the final analysis, if our hope is not in God, there is no hope. While men place their trust in the things of this world, David trusted in his God.

*"What wait I for?"* - In view of the fact that material things are fleeting, and that to amass wealth and property is vain, the Psalmist turns to his God for a refuge. This expression means, "What else is there to turn to?" There is nothing in the world to provide comfort. All of these things are vain.

*"My hope is in thee"* - The Psalmist's contemplation of the world about him, with all of its vain allurements, does not, nor can it, provide any hope. He thus acknowledges that his hope is in Jehovah.

***Second, his hope causes him to plead for deliverance*** (verse 8).

**39:8:** Had the Psalmist not hoped in God, then any hope of deliverance from sin would be vain. Forgiveness removes reproach.

*"Deliver me from all my transgressions"* - Forgiveness precedes deliverance from our enemies. Without a right standing with God, how can we expect Him to answer our prayers for those physical

blessings we so desperately desire and ask. Is there not at least a hint in these verses that David felt that his sins were the source of his troubles and sorrows? He must have felt that if his transgressions were forgiven, his trouble would be removed.

*“Make me not the reproach of the foolish”* - The wicked are foolish if for no other reason than the fact that they have chosen the path of unrighteousness. The Psalmist’s prayer is that he might not become the object of reproach to wicked and foolish men. If God would forgive him, and remove the hand of chastisement, then the enemies would see that God was no longer angry with him, and that instead he was the object of Divine favor.

***Third, his hope produced self-restraint*** (verse 9).

**39:9:** Realizing that he was chastened by the hand of God, David remained silent, and opened not his mouth. He came to recognize that it was God’s hand that was heavy upon him, and that all these trials and tribulations were because *“thou didst it.”* Like Joseph, he came to realize that God was behind it all, working out even that which was wicked to the fulfillment of His purpose. “Here we have a nobler silence, purged of all sullenness, and sweetened with submission” (Spurgeon, 2.218). Unlike the words in verse 2, where he refused to utter what was on his mind because he felt that doing so would produce harm, here he had been silenced from the realization that these things were from the hand of God. “He was dumb, not by putting a restraint on himself, but because he had nothing to say” (Barnes).

*“Because thou hast done it”* - Wise is the man who can see in his life the hand of God’s providence bringing about the fulfillment of the Divine Purpose in his life. So stated Barnes: “The most perfect calmness and peace in trouble is produced, not when we rely on our own reasoning, or when we attempt to comprehend and explain a mystery, but when we direct our thoughts simply to the fact that God has done it” (Barnes).

***Fourth, hope is confirmed in chastisement*** (verses 10-11).

**39:10:** *“Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thy hand”* - Chastise, yes; destroy, no. We must never forget, “It is not to consume us, but to consume our sins, that the Lord aims at his chastisements” (Spurgeon). The Psalmist would accept his situation, but he still had the desire that it

be removed. "Perfect submission is not inconsistent with the prayer that, if it be the will of God, the calamity may be removed" (Barnes). The New Testament expresses the same truth (Heb 12:6-11):

6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7 If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? 8 But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9 Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10 For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. 11 Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

*"I am consumed"* - He would waste away; sinking down to the grave, if the affliction was not removed.

**39:11:** *"When thou with rebukes dost correct"* - The word "rebuke" means (1) proof or demonstration, (2) contradiction, (3) reproof or admonition by words, (4) or reproof by correction or punishment. It is the final meaning of the word that is in the mind of the writer.

*"Thou makest his beauty to consume away"* - "It refers to anything that is to man an object of desire or delight - strength, beauty, possessions, life itself" (Barnes). God can, and often does, remove those things from our lives that keep us from serving Him as we should. It may not be that He directly removes those things, but, as in the case of Job, allows them to be removed so as to strengthen and refine the faith of His child.

*"To consume away like a moth"* - The meaning was expressed by Barnes: "Not as a moth is consumed, but as a moth consumes or destroys valuable objects, such as clothing" (Barnes).

*"Surely every man is vain"* - The things surrounding man, and those things upon which he places importance, are vain when consideration is given to the fact that they are so quickly and easily taken away under the chastening hand of God.

***Fifth, hope realized through prayer (12-13)***

**39:12:** In this prayer (1) the Psalmist asks God to “give ear,” or listen to his cry; (2) he asks God to see his tears; (3) he seeks for strength; (4) realizes that he shall eventually “go hence, and be no more.”

*“Hear my prayer”* - In view of what he was now experiencing, the writer asks God to listen to his prayer.

*“Hold not thy peace at my tears”* -- Do not be silent; do not refuse to answer nor to give heed. The Psalmist is asking God that He please be observant of his tears. “The weeping penitent, the weeping sufferer, is one on whom we may suppose God looks with compassion, even though the sorrows of the soul do not find words to give utterance to them” (Barnes).

*“I am a stranger with thee”* - The word rendered “stranger” means a sojourner, a pilgrim. It refers to one who has no permanent dwelling on this earth. See in this connection Hebrews 11:13, 1 Peter 2:11, etc. The fact that the Psalmist’s sojourn is *“with Thee,”* or with God, shows the close association he had with the heavenly Father. Though he may sojourn in this life, he is not alone, for God is with him. “Not to thee, but *with* thee. Like thee, my Lord, a stranger among the sons of men, an alien from my mother’s children. God made the world, sustains it, and owns it, and yet men treat him as though he were a foreign intruder; and as they treat the Master, so do they deal with the servants” (Spurgeon).

*“As all my fathers were”* - Those who had come before had the same attitude as the Psalmist. They all confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims (Hebrews 11:13-15).

**39:13:** *“O spare me...”* - The idea is that God would “look away from” the punishment now inflicted upon the Psalmist.

*“That I may recover strength”* - The idea is that of being cheered up; of being strengthened and invigorated before he should pass away. David’s desire was that he might depart this life in a cheerful mood, rather than under a cloud of doubt and despair. Barnes correctly observes:

A joyful confidence in God and his government, when a man is about to leave the world, does much, very much, to impress the minds of others with a conviction of the truth and reality of religion, as dark and gloomy views can hardly fail to lead the world

to ask what that religion is worth which will not inspire a dying man with hope, and make him calm in the closing scene (Barnes).

This the writer realized, and sought for a calm disposition before his departure, so that it might leave a favorable impression on others.

### ***Lessons and Quotes***

Verses 1-2: The determination within that we will not sin with our tongue is of utmost importance. The Psalmist spoke with himself and made such a determination. Someone noted: "It is true, a man hath need of a well-set mind, when he speaks to himself; for otherwise, he may be worse company to himself than if he were with others."

Verse 3: Meditation with prayer is an essential part of Christian growth. The following is attributed to Thomas Watson: "Meditation and prayer are like two turtles, if you separate one the other dies; a cunning angler observes the time and season when the fish bite best, and then he throws in the angle; when the heart is warmed by meditation, now is the best season to throw in the angle of prayer, and fish for mercy."

Verse 5: Life, at its very best, is short. The brevity of life ought to serve as a sober reminder that we should take only one day at a time, and remember the words of our Master, "Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matt. 6:34). Edmund Layfielde is credited with the following: "Man's life is styled *days* because it is not conferred upon us by wholesale, by months and years, but by retail of days, hours, minutes, moments, as to check our curiosity in making inquiry how long we have to live (verse 4); so acquainting us with the brevity thereof, we may learn to depend upon God's bounty for the *loan* of our life, employ it for his glory, and every day prepare for the Bridegroom, Christ."

The Fundamental lesson seems to be that the only true hope is in God. He has promised: "be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13:5-6).

## *“The Blessed Man of Trust”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript ascribes the Psalm to David, “and no argument of the least weight has been brought against this view” (Rawlinson, 311). The occasion is some great deliverance that was granted the author, but the exact time in David’s life when this might have occurred is uncertain. Much of the Psalm is Messianic, and this has led some to conclude that the author was speaking of Jesus in its entirety. “Lifted by the Holy Spirit into the region of prophecy, David was honoured thus to write concerning a far greater than himself” (Spurgeon). We have entitled this Psalm “The Blessed Man Of Trust.”

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm is easily divided into three parts, though the precise verse division varies. Verses 1-3 serve as a sort of introduction in which the author speaks of some deliverance granted for which he is thankful. Verse 4 pronounces a blessing on the man that trusts in the Lord, who has no respect for the “proud,” and who is not turned aside unto lies. In verse 5 the Psalmist turns his attention to the “wonderful works” of God, and freely admits that thoughts and blessings of God are beyond human reckoning, that they are “more than can be numbered.” How, then, shall the Psalmist express his gratitude? This leads him to an outburst of sacrificial praise in which he acknowledges that sacrifices and offerings would not provide a suitable expression of that deep gratitude (verse 6), but that full submission to the will of God is necessary (verses 7-10). At verse 11 to the close of the chapter there is a change in the Psalmist’s tone. Although recently delivered from some great peril, the author is still conscious of infirmity within (verse 12), enemies without (verses 14-15). This leads him to cry out for the godly in general (verse 16), and for himself specifically (verse 17). G. Campbell Morgan outlined the Psalm thusly:

- I. Song of Praise, verses 1-10;
- II. Complaint, verses 11-16;

### III. Final Prayer and Faith, verse 17.

I have selected to follow an outline obtained during my studies at Brown Trail and entered into the margin of my ASV Old Testament:

I. Prelude, 1-3;

II. Praise of God and Promise of Obedience, 4-10;

III. Prayer to God, 11-17.

## **Commentary**

### **Prelude Verses 1-3**

- 1 *I waited patiently for Jehovah; And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry."*
- 2 *He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay; And he set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings."*
- 3 *And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: Many shall see it, and fear, And shall trust in Jehovah."*

**40:1** - David "*waited*" in that he allowed God to perform His purpose. Those who "wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa 40:31). "*I wait*" is a common Hebrew idiom used "when an idea is to be emphasized" (Rawlinson, 312). Barnes suggests the idea of repeated prayer, as indicated by the writer waiting patiently.

"*And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry*" - The word for "inclined" means "bowed; that is he bent forward to hearken, or to place his ear near my mouth and to hear me" (Barnes). While David was the "type," Jesus is the anti-type. The night before the crucifixion, Jesus prayed fervently in the garden (John 17:1, Matt 26:36-46). Notice in this connection Hebrews 5:7. "The son of David was brought very low, but he rose to victory; and here he teaches us how to conduct our conflicts so as to succeed after the same glorious pattern of triumph. Let us arm ourselves with the same mind; and panoplied in patience, armed with prayer, and girt with faith, let us maintain the Holy War" (Spurgeon, 2.235).

**40:2:** "*He brought me up out of a terrible pit*" - Here is the answer to David's prayer. The "pit" and "miry clay" may be figurative, describing the circumstance David was in, as IF it were a pit - no way out! In contrast, God set David upon a rock; a place of stability. There may be a reference here to the Christ. If it is prophetic, we get



a glimpse of our Lord's death and His ultimate victory in the Resurrection that followed.

*"horrible pit"* - The word means a pit, and may also be used to refer to a prison, a dungeon, or even the grave. The last use of the word is found in Psalms 28:1, 30:3, 88:4, Isaiah 38:18, and 19:19. The depth of our Lord's suffering, that of David, and all saints of every age, is expressed in the language before us.

*"established my goings"* - Barnes has this:

If we understand this of the Redeemer, it refers to that time when, his sorrows ended, and his work of atonement done, it became certain that he would never be exposed again to such dangers, or sink into such a depth of woes, but that his course ever onward would be one of safety and of glory (Barnes).

There is great hope in knowing that our God will lift us out of our distress and place us on solid ground.

**40:3:** *"He hath put a new song in my mouth"* - Once delivered, David expressed the joy of his salvation. The "new song" has reference to the song of joy and peace as a consequence of reconciliation with Jehovah. The "song" is a synecdoche, describing the whole of life as it manifests joy. Barnes suggests that the idea

is that he had given a new or fresh *occasion* for praise...As applied to the Messiah, and referring to his being raised up to glory after the depth of his sorrows, it would mean that no language hitherto employed to express gratitude to God would be adequate to the occasion, but that the language of a *new song* of praise would be demanded to celebrate so great an event (Barnes).

*"Many shall see it and fear"* - Rawlinson had this interesting take on this phrase:

Compare Deut. xiii.11, xvii. 13; xix. 20; xxi. 21, where the phrase...is used of the effect produced by the capital punishment of a high-handed transgressor of the Law. There may be an allusion here to Absalom's end, which was probably followed by a certain number of executions (Rawlinson, 312).

*"and shall trust in Jehovah"* - David's example would have an impact upon those who saw and heard him. But David was the man he was because of whom he trusted. The bottom line is that all men trust in something. The question is, "What do you trust in?"

## Praise of God and Promise of Obedience Verses 4-10

- 4 *Blessed is the man that maketh Jehovah his trust, And respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies."*
- 5 *Many, O Jehovah my God, are the wonderful works which thou hast done, And thy thoughts which are to us-ward; They cannot be set in order unto thee; If I would declare and speak of them, They are more than can be numbered."*
- 6 *Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in; Mine ears hast thou opened: Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast thou not required."*
- 7 *Then said I, Lo, I am come; In the roll of the book it is written of me:"*
- 8 *I delight to do thy will, O my God; Yea, thy law is within my heart."*
- 9 *I have proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness in the great assembly; Lo, I will not refrain my lips, O Jehovah, thou knowest."*
- 10 *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation; I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great assembly."*

**40:4:** The man who is truly blessed is the man who trusts in God. The words express an exclamation like that in 1:1, "Oh the happiness of the man." Such is the man "*that maketh Jehovah his trust.*" A single-eyed confidence in God is the mark of a man who is genuinely blessed. Indeed, "A man may be as poor as Lazarus, as hated as Mordecai, as sick as Hezekiah, as lonely as Elijah, but while his hand of faith can keep its hold on God, none of his outward afflictions can prevent his being numbered among the blessed" (Spurgeon).

"*And respecteth not the proud*" - Another mark of the "blessed man" is that he does not cow-tow or cater to the proud or wicked. The proud think the world revolves around them and should bow to their every demand. But those who believe in God and trust the Almighty do not honor mere "money bags, or cringe before bombastic dignity" (Spurgeon).

Finally, the "blessed" man is the man that refuses to "*turn aside to lies.*" He loves the truth, lives by it, and defends it earnestly.

**40:5:** There is a reference to the “works” and “thoughts” of God. The power of God is manifest in His great works, of such abundance they cannot be numbered. The *“thoughts which are to us ward”* are those concerns that God has for us. The “purposes, plans, arrangements of God designed are for our welfare; the things that are the result of his thinking of our wants, of what would do us good” (Barnes,). The wonderful mercies of God weighed heavy upon the mind of the Psalmist and laid him under great obligations to respond in loving obedience to the will of God.

*“they cannot be set in order unto thee”* - One has suggested that it means “Nothing can be compared unto thee.” The literal meaning of the word “order” is that of arranging in a row. The context seems to suggest that the Psalmist was saying that the works of God, and His great thoughts, are so abundant, that any attempt to enumerate or exhaust them would be futile. Any attempt to declare and speak of the great things God has done are, obviously, more than can be numbered. One of the genuine marks of inspiration is the inexhaustible nature of God’s word. If our Psalm is prophetic of our Lord’s agony and victory, then there is something especially glorious about the scene before us.

Our special attention is called by this passage to the marvels which cluster around the cross and flash from it...Wonders of grace beyond all enumeration take their rise from the cross; adoption, pardon, justification, and a long chain of godlike miracles of love proceed from it...Far beyond all human arithmetic they are multiplied; thoughts from all eternity, thoughts of my fall, my restoration, my redemption, my conversion, my pardon, my upholding, my perfecting, my eternal reward; the list is too long for writing, and the value of the mercies too great for estimation (Spurgeon).

When we contemplate such wonderful “works” of Jehovah, it is an understatement to say *“they are more than can be numbered.”* Beyond those wonders of which we are aware are those things that God has given to us in secret and of which we are not immediately aware. Only eternity will reveal the marvelous providential workings of God in our lives to bring about our salvation.

**40:6:** Barnes has pointed out that the “four words employed in this verse - sacrifice, offering, burnt offering, sin offering - embrace all the species of sacrifice and offerings known among the Hebrews” (Barnes). Since it is God who originated the sacrifices, it does not seem probable that the Psalmist intended to teach that the system of

sacrifices could be ignored or neglected. The following verses (7 and 8) stand in contrast to the mention of these sacrifices. The meaning is that God does not delight or desire sacrifices for sacrifice's sake. God wants a contrite heart, submissive to His will and obedient to His commandments. "Apart from a spirit of obedience, sacrifice and offering are not desired or required at all; rather, as Isaiah says, they are a weariness and an abomination (Isa. 1:11-12)" (Rawlinson, 312).

*"Mine ears hast thou opened"* - The words may have either of two meanings. The Psalmist may have been saying that God had taken away his deafness and given him ears open to hear and embrace the Law. Or there may be a reference here to Exodus 21:6 and Deuteronomy 15:17 in which a voluntary servant had his ear bored through so as to mark him a slave forever. David would manifest both of these principles in his life. There is no reason to doubt that the Psalmist speaks of the Messiah. Our Lord was completely submissive to the will of the Father. His ears were opened in the fullest sense of the word. No, burnt offerings and sacrifices were not required of our Lord because (1) there was no sin in our Lord, and (2) such were completely ineffective to remove sin where sin did abound.

**40:7:** *"Then"* reflects on the previous verse. It is not until our "ears" are "open" that we can ever hope to be submissive to the will of the Father. The Hebrew writer used these verses to contrast the sacrifice of Jesus with that of the blood of bulls and goats. The passage is obviously Messianic in its nature, for I know of no place where such language could apply to David. Of the Messiah, two things are noteworthy: (1) *"I am come"* would be a reference to the first entry of Jesus into this world, i.e. the incarnation. (2) *"it is written"* would be a reference to the prophecies in the O.T. which point to the coming Messiah. These things were "written," as it were, in the eternal decree of God (Eph. 3:10-12).

**40:8:** Here is the essential element in one's relationship to God. One must *"delight"* in doing God's will. This is accomplished only when "the law" is written in the heart. A superficial, head-knowledge of the will of God will not properly motivate one to obedience and faithfulness to God. The word must be in the heart, a part of our very being.

**40:9:** The language is applicable to the Lord in that He was a preacher, addressed great multitudes, and upheld righteousness in all His teaching and preaching. Our Lord's whole life was that of a

preacher. He spoke as never a man spoke, and He spoke as one with authority. The poor listened to Him, the Pharisees refused to hear Him, and to both He proclaimed the truth from heaven. The Psalmist is committed to declaring the truth of God's word in the assembly. This should be a guide for all preachers of God's word today. I fear, however, that such is not the case.

**40:10:** Silence is not always golden, and this is especially true when one who has a knowledge of the truth refuses to share it with others. The New Testament counterpart of this verse is contained in 2 Corinthians 4:13, "But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak." But it is also important to declare the "whole counsel of God" when preaching and teaching. Too many preachers of this generation are slack in dealing with those things that might offend the guilty heart.

### **Prayer to God**

Verses 11-17

- 11 *Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Jehovah; Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*
- 12 *For innumerable evils have compassed me about; Mine iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up; They are more than the hairs of my head; And my heart hath failed me.*
- 13 *Be pleased, O Jehovah, to deliver me: Make haste to help me, O Jehovah.*
- 14 *Let them be put to shame and confounded together That seek after my soul to destroy it: Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonor That delight in my hurt.*
- 15 *Let them be desolate by reason of their shame That say unto me, Aha, aha.*
- 16 *Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: Let such as love thy salvation say continually, Jehovah be magnified.*
- 17 *But I am poor and needy; Yet the Lord thinketh upon me: Thou art my help and my deliverer; Make no tarrying, O my God.*

The elements in this prayer say much about David the King, and in prophecy, of Christ the King of kings. Barnes made this observation:

As applicable to the Redeemer, this is a prayer that God would bestow upon him in connexion with his work, and as a reward of

his work, appropriate proofs of his goodness....He saw himself now about to enter the vale of sorrows; to plunge into that depth of the unutterable woes connected with the making of an atonement. He prayed, therefore, that, in these approaching sorrows, God would not withhold the expression of his tender mercy. The point of time, therefore, in the Redeemer's life which the verse before us occupies, is that awful and sorrowful hour when, his public work of teaching and of miracles furnished, he was about to endure the agonies of Gethsemane and of the cross (Barnes).

**40:12:** The sorrows which accompanied the Psalmist were *“more than the hairs of my head.”* It is not certain what the “iniquities” mentioned here might have been. We are prone to think that it was not the NUMBER of sins which distressed the Psalmist but the MAGNITUDE of them. One cannot help but see a deeply penitent attitude in the heart of the Psalmist. No wonder God blessed him so. It is precisely at this verse that we depart from those who see in this Psalm a reference to the Messiah throughout. We see no way that the words of the Psalmist could be spoken by our Lord, especially the reference to “mine iniquities” being “more than the hairs of mine head.”

**40:13:** *“make haste to help me”* - Urgency was the key word. Danger must have been very real, and extremely threatening.

**40:14:** The remainder of this Psalm is detached and repeated in Psalm 70, almost verbatim. It has been suggested that David may have selected the closing portion of the Psalm to stand by itself for some special occasion of worship.

The Psalmist was not seeking any sort of self gratification in seeing his enemies defeated. He was leaving vengeance up to God. His prayer was that TOGETHER his enemy might be confounded and their plans frustrated.

**40:15:** To be “desolate” is to be cut off; to bring to waste. Those who mocked the righteous, who cried “Aha, aha,” having no regard for things holy, would be brought to desolation. Such shall be the end of those who cast their lot with the ungodly (cf. Psalms 1:4-5).

**40:16:** The Psalmist is speaking here of the righteous; those who “seek” God, who “rejoice” and are “glad” in Him; those who “love..salvation,” and who continually magnify Jehovah.

**40:17:** The words would certainly fit David during the time of his trouble with Absalom. “No one is more in need than a discrowned king, driven from his throne and land, and not yet restored to either” (Rawlinson, 313). There is a note of urgency in the verse. “*Make no tarrying, O my God.*” Note that the Psalmist admits his low estate, and yet at the same time is confident that God “thinketh upon me.” It is amazing that our God considers man at all. His graciousness, lovingkindness, and condescending nature, has brought salvation unto all men (Titus 2:11). For this we should rejoice.

### ***Lessons***

1. Only in God is the solid foundation that can help us to face the problems of life (notice verse 2). Jesus taught us that the wise man hears the words of God, and then applies them to his life. Such a one is like the man that builds on a rock foundation, whose life is prepared to withstand the trials and tribulations of life (Matthew 7:24-27).
2. The wonderful blessings of God graciously bestowed upon man the creature are beyond measurement and human comprehension. William Dunlop (quoted by Spurgeon) commented on this marvelous feature of our God:

Cast abroad your eyes through the nations, and meditate on the mighty acts that he hath done, and the wisdom and power of his providence, which should charm all thy affections. Behold his admirable patience, with what pity he looks down on obstinate rebels; and how he is moved with compassion when he sees his creatures polluted in their blood, and bent upon their own destruction; how long he waits to be gracious; how unwillingly he appears to give up with sinners, and execute deserved vengeance on his enemies; and then with what joy he pardons for ‘with him is plenteous redemption.’ And what can have more force than these to win they esteem, and make a willing conquest of thy heart? so that every object about thee is an argument of love, and furnishes fuel for this sacred fire. And whether you behold God in the firmament of his power, or the sanctuary of his grace, you cannot miss to pronounce him ‘altogether lovely’ (Spurgeon).

3. From verses 6-8 we learn the importance of a heart that willingly submits in loving obedience to the demands of God. Sacrifices are of no value if they are not accompanied by love (1 Cor. 13:1-4). “And Samuel said, Hath Jehovah as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Jehovah?

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22).

4. The Lord is concerned about the welfare of His people, vs 17a. It is a most wonderful thing to meditate upon the fact that “the Lord thinketh upon me.” It is the realization of this truth that sustains us when all others have forsaken us. God has promised us: “Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).



## *“Confidence In Time of Peril”*

### ***Introduction***

This is “a Psalm of David to the chief musician,” as stated in the subtitle. The occasion is unknown, but there is a similarity between this and 38. The author was suffering from some bodily sickness due, most likely, to the mental sorrows caused by the ingratitude of his friends. Dub McClish suggests that “it seems most reasonable to ascribe the events described to the rebellion of Absalom” (McClish, 258). John Phillips concurred:

Psalms 38, 39, 40, and 41 were all...written around the circumstances which surrounded the rebellion of Absalom...No rebellion takes place in a vacuum. Behind Absalom’s rebellion, and ever haunting David’s conscience, was David’s sin with Bathsheba and the consequent murder of her husband...[T]he consequences pursued David through the remaining years of his life. How could David impose the death sentence, required by the law of Moses, upon Amnon for his wicked seduction of Absalom’s sister, when he himself had been guilty of the wicked seduction of Bathsheba? How could David impose the death sentence..upon Absalom for the murder of Amnon, when he himself had been guilty of murdering Uriah? So, from that one evil seed the whole Absalom rebellion flowered, flourished, and bore fruit. Truly, what we sow we eventually reap (Phillips, 316).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalms were divided into five books to match the books of Moses. This particular Psalm marks the end of the first book. This Psalm has been variously divided. The Psalmist dwells on the blessed character of the one who shows compassion to the suffering (1-3). An appeal is then made to God for mercy especially restoration of health (4). A statement is made in regard to the manner in which he had been treated by the conspirators (5-9). It closes with an earnest expression of confidence (10-13). Following brother Deaver’s outline, I have selected to add a point, coming up with the following:

- I. Compassion, 1-3;
- II. Cry, 4;
- III. Conspirators, 5-9;
- IV. Confidence, 10-13.

Coffman pointed out that “the Psalm is remarkably balanced and regular with four stanzas, each having three lines, concluded by verse 13, which is actually the Doxology marking the end of Book I. It is not considered a part of the psalm itself” (Coffman, 339). Rawlinson agrees: “It consists of an introduction (1-3), respecting the blessedness of those who ‘consider the poor;’ a bitter complaint against his enemies generally, and one enemy in particular (4-9); and a conclusion, in which prayer and an expression of confident hope are united (10-12)” (Rawlinson, 323).

G.Campbell Morgan suggests, “this whole song depends for interpretation on its opening beatitude. This man who is considerate toward the weak, who is compassionate, is blessed. His blessings are then described” (Morgan, 236).

There is some disagreement among commentators regarding the Messianic thrust of this Psalm. Morgan does not allow the confession of sin in verse four to deter any Messianic application. He concludes, “the Messianic reference is not destroyed. The wrong of those who harmed the Christ is greater because they acted without cause. Even then His prayer, ‘Father, forgive,’ harmonizes with this interpretation. His raising up by God was for blessing on men” (Morgan, 236).

## **Commentary**

### **Compassion Verses 1-4**

- 1 *Blessed is he that considereth the poor: Jehovah will deliver him in the day of evil.*
- 2 *Jehovah will preserve him, and keep him alive, And he shall be blessed upon the earth; And deliver not thou him unto the will of his enemies.*
- 3 *Jehovah will support him upon the couch of languishing: Thou makest all his bed in his sickness.*
- 4 *I said, O Jehovah, have mercy upon me: Heal my soul; For I have sinned against thee.*

**41:1:** These first three verses address the compassion and care that God has for them that trust in Him. The “blessed” man is that one who is happy in the genuine sense of the word. The one who “considereth” the poor is that man who demonstrates compassion by contributing to the necessities of the poor. Of such a one it is said that “Jehovah will deliver him.” The idea is that the man who does not “pass by” the one in need, is the one who will be blessed. Our Lord expressed this same eternal truth in His sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7).

*“The Lord will deliver him”* - Who is it that the Lord will deliver? He *“that considereth the poor.”* The Hebrew word means something that is weak, feeble, or powerless. David was speaking of someone who was helpless, whether by poverty or by disease. This has led some commentators to conclude that David was speaking of himself in verses 1-3. If that is the case we are given some insight into the heart of David as he struggled with his present situation. He is the one who is in need; he is the one who needed deliverance from his enemies (verse 2); he is the one who was “languishing” upon his bed (verse 3); he was the one who had sinned and was in need of mercy (verse 4). Here was the man who had, in his youth, battled and conquered the giant Goliath. Some sickness had come upon him and Absalom had, no doubt, taken advantage of the situation so as to extend his power and attempted overthrow of the kingdom.

*“The day of evil”* – The rebellion of Absalom was, no doubt, the “day of evil” for David. But this man of God was confident that God would deliver him. The “day of evil” will come to the most generous and compassionate of men. The promise in God’s word is not that the righteous shall have no trouble, but that they will be protected and preserved during that time, and eventually will come forth victorious.

**41:2:** *“Jehovah will preserve him, and keep him”* – From David’s “condition” we move to David’s “confidence.” David realized that the situation was desperate, but he was confident that God would preserve him and keep him. God’s providential care is certainly suggested. There may be a situation in which the godly person is allowed to be threatened by the enemy, but one must keep in mind that those things which may happen to us here in this life are not a representation of the final outcome. There is a “harvest” which is yet to come. Those who make their Lord the portion of their life shall be blessed. Assisting others, the generous soul shall in turn be preserved by Jehovah. God will return unto us as we give to others,

only in greater abundance. Indeed, “The miser like the hog is of no use till he is dead - then let him die; the righteous like the ox is of service during life - then let him live” (Spurgeon, 2.256).

**41:3:** *“Strengthen him on the bed of languishing”* – David was reflecting upon the strength that God had given him and expanding that Divine blessing to those who, like David, put their trust in God. Even in his sickness, the saint can expect to be preserved by his God. Sometimes God may not remove the affliction, but will give us strength to endure. “Literally, thou wilt turn all his bed; i.e. rearrange it, turn its cushions, make it such that he can comfortably lie on it” (Rawlinson, 322). David may have been looking back at the wonderful care that God provided to see him through the ordeal with his son Absalom. David’s sickness provided Absalom the opportunity to accuse David of neglect in his kingly duties and thereby strengthen the rebellion. But after the events had run their course it was David who came out victorious. When things look bad God has a way of supporting us, even when we are on our “couch of languishing.”

There is great consolation in the closing words of this verse. The compassion and kindness shown to a man upon his sick bed manifests true love. A mother’s nursing care to a sick child says more than all the words that mortal tongue might speak. Herein is love indeed. “A bed soon grows hard when the body is weary with tossing to and fro upon it, but grace gives patience, and God’s smile gives peace, and the bed is made soft because the man’s heart is content; the pillows are downy because the head is peaceful” (Spurgeon).

**41:4:** Was there a particular “sin” that David had in mind? Morgan concluded, “in light of the beatitude the sin is seen to have been lack of compassion, and this is the secret of the bitter hatred of his enemies, which he proceeds to describe” (Morgan, 236). But we are convinced that it is more than just one sin. David was conscious of ALL of his sins. From his adultery, to the murder of Uriah, and including any mismanagement of the kingdom, he was aware that there was much that needed to be forgiven. He did not deny it, nor did he attempt to excuse his behavior or to pass blame. Modern saints would do well to learn from this Psalmist to confess sin before the Almighty that healing may be obtained. God is the only source for spiritual healing. David was grateful for God’s great mercy. “Kidner remarked that, ‘David got more mercy from God whom he

had wronged than from the ‘familiar friend’ whom he had helped” (Coffman, 340).

*“Heal my soul”* - The meaning of the Hebrew is not conveyed by the single pronoun. The word suggests a healing that refers to both soul and body. Likely there was some serious illness that had come upon David following his sin with Bathsheba.

### **Conspirators Verses 5-9**

*5 Mine enemies speak evil against me, saying, When will he die, and his name perish?*

*6 And if he come to see me, he speaketh falsehood; His heart gathereth iniquity to itself: When he goeth abroad, he telleth it.*

*7 All that hate me whisper together against me; Against me do they devise my hurt.*

*8 An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him; And now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.*

*9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, Who did eat of my bread, Hath lifted up his heel against me.*

**41:5:** Whatever this physical illness from which the writer was suffering, it was serious enough that his enemies expected him to die as a result. Their anxious desire for the death of the Psalmist was NOT for the purpose of release from pain, but that his name and influence would cease. “What we have here is a graphic picture of the conduct of a malignant enemy” (Coffman, 341). Absalom had stolen away the hearts of the children of Israel from David (2 Samuel 15:3-4). The conspirators consisted of Absalom, Ahithophel, and Shimei (2 Samuel 16:5-8) desired the death of David; longing for his very “name” to perish, that his memory be completely rooted up. We see in this verse the hatred of the enemy.

**41:6:** The hatred of the enemy is manifested in hypocrisy. The Psalmist is describing the feigned “compassion” of his enemy. A visit from this hypocrite was not out of a heart of concern, but one filled with malice. The calling was only in pretense. We are not certain who this “friend” might have been, but perhaps the suggestion that it was Absalom is correct since he would not have been restricted from seeing the king. How sad that “out of the sweetest flowers chemists can distill poison, and from the purest words and deeds malice can gather groundwork for calumnious report” (Spurgeon).

And exactly what is this “falsehood”? We can almost imagine that wicked, hypocritical enemy telling the Psalmist, “Hope you get better. We are anxious for your recovery!” All the while this deceiver was scheming and planning. Unconcerned about the well being of his sick friend, our visitor looks for something that might entrap or snare, in order to bring David to his ruin. When once he has left the bed side of David, he speaks his evil devices unto others! “He makes his lies, and then vents them in open market” (Spurgeon, 2.258). Rawlinson quotes Dr. Kay: “He makes a show of friendship, using hollow compliments; but he is treasuring up every expression as material for misrepresentation” (Rawlinson, 322).

**41:7:** What utter hypocrisy! While wishing him well, they devise his hurt! From his bed of sickness David could see those who feigned compassion and concern whispering evil things against him. If the rebellion of Absalom was underway, it manifests the height of cowardice for Absalom to take advantage of the king’s physical weakness to promote his own evil devices. “Evil men are good at devising; they are given to meditation, they are deep thinkers, but the mark they aim at is evermore the hurt of the faithful. Snakes in the grass are never there for a good end” (Spurgeon).

**41:8:** The pessimistic outlook of these prognosticators stemmed from a motive of pure selfishness. Perhaps, were they fortunate enough, this “evil disease” would take his life so as to save them the trouble of slaying him themselves. But note also the cunning insinuations by the use of the words “evil disease.” The words suggest they were accusing David of some wicked deed. Dare they suggest that there was something evil in David’s life that led to a physical ailment? The mere suggestion unto others would slander the name of David and lessen respect for him among Israel. “The very vagueness of the report was part of its effectiveness; and this is also a mark of many other slanders that can be very damaging to their victims” (Coffman, 342).

**41:9:** “*Mine own familiar friend*” - Rawlinson concludes that Ahithophel is the “familiar friend.” He is called the “man of my peace,” since he was one of David’s official counselors (2 Sam. 15:12), and consequently on the most friendly of terms with him. At Oriental courts, the kings counselors, together with many other members of the court, habitually “eat at the king’s table” (compare 2 Sam. 9:7-13, 1 Kings 4:23, 27; Neh. 5:17, Esther 1:10, 11, etc.). But it was Absalom, not Ahithophel, who would have had such easy access to David’s bedside. That this “familiar friend” was indeed his own

son would explain why this traitor was not named. This is one whom David fed, who *“did eat of my bread.”* Here is the epitome of selfishness. Having been raised by a loving father who saw to it that the very sustenance of life was provided, Absalom has now determined to destroy the one from whom those blessings had come. The closeness of David to Absalom can be seen in the words *“mine own familiar friend,” “whom I trusted.”* Instead of returning kindness for kindness, this wicked one *“lifted up his heel”* against David. The hurt that David experienced was like a trusted animal that kicks its owner without provocation. Not only had this close associate turned his back on David, but had delivered him a ferocious blow as an angry horse might give.

**41:10:** The numerous imprecatory tones in the Psalms are never for personal vengeance. David left retribution in the hands of God. But still there is the presence of what we might call “justifiable anger” on the part of David. There are some commentators who seem to think that David manifested some sort of rage, or “hot glowing vengeance” from a “carnal passion” in the heart of David. In view of the fact that the government is God’s servant to wield the sword against unlawful men, David was completely within his authority to seek the punishment of those who sought to overthrow the Divinely appointed king. No, this was not private revenge. This was David’s duty as a king.

**41:11:** David’s desire for respite was in order that God’s desire might be manifest. If it were the case that God found delight in David, then the Almighty would bring the victory. Oh yes, the victory shall be ours! “What a wonder it is that when the devil enters the lists with a poor, erring, bedridden, deserted, slandered saint, and has a thousand evil tongues to aid him, yet he cannot win the day, but in the end slinks off without renown” (Spurgeon).

**41:12:** David’s “integrity” was not sinless perfection. This is evident from verse four. It is apparent, therefore, that Divine blessings were a manifestation of God’s approval of the inner heart and character of this man after God’s own heart.

**41:13:** There is some question whether this verse is to be included with the Psalm, or if it serves as a conclusion to book one of the whole collection. Coffman noted that there are “similar doxologies at the end of the other four, in 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48; and the entire 150th Psalm” (Coffman, 344).

Whether this verse is to be taken as the conclusion to this Psalm, or the first book, it is a marvelous doxology. We learn that God is “blessed”; yea, deserving of great honor and exhalation. We learn that God involves Himself in the affairs of man, being the God of Israel. We learn that He is without limitation, “from everlasting and to everlasting.” With the words “Amen and Amen,” the Psalmist says, “Let it be so!”

### ***Lessons***

1. Those who have compassion upon others will be truly blessed by God.
2. The enemies of God will NOT be victorious, no matter how they might scheme. Though the battle seems long, and at times futile, we are promised victory through Jesus.



## *“The Despondent Soul”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is the ***first in the second of the five books*** of the Psalms. One particular feature of these Psalms (42-72) is the frequent use of Elohim for God, whereas the more common word heretofore has been Jehovah. Keil and Delitzsch point out that in Book I, Jehovah is used 272 times, and Elohim is used only 16 times, but here in Book II, Elohim is used 164 times and Jehovah only 30 times.

Psalms 42 and 43 are originally believed to have been one Psalm due to the similarity of the language and the rhythm. Psalms 42:5 and 11 close with the same language as that of 43:5. If it is the case that these were originally one, exactly how that separation came about is a mystery. In a few of the manuscripts these two appear as one, probably due to some scribe noting the resemblance, and combining them into the one. With regard to the latter, “The probability is, that this psalm was composed by the same author, as a kind of supplement to the former psalm, or as expressing, in a slightly different form, the emotions which passed through his mind on that same occasion” (Barnes).

There are varying opinions with regard to the author of this Psalm. Adam Clarke attributes the Psalm to the descendants of Korah, and places the writing during the time of the Babylonian captivity. He wrote

This is the first of the Psalms assigned unto the sons of Korah; and it is probable that they were composed by descendants of Korah during the Babylonian Captivity, or by some eminent person among those descendants, and that they were used by the Israelites during their long captivity as a means of their consolation. Indeed most of these Psalms are of the *consoling kind*; and the sentiments expressed appear to belong to that period of Jewish history and to no other (Adam Clarke).

Coffman was of the same opinion and offered the following reasons for a later date than the time of David: (1) The superscription

includes a reference to the exile, the only “exile” of Israel being that in Babylon. (2) In 43:1 reference is made to “an ungodly nation,” something that cannot be successfully identified if we place this during the time of David. (3) The Psalmist himself speaks of his remembrance of God “from the land of Jordan,” meaning the land beyond the Jordan. Barnes, on the other hand, believes that it was written by David, and that the name was withheld because he was so well known as its composer. “The psalm agrees best with the supposition that it was in the time of rebellion of Absalom, when David was driven from his throne, and from the place which he had appointed for the worship of God after he had removed the ark to Mount Zion, and when he was in exile and a wanderer beyond the Jordan, 2 Sam. 15-18” (Barnes). Keil and Delitzsch argue strongly for the Davidic authorship:

The composer of Ps 42 finds himself, against his will, at a great distance from the sanctuary on Zion, the resting-place of the divine presence and manifestation, surrounded by an ungodly people, who mock at him as one forsaken of God, and he comforts his sorrowful soul, looking longingly back upon that which it has lost, with the prospect of God’s help which will soon appear. All the complaints and hopes that he expresses sound very much like those of David during the time of Absalom. David’s yearning after the house of God in Ps 23; 26; 55; 63, finds its echo here: the conduct and outlines of the enemies are also just the same; even the sojourn in the country east of Jordan agrees with David’s settlement at that time at Mahanaim in the mountains of Gilead. ...We do not, therefore, in the least doubt that Ps 42 is the poem of a Korahitic Levite, who found himself in exile beyond the Jordan among the attendants of David, his exiled king (Keil and Delitzsch on this passage).

It is our studied conclusion that the Psalm is Davidic. The language is that of David, and there is nothing within the Psalm itself that would prohibit his being the author.

The Psalm is written “to the chief Musician...for the sons of Korah” (as per subscript). The sacred history tells us that the sons of Korah had been spared when their father and his company were swallowed alive in their sinful rebellion. The deep devotion to God as well as their thanksgiving for deliverance may have contributed to their active involvement in the work of worship and praise.

As for the subject of the Psalm, it is the cry of a man who has been removed from any possibility of assembling with his brethren in worship to Jehovah. It is the voice of one who is under depression,

longing for renewal of God's fellowship, and struggling with fears, doubts, and fading hope. The reader is encouraged along the way as he sees the writer struggle with these things, while maintaining faith in his God.

## ***Analysis***

Barnes wrote, "Psalms like this make the Bible a complete book, and show that He who gave it 'knew what is in man' and what man needs in this vale of tears" (Barnes, II, 3). The Psalm as a whole is one of consolation. In times of trouble we can be confident that God DOES care, and that He will over rule every circumstance and situation for our ultimate good. In a world of sorrow, despair, and extreme grief, when we are down cast and discouraged because of the faithlessness of our friends and loved ones, there is One that cares. This is the main thought in this Psalm. We have selected to entitle this Psalm, "The Despondent Soul." The Psalm naturally divides itself into two parts, both ending with the same refrain (verses 5 and 11). We suggest the following outline for this Psalm:

I. David's Disappointment, 1-5

1. Longings, 1-3;
2. Remembrance, 4;
3. Questions, 5a;
4. Counsel, 5b;

II. David's Despair, 6-8

III. David's Decision, 9-11

1. Questions, 9-10;
2. Counsel, 11;

## ***Commentary***

### **David's Disappointment Verses 1-5**

Although the throne belonged to David, there were few times in David's life that he did not have to struggle to maintain control. From his early years of battle with Saul, to the rebellion of Absalom and Ahithophel, David was driven to and fro, seldom being able to stay in the city of Jerusalem. This would explain the tenor of this Psalm. Separated from the city, and from worship, there would be those great longings in his heart for a return to worship in the temple.

*Longings, verses 1-3:*

- 1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after thee, O God.*
- 2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God?*
- 3 My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*

**42:1:** The “hart” is the male deer. It is masculine, but in this place it is joined with a feminine verb. The word rendered “panteth” has a marginal rendering in some versions of “brayeth.” The Hebrew word occurs only in this passage and in Joel 1:20, where the beasts of the field “pant” unto God because of the drought. The idea is one of “longing” for something, and in this Psalm there is intense desire on the part of the hart for refreshing water. In the same way, the Psalmist pants after God. “Debarred from public worship, David was heartsick. Ease he did not seek, honour he did not covet, but the enjoyment of communion with God was an urgent need of his soul; he viewed it not merely as the sweetest of all luxuries, but as an absolute necessity, like water to a stag...When it is as natural for us to long for God as for an animal to thirst, it is well with our souls, however painful our feelings” (Spurgeon). Only when men have such intent desires to find God, and learn of His will for our lives, can we expect to find Him. The New Testament equivalent of this wonderful truth is found in the words of our Master: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). Unfortunately, men invent one excuse after another for absenting themselves from the assembly of the saints. Perhaps our affluent society has taken us further from God than we realize.

**42:2:** It is evident from this verse that the Psalmist has been hindered from entering the temple and appearing before God. The reason is not given, but if we accept David as the author, there are many circumstances that would fit this occasion. In this verse the Psalmist continues his expression of intense desire for association with God. It is noted that God is described as a “living” God. Unlike the idols that were worshipped and served, David’s faith was in the Living God. In like manner we should recognize God as a living God, personal in His being, and powerful in His deeds and works. This particular attribute of God is mentioned but one other time in the Psalms, but is abundant through the Old Testament as a whole. See Deuteronomy 5:26, Joshua 3:10, 2 Kings 19:4, 16, Isaiah 37:4,

Jeremiah 10:10, 23:36, Daniel 6:26 and Hosea 1:10. “God is our Life; he is the Light of the world; he is the fountain of living waters; He is our All in All; as Augustine said it, ‘Our souls, O God, were made for Thee; and never shall they rest until they rest in Thee’” (Coffman, 349).

**42:3:** “*My tears have been my food day and night*” - The idea seems to be that David’s sorrow had caused his appetite to cease. This is not uncommon, and has been experienced by many who are caught up in the grips of despair. The “tears” are simply his weeping. Coffman believes that “these words seem much more appropriate as the tearful expression of Babylonian captives than the wails of the king of Israel” (Coffman, 349). But David had his occasions for tears as well may his life testify. David’s grief at being shut out of entrance into the tabernacle would have been intensified by the reproaches of his enemies. They taunted him asking, “*continually...Where is thy God?*” The enemies of David might very well have taunted David, gloating over those occasions when he was sick or in despair.

*Remembrance, verse 4:*

*4 These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me, How I went with the throng, and led them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping holyday.*

**42:4:** David recalls the joy of former days. This too is a natural response in times of trouble. We often remember “the good old days,” and long for their return. “Deep sorrow tries to lose itself in the recollection of the happier past” (Rawlinson, 331). But David was doing more than merely reflecting upon the past joys. The Hebrew word for “went with” is future tense and would suggest David’s faith in and confidence in God that He would once again lead the “multitude” into the house of God. Barnes points out that the Hebrew word translated “throng” denotes a thicket of trees and that it occurs no where else in the scriptures.

*Questionings, verse 5a:*

*5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me?*

**42:5:** “*Why art thou cast down?*” - This might be a good question for each one to ask when he tends to be melancholy, or to enter into a frame of mind in which he feels sorry for himself. There is a “dark

side” and a “bright side” to many events that come our way. We may not be able to see the “bright side” to every circumstance, but we can be assured that God will use even our trials and tribulations to our ultimate good. A recognition of WHO is on our side will cause us to ask the same question: “Why are you cast down? Why get discouraged? Has not God promised that He will take care of you?” The child of God has every reason to be optimistic. Indeed, “In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, the lilies of approaching peace” (Spurgeon).

*“Why art thou disquieted within me?”* - The word means “literally, (1) to growl as a bear; (2) to sound, or make a noise, as a harp, rain, waves; (3) to be agitated, troubled, or anxious in mind; to groan internally” (Barnes, II, 14). David’s soul groaned within.

*Counselings, verse 5b:*

*5b Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him For the help of his countenance.*

David faced his problems head on. No, there was no logical reason why he should be “cast down.” He knew where to go for hope: IN GOD! Here is the key to seeing that “bright side” of life. There are three things evident in this verse: (1) Hope is a positive reaction on the part of the individual. We can CHOOSE to hope and trust in God; (2) Faith is confident expectation that God will thus fulfill his promises; (3) It is GOD’S COUNTENANCE which provides safety and satisfaction. As David recognized the need to follow God’s leadings, so he here encourages others to *“hope thou in God.”*

*“Hope thou in God”* - Remove hope in God, and all hope is gone. In times of “disquietude,” the soul must turn to God. There is hope in none other. David was confident that he would “praise him” once again; that he would yet have occasion to give thanks to God for His merciful intercession in delivering him from the enemy.

*“for the help of his countenance”* - The meaning of this phrase is that God would look upon the author favorably. See similar scriptures, Psalms 4:6, 11:7, 21:6, 44:3, and 89:15.

## David's Despair Verses 6-8

- 6 *O my God, my soul is cast down within me: Therefore do I remember thee from the land of the Jordan, And the Hermons, from the hill Mizar.*
- 7 *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterfalls: All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*
- 8 *Yet Jehovah will command his lovingkindness in the day-time; And in the night his song shall be with me, Even a prayer unto the God of my life.*

**42:6:** “*Oh my God, my soul is cast down*” - This is the language of a soul in great anguish. His troubles overwhelmed him. “His heart is oppressed, and he is constrained to confess that, notwithstanding his solemn purpose not to be sad, and the conviction that he ought to be cheerful, and his wish to be and to appear so, yet his sorrows get the mastery over all this, and his heart is filled with grief” (Barnes).

“*Therefore do I remember thee...*” - With no comfort or encouragement, the Psalmist remembers his God. The “land of the Jordan” is the region adjacent to the Jordan, likely the wilderness east. “*Hermons*” is the region wherein Mt. Hermon is situated. Barnes points out “this spur or ridge lies near the sources of the Jordan. It consists of several summits, and is therefore spoken of here in the plural number” (Barnes, II, 8). It was in this region that the author had taken up his exile from his enemies. This would fit the exile of David far better than the exile of the Hebrews in Babylon.

**42:7:** The verse suggests that the author was near some body of water, or close to some “*waterfall*.” The word is rendered “waterspouts” in the KJV, and in the original language appears only here and in 2 Samuel 5:8, where it is rendered “gutter.” Using the scene before him of rushing water, and perhaps the floods that descended from the waterfall, he uses it as a likeness of the overwhelming nature of his troubles. “*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*” He was literally consumed by his trials. “So we speak of ‘floods of grief,’ ‘floods of tears,’ or ‘oceans of sorrows,’ as if waves and billows swept over us” (Barnes). David had come to his “Jordan.” The waves and billows threatened to break over his head and consume him. But like the Psalmist who wrote in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end” (73:16-17), David looks beyond his troubles to the Lord’s

lovingkindness as expressed in the next verse.

**42:8:** “Yet” – What a contrast! Yes, the storms of life had discouraged him. “Yet” he was confident that God would “*command his lovingkindness*” and His “*song shall be with me.*”

The word “daytime” refers to the times of prosperity and peace, while “night” has reference to those occasions of sorrow and trouble. The writer simply says that even in the night of sorrow, he would sing and offer up his prayer to Jehovah. “Blow follows blow. Misfortunes come not in single file, but in battalions...Notwithstanding all these present woes, God will at some time ‘command’ his loving-kindness to make itself apparent” (Rawlinson, 331). David may have been temporarily *overwhelmed*, but when he looked to his God, he was *overjoyed*.”

### **David’s Decision Verses 9-11**

*This portion is further divided into Questions (verses 9-10) and Counsel (verse 11). David makes a positive decision in these last two verses. He would talk to the Lord, and he would trust in the Lord. David would present his questions, and then listen to God’s counsel. Lets take a closer look.*

#### Questions, verses 9-10

- 9 *I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*  
10 *As with a sword in my bones, mine adversaries reproach me, While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*

**42:9:** Why should I be *forgotten*, why should I be *forlorn*? The word “oppression” means “distress, affliction, straits.” See Job 36:15, 1 Kings 22:27, and Isaiah 30:20. The “enemy” may very well have been Absalom, who had driven David from his throne and kingdom. David decided he would approach God with his doubts and fears. If a great man like David could be driven to ask “Why,” and if the Son of God Himself would ask “Why,” is it not possible that we will, in our trials and tribulations, desire to ask the same question? There is nothing wrong with despair. It is when we allow our despair to drive us away from God rather than to Him that we sin.



**42:10:** “Like someone who has pierced me with a sword, even to the depth of my bones, my enemies reproach me.” The idea is that, like a sword that has been thrust deep in the body, so their reproaches were breaking and crushing his bones. David’s enemy mocked him, continually asking, “Where is your God?” As if to say, “Why does your God not deliver you? Why does He not care?”

*Counsel, verse 11:*

11 *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; For I shall yet praise him, Who is the help of my countenance, and my God.*

**42:11:** As the Psalm closes the author asks himself once again, “Why are you cast down?” Once again, he rallies himself by suggesting that he ought not to be cast down in view of Who is on his side. And notice the closing words, “My God.” Jehovah is a living God, and He is David’s God. Why should David be cast down and gloomy in view of the fact that God is alive, and watching over him?

One highlight of this chapter is the steadfast faith of the writer in (1) his God, (2) the faithfulness of his God, (3) and the implied expectation that his God would, in the final analysis, deliver him from the enemy.

### ***Lessons***

1. When it is as natural for us to long for God as for the hart to thirst, it is well with our souls. The great challenge to our affluent age is that of keeping our priorities in place. There are too many who “pant” after the things of this world while the true riches go unnoticed. Happy is the man who longs to be in fellowship with God above all that the world may offer.
2. He who loves the Lord loves also the assemblies wherein His very name is adored. While our private devotions play an important part in our lives, we dare not neglect the public assemblies of the saints (Heb. 10:25).
3. The man who hopes in God may have disappointment come into his life, but his soul will not be “cast down.”

4. Trust in God will provide escape from the taunts of the enemy. When they ask, “Where is thy God?” we can truly answer that God is the “help of our countenance.”

## *“A Prayer For Guidance”*

### ***Introduction***

There is a remarkable similarity between Psalm 42 and 43, leading many to suggest that these were originally one. It is possible that the 43rd Psalm is actually the third part of the total. Psalms 42:5 and 11 close with the same language as that of 43:5. IF it is the case that these were originally one, exactly HOW the separation came about is a mystery. In a few of the manuscripts these two appear as one, probably due to some scribe noting the resemblance, and combining them into the one. Albert Barnes has suggested the probability is that “this psalm was composed by the same author, as a kind of supplement to the former psalm, or as expressing, in a slightly different form, the emotions which passed through his mind on that same occasion” (Barnes). It would appear that the style the author used met his intended purpose, and at some point in time he may have returned to write a “supplement” to Psalm 42, using the same format as before. We will entitle the psalm, “A Prayer For Guidance.”

### ***Analysis***

The Psalmist cries to God in prayer, verses 1–3. In anticipation of an answer, he promises praise to follow, verse 4. He then chides himself for his despondency, verse 5. We will divide the Psalm thusly:

- I. Prayer, 1-3;
- II. Praise, 4;
- III. Personal, 5;

### ***Commentary***

#### **Prayer Verses 1-3**

- 1 *Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation:  
Oh deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.*
- 2 *For thou art the God of my strength; why hast thou cast me off?  
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*
- 3 *Oh send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me:  
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill,  
And to thy tabernacles.*

**43:1:** This first verse constitutes a prayer on the part of David for swift action on the part of God. The reference to the “*ungodly nation*” suggests that the majority of Israel had turned against him. The “*deceitful and unjust man*” is either Saul, or Absalom. It seems most likely that Absalom is under consideration, since it is said of David’s son that he stole the hearts of Israel. David was seeking deliverance from those who seeking his destruction. Barnes points out that “this entire description would agree well with the state of things in the time of the rebellion of Absalom, when David was driven from his home and his throne (2 Sam. 15)” (Barnes).

“*Judge me*” - This does not mean to “pronounce judgment,” but rather that God might undertake his cause and do justice with regard to his situation. David regarded his own cause as being right. He was asking that God might accept him. He could accept the misrepresentation of others if God would accept him.

“*please my cause against an ungodly nation*” - A marginal rendering in the ASV reads, “against an unmerciful nation.” If we render the passage literally it would read, “from a nation not merciful,” or not religious. The idea is, that the nation or people referred to manifested none of the spirit of religion in their conduct toward him; that he was treated with severity and injustice. This entire description would agree well with the state of things in the time of the rebellion of Absalom, when David was driven from his home and his throne (cf. 2 Sam. 15). “One such advocate as the Lord will more than suffice to answer a nation of brawling accusers. When people are ungodly no wonder that they are unjust: those who are not true to God himself cannot be expected to deal rightly with his people” (Spurgeon).

*“deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man”* - Deceit and injustice go hand in hand. Those who would practice deceit are by their very nature unjust to their fellow man.

**43:2:** This verse presents a question. The circumstances surrounding David at this time made it **APPEAR** that God had forsaken him, hence the request that Jehovah not *“cast me off.”* The Hebrew word rendered “cast off” is a word that implies strong disgust or loathing: “Why dost thou cast me off as a loathsome or disgusting object?” The Hebrew word means properly to be foul, to be rancid, to stink: then, to be loathsome or abominable; and then, to treat or regard anything as such. Compare the language here with that found in Hosea 8:3, 5 and Isaiah 19:6. While it may seem that the forces of evil are winning the battle, or that God is no longer in control, the scriptures teach otherwise. God often allows persecutions to come upon His children so as to strengthen, and test them. David’s intense concern for Israel, and for the cause of that which is right, is manifested in his “mourning.” The direct **CAUSE** was the *“oppression of the enemy.”*

**43:3:** The words “light” and “truth” are often used as synonyms. We are to walk in the light (1 John 1:6-8). John was pleased to learn of certain “walking in truth” (2 John 4). It is interesting, therefore, to find a definite distinction between the two words here. An earlier Psalm (4:6) used the word light in connection with God’s countenance. Albert Barnes commented on the use of these two words:

The word light here is equivalent to favor or mercy, as when one prays for the “light of God’s countenance” (see the notes at Ps. 4:6); and the idea is, that now, in the time of darkness and trouble, when the light of God’s countenance seemed to be withdrawn or hidden, he prays that God would impart light; that he would restore his favor; that he would conduct him back again to his former privileges. The word truth here is equivalent to truthfulness or faithfulness; and the prayer is, that God would manifest his faithfulness to him as one of his own people, by restoring him to the privileges and blessings from which he had been unjustly driven. Compare the notes at Ps. 25:5 (Barnes).

It is only through the guidance of God, through His mercy, and the revelation of truth, that anyone will enter into God’s “holy hill,” or “tabernacle.” The “tabernacle” has reference to the temporary place

of worship and approach to God, and is a type of the church. The “holy hill” has reference to that final dwelling place. Thus, it is through the truth that men come to find entrance into the church, and finally into heaven!

**Praise  
Verse 4**

4    *Then will I go unto the altar of God,  
      Unto God my exceeding joy;  
      And upon the harp will I praise thee, O God, my God.*

**43:4:** Here the joy of salvation is manifested in certain action. It is AFTER God’s truth is revealed, and God’s mercy extended, that man can ever hope to enter into the presence of God, to the “altar” where the sacrifice is offered. As a result of being permitted entrance into the presence of God, praise will be offered. Notice the personal relationship expressed in the words “my God.”

**Personal  
Verse 5**

5    *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?  
      And why art thou disquieted within me?  
      Hope thou in God; For I shall yet praise him,  
      Who is the help of my countenance, and my God.*

**43:5:** Why should we be cast down? Why be discouraged? If God is for us, who can possibly be against us? And yet, too many of God’s people can see the negative things which surround us, and lose sight of exactly who is on our side. The counsel that David thus gives to himself and others is simply this: “Hope thou in God”! It is He alone who is the help and strength we so desperately need.

**Lessons**

1. Notice the progression in the Psalm: From the hill, to the altar, to actual praise.
2. The light and the truth (verse 3) are necessary prerequisites to acceptable worship (verse 4).
3. In view of the strength from God, it is indeed a perplexing question as to WHY our souls become “cast down.” Indeed, why

do some go about mourning, depressed and discouraged, when all the while God is by our side. That will remain a mystery, for all men experience such moods of despondency and depression, even among the most faithful.

4. "There are ungodly men who, being destitute of religious principle, will not scruple to injure us, when they can thereby gratify their passions or advance their worldly interests. There are deceitful men who will put on the garb of friendship, and acquire our confidence and esteem, and then treacherously cheat us out of our property, or our reputation, or our peace. There are unjust men, who by fraud or by violence, would rob us of our dearest rights and most valuable possessions, and not only reduce our powers and opportunities of doing good, but even diminish our means of comfortable subsistence. And there are oppressors, who taking advantage of our weakness or dependence, and trampling alike on the maxims of equity and humanity, may exact from us unreasonable services, impose upon us heavy burdens and cruel restraints, and ply us with insults, and harassments, and deprivations, from which we can make no escape, and for which we can find no redress." Andrew Thomson, D.D., in "Lectures on Portions of the Psalms," 1826, as quoted by Spurgeon.
5. We appeal to God: I. As our Judge: "Judge me." II. As our Advocate: "Plead my cause." III. As our Deliverer: "O deliver me."
6. Notice from verses 1, 2, 4, 5 - Five "my's":
  1. My cause—"plead it."
  2. My strength—"thou art."
  3. My joy—God is.
  4. My soul—"why disquieted."
  5. My God.

## *“A Plea for Deliverance”*

### ***Introduction***

We cannot ascertain the author, nor the occasion upon which this Psalm was composed. The context would suggest that Israel had been defeated by some unidentified enemy. Some of the early church fathers assigned this Psalm to the Maccabean period, but we reject such for the following reasons: (1) There is nothing in the Psalm which refers to the desecration of the Temple, something that most certainly would have been mentioned if it had been written during that era. (2) The Psalm implies that the nation as a whole had remained faithful, which certainly they were not during the Maccabean period. Other suggested dates include (1) the reign of Jehoiachin, (2) sometime during the life of David, (3) and the reigns of Jehoram or Joshua. Barnes makes a very convincing argument that the Psalm was written just prior to the Babylonian Captivity during the time of “Josiah, and especially the close of his reign... It was a time when the nation was free, as far as the efforts of a pious king could accomplish it, from prevailing idolatry” (Barnes). In the final analysis, however, it is not all that important to discern the precise time of the Psalm, since the value of the Psalm is not derived from the occasion or date of writing, but the overall message contained therein. Coffman has this note: “We believe the New Testament provides the key for understanding this remarkable psalm. The problem that dominates it was identified by M’Caw as, ‘The problem of the undeserved sufferings of godly people,’ along with the astounding fact that such is in keeping with the will of God” (Coffman, 356). The meaning of this Psalm is not discovered until the last four verses. The mystery of the suffering of God’s saints comes into focus. The mystery is answered by Paul in Romans 8:36-37 wherein the apostle quotes the 22nd verse, and then writes, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” Charles Spurgeon summed up this Psalm: “Some Israelitish patriot fallen on evil times, sings in mingled faith and sorrow, his country’s ancient glory and her present griefs, her traditions of former favour and her experience of pressing ills” (Spurgeon).



The subtitle tells us that the Psalm was written “to the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.” Korah was a Levite, grandson of Kohath and great-grandson of Levi. Kohath perished during the rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron, but his sons remained faithful and their descendents became leaders in worship. The word “Maschil” means that the Psalm was designed to impart instruction.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm naturally divides itself into four parts:

- I. Recollection of God’s Past Help, 1-8;
- II. The Emergency, 9-16;
- III. Declaration of Innocence of God’s People, 17-22;
- V. Prayer for Deliverance, 23-26;

The New Century Bible Commentary divides the Psalm into three parts: (1) Verses 1-3 contain a hymn-like description of the mighty deeds of God in times past. (2) Verses 4-8 contains\ an expression of confidence in God based upon the Heilsgeschichte, or the salvation-history. (3) Verses 9-26 form the actual lament in which verses 9-16 depict the present distress, verses 17-22 express a protest and the perplexity of the nation, and, finally, verses 23-26 present a desperate petition to God. Phillips provided a good homiletic outline to the Psalm (Phillips, 339):

- I. Israel’s Previous History (44:1-8)*
  - A. The Facts of That History (44:1-3)
  - B. The Force of that History (44:4-8)
- II. Israel’s Present Helplessness (44:9-22)*
  - A. The Military Disaster Confronting The Nation (44:9-16).
  - B. The Moral Dilemma Confronting The Nation (44:17-22)
- III. Israel’s Positive Hope (44:23-26). A Call Upon God to:*
  - A. Regard His People (44:23-25)
  - B. Rescue His People (44:26)

We shall entitle this Psalm, “A Plea For Deliverance.”

## Commentary

### ***Recollection of God's Past Help*** **Verses 1-8**

- 1 *We have heard with our ears, O God, Our fathers have told us,  
What work thou didst in their days, In the days of old.*
- 2 *Thou didst drive out the nations with thy hand; But them thou  
didst plant: Thou didst afflict the peoples; But them thou didst  
spread abroad.*
- 3 *For they gat not the land in possession by their own sword,  
Neither did their own arm save them; But thy right hand, and  
thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, Because thou wast  
favorable unto them.*
- 4 *Thou art my King, O God: Command deliverance for Jacob.*
- 5 *Through thee will we push down our adversaries: Through thy  
name will we tread them under that rise up against us.*
- 6 *For I will not trust in my bow, Neither shall my sword save me.*
- 7 *But thou hast saved us from our adversaries, And hast put them  
to shame that hate us.*
- 8 *In God have we made our boast all the day long, And we will give  
thanks unto thy name for ever. Selah*

**44:1:** These verses reflect upon PAST deliverance by the hand of God Almighty. We have a brief sketch of the victories of Israel in their conquest and settlement of Canaan. The story had been passed down through history, one generation telling the next. The MEANS of communicating the message to each generation was both oral and written. Here is the key to maintaining the purity of the church from one generation to the next. The story must be told, passed on to faithful men who shall teach others (2 Timothy 2:1-2). It was in God's design that men would be saved through the foolish of preaching. The word rendered "told" means properly "to grave, or to insculpt on a stone; and thence, to write. Then it comes to mean to number, to count, to tell, to declare" (Barnes).

"*Our fathers have told us*" - God's admonition is that "fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). "Schoolmasters are well enough, but godly fathers are, both by the order of nature and grace, the best instructors of their sons, nor can they delegate the sacred duty...When fathers are tongue-tied

religiously with their offspring, need they wonder if their children's hearts remain sin-tied?" (Spurgeon). It is important to notice here that the central thrust of the message was the "work" that God performed in "their days." In the final analysis, no man can write history who does not see the hand of God in the affairs of men.

**44:2:** There is a contrast between what God did to the nations in Canaan, and what He did for His chosen nation. As for the heathen nations, He "*drove them out*" with His "*hand*." The word "drive out" (*yarash*) means to seize, or take possession of; to come to possess." (Barnes). The "hand" of God is symbolic of His great power. In contrast, God did "*plant*" Israel. God did "*afflict*" the heathen, and "*spread abroad*" His people through the land. Like a vine that spreads, so Israel spread through the land. See Psalms 80:8 ff.

*"But them thou didst plant"* - The metaphor of planting is used on a number of occasions as a description of Israel's Settlement in Canaan (cf Exod. 15:17; 2 Sam. 7:10; Jer. 11:7, 12:2). "The Great Wonderworker tore up by the roots the oaks of Bashan, that he might plant instead thereof his own chosen 'vineyard of red wine'" (Spurgeon).

*"them thou didst spread abroad"* -- The God Who troubled His enemies, smiled on His friends. While the enemy was driven from the land, the people of God were "spread abroad," occupying even the most remote corners of the land promised to Abraham.

Bright beams the star of grace amid the night of wrath! It is a solemn thought that the greatness of divine love has its counterpart in the greatness of his indignation...Hell is as deep as heaven is high, and the flame of Tophet is as everlasting as the blaze of celestial glory. God's might, as shown in the deeds of both mercy and justice, should be called to mind in troublous times as a stay to our fainting faith. (Spurgeon).

The KJV reads, "*and cast them out.*" The Hebrew can be used in the sense of sending out, or expelling. See Genesis 3:23; 1 Kings 9:7. It likely has reference to God's casting out the nations that occupied Canaan prior to the entrance of Israel into the land.

**44:3:** "*Not by their own sword*" - Recognition of the mighty power of God to save, and not man's inherent power or goodness, is an essential element of saving faith. Israel could not have in any way

conquered the land. This was proven at Ai (Joshua 7). Without God, Israel never would have become the great nation they were. This does not mean, however, that the Psalmist thought that the Israelites played no part in the conquest. In retrospect all the heroic exploits of the ancestors were entirely overshadowed by God's deeds of salvation.

*"Neither did their own arm save them"* - Their victory was not obtained by their own might or arm. This double negative is designed to impress upon them that their success was not due to their own power.

*"Thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance"* - The "arm" and "hand" are anthropomorphic terms. God does not literally have a right hand, or an arm. The right hand was used by the soldier to wield the sword or the spear. Israel was delivered by God's might, not theirs. The "light of thy countenance" refers to God's grace. The underlying cause for Israel's blessing was because God "wast favorable unto them." While men may attribute their success to their own ingenuity or strength, God is quick to remind us that our blessings are due to His wonderful grace.

The divine hand actively fought for them, the divine arm powerfully sustained them with more than human energy, and the divine smile inspired them with dauntless courage. Who could not win with such triple help, though earth, death, and hell should rise in war against him? (Spurgeon).

**44:4:** *"Command deliverance"* - The ASV footnote reads "victories." The verse would indicate that the writer had some great battle in mind.

*"My King..."* - Men look to their leaders for guidance, safety, and victory over their enemies. It is no different today. It is Christ our King Who grants us safety, provides us with victory, and lovingly guides us through life toward that eternal shore wherein we shall safely rest at the close of life's end. Notice the number of times the Psalmist uses the pronouns "Thy," "Thee" and "Thou." More than a dozen times in the Psalm the writer refers to the strength provided by Jehovah.

*“Jacob”* - Jacob’s life was filled with trials and tribulation, followed by deliverance. His descendants are now called by his name, implying that they too experienced similar trials and tribulation.

**44:5:** The writer was confident of utter defeat of the enemy. Israel, with God’s help, would *“push”* them down, and *“tread them under.”* The word rendered *“push down”* means literally to strike or push with the horns, spoken of horned animals (cf. Exodus 21:28, 31-32). It later came to be applied to a conqueror that subdued another nation (see Deut. 33:17; 1 Kings 22:11). Notice that the conquests are attributed to *“thy name,”* yea the name of Jehovah God. The words *“push down”* and *“tread them under,”* suggest the complete defeat of the enemy.

**44:6:** *“I will not trust in my bow”* - The nations of the present generation need to learn the lesson here. Without God on our side all of the armament in the world is not sufficient to prevent defeat. *“Righteousness exhalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people”* (Proverbs 14:34).

*“sword”* - The sword was the most common of the weapons used by the Israelites, and was a Hebrew idiom used as a symbol of war (Jer. 14:15, 24:10; Ezek 7:15; 33:6). The writer realized that Israel had not conquered the nations by their own power. He then makes the application to himself. He was fully aware that his own sword would not save him.

**44:7:** *“But thou hast saved us”* - The Psalmist simply observed the past experiences of God’s dealings with Israel, and by faith projected that into the future. As in the past, victories were expected in the present. Notice here the double action of God in (1) blessing His people, while (2) defeating their enemies.

**44:8:** Here is a repeated affirmation of the object of the Psalmist’s trust. He did not trust in his own power, but in the power of Jehovah God. Notice the gratitude that is expressed even before the battle takes place. The Psalmist was confident that he would return victorious and give thanks to God. The word rendered *“boast”* is more literally *“praise.”* God’s power and faithfulness were the grounds of the Psalmist’s confidence. God was the *object* of his praise because the Almighty was the *origin* of his deliverance.

“*Selah*” - Spurgeon wrote: “A pause comes in fitly here, when we are about to descend from the highest to the lowest key. No longer are we to hear Miriam’s timbrel, but rather Rachel’s weeping” (Spurgeon).

### ***The Emergency*** **Verses 9-16**

- 9    *But now thou hast cast us off, and brought us to dishonor,  
And goest not forth with our hosts.*
- 10   *Thou makest us to turn back from the adversary;  
And they that hate us take spoil for themselves.*
- 11   *Thou hast made us like sheep appointed for food,  
And hast scattered us among the nations.*
- 12   *Thou sellest thy people for nought,  
And hast not increased thy wealth by their price.*
- 13   *Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbors,  
A scoffing and a derision to them that are round about us.*
- 14   *Thou makest us a byword among the nations,  
A shaking of the head among the peoples.*
- 15   *All the day long is my dishonor before me,  
And the shame of my face hath covered me,*
- 16   *For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth,  
By reason of the enemy and the avenger.*

**44:9:** There was a sense of confusion on the part of the writer as to what could possibly have caused the present situation to come upon them. It would seem as if God had abandoned them. The Psalmist was having some difficulty in reconciling the past with the present, insofar as God’s help was concerned. Rawlinson concluded that these verses do not refer to a “single defeat, but a prolonged period of depression” (Rawlinson, 342). The author now sets forth a description of the existing circumstances of the nation, a sharp contrast with what had existed in former times when God interposed in their behalf. Is it possible that God had actually cast them off? Had God abandoned them, refusing to go forth into battle with their hosts? The word rendered “hast cast off” implies “disgust and abhorrence, as the casting away of that which loathsome” (Barnes, 2.19). Israel suffered “dishonor” as a result of the invasion of the land by the enemies. Cf. 2 Chronicles 35:20-27 and 36:5-6. Phillips sees in these verses (9-16) “The Military Disaster Confronting the

Nation,” and pictures them as “Defeated (9-10), Deported (11-12), and Derided (13-16)” (Phillips, 342).

**44:10:** *“Thou makest us to turn back”* - The writer explains why his heart doubted. They had been forced into retreat from the enemy. The enemy had made spoil of them. They had been scattered among the nations. The abandonment and withdrawal of God’s help left them as cowards (2 Chronicles 36:7; 2 Kings 23:33; 24:13-16; 25:13-17).

**44:11:** *“Thou hast made us like sheep appointed for food”* - There was a distinct possibility that Israel would be completely destroyed by the enemy. Like the nations before them, Israel would be “scattered among the nations.” As sheep are slaughtered for food, so Israel had been utterly consumed by her enemies. It appeared that God had given them over to the enemy, as sheep allotted to the butcher.

**44:12:** *“Thou sellest thy people for nought”* - We are not certain about the meaning of this verse. Evidently Israel had experienced such a defeat that it was like being sold as slaves on the market. The last part of the verse would suggest that if God followed through with their destruction, that God would not benefit from His abandonment of His chosen people. “The point seems to be that for some reason the people of Israel were regarded as if of no value in the sight of God, and consequently he had sold them for a song (cf. Isa. 52:3; Jer. 15:13.)” (Anderson, 341). Surely, if God had been glorified in this present situation, it could have been tolerated. But in the mind of the writer God did not benefit in the least from the destruction of His people. It is interesting that the Psalmist was not so much concerned for his own honor as that of God. If the Almighty should allow them to be defeated, what then would be the attitude of the wicked with regard to God’s power and might? Barnes noted:

The words “thy wealth,” are supplied by the translators; but the idea of the psalmist is undoubtedly expressed with accuracy. The meaning is, that no good result to the cause of religion, no corresponding returns had been the consequence of thus giving up the people into the hand of their enemies...[T]hat is, God had not set a high price on them, but had sold them for too little, or had given them away for nothing (Barnes).

**44:13:** “*Madest us a reproach*” - Israel became a derision to the neighboring nations when they were carried out of their promised land into captivity. But the boarding nations would have scoffed at them at any occasion in which “their God” did not deliver them. The defeat that now faced Israel gave occasion to their neighbors to ridicule and scoff at the “power” of Jehovah to deliver. The taunts and jeers were as painful as the swords and arrows.

**44:14:** “*Makest us a byword*” - To become a “byword” meant that Israel’s shame and contempt had become some sort of a “proverbial” saying, and could serve as an example unto others. Oh, yes, Israel USED to be great, but now they are among the fallen and defeated nations! “A shaking of the head” or a “laughing stock” would be similar to one hearing something of complete unbelief, or of disgust, and shaking the head in disbelief. See in this connection Psalms 22:7; 64:8; 109:25; Jer. 18:16; and Lam. 2:15.

**44:15:** There must have been a continual taunting on the part of this enemy that had defeated Israel. It is interesting that the Psalmist makes such a personal application of the situation to his life. He was ashamed and declared, “*the shame of my face hath covered me.*” It is a credit to a nation when its leaders can freely admit their shame for sin. Would that our leaders would fall on their face, and open a session of Congress in full shame for those things that have come upon this nation. Someone once pointed out that the last time any President of the United States made any reference to sin as the underlying cause of our nation’s woes was under the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower. More recently (6-14-98) Senator Trent Lott made note that homosexuality was a sin, something which we have not heard from any of our national leaders in a long, long time. And even more recently President George W. Bush acknowledged that he was a “sinner in need of redemption” (Fox News, 4-30-02, Speech delivered by President Bush in California).

“*the shame of my face hath covered me*” - We might say, “he blushed all over.” Albert Barnes observed that blushing is a trait of human nature “which none can explain, except on the supposition that there is a God; that he is a moral governor; and that, as it was designed that the body should be covered or clothed, he meant that the evidence of guilt should manifest itself on the parts of the person



which are most exposed to view, or where others could see it” (Barnes).

**44:16:** *“The voice of him that reproacheth”* - The idea is that the Psalmist was in such a position as to hear those who were reproaching and blaspheming God and His people. The word rendered “blaspheme” means to “use cutting words,” and then to “revile and reproach.” Those who observed the oppressed condition of God’s people ridiculed the nation and their God. The precise occasion cannot be pin pointed. But we think Coffman was correct when he observed, “these verses imply not a single defeat, but a prolonged period of depression” (Coffman, 359).

***Declaration of Innocence of God’s People***  
**Verses 17-22**

- 17 *All this is come upon us;  
Yet have we not forgotten thee,  
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.*
- 18 *Our heart is not turned back,  
Neither have our steps declined from thy way,*
- 19 *That thou hast sore broken us in the place of jackals,  
And covered us with the shadow of death.*
- 20 *If we have forgotten the name of our God,  
Or spread forth our hands to a strange god;*
- 21 *Will not God search this out?  
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.*
- 22 *Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long;  
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.*

**44:17:** The Psalmist writers often maintained their personal integrity toward God. Here the Psalmist maintains the integrity of the nation as a whole. Though Israel often turned away from God, and failed to keep His law, such was not the case here. The nation must have just gone through a period of revival. So why would God turn His back on them now? We learn from this that it is not wrong to proclaim one’s integrity with regard to his relationship to God. These verses set forth the problem of the Psalmist, namely that “Israel had not been unfaithful to God, yet she suffered afflictions at the hand of her enemies.” In addition, “the problem was greatly aggravated by the evident fact that their faithfulness to God actually appeared to be ‘the reason why’ they suffered. That is the meaning

of the thundering words, ‘For thy sake’ in v. 22. Of course, this is the very verse Paul quoted in Romans 8:36” (Coffman, 360).

*“Yet have we no forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant”* - Coffman quotes Yates: “This claim, repeated over and over here, that Israel had remained faithful was at no time in Israel’s history literally true. The prophet must have had in mind a comparative fidelity based upon generalities” (Coffman, 360). Barnes agreed: “We cannot suppose that the psalmist means to claim for the nation entire perfection, but only to affirm that the nation at that time was not characterized by any peculiar forgetfulness of God, or prevalence of wickedness” (Barnes, 2.22).

**44:18:** *“not turned back”* – They had not turned away from following God. The writer claims they had faithfully walked in the way of Jehovah. In view of their confident integrity, still God seemed to have abandoned them. For this reason the writer was all the more perplexed. Notice that both “heart” and “steps” were said to be in harmony with God’s will. When the heart is committed to obeying God, the steps will walk in the way.

**44:19:** *“broken us in the place of jackals”* - The writer could not understand why God would allow them to be crushed, and even come face to face with death, since they had maintained faithfulness to Him. They were not guilty of any such apostasy as to account for the fact that God had dealt with them in the manner which they were now suffering. *“In the place of jackals”* may be a proverbial expression denoting ruin and devastation. See also Isaiah 34:13; 35:7; Jeremiah 9:11; 10:22; 49:33; and 51:37. Barnes concluded that they had “been vanquished; that their cities and towns had been reduced to ruins” (Barnes).

**44:20:** *“If we have forgotten the name of our God”* - If it were the case that they had acted in such a fashion, then the writer would understand why they faced the present situation. It would be understandable since God knows even the heart. But these things they had not done.

*“Spread forth our hands to a strange God”* - The stretching forth of one’s hands was the symbol of adoration. The Psalmist denies any such adoration or appeal to some “strange god.”

**44:21:** *“Will not God search this out?”* - One of the most sobering characteristics of our God is the fact that He *“knoweth the secrets of the heart.”* Compare with Hebrews 4:12. The Psalmist was declaring, “If we are guilty of idolatry, or if our hearts have secretly given themselves over to wickedness, then surely God, the Seer of secrets, would know.” “Not the heart only which is secret, but the secrets of the heart, which are secrets of the most secret thing, are as open to God as a book to a reader” (Spurgeon).

**44:22:** *“Yea for thy sake we are killed all the day long”* – This verse may very well be the key to the entire Psalm. Paul quoted this verse in Romans 8:36 in an attempt to underscore the biblical truth that sometimes suffering is a part of God’s purpose for His children. This was the situation here, and perhaps the main lesson in the Psalm. Israel had NOT been unfaithful to God, and yet she was suffering afflictions at the hand of her enemy. In addition, this suffering had come upon them “for thy sake,” suggesting that the suffering was actually DUE to their faithfulness.

*“for thy sake”* - The persecutions which Israel now experienced was not because of their offenses, but because they were loyal to God. Paul’s use of this verse in Romans proves that the persecution under which Israel presently suffered was directed by the hand of God, yea “for thy sake.”

*“All the day long”* suggests that this disaster did not consist of a single blow but that it was of a prolonged nature, and that its end was not, as yet, in sight.

### ***Prayer for Deliverance*** **Verses 23-26**

- 23 *Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever.*
- 24 *Wherefore hidest thou thy face, And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?*
- 25 *For our soul is bowed down to the dust: Our body cleaveth unto the earth.*
- 26 *Rise up for our help, And redeem us for thy lovingkindness' sake.*

**44:23:** “*Why sleepest thou?*” - This is poetic language; God does not sleep. Often His lack of action is expressed in anthropomorphic language, language that uses a trait of man to express some “apparent” trait of God. “This is a precious response, limited though it is. In the dark and tragic hours of undeserved suffering, they did not turn away from the Lord, but simply laid their sorrows upon his infinite bosom. They knew, of course, that ‘He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep’ (Psalm 121:4); but they still used the old anthropomorphic metaphor of ‘God’s being asleep’ to express their distress” (Coffman, 364).

Coffman also shared this bit of information with us: “During the time of the Maccabees, there was a group of singers who had as their theme song, ‘Awake, Why Sleepest thou, O Lord?’ These singers were called ‘The Wakers,’ indicating their purpose of waking up God. Such things as this influenced Calvin in accepting the times of the Maccabees as the date of this psalm” (Coffman, 364).

**44:24:** The language is still poetic and anthropomorphic. God does not forget. Barnes had this note: “As used in the Psalms it denotes earnestness, but not irreverence; it is solemn petition, not dictation; it is affectionate pleading, not complaint” (Barnes).

*“and forgettest our affliction”* - Again, this is a figure of speech to express the ‘delayed action’ of God.

**44:25:** “*Our soul is bowed down to the dust*” - The depth of discouragement can be seen in these words. When men have gone as low as is humanly possible, the only way to look is up. To say “*our body cleaveth unto the earth*” is another way of saying, “We just can’t get any lower than the present.” We are overcome with calamity! In short, the Psalmist was saying, “Our heart is as low as it can be, as low as the dust beneath the soles of men’s feet” (Spurgeon).

**44:26:** The Psalm closes with a call for God to “*rise up,*” and “*redeem us.*” It was for God’s lovingkindness sake that the writer pled for God to act. In the mind of the Psalmist there was no solution to the problem. We must not interpret this to mean that God did not answer, but that God, working on His own schedule, often allowed His people to be humbled and chastised to bring about great faith and dedication on their part. “They did exactly what

every distressed soul should do; they brought the problem to God, pleading neither their innocence nor their merit, but basing their appeal upon the steadfast love and lovingkindness of God. In this particular, not even the blessed children of the Father ‘in Jesus Christ’ today can do anything better” (Coffman, 364-365).

*“for thy lovingkindness’ sake”* - The plea was not primarily for their sake, but for the sake of God. If the nature of God is not upheld, then the very basis and foundation of righteousness is destroyed. “Mercy is always a safe plea, and never will any man find a better. ‘Were I a martyr at the stake, I’d plead my Savior’s name, Intreat a pardon for his sake, And urge no other claim” (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. The fundamental lesson seems to be that God sends (or allows to be sent) the various circumstances into our lives, “and this for our own good and to His glory” (Deaver, 147).
2. God is our strength and portion. This is the thought in verses 1-8. As he drove out the nations, so He will “drive out” our enemies, enabling us to overcome temptation.
3. I like this comparison from brother Deaver: “God.....
  - (1) Who provides good things, may provide (or allow) bad circumstances;
  - (2) Who is the source of victory, may give defeat;
  - (3) Who delights in His people, may cast them off;
  - (4) Who can lift us up, may put us down;
  - (5) Who can give His people favor among the nations, may cause His people to be held in derision;
  - (6) Who can give us help, may withhold help from us (Deaver, 147).
4. Just because hard times come along, that does not mean that God has abandoned us.

## *“The King And His Bride”*

### ***Introduction***

The author of this Psalm is not known. It has been suggested by Barnes that the “sons of Korah conveys the idea that it was the composition of one of that family,” although he does not definitely conclude that one of those sons was the author. The Psalm is definitely Messianic in its nature. Morgan concludes that “it is one of the songs which inevitably is Messianic in its deepest and fullest meaning” (Morgan, 237). Some have suggested that the Psalm refers to David, but verse 6 would exclude that option, for at no time could it ever be said that David’s throne would last forever.

There are three possible settings for the Psalm. Some have suggested that it was written as a description of Solomon’s bride. The kingdom of Israel was enjoying its golden years. Solomon needed a wife of noble descent. The conclusion based on that background is that some writer composed this song to commemorate both the king and his bride. Another setting would be the days of Hezekiah. As the kingdom faced some its most severe trials and tests of faith, the king needed a strong and godly woman to stand by his side. Our position is that the Psalm was written, not to commemorate or praise either of these two earthly kings, but to point Israel to the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Psalm is, without doubt, a prophetic glimpse of the coming Messiah. It gives us a picture of the great love that Christ has for His church. No wonder the Hebrew writer quoted from this Psalm (Heb. 1:8-9). Since an inspired writer use the Psalm to describe the rule and reign of our Lord, we will take the same approach in our examination of this wonderful Psalm. Albert Barnes gives extensive defense of the Messianic nature of this Psalm in his commentary. Our title, therefore, is: “The King And His Bride.”

## ***Analysis***

We will outline the Psalm as follows:

- I. Introduction - in which the author expresses the fullness of his heart, 1;
- II. Address to the King - in which the singer speaks of the glory of the King, the perfection of His rule, and closes with a reference to the beauty of His bride, 2-9;
- III. Address to the Bride - in which he counsels her to forget her own people and submit herself wholly to her husband, 10-12;
- IV. Description - in which the author describes the queen arrayed for her marriage, 13-15;
- V. Blessings - in which the Psalmist speaks of the promised blessings for the King, 16-17;

Willmington provided a suitable homiletic outline (Willmington, 240):

- I. The King:
  - A. His Charm (45:2).
  - B. His Conquests (45:3-5).
  - C. His Crown (45:6-7).
  - D. His Clothing (45:8).
  - E. His Courts (45:8).
- II. The Bride:
  - A. Her Clothing (45:9, 13-15)
    - 1. She wears jewelry made from the finest gold (45:9).
    - 2. She wears a gown woven with gold (45:13-15).
  - B. Her Commitment (45:10-11). The Psalmist instructs the bride to accept two things:
    - 1. Her separation (45:10): she left her parents to marry the king of Israel.
    - 2. Her submission (45:11): she must now honor her husband as her lord.
  - C. Her Coming Glory (45:16-17)
    - 1. Her sons will be kings (45:16).
    - 2. She will receive honor (45:17).

## **Commentary**

### **Introduction**

#### **Verse 1**

- 1 *My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter; I speak the things which I have made touching the king: My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*

**45:1:** Notice that the Psalmist is writing out of a heart that “overfloweth” with the matter under consideration. The Hebrew word for “overfloweth” is ‘*rahhash*’ and has the meaning of “boiling up.” It does not occur anywhere else in the Bible. The Psalmist sees his song as a “goodly matter.” He rushes to set forth the magnificence of the King. He stood ready to record the words as he was guided by the Holy Spirit to look across the mountaintop of time and get a glimpse of the coming Messiah. No wonder he considered this a “goodly matter.”

The “*things which I have made*” has reference to his thoughts and feelings, such things as pertain to the King. This verse serves as an introduction to the Psalm, and speaks of the deep emotions and thoughts that the Psalmist felt he must express. The teacher of God’s word must have the same attitude regarding that which he has prepared to speak. We must go before God’s people because we have something to say, not because we feel we must simply say something.

### **Address To The King**

#### **Verses 2-9**

- 2 *Thou art fairer than the children of men; Grace is poured into thy lips: Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*  
3 *Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O mighty one, Thy glory and thy majesty.*  
4 *And in thy majesty ride on prosperously, Because of truth and meekness and righteousness: And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.*  
5 *Thine arrows are sharp; The peoples fall under thee; They are in the heart of the king's enemies.*  
6 *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*  
7 *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*



8 *All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia; Out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad.*  
 9 *Kings' daughters are among thy honorable women: At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir.*

**45:2:** This is not only an address to the King; it is also a description of King's reign. The first thing we learn of this King has to do with His *character*. He is "*fairer than the children of men.*" Of this word "*fairer*" Barnes has these comments: "The Hebrew word...is a very unusual term. It is properly a reduplication of the word meaning 'beautiful,' and thus means to be very beautiful. It is the language of surprise, of a sudden impression of beauty - beauty as it strikes at the first glance - such as the eye had never seen before" (Barnes, 2:30). If we accept the Psalm as having reference to the Messiah there is some difficulty in reconciling this verse with Isaiah 53:1-2 where it is said that he "hath no beauty that we should desire him." The "beauty" of Isaiah 53 is physical beauty; here it has reference to His spiritual beauty. It has often been said that one can be "beautiful" within, while the outward appearance is not in the least attractive.

The Psalmist next explains why there is such beauty. Here is the *conduct* of the King: "*grace is poured into thy lips.*" Every word He spoke while in His sojourn upon this earth was full of grace. It is little wonder that the multitudes admitted that "never a man so spake" (John 7:46). For all this, God "*hath blessed thee for ever.*" Spurgeon also noted that the word "fairer" in the Hebrew is "doubled, 'Beautiful, beautiful art thou.' Jesus is so emphatically lovely that words must be doubled, strained, yea exhausted before he can be described" (Spurgeon).

**45:3:** "*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh*" - While God is certainly a God of grace, it is also true that he wields a sword. This wedding song is the song of a King who is also a Warrior. He rules and reigns today with His two-edged sword proceeding from His mouth (Revelation 1:16).

**45:4:** The three elements of Christ's reign are "*truth and meekness and righteousness.*" The Kingdom of Christ is not built upon falsehood, but upon truth. It is not built upon pride, but meekness. It is not established upon evil, or iniquity, but righteousness. By the same token, our lives must be built upon truth, meekness and righteousness if we are to be blessed by God. The "*right hand*" was

commonly used to wield the sword and spear. The writer gives us a glimpse of the Messiah going forth to conquer His enemies.

**45:5:** In this verse we note: (1) The arrows of the King are sharp, penetrating. Notice Hebrews 4:12. (2) The arrows pierce the heart of the enemy. (3) The enemy, once stricken, will fall. We see in the verse an allusion to the power of God's word to pierce the heart, to reach the inner thoughts and emotions. Once smitten in the heart, the result will be repentance and submission. "Our Captain aims at men's hearts rather than their heads...Whether for love or vengeance, Christ never misses aim, and when his arrows stick, they cause a smart not soon forgotten, a wound which only he can heal" (Spurgeon).

**45:6:** These next two verses were quoted by the Hebrews writer (Hebrews 1:8). We note first that His throne is *permanent*. "Thy throne, O God, is forever." Daniel foretold the permanence of the Messianic kingdom as well: "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

Next, we note that His throne is *perfect* (verse 6). "The scepter of equity is the scepter of thy kingdom." Our great nation was established on the basic principles of truth and justice revealed in God's word. But this government is limited both in time and in endurance. Corruption has destroyed equity. But our Lord's kingdom is ruled by the Divine scepter of equity, with truth and righteousness as its foundation.

Next, we note that His throne is *pleasant* (verse 7b). Someone once said, "There have been many gloomy kings, sad kings, bad kings, and even more some mad kings, but few *glad* kings." Not only is our Lord's reign a happy reign, it produces happiness in the lives of its subjects.

Finally, we note that His throne is *prosperous* (verse 8). Solomon's wealth and prosperity could be seen in the fine garments he wore, and the *"ivory throne."* But our Lord has *"ivory palaces,"* a manifestation of the prosperity of the King of kings. No, it is not a material wealth that characterizes Christ's kingdom, but spiritual wealth. Solomon may have had all this world has to offer, but "a greater than Solomon is here."

**45:7:** Note the indisputable testimony to Messiah's Deity in verse six, and to his manhood in the present verse. It is precisely because our Lord loved (and continues to love) righteousness, and hated (and continues to hate) wickedness, that God has anointed him with the "oil of gladness."

**45:8:** The excellencies of our Lord are here compared to the most precious and rare of spices. And note that ALL of His garments are of sweet fragrance. Coffman suggests that "the significance of the mention of these spices is in their connection with funerals and their use as a kind of embalmment in the burial of deceased loved ones" (Coffman, 372). It is interesting that when Christ was buried, Joseph of Arimathea was assisted by Nicodemus who brought a "mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds" (John 19:13-40). "All' his garments are thus fragrant; not some of them, but all; we delight as much in his purple of dominion as in the white linen of his priesthood, his mantle as our prophet is as dear to us as his seamless coat as our friend" (Spurgeon).

**45:9:** "*Ophir*" cannot be located with certainty; possibly it was in Arabia or India. Nevertheless, it was world-renowned for its fine gold (cf. 1 Kin. 9:28; Isa. 13:12).

### **Address To The Bride**

#### **10-12**

In these verses the Psalmist turns his attention from the King to the Bride. The Jews saw in this Psalm a reference to physical Israel. While that physical nation was, indeed, a type of the church, there is really little comparison when it comes to the beauty of the bride of Christ. Lets take a closer look.

- 10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;  
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house:*  
*11 So will the king desire thy beauty; For he is thy lord; And  
reverence thou him.*  
*12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; The rich  
among the people shall entreat thy favor.*

**45:10:** The instructions to the bride are significant. "*Incline thine ear*" suggests the idea of leaning forward so as to grasp every syllable, every sound, that nothing be missed. In addition, the bride

is to renounce the world. Such is not easy, but is an absolute must for those who would be disciples of the Lord.

*“Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house”* call forth images of our Lord’s admonition and warning, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37). It is not always easy to renounce the world, but it must be done by those who wish to follow the Lord.

**45:11:** We think Barnes had correctly concluded that “the Church, the bride of the Lamb of God, as seen in the vision, is exalted to the highest post of honor” in these verses. The word “desire” is “equivalent to having pleasure in; as meaning that his affection would thus be fixed on her” (Barnes). There are two fundamental principles, if accepted and applied, will bring one close to God. The first of these is a **proper regard for our relationship to the Christ**. “He is thy Lord.” The colossal problem in the religious world is the failure to recognize Jesus as “Lord,” giving lip service though not manifesting submission as a servant to its master. The second truth which shines in this verse is the **“reverence” that is due to Jesus the Lord**. The KJV renders this, “Worship thou him.” The original here “means properly to bow down; then, to show respect, as to a superior; and then, to show proper respect to God, to wit, by worshipping or adoring him” (Barnes).

From verses 10 and 11 we learn that the bride is (1) to forsake all others, and (2) fear the Lord. When the Lord’s church forsakes the world, and fears the Lord, she will be blessed with favor (verse 12).

**45:12:** At the time this Psalm was written Tyre was probably the most wealthy and luxurious commercial town then existing; and it is referred to here as meaning that persons of highest rank, and of the greatest riches, and those who were surrounded most by affluence and luxury, would come to honor the king. As applied to the Messiah, it is a description of the honor that would be shown to Him by those of highest rank and largest wealth. This of course occurred not only in Joseph of Arimathea’s kind gesture in providing a burial place for the Lord, but in the wide influence that the preaching of the Gospel had, even among high ranking individuals, both rich and poor alike. I doubt that the “rich among the people” is to be strictly limited to those of material sustenance, but those who are truly “rich,” in that they have discovered the truths of the word and have discovered the “pearl of great price,” and have willingly sold all they

have so as to purchase this one single pearl of wealth. In the final analysis, the only measure of lasting wealth is one's relationship to God.

**Description Of The Queen  
Arrayed For Her Marriage  
Verses 13-15**

*13 The king's daughter within the palace is all glorious: Her clothing is inwrought with gold.*

*14 She shall be led unto the king in brodered work: The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.*

*15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be led: They shall enter into the king's palace.*

**45:13:** What can this be but a further description of the church, the bride of Christ? Barnes suggested, "the verse contains a description of her beauty - her splendor of attire - before she is brought to the king, her future husband. She is represented here as in the palace or home of her father, before she is conducted forth to be given to her future husband in marriage" (Barnes). The New Testament equivalent can be seen in Matthew 25:1-9.

*"inwrought with gold"* - Words are multiplied and mounted up so as to impress the reader with the absolute, overwhelming beauty of the bride of the King. The beauty of the church, as a bride adorned for her royal wedding, is most magnificent. There is the best material, and added to this, the best workmanship. When the church is finally called home, perhaps then, and only then, will we come to appreciate the wonderful and complete beauty of the Lord's bride, adored in splendor, "that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27).

**45:14:** *"in brodered work"* - The word here used means "something variegated or versicoloured, and would here denote a garment of divers colours" (Barnes). The word occurs in Judges 5:30, 1 Chronicles 29:2, Ezekiel 17:3, 16:10, 13, 18, 26:16, 27:7, 16, 24. It has reference to embroidery or needle work, though the particular idea is rather that of the variegated appearance of the garment than to the manner in which it is made. This fine embroidery is descriptive of the perfect church as she is finally ushered into the presence of the King.

This verse tells us of the ultimate rest of the church - the King's own bosom; of the way she comes to it, she is brought by the power of sovereign grace; of the time when this is done - in the future, "*she shall be*" it does not yet appear; of the state in which she shall come - clad in the richest array, and attended by brightest spirits, "*the virgins her companions.*" That those who are admitted to everlasting communion with Christ are pure in heart - *virgins*, pure in company - *her companions*, pure in walk - *that follow her* (Spurgeon).

Those who are not purified BEFORE the return of the King to receive His bride shall not enter into the glorious home with the King.

**45:15:** Can we even begin to imagine the joy that shall be ours when we are finally ushered into that heavenly home? I think not. Gladness and rejoicing are but faint and failing descriptions of the utter joy that shall be ours. If this is a description of the church as she enters into that final abode (and we most certainly believe this to be the case), then words fail us to even begin to attempt comment upon this passage. Indeed, "What joy will that be which will be seen at the feasts of paradise when all the redeemed shall be brought home" (Spurgeon).

### **Promised Blessings For The King Verses 16-17**

- 16 *Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, Whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth.*  
17 *I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: Therefore shall the peoples give thee thanks for ever and ever.*

**45:16:** Barnes' comments on this are as good as any:

This would seem to be an address to the bridal-queen, as if to console her for leaving the home of her illustrious ancestors, by the assurance that she would have children of her own, who would be still more illustrious. The connection, however, and the original, at least, in the Masoretic pointing, demands that this should be understood as an address to the king himself - the main subject in the poem...The idea is, that he would derive his dignity and honour ultimately, not so much from his ancestors as his descendants; that those who would be born unto him would be more illustrious, and would have a wider dominion, than any who had gone before him in the line in which he was descended... [I]t is not difficult to apply it to the Messiah, and to the fact that those who would be

descended spiritually from him, and who would ultimately be regarded as deriving true rank and honour from him, would far surpass in dignity all those who, in the line of kings, had been his predecessors (Barnes).

We cannot help but see here also a reference to the mission of the lovely bride of Christ. She “*shall make princes in all the earth.*” The mission of the church is summed up in the Great Commission, “Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:18-20).

**45:17:** The widespread knowledge of Christ, the church, and Christianity in general, has testified to the truth of this verse. Though religions, men, and movements have come and gone, the name of Christ has been on the lips of untold generations. But we see here a foreshadow of the promise made by our Lord that He would build His church, “and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:16-18). “All down the ages the memories of Gethsemane and Calvary shall glow with unextinguishable light; nor shall the lapse of time, the smoke of error, or the malice of hell be able to dim the glory of the Redeemer’s fame” (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. If the psalm is Messianic (and we believe it is), then note:
  - (1) The triumphant nature of the Messiah (verse 4);
  - (2) The rule of Christ in His kingdom is one of righteousness and truth (verse 6-7);
  - (3) The importance of putting God first (verse 10-11);
  - (4) The eternal veneration of the Messiah (verse 17).
2. Brother Wayne Coats paid tribute to the bride of Christ in the following poem:

#### ***The Beautiful Bride***

A glorious purpose  
And jewel Divine  
For unnumbered ages  
Was kept in His mind

Then in His great love,  
And from pierced side,  
He gave to the world  
His beautiful bride.

Like roses of Sharon

And lilies so rare,  
The beautiful bride  
Is wondrously fair.

Without spot or wrinkle,  
By blood cleansed so white;  
Forever with Jesus  
In Heaven so bright.

He'll come for His bride,  
Unblemished and pure.  
For Him the redeemed  
Will ever endure.

Presented to God  
With glory Divine,  
The beautiful bride  
Will evermore shine.

She's dear to God's heart,  
Though scarred and maligned.  
When all Hell prevails,  
With faith be resigned.

Throughout the long ages  
Adorned she will be,  
Christ's beautiful bride  
In glory we'll see.



## ***“God The Refuge Of His People”***

### ***Introduction***

The subscript attributes the Psalm to “the sons of Korah.” Exactly who composed the psalm is not known. The occasion for this Psalm was the mighty deliverance of Judah from the armies of Sennacherib as recorded in 2 Kings 19. Notice the similarity between verse 5 here and Isaiah 37:36 where mention is made of the early morning dawning to reveal Sennacherib’s army of dead men. We have selected to retain the title in the subscript as our title for this Psalm.

### ***Analysis***

The “main thought of the psalm...is, that, amidst these general and far spreading agitations and convulsions among the nations of the earth, the people of God were safe” (Barnes, 2:39). G. Campbell Morgan’s outline is as good as any we have found:

- I. The Challenge of Confidence, 1-3;
- II. The Secret of Confidence, 4-7;
- III. The Vindication of Confidence, 8-11;

### **The Challenge Of Confidence Verses 1-3**

- 1 God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.*
- 2 Therefore will we not fear, though the earth do change, And though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas;*
- 3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, Though the mountains tremble with the swelling thereof. Selah*

**46:1:** There are three words which describe God and His relationship to man. He is (1) our refuge, (2) our strength, and (3) our help. Man can choose in whom or in what he will place his trust and confidence, but genuine help is only to be found in God. The last

part of verse one expresses the readiness of God to assist those who love and obey Him. He will be there without delay.

*“God is our refuge”* - Though it is said collectively, it must never be forgotten that each one of us can, and must, say, “God is MY refuge.” “Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these” (Spurgeon, 339). The fact that God IS our refuge and strength makes us realize that we have a “very present help in trouble.” A poet put it this way:

A fortress firm, and steadfast rock,  
Is God in time of danger;  
A shield and sword in every shock,  
From foe well-known or stranger.

**46:2-3:** The second and third verses contain one continuous thought. In view of God’s ever present help, the power of His strength, and His availability as a refuge, the psalmist boldly claims that he will “not fear.” Paul wrote, “If God be for us, who can be against us” (Romans 8:31). It is likely the case that these verses are figurative language to describe the social and political upheaval produced by the ravages of the Assyrian armies. Beyond the immediate application, there is the spiritual and eternal truths contained within the words of the Psalmist.

*“A very present help”* - The word rendered “present” means, “is found, or has been found; that is, he has proved himself to be a help in trouble” (Barnes).

**46:2:** *“Therefore”* points us to the consequence of the truth of verse one. With God on our side it would be unreasonable to fear.

*“Though the earth change”* - And indeed it does! Society is ever changing; but God remains steadfast, stable, and secure. *“Though the mountains be shaken into the heart of the seas...”* The natural calamities that often discourage the hearts of men do not strike fear in the heart of God’s child. “Though the waters...roar and be troubled.” Let the floods come; let the thunder storms of life pound about us; let the mountains tremble; God’s child will always find comfort in the Almighty. Barnes had this: “It will be seen at once that this entire description of trust and confidence in God is applicable to the time of Hezekiah, and to the feelings which he manifested when the land was invaded by the hosts of

Sennacherib...It is fitted to any time of trouble, when commotions and revolutions are occurring in the earth, and when everything sacred, true, and valuable seems to be in danger” (Barnes). How applicable are the words to our generation when men who once stood for that which is right and true now seem determined to destroy the very nature of the church for which Jesus died.

### **The Secret of Confidence** **Verses 4-7**

- 4 *There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,  
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.*  
5 *God is in the midst of her; She shall not be moved: God will help  
her, and that right early.*  
6 *The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered his  
voice, the earth melted.*  
7 *Jehovah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*

**46:4:** There is a sense of calm repose at the contemplation of a river, gently flowing, with the sound of the water rippling over the rocks. The “*city of God*” is Jerusalem. It is an astonishing fact of history that the armies of Assyria marched through the land, overthrowing every city in its path. But when Sennacherib’s army came to the Holy City, he was unable to penetrate her walls. In fact, he never so much as had the opportunity to engage battle, since God intervened and destroyed his armies. In like manner, the presence of God in the midst of the church is great occasion for joy and gladness. One of the great fears of a city under siege was disruption of its water supply. Given adequate water, a city could hold out against its enemy almost indefinitely. If we are in the Holy City when the enemy attacks, we can rest assured that the streams of water will never fail, and will make glad the inhabitants thereof.

**46:5:** God is there in the visible presence of the Temple, and also as a help and protector. The words “*and that right early*” are somewhat difficult. The Hebrew is literally “*in the faces of the morning or in the turning of the morning.*” The allusion here is to the defeat of Shennacherib’s army as earlier noted. It is recorded that “the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead men” (Isaiah 37:36). “As soon as the first ray of light proclaims the coming day, at the turning of the morning God’s right arm shall be outstretched for his people...We are slow to meet him, but he is never tardy in helping

us. Impatience complains of divine delays, but in very deed the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. Man's haste is often folly, but God's apparent delays are ever wise; and, when rightly viewed, are not delays at all" (Spurgeon).

**46:6:** Here is action and reaction. The world does not submit to God's will; they rage, rebel and refuse to live in accord to the guidelines that God has set forth. The nations being "moved" has reference to the constant give and take in earthly governments; one invades another, change is wrought, etc. This is simply God working in the affairs of men. So long as nations exemplify righteous behavior, God will bless them. But when any nation turns away from God, no man can foretell how swift or how sure the destruction will be. Consequently, when God "uttered his voice" it is only natural that the earth "melted." Thus it could be said that indeed, "God controls all the raging of the nations and their tumults" (Coffman, 384). And He does so with the mere sound of His voice!!

**46:7:** God is "*Jehovah of hosts*," Commander in chief of His armies. How encouraging to know that He is on OUR SIDE and not AGAINST us. Rather than put our trust in men, or in our own might, we should and MUST put that trust in Jehovah.

### **The Vindication of Confidence Verses 8-11**

- 8 *Come, behold the works of Jehovah, What desolations he hath made in the earth.*  
9 *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariots in the fire.*  
10 *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.*  
11 *Jehovah of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*

**46:8:** Likely Coffman is correct here: "This was an invitation to the citizens of Jerusalem to behold the devastation of the army of Shennacherib to the extent of 185,000 men. Cleaning up a mess like that required bonfires that lasted a long time, the war chariots, spears, arrows, shields and other military equipment providing fuel for the disposition of the dead" (Coffman, 385). The destruction of such a mighty army would serve as undeniable evidence that God was Israel's refuge and shield. It should also be remembered that this amazing miraculous deliverance was not done in some isolated

location, but in the open, in the presence of all. This was, without doubt, one of the most amazing things that ever happened on this earth. “Nothing could furnish a clearer proof of the power of God to save, and of the propriety of putting confidence in him in times of national danger, than a survey of the camp of the Assyrians, where an hundred and eighty-five thousand men had been smitten down in one night by the angel of God” (Barnes, 2.44).

**46:9:** Of course the destruction of the Assyrian army would put a world terrorized by that nation at rest. It should be noted that when nations rise up in opposition to God, or run roughshod over humanity in general, that it will not be long before God “*breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder.*” When Pharaoh sought to pursue Israel into the Red Sea, it is said that God removed the wheels off their chariots. “And he took off their chariot wheels, and they drove them heavily; so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians” (Ex. 14:25).

**46:10:** “*Be still*” - The Hebrew word used here (*raphah*) means “to cast down; to let fall; to let hand down; then to be relaxed, slackened, especially the hands.” It is also employed in the sense of *not* making an effort; *not* putting forth exertion; and then would express the idea of leaving matters with God, or of being without anxiety about the issue.

“*And know that I am God*” - That is, take a look at the work that I have accomplished, something which no man could ever possibly do. As a result, God is indeed “*exalted among the nations...in the earth.*” As Barnes put it, “The defeat of the armies of Sennacherib were eminently fitted to make a deep impression on the world that the true God of the Hebrew people was the true God” (Barnes).

**46:11:** “*Jehovah of hosts is with us...*” – This is the ONLY conclusion that one could draw.

### ***Lessons:***

As then, even so now, God is our Refuge. Hebrews emphasize that under Christ we have a better covenant, promises, etc. Notice Hebrews 13:6. This seems to be the fundamental lesson in the Psalm.

But in addition there is the wonderful truth that peace, comfort, and rest awaits those who enter into the “city of God.” The reason why such superlatives could be used to describe that city is because God is in the midst of her.

## *“God The King of the Earth”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript reads, “A psalm for the sons of Korah.” There is no name given, and it is not possible to determine exactly who wrote the Psalm. Spurgeon believed this Psalm has “all the indication of David’s authorship that one could expect to see... The sons of Korah sang these Psalms, but we believe they did not write them” (Spurgeon). It is a triumphal song and was composed at some victory over the enemy. Following on the heels of a Psalm that addressed the same theme, it is highly possible that it, like Psalm 46, may have been written following that same victory. It is likely, therefore, that the Psalm was written to celebrate Judah’s deliverance from Sennacherib, and having made such an impression upon that nation, was then used on a regular basis to extol the greatness of their God. Rawlinson concluded that “the events which have taken place - the great extension of God’s kingdom, by David’s conquests, are for the advantage of all, and all ought to be thankful for them” (Rawlinson, 365). We have selected the subtitle as our title on this chapter.

### ***Analysis***

Roy Deaver’s analysis is as good as any:

- I. Exhortation, 1;
- II. Explanation, 2-4;
- III. Exhortation, 5-7;
- IV. Explanation, 8-9;

### ***Commentary***

#### **Exhortation**

## Verse 1

*1 Oh clap your hands, all ye peoples; Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.*

**47:1:** An occasion of victory over some enemy called for shouts of triumph. It would appear that the people were accustomed to an outward manifestation of praise and joy that accompanied such victory. The clapping of the hands was a common expression of joy.

## Explanation Verses 2-4

*2 For Jehovah Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth.*

*3 He subdueth peoples under us, And nations under our feet.*

*4 He chooseth our inheritance for us, The glory of Jacob whom he loved. Selah*

**47:2:** God is “Most High” for the simple reason that there is none before or equal to Jehovah. The word for “terrible” in the Hebrew “does not go beyond the notion of inspiring reverence or awe, and is the common word by which the worship of God is designated in the Scriptures” (Barnes). The concept of harshness, or severity, is not inherent in the original word. The Psalmist was simply saying, “Jehovah is to be revered and adored.” The reason for such respect is that He is King over all the earth! Those who deny the universal reign of Christ over all men should take a lesson from this verse.

**47:3:** Barnes points out that the word rendered “subdue” is commonly rendered “to speak.” God needs only to speak the word and it will come to pass. Notice in this connection Psalms 33:9, “For he spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.” The absolute power of God over the nations is suggested by this phrase, “under our feet.” They shall be “entirely or effectually subdued.”

**47:4:** God divided the land, using Joshua as spokesman. It is likely that “Jacob” was selected here because it was his children who actually possessed the land. Although it was promised to Abraham and Isaac, the land was never completely settled and subdued until the times of Jacob’s sons.

## Exhortation



## Verses 5-7

- 5 *God is gone up with a shout, Jehovah with the sound of a trumpet.*  
6 *Sing praise to God, sing praises: Sing praises unto our King, sing praises.*  
7 *For God is the King of all the earth: Sing ye praises with understanding.*

**47:5:** Barnes suggests that this refers to God's returning to heaven, to his "home and throne, after having secured the victory" (Barnes, 2.47). Coffman also sees in this a prophecy of the ascension of our Lord after His earthly sojourn. Rawlinson had this helpful note:

As God 'comes down' when he interposes for the relief or deliverance of his people (Psalms 144:5), so after the relief or deliverance is effected, he is viewed as 'going up' - returning to his glorious abode, reoccupying his seat in the heaven of heavens, and there remaining until some fresh call is made upon him. If the interposition has been one of a striking and unusual character, if the relief has been great, the deliverance signal, the triumph according to his people extraordinary, then he 'goes up with a shout' - amid the exulting cries and loud jubilations of rescued Israel. When the occasion is such as to call for a public manifestation of thanksgiving at the house of God (2 Chron. 20:28), then he 'goes up' also 'with the sound of the trumpet,' which was always sounded by the priests on great occasions of festal joy and gladness" (Rawlinson, 365).

See also 2 Samuel 6:15, 2 Kings 11:14, 1 Chron. 13:8, 16:42, 2 Chron. 5:12, 7:6, Ezra 3:10, and Neh. 12:35.

**47:6:** Four times in verse six we find the admonition to "sing praises" unto God. Yet again in the next verse the admonition is repeated. It is astonishing that such a natural response to the Great and Almighty should needs be commanded. But unfortunately we have known members of the Lord's body who seldom sing praises in the assembly of the saints. We wonder if such individuals ever sing when absent from the assembly.

**47:7:** One should note that God is the "King of all the earth." The fact that men do not recognize and respect this truth does not make it any less true. Physical Israel never did seem to grasp the significance of this truth, and rather than tell the world of their King,

they rejected Him and asked for an earthly king like the nations about them. They selfishly kept the knowledge of God to themselves.

Finally, notice that praise is to be offered with UNDERSTANDING. All else is vain worship. The introduction of instrumental music into the praise and worship of God is precisely the opposite of what is instructed here. God's people are told to "sing." Not "sing and play." Interestingly, Rawlinson observed, "Every song in praise of God, on account of God, on account of his glorious deeds, contains a rich treasure of instruction and improvement" (Rawlinson, 365).

### **Explanation Verses 8-9**

*8 God reigneth over the nations: God sitteth upon his holy throne.*

*9 The princes of the peoples are gathered together To be the people of the God of Abraham: For the shields of the earth belong unto God; He is greatly exalted.*

**47:8:** God's throne is "holy," And it is upon that holy throne that our God rules over the nations. "Unmoved he occupies an undisputed throne, whose decrees, acts, and commands are holiness itself. What other throne is like this? Never was it stained with injustice, or defiled with sin" (Spurgeon). How unlike the worldly kings who ruled over Israel, especially during the closing days of the monarchy of the divided and splintered kingdom.

**47:9:** We are in agreement with Coffman here: "In all the Bible there is not a clearer prophecy of God's converting the Gentiles and of bringing them into the kingdom of God, alongside the Jews, than we have here" (Coffman, 394).

*"For the shields of the earth belong unto God"* - Spurgeon wrote: "The insignia of pomp, the emblems of rank, the weapons of war, all must pay loyal homage to the King of all...Those who are earth's protectors, the shields of the commonwealth, derive their might from him, and are his" (Spurgeon). The New Testament equivalent of this truth is found in 1 Tim 6:15, "which in its own times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

*"He is greatly exalted"* - Rawlinson wrote, "The perfect submission to God of all his rational creatures is his highest exaltation and glory.

When ‘all people bow down before him,’ and ‘all nations do him service,’ when rebellion and resistance to his will are at an end, then will he be established in his rightful position, and his exaltation will be complete” (Rawlinson, 366). That of course, will happen only in the church of our Lord, and in the full sense of the word when every tongue shall confess, and every knee shall bow (Romans 14:11) when Jesus returns to gather His own unto Himself for all eternity.

### ***Lessons***

The fundamental lesson is that God is King of all the earth, and rules in the affairs of all nations. Men may THINK they rule themselves. They may even be granted liberty to govern for so long a time as God allows them to stand. But in the final analysis, kings, governors, princes and presidents would do well to keep in mind that they are subservient to the King of kings and lord of Lords. To do otherwise is suicide.

## *“God In The Midst of His City”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is unknown. The occasion is one of deliverance from a confederacy of kings (verse 4) who had come within sight of the city, but had then been seized with panic and retreated without making an attack (verse 5). After this, they were stricken with fear and “broken as the ships of Tarshish” (6- 7). Because of this deliverance, a Psalm of thanksgiving was given. This coincides with the occasion in 2 Chronicles 20:1-28 in which the Moabites, Amonites and children of Seir advanced on the city of Tekoa, and could then see Jerusalem in the distance. But they argued among themselves, and began to retreat, fighting with one another. Coffman suggests that this Psalm forms a trilogy with 46 and 47. He is somewhat more definite as to the occasion, identifying the enemy as Sennacherib. “Psalm 46 extolled the deliverance; Psalm 47 extolled the power and majesty of Him who wrought it; and Psalm 48 describes the glory of the city which God has so marvelously preserved” (Coffman, 397).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalmist begins with a statement that God is worthy to be praised. This is followed by a reference to the abode of God, a “city” in the “mountain of his holiness” (KJV). The beauty, security, and fact that God dwells in this “city” are the first things that the Psalmist calls attention to. This is followed by a reference to some danger the city had faced (verse 4), and the manner of deliverance (verses 5-7). These “kings” were awe-struck” with the appearance of the city so much so that they “hasted away.” There was evidently an attempt to conquer the city, but the confederation of these kings was broken up as “thou breakest the ships of Tarshish” (verse 7). The Psalmist sees in these events a confirmation that this “city” would stand forever, that God would be her Protector (verses 8-10). The Psalm closes with a call for men to praise God, to rejoice, and to “walk about Zion” and observe the beauty and strength of this city thus favored by God

(Verses 11-14). The source of the following outline was lost, but it is certainly as good as any we have found.

- I. The City INDWELT by Jehovah, 1-3;
- II. The City DELIVERED from its Enemies, 4-7;
- III. The City PROTECTED by Jehovah, 8-10;
- IV. The City REJOICING, 11-14;

We are convinced that the Psalm is prophetic of the church, the spiritual city of God, of which Jerusalem is but a faint type.

### ***Commentary***

#### **The City INDWELT by Jehovah Verses 1-3**

- 1 *Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised, In the city of our God, in his holy mountain.*
- 2 *Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, Is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, The city of the great King.*
- 3 *God hath made himself known in her palaces for a refuge.*

**48:1:** “*Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised*” – Although the writer will focus upon the city and its beauty, the Psalmist wanted his readers to understand that the city was only beautiful because of Who dwelt there. God’s greatness was manifested in the deliverance of the city, as well as the marvelous works throughout the history of the nation of Israel.

“*in the city...in his holy mountain*” – The “mountain” is Mount Moriah, on which the Temple was built.

**48:2:** “*Beautiful in elevation*” - The physical appearance of the city of Jerusalem must have been quite beautiful. She has been called the “Queen of the East.” But we see a much greater beauty in the church, the heavenly Jerusalem. Her beauty arises from her “being placed near God’s heart, within the mountains of his power, upon the hills of his faithfulness, in the center of providential operations” (Spurgeon). The church is the beautiful bride of Christ, adorned in holiness, and set above the mountains of the earth (Isaiah 2:1-4).

“*the joy of the whole earth*” - There never has been any sense in which physical Jerusalem was ever the joy of the whole earth. The Psalmist must have been looking down the corridor of time to see

spiritual Jerusalem, the church of our Lord. And yes, the church conglomerate is, and always has been, the source of genuine joy and happiness for this sin sick world in which we live.

**48:3:** “*God hath made himself known*” – We should be grateful that our God is a God Who communicates with His creation. We learned in the 19<sup>th</sup> Psalm that God communicates through the creation itself. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). Design demands a designer, and the creation demands a Supreme Designer. In addition, God speaks through special revelation, i.e. His word:

The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul: The testimony of Jehovah is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart: The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of Jehovah is clean, enduring for ever: The ordinances of Jehovah are true, *and* righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the droppings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: In keeping them there is great reward (Psalms 19:7-11).

“*in her palaces*” - The word rendered “*palaces*” means a “fortress” or a “castle,” so called because of its height. The verb form of this Hebrew word means to “elevate,” or “to lift up.”

“*for a refuge*” – But a refuge from what? Jerusalem was the place of safety. Inside her walls there was protection; outside there was defeat. All spiritual blessings are IN Christ (Eph. 1:3). Many a soul has sought to escape the pressures of life and find peace and happiness. Unfortunately they refuse to enter into the “palaces” of our Lord’s church. Consequently, they have no refuge from the storms of life; peace and happiness elude them.

### **The City DELIVERED from its Enemies Verses 4-7**

- 4 *For, lo, the kings assembled themselves, They passed by together.*  
5 *They saw it, then were they amazed; They were dismayed, they hasted away.*  
6 *Trembling took hold of them there, Pain, as of a woman in travail.*  
7 *With the east wind Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish.*

**48:4:** Whatever event was in the mind of the Psalmist, the result is the important thing here. Though joined together, these kings were unable to capture the city. We cannot agree that any failure on the part of the enemies of God to capture the city was due to the mere attraction of her walls. Instead, deliverance arose from the mighty intervention of God for His people. As the “spiritual city” of God, the church can turn back the armies of the enemies so long as her walls remain intact. That strength derives from our God who will give us the victory as we “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). As one brother noted, “Just here let us note that it would be wonderful indeed if those who sought to do harm to the church would in the prosecution of their evil plans have to confront those who by their firm stand for the truth would evidence to the would be destroyers that their plans would fail. It would be a great thing in spiritual Israel if false teachers who seek to influence those in any given congregation could be immediately intimidated into silence by those who strongly stand for the truth” (Mac Deaver, 294).

*“For, lo, the kings assembled...they passed”* - They came and went! When the “kings” of the earth assemble themselves against the church, they will not succeed in their efforts to invade her boundaries. So remarkable was their defeat that the Psalmist writer says, “LO.”

**48:5:** *“They were amazed, They were dismayed, they hasted away”* - What amazement must have struck these kings. What did they see that caused such amazement? What is the reason for their trembling? So great was their astonishment that it is said *“they hasted away.”* Barnes suggests “the idea in the whole verse is that of a panic, leading to a disorderly flight. This may have occurred in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx) when the kings of Moab, Edom, and others came up to attack Jerusalem, though the immediate cause of their overthrow was a conflict among themselves (2 Chron. xx. 22-25)” (Barnes). What a hasty retreat they exercised. Truly, “Their haste in coming was nothing to their hurry in going” (Spurgeon). This author has had the opportunity to read the debates of the early part of the 20th century. The truth put error to flight, and those proponents of false doctrine found themselves helpless and in many instances “astonished” at their inability to assail the wall of Zion. Indeed, when the truth is presented in its simplicity, the enemy is “dismayed, they hasted away.”

**48:6:** They were overcome by their fear as a woman who, because of some frightening situation, gives premature birth to her child. This was a strong expression employed by Orientals to set forth the extremity of anguish. Rawlinson had this discerning note: "This description is wholly inapplicable to the destruction of Sennacherib's host, unperceived until it was accomplished (2 Kings 19:35), but is sufficiently in agreement with the narrative of 2 Chronicles 20:1-23" (Rawlinson, Pulpit Commentary, 372).

**48:7:** The mighty deliverance of Jerusalem on this particular occasion probably caused the Psalmist to recall this particular event. The reference here is likely to the time when "Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold; but they went not: for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber" (1 Kings 22:48). We agree with Barnes that "this coincidence would seem to render it not improbable that the discomfiture of the enemies of Jehoshaphat was particularly referred to in this psalm, and that the overthrow of his enemies when Jerusalem was threatened called to remembrance an important event in his own history, when the power of God was illustrated in a manner not less unexpected and remarkable" (Barnes). Of course there were a number of occasions when God's power was manifested, the destruction of Sennacherib being one of the most astonishing. The spiritual application of this was summarized by Spurgeon:

Speculative heresies, pretending to bring us wealth from afar, are constantly assailing the church, but the breath of the Lord soon drives them to destruction. The church too often relies on the wisdom of men, and these human helps are soon shipwrecked; yet the church itself is safe beneath the care of her God and King (Spurgeon).

### **The City PROTECTED by Jehovah Verses 8-10**

- 8 *As we have heard, so have we seen In the city of Jehovah of hosts,  
in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah*
- 9 *We have thought on thy lovingkindness, O God, In the midst of  
thy temple.*
- 10 *As is thy name, O God, So is thy praise unto the ends of the  
earth: Thy right hand is full of righteousness.*



**48:8:** “*As we have heard, so have we seen*” - What had been handed down by tradition, and through the inspired record, has now been experienced by the Psalmist and his fellow countrymen. But it is the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of our Lord, of which the Psalmist writes. It is that city, and that city alone, which will be established forever. Of course what is said of Jerusalem here is true in the far greater sense with regard to the church. Build upon the solid foundation of Jesus Christ Himself, purchased with the blood He shed upon the cross, we have the assurance of the Son of God that the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matt. 16:16-18).

Notice how God is first referred to as “*The Lord of hosts,*” followed by “*our God.*” While the former signifies power and sovereignty, the latter suggests a close relationship of the Christian with his Father.

“*Selah*” - Here is a fit place to pause and contemplate God’s marvelous blessings with the promise of deliverance in the future.

**48:9:** The word here translated “thought” means literally “to compare, to liken.” The idea of meditation upon the things under consideration comes into focus. Spurgeon noted, “Holy men are thoughtful men; they do not suffer God’s wonders to pass before their eyes and melt into forgetfulness, but they meditate deeply upon them” (Spurgeon). It was in the “*midst of thy temple*” where such meditations occurred. This would suggest that this Psalm might have been used in the temple in praise to God for His unfailing protection from the enemies. Yes, “Memories of mercy should be associated with continuance of praise. Hard by the table of shewbread commemorating his bounty, should stand the altar of incense denoting our praise” (Spurgeon).

**48:10:** “*Thy right hand is full of righteousness*” - Earthly rulers often subdue their enemies out of cruel hatred and ruthless ambition. Not so with our God. His actions against the enemy are based upon “righteousness.” The “right hand” is the conquering hand, the hand of war; the hand that wielded the sword. All such actions on the part of Jehovah are based upon His absolute holiness and righteousness.

### **The City REJOICING** **Verses 11-14**

*11 Let mount Zion be glad, Let the daughters of Judah rejoice,  
Because of thy judgments.*

- 12 *Walk about Zion, and go round about her; Number the towers thereof;*  
13 *Mark ye well her bulwarks; Consider her palaces: That ye may tell it to the generation following.*  
14 *For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death.*

**48:11:** It seems unlikely that the “*daughters of Judah*” has any reference to small cities round about Jerusalem. We must agree with Barnes that “the more obvious interpretation is that the women of Judah had occasion to rejoice on account of their deliverance from so great a danger, and from the horrors which usually attend the siege or the conquest of the city - such atrocities which commonly befell the female sex when a city is captured in war” (Barnes).

**48:12:** Two words or phrases beg examination. The first is “*walk about.*” This is a call to take a survey of the city; to observe its strength, how it had escaped danger, and how capable it was of withstanding attack. The words “*go round about*” are translated from ‘*nakaph*,’ which means “to fasten together, to join together, and would refer here to a solemn procession moving around the city, and taking a deliberate survey of its entire circuit” (Barnes). The admonition is for the inhabitants to take a close look at this city. Examine its strength. Take confidence in what you see. We cannot talk too frequently about the history of our Lord’s church, her beauty, strength, and distinctiveness.

“*Number the towers thereof*” - Take courage in the stability of that in which you have taken refuge. Never has the Lord’s church stumbled under the attack of the enemy. The church of the Lord is the only institution in which absolute protection can be obtained. Look at her walls! Observe its Founder! Take courage, Christian, for the enemies shall NEVER prevail.

**48:13:** Each generation should “*mark ye well her bulwarks.*” Familiarity with the characteristics of the church will insure its strength to the next generation. Men pay close attention to the things of this life, even to the minutest detail. Why do they not treat the Lord’s church with the same respect and dignity afforded earthly matters? It might be beneficial for the members of the Lord’s church to take a close look once again at the strengths of the true city of God and remind themselves of the strength and power that comes with doing things the way God has commanded.

*“That ye may tell it to the generation following”* - God has always intended that His word be passed on to each succeeding generation. Those things that we have learned we are to commit to faithful men who shall be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:1-2). Parents should impress upon their children the strength of the church. The “towers,” “her bulwarks,” and her “palaces.” Let us never fail to pass the torch to those who shall follow us. Apostasy is only one generation away. It is quite unfortunate that our generation is witnessing an apostasy the likes of which were unheard of less than thirty years ago. As God’s people abandon the truth for traditions, and seek refuge in the philosophies of men, she will grow weaker and weaker. The “bulwarks” are to be found in loyalty to God’s word; all else will utterly fail.

**48:14:** Our God is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalms 90:1-2). He is our “guide,” suggesting an absolute standard for life. He will be our guide *“even unto death.”* The idea here is that God will be our guide all along our journey through this life, and when we come to the end of life’s way, He will walk with us even “through the valley of the shadow of death.” Indeed, “If God, by His own hand, will conduct me through this world, and lead me safely through the dark valley - that valley which lies at the end of every traveler’s path - I have nothing to fear beyond” (Barnes).

### ***Lessons***

God has promised that the church shall never be destroyed. True security is found, therefore, within the walls of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem. As the poet noted,

The church has all her foes defied  
And laughed to scorn their rage;  
E’en thus for aye she shall abide  
Secure from age to age.  
--Author unknown;

### ***Rome Vs. Christianity***

by Tom Wacaster

When Jesus Christ was born into this world Rome was on the throne and paganism at her right hand. From one end of the empire to the other, from the center to the circumference, idolatry and paganism

ruled supreme. It is somewhat surprising to learn, therefore, that just fifty years after the death of our Lord on the cross there was a church in every principle city of the Roman Empire. Christianity had swept across the Roman Empire with such force that Rome with all her centers of infidelity crumbled in the wake of the preaching of the Gospel. The impact of Christianity was nothing short of phenomenal. Will Durant concluded, "There is no greater drama in human record than the sight of a few Christians, scorned or oppressed by a succession of emperors, bearing all trials with a fiery tenacity, multiplying quietly, building order while enemies generated chaos, fighting the sword with the word, brutality with hope, and at last defeating the strongest state that history has ever known. Caesar and Christ had met in the arena, and Christ had won." Even by human standards of measurement the change that was wrought throughout the known world was swift. Like a prairie fire, the Gospel of Jesus Christ dethroned idols, swept away pagan strongholds, overcame ungodliness and brought to the empire an evangelistic fervor and newness of life unlike anything offered to man prior to that time. It should be pointed out that this was no easy task, this conquest of Rome. But what made Christ's victory over Rome even more impressive were the obstacles that the church faced in her early years. Lets think on these for just a moment.

First, there were the men who preached the Gospel. Hand selected by our Lord, those twelve men who forged the first paths into that pagan world were, for the most part, unlearned and uneducated. Add to this the fact that these twelve were from a despised race and you have a combination that should have spelled quick and certain defeat at the hands of the more "wise" and prominent Roman elite. There was not one chance in a thousand that these men could withstand the sages from Grecian and Roman background. But they did. Marching forth, equipped with nothing more than the "foolishness of the cross," these ambassadors for Christ marched into the citadels of Grecian and Roman philosophy, mounted the polemic platform and came out the other side completely victorious. Twelve men against the entire Roman army! But with God on their side, even the powers of Rome could not stop their march toward victory.

The second obstacle had to do with the presentation of the Gospel itself. The very essence of the message was so contrary to the thinking of a proud nation that it was considered strange. Think about it. This new message consisted of an offer of salvation through

complete submission to a lowly Jew Who claimed to have no earthly father, but was Himself the Divine Son of God. Add to this the details of the death of Jesus and it is a marvel that any Roman citizen would even so much as listen to the message, much less embrace it and obey it. "Salvation through a JEW? And one who was sentenced to death on the cross, punishment reserved for the most despicable of criminals. You must be kidding!" Why, only the dredge of society would be condemned to die such a horrible death.

The third obstacle had to do with the demands of the Gospel. It must be kept in mind that so far as moral and ethical values, the average Roman citizen had none. The demands of the Gospel struck at the very fabric of Roman life. This new message called for "humility" where pride was considered an honorable trait. This new message struck at the roots of sin, but the Roman of that day loved the fleshpots of physical and sensual enjoyment. This new message demanded a life of self sacrifice and service in the Kingdom of its Master where the citizens of earthly Rome were accustomed to being served by the slaves of her previous conquests. This new message was exclusive, brooking no rivals, and accepting no other "gods." But onward marched those men who were among the first enlistees in this newly organized army, and later those whom they would recruit. Their message was clear, demanding, and forceful: "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

By human standards Christianity should have been defeated before it ever got off the starting block. Instead it succeeded. It succeeded because of the zeal of the people. Coming out of pagan darkness into God's wonderful light (Col. 1:12-13), those men and women of the first century were willing to give their life for the cause of Christ. Their voices could not be stilled nor could the fire that burned within be quenched. As one author noted, "No law could be passed stringent enough to shut their mouths. No torture could be devised sufficiently horrible to hush their testimony. They laughed at death and despised the cross and the stake in their happy, earnest effort to win others to Jesus Christ. When ten were slain, a hundred took their place. When the hundred died, a thousand sprang from the blood-reddened sands to die in turn, in the hope that their testimony might be sealed with an evidence of their sincerity." But behind it all was the unshakable faith in the reality that Jesus was raised from the grave, and that they, themselves, were promised immortality if they would but remain faithful to their Lord. The message for us is

simple. If Christianity could so conquer and captivate a nation steeped in idolatry and immorality, what makes us think that the glorious Gospel is not just as powerful in our generation as it was when Rome opposed our Lord, and lost? Indeed it is. May our lives demonstrate that same unconquerable faith of those early Christians who gave their lives in service to Him Who died for us that we might live!

## *“Wealth and Righteousness”*

### ***Introduction***

The author of this Psalm is not known. As for the occasion, it was written in view of some evil or wrong the author was suffering at the hands of rich oppressors. “This Psalm is about poor rich people – people who have money, but that is all they have. Family, fortune, friends, and future – nothing matters but money. These people are the orphans of eternity. When life’s moorings are untied they will be cast adrift to be tossed upon the waves of a shoreless sea – without chart or compass, without sun or star, forever driven before the howling winds of God’s wrath deeper into the dark” (Phillips, 387). The Psalmist had learned that the wealthy man cannot redeem a brother from the grave, cannot save himself from the tomb, and cannot take his riches with him when he dies. There is, therefore, nothing to fear from the rich man. But just as well, the Psalm teaches the man of low degree not to despise his state or to seek to gain riches in an inordinate manner. This Psalm is the equivalent of all those New Testament instructions that teach us the folly of trusting in material riches. It has been pointed out by a number of commentators that this Psalm is didactic in character. While some of the Psalms emphasize praising God, and others setting forth prophesy, in this Psalm the Psalmist is preaching.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have an introduction in which the writer calls attention to the subject at hand (verses 1-4). The Psalmist then tells us that the righteous need not be afraid when the rich oppressors surround them and threaten them (verse 5). He then sets forth reasons for his admonitions (verses 11-20).

### ***Commentary***

## **An Introduction, calling attention to the general subject**

### **Verses 1-4**

- 1 *Hear this, all ye peoples; Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world,*
- 2 *Both low and high, Rich and poor together.*
- 3 *My mouth shall speak wisdom; And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.*
- 4 *I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.*

**49:1-2:** The first four verses of this Psalm serve as an introduction, calling attention to the general subject. The message which the Psalmist was about to deliver needed to be heard by “*all...inhabitants of the world*”: the young and old; rich and poor; those who are in positions of honor, and those that are lowly. For those that are of low rank, they are not to envy the rich or to fear their power. To those of exalted rank, they must not trust in their riches or to suppose that they could permanently possess and enjoy them. Coffman points out “only a world-shaking truth could be entitled to such an introduction as this. The revelation of this great truth is not for Jews only, but for all men and all classes of peoples in the whole world” (Coffman, 409). All men would do well to listen, for “he who refuses to receive instruction by the ear, will not be able to escape receiving destruction by it when the Judge shall say, ‘Depart, ye cursed’... The low will be encouraged, the high will be warned, the rich will be sobered, the poor consoled, there will be a useful lessons for each if they are willing to learn it” (Spurgeon).

**49:3:** He would utter statements that are indeed wise. Here are some things that all men would do well to consider and heed. What he speaks would be the “*meditation of his heart*.” These things had been thought through, and the conclusion is based upon consideration of God, eternity, and those things that really matter.

**49:4:** The key words in this verse are “*parable*” and “*dark saying*.” The word rendered “*parable*” is from ‘*mashal*.’ It means “similitude; then, a sentence, sententious saying, apophthegm; a proverb; a song or poem” (Barnes). There was some difficulty in the mind of the author pertaining to the rich and the poor, and especially the oppression of the poor by the rich. The Psalmist simply plans to explain the difficulty, and set forth the answer to one of life’s most perplexing mysteries. His doing this “*upon the harp*” suggests that



he would set forth the answer in song. Many a truth has been captured in song, and impressed upon the minds of men through that avenue of communication.

### **The Main Subject** **Verse 5**

*5 The righteous have no reason to be afraid when rich oppressors compass them about*

**49:5:** It would seem that for some reason he had become discouraged over the wealth of the wicked, and especially those who were persecuting him. Upon further reflection, however, he realized that they could not, by their riches, provide for the security and solace of the soul.

The age-old problem of why the wicked prosper, and why the righteous suffer, is answered in this Psalm, and others of like nature (Cf. Psalms 73). The unique feature of this Psalm is the distinct reference to the compensation in a future life.

### **Reasons for this announcement** **Verses 6-20**

The Psalmist will now set forth a half dozen reasons why the rich are not to be envied or feared.

**First,** *No one can, by his riches, save another from death, 6-10:*

- 6 They that trust in their wealth, And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;*  
*7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him;*  
*8 For the redemption of their life is costly, And it faileth for ever;*  
*9 That he should still live away, That he should not see corruption.*  
*10 For he shall see it. Wise men die; The fool and the brutish alike perish, And leave their wealth to others.*

**49:6-7:** It has been appointed unto men once to die (Heb. 9:27), and all men will keep that appointment. The key words here are “*trust in their wealth.*” The possession of riches is not inherently evil. It is when men “*boast themselves in the multitude of their riches*” that they find themselves at odds with God. The allusion here is to someone who (1) trusts in his material possessions, and (2) then

boasts about the multitude of those possessions. In my preaching career I have occasionally come across individuals who like to talk about their stocks and bonds more than the Lord's church. Those who place their trust in material things, be it wealth or possessions, are "secularists." But they soon forget that wealth cannot redeem a brother. Our money cannot provide that which is necessary to affect redemption and reconciliation. Peter pointed out that we are not redeemed with gold or silver, but with the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:18). Those things that man might amass cannot, in any sense, "*by any means*" redeem one's soul; not his; not his brother's! "Let them weigh their gold in the scales of death, and see how much they can buy therewith from the worm and the grave" (Spurgeon).

Some otherwise successful men have come to realize that their wealth was not that important. "Millionaires who laugh," said Andrew Carnegie, "are rare." Sir Ernest Cassel, who spent vast fortunes for the benefit of mankind, a multi-millionaire, the friend of kings and emperors, said to one of his visitors: "You may have all the money in the world, and yet be a lonely, sorrowing man. The light has gone out of my life. I live in this beautiful house, which I have furnished with all the luxury and wonder of art; but, believe me, I no longer value my millions. I sit here for hours every night longing for my beloved daughter."

The following appeared in a computer illustration source.

Money will buy a bed; but not sleep; books but not brains; food but not appetite; finery but not beauty; a house but not a home; medicine but not health; luxuries but not culture; amusements but not happiness; religion but not salvation; a passport to everywhere but heaven.

-- The Voice in the Wilderness

In this connection see: Psalms 39:6-7; Psalms 49:6-9; Psalms 19:14; Proverbs 11:4; Matthew 6:19-20.

**49:8:** "*The redemption of their life is costly*" - The idea is that life is more valuable than all the wealth that mankind might possess. The multiplied wealth of the whole world utterly fails in redeeming man. Barnes suggests that the reference in these verses is to the inability of wealth to save a man's life. When it comes time to die all the money in the world cannot prevent it from happening. But if money

cannot prevent one from going to the grave it is certainly powerless to redeem man's soul from hell. Barnes adds this comment: "The object is to show how powerless and valueless is wealth in regard to the things that most pertain to a man's welfare. It can do literally nothing in that which most deeply affects man, and in which he most needs help" (Barnes). Credit is given to brother Burton Coffman for this vivid illustration of that truth: "Diamond Jim Brady of New York once offered a physician a million dollars to get him a new stomach, but he didn't get it, and died for the want of it" (Coffman, 411). When will men learn the truth that, "Death comes and wealth cannot bribe him; hell follows, and no golden key can unlock its dungeons. Vain, then, are your threatenings, ye possessors of the yellow clay; your childish toys are despised by men who estimate the value of possessions by the shekel of the sanctuary" (Spurgeon).

**49:9:** *"that he should live always"* – The writer continues the thought that wealth will not keep a man from death. It is appointed unto men once to die and after that cometh the judgment (Heb. 9:27). All the money in the world cannot cancel that appointment. "Gold is lavished out of the bag to cheat the worm of the poor body by embalming it, or enshrining it in a coffin of lead, but it is a miserable business, a very burlesque and comedy" (Spurgeon).

**49:10:** What shall he see? Corruption! The grave! The wise and the foolish; the rich and the poor. All shall face death. It is impossible to "laugh off" the dying hour, for death will visit the tavern and university alike. The fact is that no matter what may be the character of a man, he must certainly die. It is said that all men die, but only the foolish and wicked are said to "perish." Such a one is blotted out of remembrance, bewailed by none, remembered no more.

**Second,** *They cannot make their possessions permanent, 11-12:*

11 *Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, And their dwelling-places to all generations; They call their lands after their own names.*

12 *But man being in honor abideth not: He is like the beasts that perish.*

**49:11:** One of the most amazing mysteries of life is the fact that men realize that death is certain yet they live as if death were not real. As brother Coffman noted, "The picture of the man who trusts in riches here is that of a man who is living in this world exactly as if he fully

intended to live here for ever” (Coffman, 411). He is in love with the world and its fool’s gold. I once heard of a man who, in the sunset years of his life, remarked that the most horrible thing about dying was leaving all of “this” behind. Why is it that the worldly rich think that they shall somehow escape death? While none would deny the reality of death verbally, it is nonetheless true that they live AS IF they were exempt from it. It is still true that one will never see a U-Haul behind a hearse, and when men die they leave behind all they might have acquired in their lifetime! Such worldly minded men “cannot tell the mirage from the true streams of water; they fancy rainbows to be stable, and clouds to be the everlasting hills” (Spurgeon).

**49:12:** This verse, like verse 20, is not a refutation of life after death but rather an affirmation that wealth is powerless to gain additional time here on the earth. The hero may bask in his glory, but soon his hour of glory passes and he is forgotten by his contemporaries. While living in Ada, Oklahoma, one of our sisters in Christ was the wife of the great baseball legend Harry “The Cat” Brecheen. On one occasion the young people were invited by sister Brecheen to visit in their home. In the basement the walls were decked with pictures, plaques, and various baseball memorabilia. But interestingly, few with whom I have visited through the years remember “The Cat” Brecheen. “The hero of the hour lasts but for an hour. Scepters fall from the paralyzed hands which once grasped them, and coronets slip away from skulls when the life is departed” (Spurgeon).

The word rendered “abideth” means “to pass the night; to remain over night; to lodge,” as one does for a night. The idea is that he is not to lodge or remain permanently in that condition. All that it takes for a man’s fame to vanish from off the face of the earth is for him to die and those who were acquainted with him to die. While a selected few may have their names etched in history, it is only that, and given enough time that too will pass away.

*“Like the beasts that perish...”* - Those who trust in riches are surrounded with pleasure, though their later end is no better than a beast going to the slaughter.

**Third,** *They will not learn from the past, but are as foolish as previous generations, 13:*

13 *This their way is their folly: Yet after them men approve their sayings. Selah*

**49:13:** One generation to the next seems not to learn the lesson that the Psalmist was seeking to shout from the rooftops. It is folly to trust in riches. Wealth cannot prolong life, give peace, or fulfill the longings of the soul. Unfortunately, one generation follows the next, and so on through the myriads of humanity, and the lie is still told, and believed, that wealth is the most important thing in life. “Those who follow them in descent follow them in folly, quote their worldly maxims, and accept their mad career as the most prudent mode of life” (Spurgeon). But men do not simply approve their sayings. They also approve their foolish ways, and mimic those who have gone before, all the while thinking they have discovered some new “truth” relative to the value and power of material possessions.

**Fourth, All go to the grave, 14:**

14 *They are appointed as a flock for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; And their beauty shall be for Sheol to consume, That there be no habitation for it.*

**49:14:** The amazing thing in this verse is the Psalmist’s unshakable conviction of redemption beyond the grave. Those who trust in riches are “*appointed as a flock*.” But the place for their appointed gathering is Sheol. The “morning” is an unmistakable reference to the morning of the resurrection. In the hereafter the righteous who were persecuted, taunted, ridiculed and despised by the materialistic unbelievers of this life, will in the end, have dominion over those who trusted in their riches. And what shall become of the beauty of wealth? All of it shall be consumed by Sheol. Peter says that it, along with this world, shall be burned up. Indeed, “*there shall be no habitation*” for the stocks, bonds, investments, bank accounts, gold, silver, precious jewels, or any such things, in the world to come. The righteous will inherit the true riches, and the wicked shall perish, along with those things that were most important in this life. Yes, it is true, that “sinners rule till night-fall; their honours wither in the evening, and in the morning they find their position utterly reversed” (Spurgeon). Both the wicked and the righteous die, and both shall live again. But the righteous alone have the hope of resurrection to honor and glory.

**Fifth, There is a hope for the righteous, 15:**

*15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; For he will receive me. Selah*

**49:15:** As for the righteous? They shall be redeemed by God. We will be received into eternal tabernacles, to life forever with the righteous of all ages. Gold will be put in its proper place, to pave the streets of heaven where it will be trodden under foot. Coffman quotes W.E. Addis: "This is one of the most important verses in the OT. The Hebrew word for 'take' (or 'receive') here is technical. It is applied in Genesis 5:24 to the translation of Enoch, and in 2 Kings 29 and following to the translation of Elijah" (Coffman, 414). Indeed, this verse is one of the clearest statements of immortality in the Old Testament. Although some critics suggest that a knowledge of the resurrection was either absent or severely restricted among the ancients, it is our studied belief that there was a widespread belief in life after death. Albert Barnes agrees that "this verse, therefore, may belong to that class of passages in the Old Testament which are founded on the belief of the resurrection of the dead" (Barnes).

**Sixth, *The rich can carry nothing with them, 16-20:***

*16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, When the glory of his house is increased.  
17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away; His glory shall not descend after him.  
18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul And men praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself,  
19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; They shall never see the light.  
20 Man that is in honor, and understandeth not, Is like the beasts that perish.*

**49:16-17:** No one has ever been able to carry his wealth with him into the next world. While upon the earth, they have their glory. When their "house" is increased, there is much of which to be "proud." Through the centuries men have often sought to display their material status by ornamentation of their "houses." We can drive through the neighborhoods in Northeast Harris country and marvel at the elaborate and spacious houses that men build. The cost absolutely astounds the mind. Yes, social status is often measured by such standards. But when men die, they are laid in

exactly the same size plot, with four walls that surround them, there to await the resurrection. It is still true that when men die they *"shall carry nothing away."* The "glory" that men enjoy in this life shall not descend with them into Sheol. The grave does not recognize aristocracy and the dead cannot claim any sense of nobility.

*"He shall carry nothing away"* - The apostle Paul may have had this passage in mind when he wrote, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:7).

**49:18-19:** The contrast is brought to conclusion in these verses. The key words here are *"while he lived."* Oh yes, while the rich man lives he may bless his soul and receive great praise from his contemporaries. Let a man "strike it rich," and his friends will heap approbation upon he who *"doest well."* But life is not measured by the here and now, for the harvest has yet to be gathered. All men shall go to *"the generation of his fathers"* to await the resurrection and judgment. Those who trusted in their wealth will have an eternity to remember those things in which they placed their trust. Unfortunately it will be to their own shame. Such miserable souls *"shall never see the light."* "The banker rots as fast as the shoe-black, and the peer becomes as putrid as the pauper. Alas! poor wealth, thou art but the rainbow colouring of the bubble, the tinge which yellows the morning mist, but adds no substance to it" (Spurgeon).

**49:20:** The "honor" here is that shown by one's worldly contemporaries, not God. We never cease to be amazed at the honorable positions that the wealthy are given, while the poor are seldom recognized as having achieved anything of significance. No, the materialists do not understand, their hearts being blinded by their riches. Such men are no better than the *"beasts that perish."* While it is true that all men die, it is only of the unbeliever and materialist that it can be said that they perish like the beasts.

## ***Lessons***

The things that God gives us are not for our keeping. We are simply stewards. Some just happen to have been granted the privilege of watching over and caring for more than others. Duane Warden reminded us of this most sobering truth:

When life is good, when God's people are inclined to take refuge in the things they have built, the reminder of Peter is the more urgent. The land beneath our feet is not ours. Neither are the houses, nor the concrete and steel skyscrapers, nor the interstate highways and the automobiles we drive on them. Whatever security we take in them is bound to disappoint us. Exchanging tents and camels for houses and automobiles makes us nonetheless strangers, visitors, sojourners, passing through with only a nodding interest in the landscape. God's people seek a more enduring homeland. They are reminded of Abraham: 'By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God' (Heb. 11:9-10). (Warden, 14).

Since the wicked concentrate on the here and now, and thus lay up for themselves treasures upon this earth, then practically speaking, they must adopt the Epicurean philosophy that says, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die." But one of the richest men ever to live admitted, "I am miserable. You can just paint the town red so many times and get drunk just so many times. Then you sit at home alone and realize that money cannot buy happiness.

The rich man who trusts in his riches confuses time with eternity. A number of years ago we heard the story of a wealthy man who wanted to be buried in his Cadillac when he died. It was an elaborate funeral, nothing spared with regard to ornamentation. The obituary was read, the eulogy given, and the procession moved to the gravesite where, as per his desire, he was lowered into the ground sitting behind the wheel of his Cadillac. Someone remarked as he watched the car being lowered, "Man, that's living." The rich man in our Lord's parable THOUGHT he had years of pleasure left in front of him, but that night his soul was required of him. No, riches do not guarantee years.



## *“God’s Righteous Judgment”*

### ***Introduction***

Asaph, a Levite, a son of Berachiah (1 Chronicles 6:39) has been credited with writing this Psalm. This is the first of twelve Psalms ascribed to him. He was an eminent musician (Neh. 12:46, 1 Chron 6:39, 15:17). In 1 Chronicles 15:5 he is described as the chief of sacred music. Hezekiah is said to have brought the words of David and of Asaph the seer into use in the service of the house of God (2 Chronicles 29:30). There is much about Asaph that remains a mystery and we can only wish with others that we knew more about this man. The title rendered in the margin “for Asaph” may mean either that the Psalm was composed BY Asaph, or FOR him. The most natural conclusion is that he actually wrote the Psalm, and we will take this position until evidence compels otherwise.

Coffman calls this Psalm, “A Prophetic Glimpse of the Eternal Judgment” (Coffman, 417). Others have seen in this Psalm a reference to the judgment as well, though most fall short of seeing in it a reference to that final Judgment Day. We happen to think that Coffman’s analysis of the Psalm is worth serious consideration. He writes, “The true Judge of All the Earth is not the Father but the Son (John 5:22); and the tremendous theophany of these first six verses, in which God is represented as convening Heaven’s court, calling the world to appear, and summoning his people before his throne for judgment - all of this speaks eloquently of the Final Judgment” (Coffman, 417). In support of this “prophetic view,” Coffman suggests the following:

- (1) As a matter of history, God did not formerly judge the Old Israel, as represented here;
- (2) In no sense did God “come” from heaven to earth for such a Court Scene as this during the days of the old Israel’s history;
- (3) The grandeur and solemnity of the majestic appearance of God himself in these verses resembles that of his giving of the Law of Moses at Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19:16; 20:18);
- (4) There is the additional fact that a prophetic interpretation does no violence whatever to what is written here;

- (5) Most convincing of all, however, is the simple truth stated in the Gospel of John, “Neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22).

Hence, “we are driven to the conclusion that we have here a prophetic glimpse of the Eternal Judgment that shall close this Dispensation of God’s Grace” (Coffman, 418). Of course if this Psalm is looking down the corridor of time to that Great Judgment Day, then we are provided with some reasons as to why the vast majority of mankind is going to be lost. While it is true that many will be lost because of their profligacy, it is religious error that places a vast multitude in a lost condition. “At the time when this psalm was composed, it would seem that there was a general reliance on the mere ceremonies of public worship; that much of the spirituality of religion had vanished; and that under the forms of religion, and connected with a decent and even scrupulous attention to them, there was a great, if not general, prevalence, of moral corruption among the people” (Barnes). Religious error will effectively rob man of his eternal reward (Matt. 7:21-23). It is not enough to worship; man must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

### ***Analysis***

The significance of this Psalm is that it sets forth the value and importance of spiritual religion as compared with a mere religion of form. The following is an adaptation of Barnes’ outline:

- I. Introduction and a solemn representation of the scenes of judgment, 1-6
  1. General summons to the world, 1;
  2. Judgment would proceed out of Zion, 2;
  3. Description of God coming in Judgment, 3;
  4. A call to the heavens and earth, that God’s people might be called to judgment, 4-5;
  5. God being the judge, would execute perfect judgment, 6;
- II. The Principles of Judgment, 7-23
  1. By showing that it is not by mere formal rites and acts, 7-15;
  2. By showing that the wicked cannot hope to meet with the favor of God though they might observe these forms, 16-23.

We have selected to follow Adam Clark’s outline on this Psalm:

- I. God summons all men before His throne of judgment, 1-6;
- II. God expresses disapproval of their sacrifices, 7-13;
- III. God reveals what He expects of them, 14-15;
- IV. God speaks 'to the wicked,' 16-22;
- V. Blessedness of the true worshipper whose life does not negate it, 23.

## ***Commentary***

### **God summons all men before His throne of judgment, Verses 1-6**

- 1 The Mighty One, God, Jehovah, hath spoken, And called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.*
- 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined forth.*
- 3 Our God cometh, and doth not keep silence: A fire devoureth before him, And it is very tempestuous round about him.*
- 4 He calleth to the heavens above, And to the earth, that he may judge his people:*
- 5 Gather my saints together unto me, Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.*
- 6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness; For God is judge himself. Selah*

**50:1:** God summons “the earth.” This is a universal call for judgment, “from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof.” This is no local judgment. The “Mighty One” (*El*), “God” (*Eloheim*), “Jehovah” (*Yaweh*) summons men to the judgment bar. There is more here than judgment upon Israel. The Psalmist is speaking of that time when God will no longer “keep silence.” It will come suddenly, without warning; when least expected. The Psalmist’s use of the past tense is typical of prophetic language in which the author stresses the certainty of the prophecy by viewing it as if it had already occurred.

**50:2:** “*Out of Zion*” - The writer had the city of Jerusalem in mind, the very center of Jewish religion. A portion of this verse was quoted by our Lord in Luke 24:47, suggesting that the Zion is the heavenly Jerusalem. It is THAT city, the church, which is the “perfection” of beauty (Eph. 5:23). “This means that the great principles that are to determine the destiny of mankind in the Final Judgment are those very principles which have been taught in the word of God that went forth from Jerusalem” (Coffman, 420).

**50:3:** *“A fire devoureth before him...it is very tempestuous”* - There is an allusion to God upon Mt. Sinai. Notice Exodus 19:16-18. The Hebrew word translated “tempestuous” (*‘saar’*) literally means “to shudder, to shiver, and then it is employed to denote the commotion and raging of a tempest” (Barnes). The “fire” is the emblem of Divine justice; the “tempest” a token of God’s overwhelming power.

Although it may seem that at times our God is silent, there is a time coming when He will appear in “flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess. 2:7-8). At that moment heaven will no longer be silent and all men will hear His voice in judgment. God will break the years, yea centuries, of silence. He will then speak in His wrath and judgment. His apparent silence is an indication of His mercy. But when He speaks the time for mercy will be past and the judgment will begin.

**50:4:** *“He calleth to the heavens...and to the earth”* - God will call the inhabitants of the heavens and the world to be His witness to the judgment. It is not that God needed them for the judgment so much as He desires all His creation to observe His mighty justice.

**50:5:** *“Gather my saints together unto me”* - The gathering would be to determine who has remained faithful; who had maintained the covenant they made with Jehovah. Those who have remained faithful; those who have been obedient, and offered up the sacrifice of their lives (Romans 12:1-2) would then be “gathered together unto” Jehovah God. It is evident from this verse that the Jews understood the concept of an ultimate and universal judgment. The New Testament equivalent of this passage is to be found in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.

*“Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice”* – The child of God has made a “covenant” with God; he has entered into an agreement with the Almighty. God has set forth the conditions; man must comply. Here God requires a “sacrifice” to ratify this covenant. We cannot come to God empty handed. We must bring our sacrifice of self, a living sacrifice, “holy, acceptable” unto God (Rom. 12:1-2). A missionary once drew a circle in the dirt and encouraged his listeners to cast something of value into the circle as their “sacrifice” unto God. As others cast in their offering, one young man stepped forward and placed himself into the circle. His was a covenant made

with God made by “sacrifice.” The Macedonians were commended for their sacrificial giving. They gave sacrificially because they first gave of themselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

**50:6:** *“the heavens shall declare his righteousness”* - The language is hyperbolic (exaggerated for purpose of emphasis). The heavens are depicted as shouting forth the righteousness of God. It has reference, of course, to the inhabitants of heaven. The last part of this verse tells us WHO will exercise the judgment in that day. It will not be left to mortal man. Men are partial, weak, and incapable of knowing the hearts of men. But our God is omniscient, and absolutely just. When it comes time for judgment to be pronounced we should, therefore, desire that God be the Judge. The judgment of men is flawed; not so with our Creator. He will judge according to absolute righteousness.

### **God expresses disapproval of their sacrifices Verses 7-13**

- 7 *Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify unto thee: I am God, even thy God.*
- 8 *I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices; And thy burnt-offerings are continually before me.*
- 9 *I will take no bullock out of thy house, Nor he-goats out of thy folds.*
- 10 *For every beast of the forest is mine, And the cattle upon a thousand hills.*
- 11 *I know all the birds of the mountains; And the wild beasts of the field are mine.*
- 12 *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; For the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.*
- 13 *Will I eat the flesh of bulls, Or drink the blood of goats?*

**50:7:** God now speaks for Himself. Phillips provided us with Rotherham’s interesting rendering of this verse:

Hear, O My people, and let Me speak, O Israel, and let Me admonish thee: God thy God am I [who brought thee out of the land of Egypt].

God has listened to the atheistic, blasphemous, rebellious slander of men. His patience has finally run out. As God, He has the right to speak and to expect the audience to listen. In the final judgment, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess (Romans 14:11).

When the books are opened, God will “*testify unto thee.*” The image is that of a courtroom. God will call His witnesses to prove Himself just. All men will be called to give account (2 Cor. 5:10). The books will be opened (Rev. 20:28, John 12:48). The star witness will be man himself; excuses will mean nothing and man’s sins, naked and laid open, will testify to the wicked heart of those who have rejected their Savior.

### ***What Then?***

When the great plants of our cities  
Have turned out their last finished work;  
When our merchants have sold their last yard of silk  
And dismissed the last tired clerk;  
When our banks have raked in their last dollar  
And paid the last dividend;  
When the Judge of the earth says, "Close for the night,"  
And asks for a balance - WHAT THEN?

When the choir has sung its last anthem,  
And the preacher has made his last prayer;  
When the people have heard their last sermon,  
And the sound has died out in the air;  
When the Bible lies closed on the pulpit,  
And the pews are all empty of men,  
When each one stands facing his record,  
And the great book is opened - WHAT THEN?

When the actors have played their last drama,  
And the mimic has made his last fun;  
When the film has flashed its last picture,  
And the billboard displayed its last run;  
When the crowds, seeking pleasure, have vanished,  
And gone out in the darkness again;  
When the trumpet of ages is sounded,  
And we stand up before Him - WHAT THEN?

When the bugle's call sinks into silence,  
And the long marching columns stand still;  
When the captain repeats his last order,  
And they've captured the last fort and hill;  
When the flag has been hauled from the masthead,  
And the wounded afield checked in,  
And the world that rejected its Savior  
Is asked for a reason - WHAT THEN?

**50:8:** Why would God “*reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings*”? Had He not instituted those sacrifices? Or was there something missing that was supposed to accompany those sacrifices? Barnes paraphrased this verse: “I do not accuse the nation of indifference in regard to the external rites or duties of religion. It is not on this ground that you are to be blamed or condemned” (Barnes). It is important that the external acts of worship be maintained according to the Divine pattern. But if the heart is not tuned to worship, the acts themselves are but vain oblations, even an abomination before God.

What, then, was the problem? Verse 14 gives us some help. It is in that verse that thanksgiving and paying one’s vows are mentioned, “with the implication that it was deficiency in those things that rendered their sacrifices unacceptable to God” (Coffman, 423). The deficiency lay in the absence of heart-felt worship. There was a greater emphasis upon the ACT than the ATTITUDE. Evidently Israel had ceased to be thankful for their blessings.

**50:9:** “*I will take no bullock*” - God does not NEED these animals; the sacrifices offered by Israel were not essential to God’s well-being, or existence. Those things were really immaterial in view of Who it is that received those offerings. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were types and shadows of the good things that were to come. Consequently, those sacrifices were of no value whatsoever except as they pertained to the typical aspect of the offering itself.

**50:10:** “*Every beast of the forest is mine*” - Everything belongs to God. Though men may temporarily be given the stewardship of material possessions, all things ultimately belong to Jehovah. There is a great temptation in our materialistic world to view those things which we possess as ours by right of achievement. But the things that God has placed in our hands are ours for only a short period of time. We are merely stewards of His possessions, and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2).

**50:11:** “*I know all the birds of the mountains*” - God knows their number, their nature, and their needs. Who is man to think that he can somehow, via the sacrificial offerings, provide something to the Almighty that He is in some way lacking? God is not looking for the animal sacrifice per se. He is, rather, seeking the very heart of the worshipper. Man draws near to God by obedience to His divine will.

**50:12:** *“If I were hungry”* - As in previous verses, “this language is used to show the absurdity of the supposition that he was in any way dependent on man, or that the offering of sacrifice could be supposed in any way to lay him under obligation” (Barnes). God is saying, “Even IF I were hungry, I would not tell you!”

**50:13:** This verse is especially significant because it stresses God’s spiritual nature. He is SPIRIT, not limited to or dependent upon the things physical. He does not require those sacrifices for nourishment. It was a common belief among the heathen that the gods ate and drank what was offered to them.

### **God reveals what He expects of them** **Verses 14-15**

*14 Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; And pay thy vows unto the Most High:*

*15 And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.*

**50:14:** The word rendered “offer” is from the Hebrew ‘zebahh,’ meaning “to sacrifice.” Here is the KIND of sacrifice that God desires. God wants the contrite heart expressing gratitude unto Him. We should not draw the conclusion that God did not require or approve of the animal sacrifices. God is telling us that a higher sacrifice is necessary, i.e. the sacrifice of thanksgiving that comes from deep within the heart of man. The animal sacrifices would be worthless unless they were accompanied with the heart. Or as Spurgeon paraphrased, “No longer look at your sacrifices as in themselves gifts pleasing to me, but present them as the tributes of your gratitude; it is then that I will accept them, but not while your souls have no love and no thankfulness to offer me” (Spurgeon). Keep in mind that the specific mention of “thanksgiving” and paying one’s “vows” are indications that it was precisely in these two areas that otherwise acceptable worship was rejected by God. It was the absence of thanksgiving which plunged the Gentile world into darkness (Romans 1:21). These two keys unlock heaven’s gate, and the absence of thanksgiving coupled with stinginess on the part of the worshipper will bar the door to heaven.

**50:15:** The promised blessing is conditioned upon the proper sacrifice. God’s blessings have always been conditional, in both the Old dispensation, and the New. Once the condition is met, the



blessings are bestowed. And oh, what blessings are ours! In the day of trouble we can call upon God, and He has promised that He will answer. "It is very tempestuous round about Jehovah, and yet what soft drops of mercy's rain fall from the bosom of the storm" (Spurgeon).

**God speaks 'to the wicked'**  
**Verses 16-22**

- 16 *But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, And that thou hast taken my covenant in thy mouth?*
- 17 *Seeing thou hatest instruction, And castest my words behind thee?*
- 18 *When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him, And hast been partaker with adulterers.*
- 19 *Thou givest thy mouth to evil, And thy tongue frameth deceit.*
- 20 *Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.*
- 21 *These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.*
- 22 *Now consider this, ye that forget God, Lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver:*

**50:16:** "*But unto the wicked*" - With this verse, the Psalmist turns his attention to the wicked. It should not surprise us that such wicked men as described here would be found in the sanctuary. We remind ourselves that the sons of Eli committed fornication with the women who came to the tabernacle. It is the intention of the writer to show that the high-handed, moral rebellion in which these wicked men participated would quite obviously render their worship unto Jehovah vain. Dehoff's analysis of these "wicked" men is that it speaks of "people who had no intentions of keeping God's word but sought to tread it under foot" (as quoted by Coffman, 424).

*"taken my covenant in thy mouth"* - What hypocrisy, that such men would attempt to explain the doctrines of God while refusing to live in accord with His law!! Such men make God's grace an excuse for sin. It bears repeating, "We need the grace of the doctrines as much as the doctrines of grace, and without it an apostle is but a Judas, and a fair-spoken professor is an arrant enemy of the cross of Christ" (Spurgeon). Coffman has this excellent observation: "If we may state a purely personal opinion here, it is that the greatest enemies of God

on earth today, are precisely those who are doing an incredible amount of writing about God's word, with one and only one design, namely, that of destroying all confidence in it as God's word. Thus, talking (or writing) about the word of God, and declaiming about 'his covenant' is the 'stock in trade' of the most wicked people of our generation" (Coffman, 425).

**50:17:** *"Seeing thou hatest instruction"* - Every generation produces its fair share of men and women who "hate instruction." Wise in their own eyes, they are considered fools in God's sight. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7). The "fool" in Proverbs is not one lacking in intelligence, but rather one who is obstinate (13:16; 17:10), stubborn (1:7; 17:28; 20:3; 22:15), even boorish (*naval*, Heb.; cf. Prov. 17:7; 1 Sam. 25:17). The root of the fool's foolishness is not mental but spiritual. He begins by rejecting "the fear of the Lord" (Pro. 1:29) and determining to go his own way (Pro. 1:31), closing his mind to God. Whereas the simple wanders into sin (Pro. 1:4-5), the fool plans it.

**50:18:** *"When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedst with him"* - The wicked man does not have to participate in the theft with others. He has merely to have knowledge of the wicked deed, and to consent in the action. When we observe sin, do we secretly consent to that vice? Do we look upon pornography with a certain degree of approval? Then we have "been partaker" with them; though not in deed, perhaps in desire of heart. "If we can acquiesce in anything which is not upright, we are not upright ourselves, and our religion is a lie" (Spurgeon).

The following sins appear in verses 18-20: (1) Thievery, (2) adultery, (3) evil speaking, (4) deceit, and (5) slander. All such sins are committed by those who spoke God's word but hated instruction and refused to let the word abide in the heart that they might not sin against God.

**50:19:** *"Thou givest thy mouth to evil"* - A man's spiritual health is readily judged by his tongue. While in Poltava, Ukraine, I had a need to visit a throat and ear specialists. One of the first things the doctor examined was the tongue and throat. I shall never forget his placing his utensil upon my tongue and pressing downward with a great deal of pressure so as to observe the whole of the tongue and throat. A

man's spiritual health is also judged by his tongue: "For out of the abundance of the heart a man speaketh" (Matt 12:34).

*"And thy tongue frameth deceit"* - Notice the progression. For one to "give thy mouth to evil" suggests a failure to control the tongue and keep it from gossip. But when the writer speaks of the tongue "framing deceit," there is a more deliberate kind of slander under consideration. The wicked man actually manufactures falsehood. His tongue is given over to framing deceit.

**50:20:** *"Thou speakest against thy brother"* - We can hardly image the rottenness of heart that would speak against one's brother; that would *"slander thine own mother's son."* Unfortunately, the apostate heart looses all sense of natural affection.

**50:21:** *"I kept silence"* - God's "silence" is no indication of approval. In this case there was no swift judgment. Instead, God was long-suffering, giving these wicked souls time to repent. But instead of repenting, they falsely concluded that God approved of their wicked deeds, that the Almighty was, in fact, altogether as themselves. Spurgeon paraphrased the thinking of these wicked men: "Why need believe these crazy prophets? God cares not how we live so long as we pay our tithes. Little does he consider how we get the plunder, so long as we bring a bullock to his altar!" (Spurgeon). But the time is coming when men will give an account; a time when God will reprove men for their wicked and vile deeds; a time when God will set them in order, and render final judgment upon the whole of Adam's apostate race!

**50:22:** God is merciful, compassionate, loving and kind. But there is another side of our God which men so often refuse to acknowledge. God is an angry God; He is a just God; He is a vengeful God. We must not forget, however, that God's vengeance is not emotional, nor is it arbitrary. In all cases, and that without exception, God's wrath is judicial. His gavel is not lowered in emotional duress, but in judicial proclamation.

Coffman makes a significant observation regarding the closing verses of this Psalm:

This chapter concludes with a word to both classes who shall be featured in the Judgment of the Last Day, namely the good and the bad, the wheat and the chaff, the wise and the foolish, those on the right and those on the left, the wheat and the tares, the sheep and

the goats, etc. Thus this view of the Eternal Judgment harmonizes with the view throughout the Bible, namely, that there are two classes, and only two classes, of God's human children, i.e., the saved and the lost. Both are addressed in the final two verses (Coffman, 426).

**Blessedness of the true worshipper whose  
life does not negate it**

**Verse 23**

23 *Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth me; And to him that ordereth his way aright Will I show the salvation of God.*

**50:23:** It is the "sacrifice of thanksgiving" that pleases God, and which glorifies our Creator. To the man that "ordereth his way aright," God will show the way of salvation. Such a one will be enlightened, and will come to know God's salvation. The only way one can "order his way aright" is to study God's word for direction and then make a concentrated effort to apply that word to his life. It is significant that it is the man that orders the direction of his life. This suggests that he has free will to "order" his life as he so desires.

***Lessons***

1. "One of the six fundamental doctrines of the Christian religious is that of the 'eternal judgment' (Heb. 6:2); and it is a mark of the apostasy of our current age that preachers of God's word seldom mention it; and there are congregations of allegedly Christian people all over the nation who have not heard a sermon on 'The Eternal Judgment' in years" (Coffman, 426-427).
2. It ought to concern all men what God has to say when He speaks. It is the Almighty that speaks, not angels. He speaks to all nations, not a select few. Unfortunately the vast majority of men in every age have hated instruction from God (verse 17). When men reach the point where they care not what God has to say, they have likely passed that point of no return from which spiritual recovery is nearly impossible.
3. There is a judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). All men will stand before God on that notable day and give account of why they rejected their Savior.

4. Praise and honor are given to God by doing the things that God tells us to do, the way He tells us to do them, and for the precise purpose that He would have us to them.
5. God wants us to be *thankful* – thankful for all the blessings God sends our way; thankful for His guidance; thankful for the spiritual privileges we enjoy. God also wants us to be *truthful* – to pay our vows unto the Most High as we have promised. (3) Finally, He wants us to be *trustful* – to call upon the Almighty in the times of trouble rather than trust in our riches or our own power.
5. The greatest blunder of mankind is forgetting God. Unfortunately the Western world has forgotten her God. While the world seems to think it is no great matter to forget God, there is without doubt a heavy price to pay when men fail to retain God in their memory and in their hearts.
6. Verses 16-17: Phillips provided us with this homiletic outline on these verses (Phillips, 401-402):
  - A. The worst kind of Blasphemy (50:16-17) “Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest My words behind thee”
  - B. The worst kind of Behavior (50:18): “...thou consentest [‘dids’t delight thyself with or found pleasure’] with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.”
  - C. The worst kind of Betrayal (50:19-20): “Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.”
  - D. The worst kind of Belief (50:21): “thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”

## *“The Plea of A Penitent Soul”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript says this Psalm is “to the chief Musician; A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.” Some have objected to the Davidic authorship on the grounds that verse 18 mentions the “walls of Zion.” Such complaints are not worthy of serious consideration. The Psalm is that of a soul sick with sorrow because of personal sin. Although it may describe any godly man faced with the seriousness of some sin in his life, the absence of a specific name in the subtitle leaves David as the primary candidate as its author. There is no doubt in our mind that David wrote this Psalm following his sin with Bathsheba.

### ***Analysis***

The first twelve verses contain a confession of guilt and prayer for pardon. There is a plea for mercy (verses 1-2), followed by an acknowledgement of sin (verses 3-6), followed by a plea for forgiveness (verses 7-12). The second half of the Psalm contains a description of the results that followed forgiveness (verses 13-19). The Psalmist acknowledges that he would “teach transgressors” (verse 13), his tongue would “sing” of God’s righteousness (verses 14-15), he would offer sacrifices unto God (verses 16-17), and turn his concern toward Zion (verses 18-19). We will study the Psalm under the following headings:

- I. David’s Confession (verses 1-6)
- II. David’s Cleansing (verses 7-12)
- III. David’s Commitment (verses 13-19)

### ***Commentary***

#### **David’s Confession Verses 1-6**

The first twelve verses contain a confession of guilt and prayer for pardon. There is a plea for mercy (verses 1-2), followed by an acknowledgement of sin (verses 3-6). As we go through these verses we should notice that David accepted responsibility for what he had done. There is no attempt on his part to blame others, to minimize sin, or excuse himself for what he had done.

### **Plea For Mercy** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*
- 2 *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.*

**51:1:** David employs the three most important Old Testament words to describe sin: (1) transgression (*pesha*), which means breaking the law, (2) iniquity (*`avon*), which is gross wickedness, and (3) sin (*hattat*), which means missing the mark. As in Psalms 32, there is a threefold description of forgiveness: (1) “blot out” (*mahah*) pictures the rubbing out of a debt in the account book; (2) “wash” (*kavas*) conveys the idea of washing out a dirty stain in a garment (cf. Isa. 1:18); and (3) “cleanse” (*taher*) depicts sin as a moral leprosy, the purification of which required the direct pronouncement of God.

There is an important lesson to be learned regarding sin and guilt. The burden of guilt is overwhelming. We do not want justice when we have sinned, but rather mercy from God. It is God’s “lovingkindness” and “tender mercies” that serve as a basis for God’s wonderful forgiveness. It is notable David did not excuse himself, nor did he seek to place the blame upon others. He admitted his sin and begged God for forgiveness. David’s plea was for the complete removal of the guilt of sins. Nothing less would satisfy.

**51:2:** “*Wash me thoroughly*” - Notice the absolute and thorough nature of forgiveness. God does not forgive partially. His mercy is complete, final, and irrevocable. Once sin has been forgiven, it is forgotten. The offender is treated by the offended as if the offense had never occurred. One should also note that the Psalmist cries out for the SIN to be removed, and not that the punishment be lightened. “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” (Spurgeon).

### ***Acknowledgment of Sin*** **Verses 3-6**

- 3 *For I know my transgressions; And my sin is ever before me.*  
4 *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, And done that which is evil  
in thy sight; That thou mayest be justified when thou speakest,  
And be clear when thou judgest.*  
5 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; And in sin did my mother  
conceive me.*  
6 *Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts; And in the hidden  
part thou wilt make me to know wisdom.*

**51:3:** “*I know my transgressions*” - David did not seek to hide his sin. He recognized the enormity of his sin and willingly made confession. It seems that the first part of this verse has reference to the awareness of sin, and the last to the burden of guilt that accompanies sin. Day and night, his sin was before him. Barnes noted, “The offense derived its chief heinousness from the fact that it was a violation of the law of God” (Barnes). He had disappointed God. Like a child that has done something wrong, he feels the great pangs of disappointment from his parents. “Sins may be forgiven, but their memory may leave an aching heart for a lifetime” (Coffman, 433).

**51:4:** “*Against thee, thee only*” - Sin is, first and foremost, an offense against God. When Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife, he acknowledged that to give in would be a sin against God (Ex. 39:9). Every sin is a slap in the face of God Almighty. There is a sense in which the sin is also against our fellow man, but in the final analysis, it is against God Who created man. While one may sin against his own body, against his fellow man, or against his brethren, those sins are, nonetheless, offenses against God Himself. Until men recognize this truth they will never grasp the magnitude of their wrongdoing! Sin committed is sin performed in the very sight of God. “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” (Spurgeon). R.C. Sproul summed up the seriousness of sin with these words:



Sin is cosmic treason. Sin is treason against a perfectly pure Sovereign. It is an act of supreme ingratitude toward One to whom we owe everything, to the One who has given us life itself. Have you ever considered the deeper implications of the slightest sin, of the most minute peccadillo? What are we saying to our Creator when we disobey Him at the slightest point? We are saying no to the righteousness of God. We are saying, "God, Your law is not good. My judgment is better than Yours. Your authority does not apply to me. I am above and beyond your jurisdiction. I have the right to do what I want to do, not what You command me to do." The slightest sin is an act of defiance against cosmic authority. It is a revolutionary act, a rebellious act where we are setting ourselves in opposition to the One to whom we owe everything. It is an insult to His holiness" (Sproul, 151-152).

The last part of this verse describes the "right" that God has to judge man. Separation from God because of our sins is certainly justified when we consider the fact that our sins are "against" Him.

**51:5:** There is no hint in this passage of the Calvinistic doctrine of total depravity. David did NOT say he was born a "sinner," but rather that he was "brought forth in iniquity." The iniquity was not his own, but that of another. He may have been speaking of some "iniquity" on the part of his parents, grandparents or ancestors. Or he may have been speaking of the world into which he was born. The late and lamented Gus Nichols once illustrated the truth of this passage thusly: "If I were to say, 'Behold I was brought forth in a cucumber patch, and in the field did my mother conceive me,' it does not mean that he was, therefore, a cucumber." It will help to keep in mind that sin is an individual thing. It is violation of the law of God (1 John 3:4). When one is born into this world, what law of God has been violated on the part of the new born child? (cf. Ezek. 18:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:10. One explanation of this passage has been given by Carl Garner:

Again, David is expressing his deep regret and absolute penitence in regard to his sins. Just as Paul used a form of hyperbole in 1 Timothy 1:15, speaking of himself as 'chief' of sinners, David overstates the expression of his sin to show that he is confessing and not hiding his wickedness (Garner, 316).

The passage says nothing of David's individual spiritual state, but the conditions into which he was born. He was shaped and born into a sinful environment. Unfortunately he allowed the temptations that are inherently present in this evil world to seduce him to sin.

**51:6:** *“thou desirest truth in the inward parts”* - The “inward parts” and “hidden part” have reference to the heart. Acknowledgment of sin begins in the heart. The standard is to be “truth.” It is God’s word that must rule our hearts. Only then will we be equipped to recognize sin for what it is. The man who is so equipped, is one that is wise.

### ***Plea For Cleansing*** **Verses 7-12**

- 7 Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*  
*8 Make me to hear joy and gladness, That the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*  
*9 Hide thy face from my sins, And blot out all mine iniquities.*  
*10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; And renew a right spirit within me.*  
*11 Cast me not away from thy presence; And take not thy holy Spirit from me.*  
*12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; And uphold me with a willing spirit.*

**51:7:** Words are mounted up so as to emphasize the author’s sincere plea for cleansing: “Purity,” “wash me,” “blot out,” all emphasize God’s forgiveness. As a result there is “joy,” “gladness,” “clean heart,” “right spirit” and “salvation.”

The “hyssop” was used in association with cleansing and sacrifice. See Exodus 12:22, Leviticus 14:49-51 and Numbers 19:6 and 19:18. Barnes makes this interesting observation about the Hebrew word translated “purify.” “From the word ‘hhata’ which means to sin. In the Piel form it means to bear the blame for anything; and then to atone for, to make atonement, to expiate. The idea was that the sin was to be removed or taken away, so that he might be free from it. Luther has rendered it with great force - ‘unsin me with hyssop’” (Barnes). David’s faith is manifested here, for he was convinced that when God’s ordinance was properly applied, the promise would be carried out. David both acknowledged his sin before God, and trusted in the Divine pardon that would be granted.

**51:8:** Crushed under the guilt of sin, our author longs for the blessed joy of forgiveness. He asks of God, *“Make me to hear.”* He

pleads for assurance and confidence that he may know that God's mercy has been granted. "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" (Spurgeon). When forgiveness is granted, the heart rejoices. Like the prodigal who returns to the father's house, there is music, and occasion for gladness. While sin produces crushing guilt, reconciliation brings unspeakable joy and happiness.

**51:9:** "*Hide thy face from my sins*" - This is simply a way of expressing the desire for forgiveness. Since God cannot dwell with sin, nor can His face look upon evil, then the only possible way for David to enjoy fellowship with God is for the sins to be removed.

**51:10:** "*Create in me a clean heart*" - The word translated "create" is used in Genesis 1:1. Barnes suggests that the word means "to denote an act of creation; that is, of causing something to exist where there was nothing before" (Barnes). Only God can give us a heart that is clean, renewed by His power upon the inner man. The process of reconciliation is described as a "new birth" in the New Testament.

David's desire for God to "renew" a proper spirit suggests that at some point in time prior to his fall David had a "right spirit." He was not BORN in sin and separated from God. Rather, at some point in time David turned away from God. Barnes has noted "the Hebrew word 'nachon' means that which is erect, or that which is made to stand up, or which is firm established" (Barnes). David longed for a spirit that would be firm and steadfast, unyielding to temptation. Until a man longs for such faithfulness, he will not attain unto it.

**51:11:** "*Cast me not away from thy presence*" - David must have been aware of what had happened to his predecessor, King Saul. The language comes from the idea that genuine happiness comes from being in the presence of God, or more literally, in complete fellowship and harmony with Him. The opposite of this is the absence of God's Spirit in one's life. David was simply seeking fellowship with God that would come through forgiveness of those grievous sins of which this Psalm speaks.

**51:12:** The joy that was once his had been taken away because of the guilt of sin. He was now unhappy. Forgiveness would "*restore*" the "*joy of thy salvation.*"

David's desire was that God would uphold him "with a willing spirit." This is rendered "free Spirit" in the KJV. The Hebrew ('nadib') means "willing, voluntary, ready, prompt" (Barnes). If we consider the "spirit" here to be David's spirit, then his prayer was that God would grant him an obedient attitude so that he would be willing and ready to obey God's commandments, and to serve faithfully from that day forward.

### ***Results following forgiveness*** **Verses 13-19**

- 13 *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; And sinners shall be converted unto thee.*
- 14 *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation; And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*
- 15 *O Lord, open thou my lips; And my mouth shall show forth thy praise.*
- 16 *For thou delightest not in sacrifice; Else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering.*
- 17 *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*
- 18 *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.*
- 19 *Then will thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, In burnt-offering and in whole burnt-offering: Then will they offer bullocks upon thine altar.*

**51:13:** This verse begins the second major division of the Psalm. One consequence of David's restoration would be that **he would teach** transgressors (verse 13). Reconciliation is followed by fruit bearing in the lives of those forgiven. Upon restoration David promised to teach others of God's marvelous grace. "Huntingdon's degree of S.S., or Sinner Saved, is more needful for a soul-winning evangelist than either M.A. or D.D" (Spurgeon). As a result of this instruction, sinners would be converted to the way of righteousness. Note here that conversion follows teaching and learning the ways of God.

**51:14:** Another consequence of David's restoration would be **his tongue would sing of God's righteousness** (verses 14-15). The "bloodguiltiness" is a reference to the slaying of Uriah, a sin which no doubt produced a tremendous sense of guilt in David's heart. The

word is plural and “is used probably to mark intensity, or to denote great guilt” (Barnes). While the FACT of Uriah’s death could not be reversed, the burden of guilt that was associated with the sin could be removed. It is this forgiveness for which David prays. God is the source of salvation, and the double use of God’s name emphasizes the recognition of that fact. Joy expresses itself in song. The manifestation of God’s forgiveness should naturally lead the tongue to sing of God’s gracious righteousness coupled with mercy in time of need.

**51:15:** By taking away the guilt in the heart, the heart is filled with appreciation and the lips are “opened” to sing praises. Why so many of the members of the Lord’s body sit in silence when given the opportunity to sing of God’s mercy, is a mystery to this student. Could it be that they have not come to enjoy their redemption and salvation?

**51:16:** Third, David declares ***he would offer acceptable sacrifices unto God*** (verses 16-17). The writer was not suggesting that sacrifices were not necessary. “The idea here is, that any mere external offering, however precious or costly it might be, was not what God required in such cases. He demanded the expression of deep and sincere repentance; the sacrifices of a contrite heart and a broken spirit” (Barnes). This is only one passage among many in the Old Testament that show sacrifices by themselves are of no value. The “sacrifice” must be “acceptable,” suggesting a divine standard that regulates the sacrifice. Even if the sacrifice is according to God’s pattern, if not offered with a contrite heart, that sacrifice is vain (cf. Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:10-18).

**51:17:** The double use of the word “broken” suggests a heart that was crushed under the weight of sin. “When the heart mourns for sin, thou art better pleased than when the bullock bleeds beneath the axe” (Spurgeon). The “broken heart” is suggestive of deep sorrow on the part of the sinner. There must have been a deep anguish within that called forth these marvelous words of penitence contained in this Psalm; indeed a “broken spirit.”

**51:18:** Fourth, upon restoration the Psalmist says ***his concern and attention would be toward Zion*** (verses 18-19). There is nothing in this verse that demands the walls were being “RE-BUILT.” A number of commentators have suggested that the Psalm had to have been written during the Babylonian captivity, and that the author was here seeking God’s blessings upon the restructure of

the walls of Jerusalem. But it is not necessary to adopt this supposition. Other possibilities calling for these words would include: (1) The walls may have been under construction in their ORIGINAL form at the time of this writing. (2) This may be figurative language requesting God's favor that He might bless His people AS IF the city were protected by walls and thereby rendered safe from attack by the enemy. Likely the later is the correct explanation. To David, the city of Zion represented the glory and honor of God. As a consequence of David's sin, the walls had been torn down, and Israel exposed to the blasphemies of her enemies. It was David's heart felt desire to reestablish those walls, that the glory and honor of Jehovah might stand. There is an important truth that emerges from this passage. Sin brings reproach upon God, His people, and His body, the church. When the child of God lives in sin the walls of spiritual Jerusalem are broken down. Repentance and restoration rebuilds those walls that have been destroyed by unholiness.

**51:19:** *"Then will thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness"* – God "delights" in our sacrifices when they are offered from a contrite and humble heart. Religion for "religion's sake" is no religion at all. When men bow before God and then live like the world their prayer and prostration are an abomination before God. Let us offer to God our very best. Such starts with a sacrifice of our life in humble obedience to His will (Rom. 12:1-2).

## Lessons

1. Recognition of sin is needed before forgiveness can be obtained. Notice verses 1, 4, etc;
2. Repentance is genuine sorrow for sin, and not only sorrow for being "caught" (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10).
3. Purity (verses 2 and 7), salvation (verse 12), reconciliation (verse 11), and a new heart are the fruits of humble submission before God.
4. He who has been forgiven is expected to RESPOND to God's love. Notice verse 13.
5. Conversion will only follow teaching and learning. There is no example in the pages of the Bible where someone has been saved without having first heard the Gospel (Rom. 10:17).
6. Sermon Seed: ***"Sin's Reproach"***

I. Recognition Needed (verses 1-7).

- A. Sin is Personal (“Wash **me**”)
  - B. Sin is Pernicious (“Against thee, thee only have I sinned”)
  - C. Sin is Plentiful (“I was shapen in iniquity”)
  - D. Sin is a Pollutant (“Purge me, wash me”)
- II. Repentance Demanded (verses 10, 17).
  - III. Results Granted (verses 2, 7, 11, 12, 15)
  - IV. Response Expected (verses 13-15).

## *“Blessed Is The Man Who Makes God His Strength”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes this Psalm to David. It was composed “when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul” about David’s being in the house of Ahimelech. The background can be found in 1 Samuel 21 and 22. David had fled to Ahimelech the priest at Nob. There he was supplied with bread and given the sword of Goliath. Evidently Doeg was present and reported the matter to Saul. The priests, along with Ahimelech, were arrested, tried, and sentenced. When the executioners hesitated to execute the priests, it was Doeg who fell upon them and executed them by the barbarous order from king Saul. It is the conduct of Doeg in this whole matter that is the subject of this Psalm. We have entitled this Psalm, “Blessed Is The Man Who Makes God His Strength.” The Psalm is a prophecy of God’s complete destruction of Doeg. Coffman has this added note regarding Doeg’s sin:

Our opinion is that Doeg did indeed speak with a ‘lying tongue’; he concealed from Saul the fact that Ahimelech was truly loyal to King Saul and that his helping David was no act of treason whatever. That type of report by Doeg was as malicious and unprincipled a lie as any man ever told, despite the fact of what he said having been true. The falsehood consisted in the implications of what he slanderously reported. It was like the Mate who had charge of the ship’s log during a brief illness of the Captain; and he wrote, “The Captain was sober today” (Coffman, 440).

Morgan summarized the Psalm thusly: “In this song the attitude of God toward the wicked man who is a tyrant is manifest. The mighty man who boasts himself in mischief is first put in contrast to God whose mercy endureth forever. Then follows a description of the mischief in which such a man makes his boast” (Morgan, 240). While the previous Psalm deals with the penitence of the sinner, this one deals with the presumption of the sinner.



## ***Analysis***

The Psalm is divided into three easily discernable parts. The first portion of the Psalm (verses 1-4) sets forth the character of the informant. Here was a man who was confident in himself and had little or no regard for God's goodness. He was a man whose tongue devised mischief like a "sharp razor" (verse 2). He loved evil more than good and a lie more than the truth (verse 3). The second section sets forth God's judgment upon this man. God would destroy him and remove him from the land (verse 5). The righteous would witness this divine judgment (verses 6-7). Thus we have:

- I. A Description of Doeg's Wickedness, 1-4;
- II. God's Judgment Upon Doeg, 5-7;
- III. The Character and Joy of the Psalmist, 8-9.

## ***Commentary***

### **A Description of Doeg's Wickedness *Verses 1-4***

- 1 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The lovingkindness of God endureth continually.*
- 2 Thy tongue deviseth very wickedness, Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.*
- 3 Thou lovest evil more than good, And lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah*
- 4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.*

**52:1:** "*Why boastest thyself...O mighty man*" - Although the Psalmist does not name this "mighty man," it is our opinion that he is Doeg. This seems to be true from (1) the general character of the man described in 1 Samuel 21 and 22; and (2) from the fact that he derived his power from his wealth, and not necessarily from his position. Here was a man who "boastest" in his mischief. He must have been proud in what he had achieved. Described as a "mighty man," a better word might be "tyrant." Barnes points out that the original word would mean one of power, derived either from office, or from wealth. It is sometimes applied to a hero or warrior, as in Isaiah 3:2, 2 Samuel 17:10 and Psalms 33:16. An important point to keep in mind when studying the entire incident is the fact that when Ahimelech befriended and aided David, he (Ahimelech) was totally unaware of any rift between Saul and David." Doeg immediately

seized upon the occasion to provide a false impression in the mind of Saul, which eventually led to the death of Ahimelech. The Psalmist reveals the satisfaction and pride that Doeg felt because of his well devised scheme of making it appear that Ahimelech favored David over Saul. But while Doeg may have boasted in his apparent success, it is clear that God “endureth continually” and would not allow this to pass unpunished. God would protect His friends. Although Ahimelech and the priests lost their lives, in the truest sense of the word they only gained life. The wicked cannot reach beyond this material realm. In that sense God’s protection is absolute!

**52:2:** The word “*mischiefs*” in the KJV and “*wickedness*” in the ASV, means cupidity, and then ruin and destruction. Doeg evidently used his tongue to bring about the destruction of others. He did this by providing information to the enemy of David. Note how destructive the tongue can be. The cut by a “sharp razor” is painful. Like a dagger in the back of another, so is a tongue that devises wicked things. James spoke of the destructive nature of a tongue out of control (James 3:1 ff).

**52:3:** “*Thou lovest evil more than good*” - Who can imagine a heart that loves evil more than good? Yet this describes this “mighty man” who attained greater pleasure out of “lying rather than to speak righteousness.” Doeg preferred a lie over the truth. Evidently the lie would serve his purpose better than telling the truth. Barnes makes this observation: “His conduct in this was strongly in contrast with that of Ahimelech, who, when arraigned before Saul, declared his belief that David was innocent” (Barnes). Until men hate evil and love righteousness, they will continue down the pathway of evil. A lie ingeniously framed and rehearsed in any manner is as great a sin and in the end will be seen to be as great a folly as the most bungling attempt at deception. Murder with a razor is as wicked as murder with a meat-ax or bludgeon. Both accomplish the desired end.

Let us pause and look at Doeg, the proud blustering liar. Doeg is gone, but other dogs bark at the Lord’s people. Saul’s cattle-master is buried, but the devil still has his drovers, who fain would hurry the saints like sheep to the slaughter (Spurgeon).

**52:4:** “*thou lovest all devouring words*” - What evil heart motivated this man Doeg? Here was a man who loved evil; who delighted in words that were destructive rather than constructive; whose tongue devised wickedness. Is it any wonder that the man was capable of

such evil deeds as those he performed? Here was a man who seemed to find pleasure in those things that led to destruction. The word rendered “devouring” is ‘*bela*.’ It occurs only here and in Jeremiah 51:44. The verb form occurs frequently, and it means to swallow up and then to consume or destroy.

### **The Judgment Of The Enemy** **Verses 5-7**

- 5 *God will likewise destroy thee for ever; He will take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent, And root thee out of the land of the living. Selah*
- 6 *The righteous also shall see it, and fear, And shall laugh at him, saying,*
- 7 *Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, And strengthened himself in his wickedness.*

**52:5:** “*God will*” – Yes, the “harvest time” is coming! Great promises and predictions are summed up in these words, “God will.” It may appear that wicked men succeed in their evil ways, but there is a time coming in which God will render unto men for their deeds. The language of judgment may have reference to those things which Doeg had done. As Doeg pulled the innocent out of their tents and took their lives from them, so God will remove him from his place of dwelling and punish him by removing him from the land of the living. Barnes points out that “the language in the verse is intensive and emphatic...to denote utter and absolute destruction; a complete and certain sweeping away, so that nothing should be left” (Barnes). The words “*take thee up*” are from ‘*hatha*’ which have the idea of “taking up and carrying fire or coals” (Barnes). Such is done rapidly so as to avoid getting burned. The whole of the verse is a description of the utter and complete destruction of this wicked man, and by implication, the destruction of all those who follow in the footsteps of this ungodly man.

**52:6:** There are two reasons for such swift and complete judgment upon Doeg. First, Divine judgment is designed to strike fear in the hearts of those who fear God, and to make them tremble at the judgment of God lest they fall into the same condemnation. A study of God’s judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 will show that the fear of God among the early church was a consequence of that disciplinary action exerted by the apostles upon Ananias and Sahara. Second, Divine judgment is designed to teach us that

wickedness will not and cannot triumph. When it is said that the righteous “shall laugh” it does not suggest that there is any personal joy or exultation in the suffering of the wicked. The language is a poetic reference to the satisfaction of justice against those who have wronged God and His people. There is nothing wrong with God’s faithful children desiring that God’s judgment be exercised upon wicked and evil men. Even the slain souls under the altar cried out, “how long oh God.”

Doeg was a man who sought to quench the truth. His wickedness came back upon his own head. “He troubled the land of the living, and he shall be banished to that land where the wicked cease from troubling” (Spurgeon).

**52:7:** *“But trusted in the abundance of his riches”* - The reason for the wickedness of Doeg is given. The man trusted in his riches, and not in God. He felt confident in his wealth. The vile became his god, and God became his enemy. Indeed, “Wealth and wickedness are dreadful companions; when combined they make a monster. When the devil is master of money bags, he is a devil indeed” (Spurgeon). So it is with those who follow in the steps of Doeg. And what shall be said of this man? “He found a fortress, but not in God; he gloried in his might, but not in the Almighty” (Spurgeon). Verse 6 leads into this verse and suggests that verse 7 might very well serve as a proper epitaph for the wicked man who trusts in his riches. This verse contains the words that the righteous would speak. When it comes time for us to pass through the portals into eternity, what words will men speak concerning our sojourn through life? Will we be remembered for our wealth? Will it be said of us that we did not make God our strength? What a sad, sad commentary on this man Doeg, of whom it was said, and etched into sacred writ, that he “strengthened himself in his wickedness.”

### **The Character and Joy of the Psalmist Verses 8-9**

- 8 *But as for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God: I trust in the lovingkindness of God for ever and ever.*
- 9 *I will give thee thanks for ever, because thou hast done it; And I will hope in thy name, for it is good, in the presence of thy saints.*

The Psalmist turns his attention to the righteous. Unlike the wicked who pattern their lives after Doeg, the righteous are blessed by God.

**52:8:** *“I am like a green olive-tree”* - The tree is an emblem of prosperity. While the wicked will be destroyed, the righteous will prosper. Notice the Psalmist expresses an undying trust in God. He had a strong faith that Jehovah would protect him for ever. The language here is quite beautiful. The Psalmist would be like a “green olive tree” that has been used to grace the house of God.

*“I trust in the lovingkindness of God”* - David trusted in the eternal mercy of the Almighty. Nothing is as stable or lasting as the promises of our God. The world may crumble, the skies may fall, but our God will remain faithful to His saints.

**52:9:** *“I will give thee thanks”* - There is a genuine gratitude that is expressed so often in the Psalms. Such thankfulness is the mark of a man who recognizes his absolute dependence upon God, and who has, in turn, been delivered from sin and destruction. Such was the man David. The last part of this verse expresses the author’s determination to set the right kind of example before others. But what is it that would cause David to say, *“Thou hast done it”*? What else but God’s vindication upon the wicked, and David’s deliverance from the enemy.

## Lessons

1. God’s lovingkindness is enduring. The enemy may overcome us in this life, but God’s mercy will be extended unto the faithful in the life to come. His lovingkindness cannot be destroyed.
2. The tongue is extremely dangerous. It is like a “sharp razor.” The childhood adage that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words shall never hurt me” is not always true. A good study of James 3:1-12 would aid us in a proper understanding of the danger of a tongue out of control.
3. It is simply false that all men love the truth. Some will see and recognize truth, but refuse to embrace it.
4. The saint possesses calm repose, and is like a green olive tree which adorns the house of God.

## *“Human Corruption”*

### **Introduction**

David is the author of this Psalm. There is a remarkable similarity between this Psalm and Psalm 14. Morgan sees in this Psalm a reference to the mighty works of God, while the fourteenth Psalm addresses more the knowledge that God has of men. Morgan then concludes: “All that was true of Jehovah’s knowledge of men (Psalm 14) is true also of God’s attitude toward men as the Wonder-worker. He looks on men not only as Helper, but as the supreme One. Not only do the workers of iniquity fail to discover Him as the Helper, they do not call on Him as the mighty One” (Morgan, 240).

The exact occasion of the Psalm is not known. It would appear that it was written when the wicked were attempting to destroy the people of God. Their foolishness in belief and in action is such as to call forth reference to that 14th Psalm with slight change. In Romans 3:9 ff portions of this Psalm are quoted and Paul stresses that these things were said with regard to those under the law. We conclude, therefore, that those “enemies” addressed in this Psalm may very well have been children of Israel who had abandoned their belief in God and had consequently become corrupt. In discussing the similarity between this Psalm and the fourteenth, Barnes pointed out that “both show that the belief that there is no God is not a harmless idea, or a mere speculation, but that it has important consequences on the life, and is naturally connected with a wicked life” (Barnes). We have entitled the Psalm, “Human Corruption.”

### **Analysis**

There is a cause and effect progress through this Psalm. The progress in digression will be seen as we study the Psalm. Our outline was scribbled into the margins of my large ASV Bible more than 30 years ago.

- I. Condition - the rejection and disbelief in God, verse 1;
- II. Consequences - moral degradation follows disbelief, verses 1b-4;
- III. Condemnation - they are rejected by God, and overcome of great fear within, verse 5;
- IV. Call - verse 6.

Charles Spurgeon had this introductory note:

The evil nature of man is here brought before our view a second time, in almost the same inspired words. All repetitions are not vain repetitions. We are slow to learn, and need line upon line. David, after a long life, found men no better than they were in his youth. Holy Writ never repeats itself needlessly, there is good cause for the second copy of this Psalm; let us read it with more profound attention than before. If our age has advanced from fourteen to fifty-three, we shall find the doctrine of this Psalm more evident than in our youth (Spurgeon).

## ***Commentary***

### **Condition Verse 1a**

*1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God...*

**53:1:** The Bible considers the atheist a “fool,” for the simple reason that such a one has ignored the abundant evidence which surrounds him. Once a man chooses not to believe in God, the only direction morally speaking is downward (cf. Rom. 1:18 ff). The same truth is presented in this Psalm. Once God has been dismissed from one’s mind, the individual becomes “corrupt,” practicing “abominable iniquity.” The “none” has reference to that class of men who have rejected God. It is not a description of those who still maintain faith. The atheist is, morally, as well as mentally, a fool. He is, as Spurgeon noted

A fool in the heart as well as in the head; a fool in morals as well as in philosophy. With the denial of God as a starting point, we may well conclude that the fool’s progress is a rapid, riotous, raving, ruinous one... ‘No God,’ being interpreted means no law, no order, no restraint to lust, no limit to passion. Who but a fool would be of this mind? (Spurgeon).

Even a casual perusal of this Psalm should reveal to the inquiring mind that the philosophy of atheism is not some little innocent belief or harmless error. It is the enemy of all that is right and good. If men would see the fruits of atheism in government, let him travel to any one of the countries that were dominated for nearly a century by the atheistic doctrine of socialist Russia. One does not find virtue promoted by such thinking. Left to itself, the doctrine that says there is no God produces nothing but corruption.

### **Consequences Verses 1b-4**

- 1b Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity; There is none that doeth good.*
- 2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there were any that did understand, That did seek after God.*
- 3 Every one of them is gone back; They are together become filthy; There is none that doeth good, no, not one.*
- 4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And call not upon God?*

**53:2:** Are we to imply by this chapter that NONE have sought after God? To so conclude is to deny plain scripture. What of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, David, etc. Hebrews lists numerous hosts who were faithful in their search for God. The “children of men” is often used in contrast with the “children of God.” We think it is so used here. Of all those who have rejected the evidence, are there any who are seeking after God? Are there any who understand what life is all about? Are there any who have attained unto moral righteousness? The Psalmist answers, “There is none.”

Although there are similarities between this and the 14th Psalm, there is a change in the Hebrew word for God. This Psalm uses the word ‘Elohim’ exclusively. The 14th Psalm uses both ‘Elohim’ and ‘Jehovah.’

**53:3:** Notice that the writer does not say they were “born” filthy, totally depraved, as per Calvinistic doctrine. They have BECOME filthy. Why did they so become corrupt? Because they rejected God! A careful comparison of this verse with 14:3 is quite revealing. In the 14<sup>th</sup> Psalm men were said to “turn aside.” Here they have “gone back.” The idea is that there was a departure from God. Not only does atheism produce a turning aside from all that is good and holy,



but it causes men to wax worse and worse in immorality. The 1960's and 70's declared (to their own demise) that "God is dead." Men turned aside from examining the word. Interest in God waned. The 80's and 90's find our society going backward, not forward. No, man without God does not evolve to a higher level of social utopia; instead he returns to the "monkey from which he came" (pardon our sarcasm). Certainly Spurgeon was correct in noting that "the fallen race of man, left to its own energy, has not produced a single lover of God or doer of holiness, nor will it ever do so" (Spurgeon).

**53:4:** The key to understanding this Psalm is contained in this verse. There is a contrast made between the "children of men," i.e., those who are "workers of iniquity," and the "people" of God. It is not the people of God who are become filthy but the "fool" who has abandoned his belief. Notice the characteristics of this "fool" of whom the Psalmist speaks: (1) He works iniquity; (2) He has no knowledge of God, and we suspect he is ignorant in other areas that develop virtue and goodness as well; (3) He persecutes and opposes God's people; (4) He does not call upon God, for God is nowhere to be found in his life or in his mind.

### **Condemnation Verse 5**

*53:5 There were they in great fear, where no fear was; For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: Thou hast put them to shame, because of God hath rejected them.*

**53:5:** The Psalmist points out that in some way they were in fear. This "fear" is based upon the presence of the "righteous." The idea is that those who disbelieve in God were not calm in their disbelief. Something troubled and agitated them. They wanted to disbelieve in God; but in spite of all their efforts, the evidence was so overwhelming that it produced fear within them. What "evidence," we might ask? What could there be that would cause these disbelievers to fear, "where no fear was"? The idea seems to be that outwardly they boast of their courage and philosophy which "sets them free" from what they consider to be the shackles of religion and superstition. But when push comes to shove, their rejection of God does not produce fearlessness, but rather fear, and that of the greatest sort. The great German philosopher Goethe, although highly regarded in his day, had to admit: "I have been esteemed one

of fortune's chiefest favourites; nor will I complain or find fault with the course my life has taken. Yet truly there has been nothing but toil and care; and I may say that in all my seventy-five years I have never had a month of genuine comfort. It has been the perpetually rolling of a stone which I have always had to raise anew....Men will become more clever and more acute, but not better, happier, and stronger in action or at least only at epochs." The German philosopher Nietzsche, who had a great amount of influence on Hitler, said, "Where is my home? For it do I ask and seek, and have sought, but have not found it. O eternal everywhere, O eternal nowhere, O eternal in vain." Perhaps some of the most despairing words ever spoken or penned were those of the famed Robert Ingersoll as he stood beside his brother's grave and delivered the wail of a disbeliever: "Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry." Bertrand Russell put it this way, "The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, toward the goal which few can hope to reach, and where none may tarry long." Oh yes, there is fear in their voice and most assuredly no hope beyond the grave. How sad. Spurgeon provided a correct analysis of those who believe not in God: "Without cause the wicked are alarmed. He who denies God is at bottom a coward, and in his infidelity he is like the boy in the churchyard who 'whistles to keep his courage up'" (Spurgeon).

Albert Barnes takes a different view of who it is that was in fear. He perceives the verse as a reference to those of God's people who were in fear because of the persecutions at the hands of the unbelievers. Comparing the Psalm with Psalms 14:5, he concludes that the Psalmist speaks of the "consternation of the people of God on account of the designs and efforts of the wicked" (Barnes). His conclusion is this:

In the psalm before us he says expressly that there was no ground for that fear - 'where no fear was' - and he adds, as a reason, that God had 'scattered the bones' of them 'that encamped against' them. That is, though there *seemed* to be occasion for fear, though those enemies were formidable in numbers and in power, yet God was their friend, and he had now showed them that they had no real occasion for alarm by dispersing those foes (Barnes).

**53:6:** The word for “salvation” is actually plural. Here is the Psalmist’s prayer that Israel might be delivered from the enemy, and thus rejoice. Some have objected to the authorship of David because of the Psalmist’s reference to “the captivity of his people.” But the critic must first prove to us that this “captivity” is in fact the Babylonian captivity and not some other occasion when the Psalmist considered his plight and the plight of Israel to be captivity.

The foes of Zion quake for fright,  
Where no fear was they quail;  
For well they know that sword of might  
Which cuts through coats of mail.

The Lord of old defiled their shields,  
And all their spears he scorn’d;  
Their bones lay scattered o’er the fields.  
Unburied and unmourn’d.

Let Zion’s foes be filled with shame;  
Her sons are bless’d of God;  
Though scoffers now despise their name,  
The Lord shall break the rod.

Oh! would our God to Zion turn,  
God with salvation clad;  
Then Judah’s harps should music learn.  
And Israel be glad.

### **Lessons**

1. When men say there is no God, their lives become increasingly wicked and abominable. Notice in this connection Romans 1:20 ff.
2. At times, when we are tempted to fear because of the enemy, remember that God is in control. There is no real reason to fear.
3. Man cannot make it on his own. He cannot establish an effective moral code separate and apart from God. Without divine guidance he is like a ship without a compass.

4. God will overthrow the enemies who seek to destroy the people of God;

5. We see in this Psalm

- (1) The *fact* of sin. God looks down from heaven and sees the sinfulness in the lives of men;
- (2) The *fault* of sin. It is called “iniquity,” “unrighteousness,” and a “going back” from God.
- (3) The *fountain* of sin. When men have no fear of God, they leave a void in their hearts that will issue forth in sinful and corrupt conduct. As one put it, “Men’s bad practices flow from their bad principles.”
- (4) The *folly* of sin. The man who says there is no God is here called a “fool.” Atheism is the height of foolishness if for no other reason than the fact that the atheist denies the most obvious of evidence.
- (5) The *filthiness* of sin. Such evil doers are “corrupt” (verse 1). If men could but catch a glimpse of the stain that sin leaves upon their souls, they would turn away in utter horror. But eyes blinded by participation in sin, and hearts corrupted by the love of sin will never see that blemish upon their soul and will remain filthy having no contact with the cleaning blood of the Savior. We do not know the author of the following: “What neatness soever proud sinners pretend to, it is certain that wickedness is the greatest nastiness in the world.”
- (6) The *fruit* of sin. It leads to barbarism of one’s fellow man. Like bread, the unrighteous “eat up my people.” It is astonishing to read of some of the atrocities God’s people have had to endure at the hands of the unbeliever.
- (7) The *fear and shame* that attends sin. “There were they in great fear.” Those who make God their enemy cannot find peace. “But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa 57:20).
- (8) The *faith* of the saints. Verse 6 speaks of the salvation the righteous would enjoy. The salvation those faithful patriarchs enjoyed were but a foretaste of the wonderful salvation we shall enjoy.

## ***“God Is Our Helper”***

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is believed to have been written by David, as per the subtitle. The subtitle tells us that the occasion for the writing is “when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us.” Critics would try to discredit the subtitles, but it seems that the more we study these Psalms the more dependable these subtitles become. There are two occasions to which this particular subtitle might refer. One of these is recorded in 1 Samuel 23:19, the other in 26:1. Albert Barnes had this:

It would seem not improbable that they in fact made *two* communications to Saul on the subject at different times, or that David was *twice* in their country; and that they twice endeavoured to betray him to Saul. On the first occasion, Saul, after commending them for their zeal, expressly desired them (vs 22) to return, and look carefully that they might be sure that he was there, or that he had not escaped into some other place, ‘for,’ he adds, ‘it is told me that he dealeth very subtly.’ Before making the attempt himself to seize him, he wished to be certified that he was really there. On their return, the Ziphims found that David *had* escaped to ‘Maon’ (verse 24), and they came again and informed Saul of that fact. After a vain effort on the part of Saul to find him, and after some other occurrences recorded in 1 Sam. 24, 25, it would seem that David came *again* into the country of the Ziphites, and that they again informed Saul of that fact, 1 Sam. 26:1 (Barnes).

Exactly which occasion is here indicated is not known. We have entitled this Psalm, “God Is Our Helper.”

### ***Analysis***

There are three parts to the Psalm:

- I. Prayer for Deliverance, 1-3;
- II. Confident Faith, 4-5;
- III. Promise, 6-7;

Keil suggests that the Psalm is divided into two parts, separated by the word “Selah” following verse 3. Spurgeon does likewise, and then notes: “He turns to God in prayer, and so strong was his faith that he soon sang himself into delightful serenity” (Spurgeon). Morgan had this note:

Over against the strangers risen up against the psalmist, he sets God, who is his Helper. Over against the violent men who seek after his soul he sets the Lord, who upholds the soul. The issue is perfect confidence that God will requite the evil and destroy the enemy...The central sentence of the song is, ‘God is my Helper.’ Wherever man is conscious of this fact he is superior to all the opposition of his enemies, and so is able, in the midst of the most difficult circumstances, to sing the song of deliverance (Morgan, 240-241).

## ***Commentary***

### **Prayer For Deliverance Verses 1-3**

- 1 Save me, O God, by thy name, And judge me in thy might.*
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God; Give ear to the words of my mouth.*
- 3 For strangers are risen up against me, And violent men have sought after my soul: They have not set God before them. Selah*

**54:1:** “Save me...” - The Hebrew has the idea of making wide, and the word was used frequently to refer to deliverance. Often this sort of plea carries the idea that if help is not forthcoming then the afflicted person would perish. Such seems to be the case here. The object of David’s prayer was that God might save him from the intent of the Zephites to betray him to Saul.

“*by thy name.*” - The Psalmist was asking God to employ all of the Divine attributes to bring about deliverance. The might of God would be brought to bear upon the enemies so that God’s justice might be manifest. We have in this verse an excellent example of parallelism in Hebrew poetry. God’s name and might are synonymous. Calling upon the “name” of Jehovah is seeking the power and divine attributes that are inherent in that name. The object of David’s prayer was that God would save him from the plans of the Ziphites to betray him to Saul. The word “judge” is David’s request for God to vindicate him, to declare judgment in his favor.

**54:2:** *“Hear my prayer”* - The plea was urgent. Here was an earnest request on the part of the Psalmist that God would hear and answer, and thus render aid to the soul in distress. There is great comfort in knowing that God indeed hears our prayers. When we stand in jeopardy, God will not long remain silent. “This has ever been the defense of saints. As long as God hath an open ear we cannot be shut up in trouble. All other weapons may be useless, but all-prayer is evermore available. No enemy can spike this gun” (Spurgeon).

*“Give ear to the words of my mouth”* - David’s prayer was audible. It was not the mere words which David desired that God hear, but the request behind those words. Indeed, what is prayer, if the Lord does not hear our request? After all, what is the difference between babbling nonsense and articulately framed words if God does not answer our plea? David wanted God to do more than just receive the audible sound, he wanted God to respond to his request.

Before we leave this verse please note that David, like many of the faithful and godly men in the pages of the Bible, always turned to God in times of trouble. When the trouble was past, the same godly men remembered God and offered their thanks for deliverance.

**54:3:** The *“strangers”* and *“violent men”* are one in the same. The word translated “violent men” can describe any powerful and dreaded persons, especially those who have no scruples about the use of force or treachery to obtain their wealth. These men are “strangers” in the sense that they are from another land. These were not David’s countrymen. Their determination to destroy David is due to the fact that they had not set God before them as their guide. They do not regard the authority or will of God in the matter. Both phrases refer to the Ziphites. It should not surprise us when those who know not God resort to violence to obtain their desired end.

*“They have not set God before them”* - Disbelievers persecute the righteous for no apparent reason. It would appear that atheism lay at the root of the violent persecution of the Psalmist. The primary cause of the apostasy of today’s society into the quagmire of immorality is due to the fact that men “have not set God before them.” Little, if any thought is given to the will of God when it comes to our business, recreation, or personal life. God is not before them in thought, nor is He before them leading the way when it comes to making moral and ethical decisions. The Almighty has been relegated to last place and our nation is the worst for it.

This verse ends with the musical note, “Selah.” It is generally agreed that the word is designed to call for a pause, or reflection upon what has gone before. “It may also be observed, that more pauses would, as a rule, improve our devotions: we are usually too much in a hurry: a little more holy meditation would make our words more suitable and our emotions more fervent” (Spurgeon).

### **Confident Faith** **Verses 4-5**

4 *Behold, God is my helper: The Lord is of them that uphold my soul.*

5 *He will requite the evil unto mine enemies: Destroy thou them in thy truth.*

**54:4:** “Behold, God is my helper” - Here is the central thought of the Psalm. In all circumstances, **“God is my helper.”** While the enemies rage, David has One on his side Who sustains him. As David looks upon those who might serve as his helpers, he realizes there is help available that far surpasses that of men. Knowing that God is on his side, his soul is filled with joy and cannot help but cry out to others, “Behold!” How comforting to know that God is our helper. What does it matter who might be our foes when we come to realize that God is our helper? The last part of the verse seems to suggest that others of like precious faith lent encouragement to David. They would “uphold” his soul. And who were these helpers of David? We agree with brother Coffman that “they were all Israel who loved the Lord, and who prayed to be rid of the blatant paganism of Saul” (Coffman, 451). Together, with God on their side, victory would be theirs. “Like a string of zeroes, our many friends stand for nothing, unless the Lord sets himself as a unit in front of them; then their number is innumerable” (Spurgeon).

**54:5:** There is a “confident faith” expressed in verses 4 and 5. Those who do evil unto God’s righteous servants will face the vengeance of God. It is God who will “requite” evil unto those who do not set God before them. Barnes tells us that “the original word here means literally, *to twist, to twist together*; then, to press together...*to oppress*, or to treat as an enemy” (Barnes). David’s request and desire was not for any personal or private vindication, but rather because of his love for the truth. One is amazed at the great number of diluted souls who believe that God is so loving that He will never



punish anyone for their sins. This verse, and others like it, informs us that God will ultimately bring justice upon those who oppose Him and His cause. “It is appointed, and so it must ever be, that those who shoot upward the arrows of malice shall find them fall upon themselves” (Spurgeon).

### **Promise Verses 6-7**

- 6 *With a freewill-offering will I sacrifice unto thee: I will give thanks unto thy name, O Jehovah, for it is good.*  
7 *For he hath delivered me out of all trouble; And mine eye hath seen my desire upon mine enemies.*

**54:6:** These last two verses contain a promise from the Psalmist. He would (1) offer a free will offering, and (2) give thanks. Here are the two inseparable aspects of authorized worship. The offering without the heartfelt thanks is not acceptable. David’s offering would be “freewill” in the sense that it was without constraint or compulsion. At the same time gratitude without submission to God’s will is not genuine love. In our approach to God we must worship in spirit, and in truth (John 4:24).

**54:7:** Rawlinson shared Dr. Kay’s rendering of this verse: “Mine eye has looked calmly and leisurely upon my defeated enemies” (Rawlinson, 112). A common theme throughout the Psalms is the deliverance that God granted unto David. There were occasions when David did not SEE that deliverance, only the end result. Here, however, David evidently witnessed the deliverance. If not, then David viewed with the eye of faith the deliverance that he believed would most certainly be his. Or as Cheyne put it, “The poet looks forward, and treats the future as the past” (Rawlinson, 112).

### **Lessons**

1. God is the helper of those who are oppressed. When men betray us, God will remain faithful.
2. David was a man of prayer. In times of trouble he prayed to God. In times of deliverance he gave thanks.
3. In view of what God has done for us, we should be willing and anxious to give unto Him our gratitude, thanksgiving, and appropriate offering.

4. It is a terrible thing to be in the camp of those who are God's enemies. He will vindicate His righteous cause and destroy the unrighteous who oppose Him.

5. In the Psalm we see:

I. Peril moving to prayer (vs 1-3);

II. Prayer inspiring confidence (vs 4);

III. Confidence anticipating deliverance (vs 5);

IV. Deliverance awakening praise (vs 6).

6. "In closing, let us trust that if we are friendless as this man of God, we may resort to prayer as he did, exercise the like faith, and find ourselves ere long singing the same joyous hymn of praise" (Spurgeon).

## ***“God, The Deliverer of the Bereaved”***

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David. It is “for the chief musician, on stringed instruments. Maschil of David.” There is nothing in the Psalm which would suggest that someone other than David wrote the Psalm. The time cannot be definitely determined, but every indication points to either (1) Absalom’s rebellion against his father or (2) the rebellion of Ahithophel. Notice verses 12-14. David had a great love for his son Absalom, and when the young man turned on David, it discouraged the King very much. David’s deep love for Absalom can be seen in the lament over the loss of his son in 2 Samuel 18:33. Keil was a little more dogmatic in declaring that “this Old Testament Judas is none other than Ahithophel, the right hand of Absalom” (Keil & Delitzsch, 156). If he is correct, this Psalm, like Psalm 41, belongs to the four years in which the rebellion of Absalom was forming, when the young man’s party was so sure of their cause that they had no need to make any secret of it. We tend to think Keil and Delitzsch are correct and that Ahithophel is the one who is spoken of in the Psalm. We have entitled this Psalm, “God, The Deliverer Of The Betrayed.”

### ***Analysis***

G. Campbell Morgan provided us with this excellent analysis of the Psalm:

This is the outcry of a man of faith in sore peril. The emotional nature is moved to its very center, and tides of deep feeling surge through his soul...Three movements are present. The first is fear. So terrible is this fear that the man fain would fly away and escape it all (verses 1-8). The troubled heart then breaks forth into fury. So mean is the method of the foe that the anger of the man is aroused, and he cries for vengeance against the oppressor (verses 9-15). He then appeals to God, and at once declares that he is delivered. Fear leads only to desire to flee. Fury only emphasizes

the consciousness of wrong. Faith alone creates courage (Morgan, 241).

Albert Barnes suggested the following outline of the Psalm:

- I. Prayer of the Psalmist that God would hear his cry, 1-3;
- II. A description of his troubles and sorrows, 4-8;
- III. The causes of his trouble, 9-14;
- IV. Prayer for the destruction of his enemies, 15;
- V. Confidence in God, 16-21;
- VI. An exhortation to trust in God, 22-23.

For our study we will follow Morgan and use the headings (1) Fear (verses 1-8), Fury (verses 9-15), and Faith (verses 16-23).

## **Commentary**

### **Fear Verses 1-8**

- 1 *Give ear to my prayer, O God; And hide not thyself from my supplication.*
- 2 *Attend unto me, and answer me: I am restless in my complaint, and moan,*
- 3 *Because of the voice of the enemy, Because of the oppression of the wicked; For they cast iniquity upon me, And in anger they persecute me.*
- 4 *My heart is sore pained within me: And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.*
- 5 *Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, And horror hath overwhelmed me.*
- 6 *And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then would I fly away, and be at rest.*
- 7 *Lo, then would I wander far off, I would lodge in the wilderness.*  
*Selah*
- 8 *I would haste me to a shelter From the stormy wind and tempest.*

In these eight verses we see David praying, weeping, and trembling. We are provided a glimpse into the heart of this great man of God and we see our emotions mirrored in him.

**55:1-2:** “Give ear to my prayer” - The situation was desperate. David needed God’s help. He recognized that God, and God alone,

could provide deliverance. The terms describing David's prayer are interesting: "*give ear,*" "*hide not,*" "*attend unto me,*" "*answer me,*" and "*complaint.*"

*"Hide not thyself from my supplication"* - In ancient times, when a man saw his neighbor in some distress, and then turned away, deliberately passing him by, it was said that he "hid his face" from the one in need. David begs that God would not treat him as one who would "hide his face" from one in need. The faith of David shines in this Psalm. He believed that God would answer prayer. These words describe an earnest endeavor on the part of the Psalmist to gain a favorable ear from the One Who could help.

*"I am restless in my complaint, and moan"* - We have seen David praying. Here we see David weeping. The word translated "restless" (ASV) and "mourn" (KJV) means "to wander about; to ramble...and then to inquire after, to seek, as one does 'by running up and down'" (Barnes). It is not so much that David was mourning because of his affliction, as it is that he was in deep distress and seeking for answers regarding his circumstance.

*"moan"* - God's people do not complain **of** Him, but **to** Him. They let their supplications and requests be made known (Phil. 4:6). Inability to put the heart's desires in words produce groanings from within which the Spirit takes before the throne of God. As David "moaned," so do we. "Such expressions are not merely indications of deep feeling, but they are among the appointed means of relief. They are the effort which nature makes to throw off the burden, and if they are without murmuring or impatience they are not wrong" (Barnes).

*"in my complaint"* - The word is not used to denote a complaint in the sense that we use the English word, but rather in the sense of deep distress. It is the language of a *troubled heart*.

**55:3:** *"Because of the voice of the enemy"* - Here is WHY David was asking God to listen. There were several things that the enemy was doing for which David was seeking help from God. First, there was the "voice" of the enemy. Likely they were spreading gossip to destroy the character of David. Second, they were "oppressing" him. The word rendered "oppressing" occurs nowhere else. The verb from which it is derived occurs in Amos 2:13. The idea is that of crushing by a heavy weight. Third, they were casting "iniquity" upon him. Evidently the enemy was charging David with iniquity in order to

justify their wickedness in rebelling against the king. It is as if they were suggesting that David DESERVED to be treated in this manner. “They black me with their sootbags, throw the dust of lying over me, cast the vitriol of their calumny over me. They endeavour to trip me up, and if I do not fall they say I do” (Spurgeon). The “wicked” alluded to here was Absalom and those who were united with him in his rebellion. Finally they were “persecuting” him. This is probably physical persecution. The underlying reason for this persecution was the “anger” on the part of David’s enemies. It is often the case that men become “angry” with us for no other reason than the fact that we live righteous lives. “Cain was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother’s righteous” (1 John 3:12).

**55:4:** “*My heart is sore pained within me*” – It is a mystery why the ungodly not only refuse to accept God’s word and obey it, but they go beyond their own rejection of God’s will and seek to silence those who teach and instruct others. Note the terms used to describe David’s feelings and the important truths we can learn. First, his “*heart is sore pained.*” Barnes points out that this word means to turn round; to twist; to dance in a circle; to be whirled round; and then to twist or writhe with pain (Barnes). The words suggest a tender and compassionate heart on the part of David. Second, there must have been a realization on the part of David that death was always near. “*The terrors of death are fallen upon me.*” There was only a step between himself and death (1 Sam. 20:3). Had Absalom and Ahithophel gained control of the kingdom there was no doubt that David would have been speedily executed. Third, David was overwhelmed with “*fearfulness and trembling*” (verse 5). The key to victory, however, was that David did not allow the fear to cause him to take his eyes off God. Finally, “*horror hath overwhelmed*” David (verse 5). All of these terms describe a man who is perplexed and troubled. Indeed, “nobody ever described a wounded heart like David” (Adam Clarke). Some have concluded that the Psalmist was speaking prophetically of our Lord, for when our Lord was in the garden His soul was “exceeding sorrowful even unto death” (Matt 26:38). The cries of David are the cries of our Lord.

**55:5:** “*Fearfulness and trembling*” - The Psalmist felt the horror of the enemy coming upon him. The anguish “overwhelmed” him. “The sly, mysterious whisperings of slander often cause a noble mind more fear than open antagonism; we can be brave against an open

foe, but cowardly, plotting conspiracies bewilder and distract us” (Spurgeon).

“*Horror*” - The original occurs only in three other places: Job 21:6, rendered “trembling”; Ezekiel 7:18, rendered also “horror”; and Isaiah 21:4, rendered “fearfulness.” It refers to a state of mind and spirit when someone is greatly disturbed with fear.

**55:6:** “*Oh that I had wings like a dove!*” - What man is there who has never experienced exactly the same feeling? But “attractive as such thoughts may seem to be, God’s servants must stand up to life like it is” (Coffman, 455). The reference is to the turtledove, and Barnes informs us that these doves are never tamed. “Confined in a cage, they droop, and they sigh for ‘A lodge in some vast wilderness’” (Barnes). Surely there is such a place of reprieve; a refuge from all of life’s ills and heartaches. We view that place with the eye of faith. And though it is not to be found this side of eternity, we confidently hope to arrive on the shore of that beautiful home of soul at the end of our pilgrimage. Meanwhile, we must face the trials and tribulations of life with courage and determination to remain faithful to our God, no matter what might come our way. “It is cowardly to shun the battle which God would have us fight. We had better face the danger, for we have no armour for our backs” (Spurgeon).

Be Strong

Be Strong!

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;  
We have hard work to do, and loads to lift;  
Shun not the struggle--face it; 'tis God's gift.

Be Strong!

Say not, "The days are evil. Who's to blame?"  
And fold the hands and acquiesce--oh shame!  
Stand up, speak out and bravely, in God's name.

Be strong!

It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,  
How hard the battle goes, the day how long;  
Faint not -- fight on!  
Tomorrow comes the song.

--Maltbie Davenport Babcock

**55:7:** “*Lo, then would I wander far off, I would lodge in the wilderness*” - The desire to escape the storms of life is natural. But

the storms of life develop character and teach us patience. They help our faith to grow.

*"I would lodge in the wilderness"* - An unknown poet wrote:

O solitude, where are the charms  
That sages have found in thy face?  
Better dwell in the midst of alarms  
Than reign in this horrible place

There is great strength in solitude, but God does not intend for us to dwell there permanently.

The verse ends with "Selah." We should pause and reflect upon what has been said. Perhaps the meditation upon David's horrible plight would give us a deep appreciation for the freedom we enjoy. Should that time come when we find ourselves being pursued and persecuted because of righteousness sake we may well remember that the Psalmist suggested that we take time to pause and rest lest we forget that God is on our side.

**55:8:** *"I would haste me to a shelter"* - David tells his audience that in times of trouble he would hasten to a place of refuge.

*"The stormy wind and tempest"* - Life is filled with its storm clouds and fierce wind that would sweep us away. It is only natural for the child of God to flee in times of trouble to the Rock that can provide protection.

When your troubles overwhelm you  
And your nights are far too long,  
When your heart is filled with sorrow  
And everything goes wrong...

Just remember God who loves you;  
He's your very special Friend;  
Ask Him for His help and trust Him;  
On His help you can depend.

God is always there beside you;  
He will hear your anguished prayers  
If you call on Him to help you,  
For God loves you and He cares.  
--Delphine LeDoux



## Fury Verses 9-15

- 9 *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.*  
10 *Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it.*  
11 *Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.*  
12 *For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:*  
13 *But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.*  
14 *We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*  
15 *Let death come suddenly upon them, Let them go down alive into Sheol; For wickedness is in their dwelling, in the midst of them.*

Spurgeon's summary of this section is worth sharing with our readers:

The rabble and their leaders were plotting and planning, raging and contending against their king, running wild with a thousand mad projects: anarchy had fermented among them, and the king hoped that now it might come to pass that the very lawlessness which had exiled him would create weakness among his foes. Revolution devours its own children. They who are strong through violence, will sooner or later find that their strength is their death. Absalom and Ahithophel may raise the mob, but they cannot so easily rule it, nor so readily settle their own policy as to remain firm friends (Spurgeon).

**55:9:** “*Destroy*” is translated from a word which means to swallow up, to devour. See similar passages in Isaiah 28:4, Exodus 7:12, Jonah 1:17, and Jeremiah 51:34. David prayed that his enemies might be devoured by God's justice. The request that God “*divide their tongue*” is an allusion to the confusion of tongues at Babel.

“*strife in the city*” - Barnes concluded that “perhaps he had learned that among the conspirators there was not entire harmony, but that there were elements of strife and discord which led him to hope that their counsels would be confounded” (Barnes, QV). We prefer to

view this as the “fruit” of Absalom’s rule. When rulers establish their throne by violence, there is no reason to expect the people to act any different.

**55:10:** *“Iniquity also and mischief are in the midst of it”* - Jerusalem had become a den of violence and wickedness. The rebels went about spreading their lies and innuendoes against David the king. They did this day and night. Consequently “iniquity and mischief” arose within the city. Upon the walls, within the walls, and throughout the city, there was naught but mischief and violence.

**55:11:** *“Wickedness is in the midst”* - Spurgeon wrote, “The very heart of the city was base. In her places of authority crime went hand in hand with calamity. All the wilder and more wicked elements were uppermost; the canaille were commanders; the scum floated uppermost; justice was at a discount; the population was utterly demoralized; prosperity had vanished and order with it” (Spurgeon). What a terrible predicament in which the nation found itself. The king had been defamed; virtue was reviled and vice was regarded as right. “The forum was the fortress of fraud, the congress was the convention of cunning” (Spurgeon). No wonder David cried out for God to listen!

**55:12:** *“It was not an enemy that reproached me”* – David’s “enemy” was one of his close acquaintances. It would have been much easier to deal with had his foe been someone that opposed him openly.

*“Reproached”* means to slander or to abuse. When he says that it was not an enemy that did this, the meaning is that it was not one who had been an avowed and open foe. It was the hypocritical claims of those close to David, and who then betrayed him, that hurt David the most. We expect our enemies to speak evil of us. But when those who are our supposed “friends” turn against us, it hurts deeply. Indeed, “The slanders of an avowed antagonist are seldom so mean and dastardly as those of a traitor, and the absence of the elements of ingratitude and treachery renders them less hard to bear” (Spurgeon).

**55:13:** *“It was thou, a man mine equal”* - We can almost image this traitor, at some point in time, actually standing in the very presence of the Psalmist. “It is you, you traitor!” Here was *“a man mine equal...My companion...familiar friend.”* The marginal note, “a man

according to my rank...equal-souled, like-souled, 'second self.'" It is this verse which leads us to conclude that the traitor was Ahithophel rather than Absalom. The word translated "companion" is derived from the verb *"to know."* This was one from whom no secrets were kept. The phrase denotes a more intimate friend than would be suggested by the word *acquaintance*. It is language used to describe the most intimate of friends. Barnes tells us that this word speaks of "one well known by us; that is, one who keeps no secrets from us, but who permits us to understand him thoroughly" (Barnes).

**55:14:** *"We took sweet counsel together"* - David was saying that they opened their minds one to another, and shared their plans and dreams. Betrayal by such an enemy is the worst kind.

*"We walked in the house of God"* - There is no fellowship sweeter than the tie that binds us in Christ. The sweet communion that exists between those of like fellowship is unequalled this side of heaven. How bitter must be the disappointment when such a one in whom we have placed our confidence turns their back and drives the sword of hypocrisy deep into our heart! "Of the serpent's brood some vipers still remain, who will sting the hand that cherished them, and sell for silver those who raised them to the position which rendered it possible for them to be so abominably treacherous" (Spurgeon).

**55:15:** *"Let death come suddenly upon them"* - As in all of the imprecatory Psalms, David (and other writers) never sought personal vengeance, but justice. Some have seen here a prediction of the sudden destruction which should fall on the ringleaders in this rebellion. Ahithophel, seeing his counsel rejected, eventually hanged himself. Absalom was defeated, and fleeing away, he was suspended by his hair in a tree, under which his mule had passed. Those who supported the rebellion were almost all cut off. They fell by the sword, or perished in the woods. See 2 Samuel 18:8.

*"wickedness is in their dwelling"* - We can scarcely imagine the depraved heart which is now brought to our attention. Such men do not deserve to live. "They are too bad to be spared, for their houses are dens of infamy, and their hearts fountains of mischief. They are a pest to the commonwealth, a moral plague, a spiritual pestilence, to be stamped out by the laws of men and the providence of God" (Spurgeon). Wickedness abounds in their business transactions, their daily lives, and worst of all, in their hearts.

## Faith Verses 16-23

- 16 *As for me, I will call upon God; And Jehovah will save me.*  
17 *Evening, and morning, and at noonday, will I complain, and moan; And he will hear my voice.*  
18 *He hath redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me; For they were many that strove with me.*  
19 *God will hear, and answer them, Even he that abideth of old, Selah The men who have no changes, And who fear not God.*  
20 *He hath put forth his hands against such as were at peace with him: He hath profaned his covenant.*  
21 *His mouth was smooth as butter, But his heart was war: His words were softer than oil, Yet were they drawn swords.*  
22 *Cast thy burden upon Jehovah, and he will sustain thee: He will never suffer the righteous to be moved.*  
23 *But thou, O God, wilt bring them down into the pit of destruction: Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; But I will trust in thee.*

**55:16:** David was not interested in answering the adversary in the same manner in which he had been treated. While they sought to do David harm, this “man after God’s heart” would “call upon God.” We are convinced the Psalm is prophetic of our Savior. We are given a glimpse at how Jesus would answer His enemies.

**55:17:** “*Evening, and morning, and at noonday*” - Note the frequency of David’s devotion. Evening refers to the beginning of a new day (according to Jewish measurement of time), the “*morning*” would be when he awoke, and noonday refers to the midst of the day’s busy activities. The Psalmist simply means that he will pray without ceasing (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17). “When our window is opened toward heaven, the windows of heaven are open to us. Have but a pleading heart and God will have a plenteous hand” (Spurgeon).

Here are some things we may learn about prayer. First, prayer is from the heart. Having meditated, David cried aloud. The true nature of prayer is lifting up the heart to God, not simply articulating words and phrases. Second, prayer that is acceptable is prayer that is frequent. David prayed evening, morning and noon. It was his practice and he continued that practice during times of persecution as well as times of prosperity. It was Daniel’s practice to pray three times a day (Dan. 6:10), and noon was one of Peter’s regular

occasions for prayer (Acts 10:9). “He shall hear my voice, and not blame me for coming too often, but the oftener the better, the more welcome” (unknown author). My father-in-law shared the following with me from an article he clipped some years ago:

I met God in the morning  
When my day was at its best,  
And his presence came like sunrise,  
Like a glory in my breast.  
All day long the Presence lingered,  
All day long he stayed with me,  
And we sailed in perfect calmness  
O'er a very troubled sea.  
Other ships were blown and battered,  
Other ships were sore distressed,  
But the winds that seemed to drive them  
Brought to us a peace and rest.  
Then I thought of other mornings,  
With a keen remorse of mind,  
When I too had loosed the moorings,  
With the Presence left behind.  
So I think I know the secret,  
Learned from many a troubled way:  
You must seek him in the morning  
If you want him through the day.

**55:18:** “*He hath redeemed my soul*” - The language here is that of confidence and assurance. There are a number of occasions in the Psalms where the writer is so certain that what he prays for will come to pass, that he treats it as if his prayer has already been answered. “Faith sees as well as foresees; to her foresight is sight” (Spurgeon).

“*they were many that strove with me*” - The Holy Scriptures record the numerous enemies that David had, so as to present an accurate anti-type of our Lord. It is astonishing that the righteous are so often persecuted for no other reason than the fact that they are righteous. It is this peculiar lot of God’s saints that appears so often in the Bible.

Note that David said God “redeemed my soul in peace.” The deliverance had come. David was now safe. But he was also at peace; serenity was his to enjoy.

**55:19:** “*God will hear and answer them*” – Of course God does not “hear” and “answer them” as He hears and answers His saints. The

echo of an unruly tongue is not confined to the physical realm. God will hear their slander, and he will “*answer them.*” Yes, the accusations against David entered into the ears of the Almighty.

“*He that abideth of old*” - God is the “Ancient of days,” He who is from everlasting to everlasting. This most amazing thought calls forth from the Psalmist the need for sober reflection. He calls for a pause. “*Selah,*” give consideration; pause and mediate upon this one fact: our God “abideth of old.”

“*The men who have no changes*” - These men who sought David’s life had enjoyed, and continued to enjoy, prosperity. This no doubt troubled David, as it would most men. The fear of God is not in their heart, nor is the righteousness of God manifested in their life. But happiness is not measured by the hear and now, and the Psalmist would note within just a short time how these men would be brought down to the “pit of destruction” (verse 23).

“Long continued ease and pleasure are sure to produce the worst influences upon graceless men: though troubles do not convert them, yet the absence of them makes their corrupt nature more readily develop itself. Stagnant water becomes putrid. Summer heat breeds noxious insects. He who is without trouble is often without God” (Spurgeon). Albert Barnes had this interesting analysis of this verse:

The meaning of the original is not exactly expressed in our common version. According to that version, the idea would seem to be that the fact that they meet with no changes or reverses in life, or that they are favoured with uniform prosperity, is a reason why they do not fear or worship God. This may be true but it is not the idea here. The meaning is, that the God who is unchanging - who is always true and just - will ‘afflict,’ that is, will bring punishment on those who heretofore have had no changes. How many such there are upon the earth, who argue secretly that because they have always been favoured with success, therefore they are safe; who, in the midst of abundant prosperity, of unchanging ‘good fortune,’ as they would term it, worship no God, feel no need of religion, and are regardless of the changes of life which may soon occur, and even of that one great change which death must soon produce (Barnes).

**55:20-21:** The Psalmist now returns to a discussion of this one who had betrayed him. The wicked man of whom the Psalmist speaks had feigned kindness; promises had been broken. Outwardly his “mouth was smooth as butter,” and “his words softer than oil.” But inwardly, “his heart was war,” and his words nothing more than “drawn swords.” Note carefully the implied capability of destroying another by the words which we speak. “He lauded and larded the man he hoped to devour. He buttered him with flattery and then battered him with malice. Beware of the man who has too much honey on his tongue; a trap is to be suspected where the bait is so tempting” (Spurgeon).

*“his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.”* What appeared as kindness personified, was the epitome of evil. How often have men graced us with their words, only to stab us in the back with the slander and hatred.

**55:22:** *“Cast thy burden upon Jehovah”* - What a marvelous promise we have in this verse. Life’s burdens are heavy. Only God can sustain us in times of need. Whatever comes our way, we are to cast our troubles upon the Lord and trust in Him. Barnes points out that the literal rendering of the passage should be, “Cast upon Jehovah what he hath given (or laid upon) thee; that is, they lot” (Barnes).

*“He will sustain thee”* - God is our strength. He will sustain us in times of trouble. He will never allow us to be moved. Though men may be faithless, and may in fact move themselves far from their God, Jehovah has promised us that the enemy, no matter how great, cannot come between a man and his God.

**55:23:** The thought in this verse is the utter destruction of the wicked. God will bring them *“down into the pit of destruction.”* They will *“not live out half their days.”* It appears from the closing portion of this verse that the wicked simply did not trust in God. This was their ultimate failure. In contrast, David would trust in God and his reward would be life, both in quality and in quantity.

*“Shall not live out half their days”* - “Such men are either cut off in strife and conflict, in personal affrays in duels, or in battle; or they are arrested for their crimes, and punished by an ignominious death. Thousands and tens of thousands thus die every year, who, but for their evil deeds, might have doubled the actual length of their lives; who might have passed onward to old age respected, beloved, happy

and useful” (Barnes). We must keep in mind, however, that this is a general rule, and there are always exceptions to the rule.

### ***Lessons***

1. Perhaps the greatest lesson in this Psalm is the truth that no matter how men may treat us, God is still going to take care of us. Even in David’s situation there was a ray of light.
2. Notice verse 22. Too often we fail to cast our burdens upon the Lord - REALY cast our burdens upon Him. How many times have we tried to solve our problems ourselves, rather than trust in God to take care of us?
3. Adam Clarke: “In singing this psalm we may, if there be occasion, apply it to our own troubles; if not, we may sympathize with those to whose case it comes nearer, foreseeing that there will be, at last, indignation and wrath to the persecutors, salvation and joy to the persecuted” (Adam Clarke).



## *“I Put My Trust In Thee”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle says that this Psalm was written by David “when the Philistines took him in Gath.” Though we have no record of the Philistines capturing David, it does not mean that it did not occur. There are a number of things in David’s life which are not recorded in Holy Scriptures. Barnes thinks the subtitle refers to

[T]he event recorded in 1 Samuel 21:10, when David, fleeing from Saul, took refuge in the country of Achish, king of Gath, and when the ‘servants’ of the king of Gath made him known to Achish, whose fears they so aroused as to lead him to drive the stranger away. The words ‘took him in Gath’ refer not to their *apprehending* him or seizing him, but to their following him, or overtaking him, to wit, by their calumnies and reproaches, so that he found no safety there (Barnes).

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we are given a glimpse of David’s wonderful optimism. Even in times of trouble and distress, David maintained his faith in God and continued to sing praises to the Almighty. The Psalm can be divided as follows:

- I. An earnest PRAYER on the part of the Psalmist, 1-2;
- II. An expression of TRUST in God, 3-4;
- III. A description of the ENEMY, 5-6;
- IV. CONFIDENCE that God would intercede, 7-9;
- V. The FAITH of the Psalmist, 10-13.

Coffman has this interesting introductory note: “A person asked this writer, not long ago, why did David have so many enemies? The answer is that as a type of Christ, anything less than the constant enmity of the world would have been incorrect” (Coffman, 464). Our enmity with the world is a common lot that we share with the Christ. So long as truth and error exist side by side, there will always be an

arena for battle. Paul has told us that those that live godly lives in Christ Jesus WILL SUFFER PERSECUTION (2 Tim. 3:12).

## **Commentary**

### **Prayer**

#### **Verses 1-2**

*1 Be merciful unto me, O God; For man would swallow me up: All the day long he fighting oppresseth me.*

*2 Mine enemies would swallow me up all the day long; For they are many that fight proudly against me.*

**56:1-2:** “*man would swallow me up*” - David recognized his need for God’s help. He was in danger of being “swallowed” by the enemy. The word means to “breathe hard; to pant; to blow hard; and then, to pant after, to yawn after with open mouth. The idea is, that men came upon him everywhere with open mouth, as if they would swallow him down whole” (Barnes). This was done on a daily basis. There was no let up. The circumstance demanded God’s help. The enemy would not simply wound him, but would seek to completely swallow him up so as to make an end of him. The enemy boasted in their strength; they fought “proudly” against David. The word for “enemy” in verse 2 has a marginal note, “They that lie in wait for me.” The Hebrew means to “twist, to twist together,” and is used to describe a rope that has been twisted together. The plural here suggests that the enemy had so bound themselves together as to assure greater strength by reason of sheer numbers.

### **Trust**

#### **Verses 3-4**

*3 What time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee.*

*4 In God I will praise his word, In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; What can flesh do unto me?*

**56:3:** When David was afraid, he turned to God. The faith of David is clearly presented in this Psalm. He was willing to admit that there were times when he was afraid. This was especially true when his life was threatened. Barnes points out that “there is a natural fear of danger and of death; a fear implanted in us (a) to make us cautious, and (b) to induce us to put our trust in God as a Preserver and Friend” ( Barnes). It is not the emotion of fear that is sinful, but the

lack of faith to act in SPITE of fear that is condemned in the scriptures. “Faith is a deliberate act in defiance of one’s emotional state” (Coffman, 446). The means of overcoming that fear is provided by the Psalmist: “I will put my trust in thee.” Barnes points out that genuine faith is “the feeling that whatever may be the result, whether life or death, it will be such as God sees to be best” (Barnes). It is possible for fear and faith to occupy the mind at the same moment, but it is not possible for both fear and faith to act upon the will and determination of the heart. The words of the Psalmist are words to live by. Trust in God robs fear of its terror. Morgan’s concluding words on this chapter are fitting: “It is a gracious thing to know God well enough to be able resolutely to trust Him when fear possesses the heart. It is a much finer thing to trust Him so completely as to have no fear. Both ways lead homewards, but the former is low level traveling, while the latter is high level” (Morgan, 241).

**56:4:** *“I will praise his word”* – David would “praise is word” because the promises of God are contained therein. It is because God has SAID He will care for us, that we can believe it to be so.

*“What can flesh do to me?”* - The question is certainly relevant, especially in this dispensation of greater revelation. “What **can** flesh do unto me?” What **can** the enemy of God possibly do to will destroy the people of God? Suppose they inflict pain? It is only temporary! Suppose they take our life? We simply enter into the presence of God! Indeed, “Faith exercised, fear is banished, and holy triumph ensues, so that the soul asks, ‘What can flesh do unto me?’” (Spurgeon).

### **Enemy Verses 5-6**

- 5 *All the day long they wrest my words: All their thoughts are against me for evil.*
- 6 *They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, They mark my steps, Even as they have waited for my soul.*

**56:5-6:** In these two verses the Psalmist describes this enemy who were so determined to destroy him. Note what they do. First, they “wrest” the words of David. They twist them to make it appear that David is saying things that he really did not say. “They put our language on the rack, they extort meanings from it which cannot be made fairly to contain” (Spurgeon). Second, they devise evil

“thoughts” against him. Third, they “gather themselves together,” so as to outnumber him, to take advantage of the odds. Fourth, they “hide themselves,” taking advantage of the element of surprise. What they do they do secretly, not openly. Fifth, they “mark” the steps of David. They keep a watch on him, so that David could not be certain of any privacy. No doubt they were seeking occasion to bring an accusation against him. And finally, they “waited” for his “soul.” That is, they watched for occasion when they might destroy David’s life. “Men of malice are men of cowardice. He who dares not meet his man on the king’s highway, writes himself down a villain” (Spurgeon).

### **Confidence** **Verses 7-9**

- 7 *Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, O God.*
- 8 *Thou numberest my wanderings: Put thou my tears into thy bottle; Are they not in thy book?*
- 9 *Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day that I call: This I know, that God is for me.*

**56:7-9:** “*Shall they escape by iniquity?*” - Will these enemies go unpunished? Does God not see the affliction of His people? “The LXX render it, ‘As I have suffered this for my life, thou wilt on no account save them’” (Barnes). The idea seems to be that the wicked attempt to find safety in the practice of their wickedness. The Psalmist prays that God would so intervene and show them that such is not true. The Psalmist expresses his confidence in God’s awareness of his sufferings in three ways. First, God numbered his wanderings. God was aware of every single step he had taken while fleeing from the enemy. Second, the Psalmist prays that God would catch his tears and place them in His bottle, so that they might be brought to remembrance before the face of God. “The Romans had a custom, that in time of mourning, on a funeral occasion, a friend went to one in sorrow, and wiped away the tears from the eyes with a piece of cloth, and squeezed the tears into a small bottle of glass or earth, which was carefully preserved as a memorial of friendship and sorrow” (Barnes). Third, the Psalmist kindly asks whether or not these things were recorded in God’s “book.” Does God not keep “record” of the mistreatment of His children? “Rhodes observed that both ‘bottle’ and ‘book’ here are metaphorical references to the ‘records’ of God” (Coffman, 468). All of this suggests that God

indeed keeps records, and that one day He will avenge His righteous cause.

*“Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day that I call”* – What an expression of confidence on the part of the Psalmist. Oh that all of God’s people could, with the Psalmist, express such confidence in God’s abiding presence and providential care! We should never forget that “the machinery of prayer is not always visible, but it is most efficient” (Spurgeon).

### **The Faith of the Psalmist** **Verses 10-13**

- 10 In God I will praise his word, In Jehovah I will praise his word,  
11 In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; What can man  
do unto me?  
12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render thank-offerings  
unto thee.  
13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: Hast thou not  
delivered my feet from falling, That I may walk before God In  
the light of the living?*

**56:10:** The Psalmist expresses genuine thanksgiving in the closing verses of the Psalm. “He is a wretch who, having obtained help, forgets to return a grateful acknowledgment” (Spurgeon). The first step in the apostasy of the gentile world was the failure to give thanks. Paul wrote, “Because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks; but became vain in their reasoning, and their senseless heart was darkened” (Romans 1:21). Safety for the soul is to be found in a grateful heart that responds in loving obedience to the will of the Father.

**56:11:** *“What can man do unto me?”* - The meaning is that David would not be afraid of what any man might do to him, so long as God was his friend.

**56:12:** *“Thy vows are upon me”* - Vows made in times of trouble should not be quickly forgotten. We made them; let us keep them.

The word vow means some obligation under which we have brought ourselves. It differs from duty, or obligation in general, since that is the result of the Divine command, while this is an obligation arising from the fact that we have voluntarily taken it upon ourselves. The extent of this obligation is measured by the

nature of the promise or vow which we have made; and God will hold us responsible for carrying out our vows" (Barnes).

In this connection see Genesis 28:20, Numbers 6:2, 30:2-3, Deuteronomy 23:21, and 1 Samuel 1:11. "The promise of making solemn vows in times of trouble is to be commended, when it is followed by the far less common custom of fulfilling them when the trouble is over" (Spurgeon).

### **Lessons**

1. In spite of persecutions, David continued to trust in Jehovah.
2. We need not fear what man can do to us. Jesus said, "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28).
3. "Thus in this short Psalm, we have climbed from the ravenous jaws of the enemy into the light of Jehovah's presence, a path which only faith can tread" (Spurgeon).
4. God is concerned with the misfortunes of His children, and sooner or later full justice will be administered.
5. God keeps records. The fact that He keeps records suggests that there is a day coming in which those "books" will be opened and the righteous shall be vindicated.
6. Take note of the Psalmist's respect for the word of God. "I will praise his word" is expressed two times. It is only when men have respect for the word of God that they can confidently say, "At what time I am afraid, I will put my trust in thee."

## *“Praise In Adversity”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David "when he fled from Saul in the cave." There are two possible occasions when the Psalm may have been written: either when David was hiding in the cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1) or the cave of Engedi (1 Samuel 24:1-3). Barnes observed:

The author of the Chaldee Paraphrase regards this psalm as belonging to that period of David's history when he was under a constant necessity of using language of this nature, or of saying "Destroy not," and as therefore suited to all similar emergencies. The language seems to be derived from the prayer of Moses, Deut. 9:26; "I prayed therefore unto the Lord, and said, O Lord God, destroy not thy people," etc. This very expression is found in 1 Sam. 26:9, in a command which David addressed to his followers, and it "may" have been a common expression with him (Barnes).

This being so, we are provided a remarkable window into the soul and heart of David. Here was a man willing to extend mercy even to his enemies. This "man after God's heart" had said, "Destroy not," when he had it in his power to take Saul's life. He now uses the same language in supplication to God. The Lord will spare us only if we are merciful toward our enemies.

### ***Analysis***

There is some similarity between this Psalm and the previous. Notice the first verse of each Psalm. Morgan wrote,

The cry is the same but the reason is different. There it was a cry born of the consciousness of the enemy. Here it is born of the vision of God, and of trust in Him. Faith does not free us from trial, but it does enable us to triumph over it. Moreover, faith lifts us high above the purely personal sense of pain, and creates a passion for the exaltation of God among the nations. The heart at leisure from itself is always the heart fixed on God (Morgan, 241).

The Psalm naturally divides itself into two parts, each ending with the same refrain (verses 5 and 11). The first is a prayer, the second a resolution of thanksgiving. The prayer consists of (1) a call unto the Lord, (2) a description of the enemy confronting the Psalmist, and (3) an expression that God might be exalted and honored. The resolution of thanksgiving contains (1) a further description of the tactics of the enemy, (2) an expression of confidence in God, and (3) a declaration of the majesty and glory of God. We have titled the Psalm, "Praise in Adversity."

## **Commentary**

### **Prayer Verses 1-5**

- 1 *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me; For my soul taketh refuge in thee: Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge, Until these calamities be overpast.*
- 2 *I will cry unto God Most High, Unto God that performeth all things for me.*
- 3 *He will send from heaven, and save me, When he that would swallow me up reproacheth; [Selah] God will send forth his lovingkindness and his truth.*
- 4 *My soul is among lions; I lie among them that are set on fire, Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, And their tongue a sharp sword.*
- 5 *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; Let thy glory be above all the earth.*

**57:1:** This first verse serves as a call unto Jehovah. There was no place else for the Psalmist to turn. In times of distress and helplessness the faithful child of God can find a genuine refuge in Jehovah God. The "*shadow of thy wings*" is poetic language describing the protection that is offered by God. Like a chick under the wings of its mother, the child of God can always find protection by drawing close to God. The last part of this verse implies that David believed the calamities would eventually pass. Indeed, our "light affliction is but for the moment" (2 Cor. 4:17).

"*Until these calamities be overpast*" - That they WILL pass away, the Psalmist was confident. What he wanted was the strength to endure as he passed through these calamities. God has promised, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is



faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape" (1 Cor. 10:13). "When we are under the divine shadow, the passing over of trouble cannot harm us; the hawk flies across the sky, but this is no evil to the chicks when they are safely nestling beneath the hen" (Spurgeon).

**57:2:** *"Unto God that performeth all things"* - The word rendered "performeth" (Hebrew 'gamar') means "to bring to an end; to complete; to perfect" (Barnes, QV). This is a confident expression on the part of the Psalmist that God would deliver him. Exactly how God would *"send from heaven,"* is not stated. The Psalmist was confident that it would be such that it would rebuke his enemies and deliver him from trouble. The last part of verse 3 addresses the faithfulness of God. He will show Himself faithful in keeping all the promises He has made. Like the Psalmist, we can find solace in knowing that if there is no help on earth, at least there is Divine help from above.

*"God will send forth his lovingkindness and his truth"* - The Psalmist asked for mercy, and he was given truth as well. The dual blessing would provide strength. "His mercy, to relieve the psalmist; his truth, to confound the psalmist's enemies" (Rawlinson, 2:6).

**57:4:** *"My soul is among lions"* - The Psalmist uses colorful language to describe his enemies. His situation was likened unto being in the midst of *"lions."* David was among men who were fierce, savage, and beastly. While he was in the cave, the enemy prowled without, set to devour him at the earliest opportunity. They were *"set on fire."* This is language designed to describe the intense emotions and agitation of this "enemy." We might say that one is "inflamed with passion." There are occasions when the believer will find himself in the midst of such "flames," yet not consumed.

Their *"teeth are spears and arrows,"* ready to pierce the heart and inflict destruction. The analogy of the beast is expanded. Like the teeth of the lion, so the enemy is ready to devour with spears and arrows. Their *"tongue a sharp sword,"* ready to slander. The enemy was vicious, ready to destroy.

**57:5:** *"Be thou exalted, O God"* - The deliverance that David sought was not for the mere sake of being delivered. David realized that when God intervened, it would not only be a defeat of the enemy, but a means of exalting God to a place of honor. When God delivers and

protects His children, it is a reflection upon His greatness, goodness, justice, and might. "The thought here is not that God might do something whereby he would become exalted, but that God already deserves to be exalted for what he has done already" (Coffman, 473).

### **Thanksgiving Verses 6-11**

- 6 *They have prepared a net for my steps; My soul is bowed down: They have digged a pit before me; They are fallen into the midst thereof themselves. Selah*
- 7 *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.*
- 8 *Awake up, my glory; Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake right early.*
- 9 *I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples: I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.*
- 10 *For thy lovingkindness is great unto the heavens, And thy truth unto the skies.*
- 11 *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; Let thy glory be above all the earth.*

**57:6:** "*They have prepared a net for my steps*" - The enemies of God's people often plan their evil schemes and go about their wicked work with calculated determination. Wherever David turned the enemy sought his destruction. Consequently his soul was "*bowed down*." He had been brought to the pits of despair. And although they had "*digged a pit*" to capture David, it was they themselves who "*are fallen into the midst thereof*." The enemy treated David as if he were nothing more than a brute beast. But in the end they fell into their own trap.

"*Selah*" - We are called upon at this point to pause and reflect and to meditate on David's plight. From a human standpoint there was not much to commend itself to a favorable outcome for David. But the man of God looks beyond the here and now, and he measures every circumstance through the eye of faith.

**57:7:** "*My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed*" - Note the repetition of the phrase. This gives emphasis and intensity to the expression, and is designed to show in the strongest manner that his heart, his purpose, his confidence in God did not waver in the

slightest degree. If we are not grounded in the truth of God's word our steps will falter when the battle is engaged.

*"I will sing, yea, I will sing praises"* - The same intensity is suggested by the double reference to David's response. God had provided strength and protection; David would pour out his heart in praise to God.

**57:8:** *"I will awake right early"* - David must have been an early riser. Living outdoors lends itself to rising with the sun. David's plight often found him sleeping under the stars, or in some cave. The meaning seems to be that David would "awaken the dawn" rather than waiting for the dawn to wake him. Albert Barnes' comments were worth putting into our notes:

No time in the day is more appropriate for worship than the early morning; no object is more worthy to rouse us from our slumbers than a desire to praise God; in no way can the day be more appropriately begun than by prayer and praise; and nothing will conduce more to keep up the flame of piety than the habit of devoting the early morning to the worship of God (Barnes).

**57:9:** *"I will sing praises unto thee among the nations"* - The Gentiles have always been included in the Divine purpose. The "nations" would hear the Psalmist sing praises. It should be noted that David's heart of thanksgiving was not disposed to bigotry. He was just as apt to make mention of his God before the gentiles as he would at home in his kingly court.

**57:10:** *"Thy lovingkindness is great unto the heavens"* - The Psalmist was simply expressing the unfathomable and inexhaustible mercy of our God. Here is a truth that extends great comfort to unworthy sinners.

*"And thy truth unto the skies"* - God's wonderful truth is simply inexhaustible. Though simple, His word is profound. Spurgeon's comments express this same sentiment:

Right up from man's lowliness to heaven's loftiness mercy reaches. Imagination fails to guess the height of heaven, and even thus the riches of mercy exceed our highest thoughts. The Psalmist, as he sits at the cave's mouth and looks up to the firmament, rejoices that God's goodness is vaster and sublimer [sic] than even the vaulted skies. Creation is great, but the Creator greater far. Heaven cannot

contain him; above clouds and stars his goodness far exceeds  
(Spurgeon).

**57:11:** *"Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens"* - Here is the grand conclusion, a heavenly chorus exalting our God even "above the heavens." In the previous verse the Psalmist spoke of God's wonderful mercy even "unto the heavens." Now he exalts God, and acknowledges that the Divine glory is "above all the earth."

## Lessons

1. Forsyth provided the following homiletic outline:

### *"One of God's Rescues"*

The Bible is full of records of deliverances, not only deliverances of nations, but rescues of individuals. These are written for our learning. We see....

I. Rescue Sorely Needed;

II. Rescue Earnestly Sought (verses 1-3)

III. Rescue Gratefully Acknowledged (verses 7-11).

2. The worst of enemies is no match for the greatness of our God. Though they dig a pit or prepare a net, God will send from the heaven and save His children.
3. Notice the contrasts. On the one side are the "lions," those who are "set on fire" with passion and rage, "men whose teeth are spears and arrows," and whose tongue is as "a sharp sword." They have "prepared a net" and "dugged a pit" for the Psalmist. On the other side is "God Most High," Who will "send forth his lovingkindness and truth." The Psalmist fixes his eyes on He Whose lovingkindness is "great unto the heavens," and He Who is to be "exalted...above the heavens." No wonder the Psalmist could "take refuge...until the calamities be overpast." No wonder he could give thanks and "sing praises" in the midst of adversity.

## *“There Is A God Who Judges”*

### ***Introduction***

According to the subtitle, David is the author. Both the title and the contents of the Psalm fix the time of the Psalm, and the occasion, as being the same as that of the previous two Psalms. The Psalm is one of nine imprecatory Psalms, and emphasizes the ultimate judgment of God upon the wicked. In fact, the request of the Psalmist that God would deal with the wicked forcefully and righteously is but a glimpse of God’s ultimate judgment upon the wicked of all ages. There is nothing “unloving” or “unkind” about God’s final judgment upon all men. If there is no final judgment, no reward for the righteous, and no punishment for the wicked, then it is true that the wicked really do have it better in the long run. “Pitiful indeed as the fate of wicked men will be, it must ever be remembered that such was ‘their choice’; and that no one compelled them to become servants of Satan” (Coffman, 476).

### ***Analysis***

Our outline for this Psalm is:

- I. **Complaint:** A description of the enemies of the Psalmist (verses 1-5), consisting of:
  1. A question implying those to whom he referred were, in fact, wicked, 1-2;
  2. A reflection upon the character of wicked men, 3-5;
    - (1) Estranged from the womb;
    - (2) They go astray as soon as they are born;
    - (3) They resemble a deadly serpent;
    - (4) They are deaf to appeals of their conscience;
    - (5) They do not listen to the voice of the charmer;
- II. **Condemnation:** A prayer that God would interpose and render justice (verses 6-9), as expressed in different illustrations and compared to:
  1. Lions whose teeth must be broken, 6;
  2. Water that flows away, 7;
  3. A snail that passes away, 8;

4. An untimely birth, 8b;
  5. A pot that feels the fire beneath, 9.
- III. **Conclusion:** The exultation of the righteous (verses 10-11), wherein they would:
1. Rejoice at their deliverance, 10;
  2. Recognize the great justice of God, 11.

Morgan also had a fine analysis on the Psalm: “This is a fine setting forth of the certainty of the judgment of God against wickedness. The psalmist declares its **reasons** (verses 1-5), its **process** (verses 6-9), and its **effect** (verses 10, 11)” (Morgan, 242). The following homiletic outline is also helpful:

- I. Tyrants Addressed, verses 1-2;
- II. Tyrants Described, verses 3-5;
- III. Tyrants Prayed Against, verses 6-9; and
- IV. Tyrants Rejoiced Over, verses 10-11 (Coffman, 476).

It should be noted that the whole of the Psalm turns on the first verse. It sets the tone and theme of the Psalm. The rulers of the land were not exercising justice; they did not “judge uprightly” (verse 1). The Psalmist thus calls for judgment from God to be exercised upon the wicked. The language is fierce. But we must keep in mind that the wrath of God against sin and against evil men is fierce as well. Morgan makes this noteworthy comment: “It is a sickly sentimentality and a wicked weakness that have more sympathy with the corrupt oppressors than with the anger of God” (Morgan, 242). The Lord’s church has within its majestic walls traitors who have collaborated with the enemy. In some instances greater respect is shown to those who blaspheme and ridicule the Lord’s church than those who would defend her walls against the enemies that assail her. Judgment awaits such men, and it is not improper for the saint to pray that God will hasten that day.

## ***Commentary***

### **Complaint: A Description Of The Enemies of the Psalmist Verses 1-5**

- 1 *Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness? Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?*
- 2 *Nay, in heart ye work wickedness; Ye weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth.*

- 3 *The wicked are estranged from the womb: They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.*
- 4 *Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear,*
- 5 *Which hearkeneth not to the voice of charmers, Charming never so wisely.*

**58:1:** “*Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness?*” The accusation is presented in the form of a question. The Psalmist was asking, “Are you then dumb, that you will not speak what is right, and judge what is proper, ye children of men?” The word rendered “*speak righteousness*” (KJV) is ‘*elem*’ and occurs only here and in the title of Psalms 56. The persons addressed were human rulers. It is generally accepted that “the reign of crooked judges and other evil authorities in high office was confined to no particular period in Israel’s history” (Coffman, 478). Included in the Hebrew is the idea of silence, and is reflected in the rendering of the ASV above. It would appear that the situation was one in which the multitudes remained silent with regard to the “judgment” that these magistrates were rendering. There were a multitude surrounding Saul who remained silent; they held their tongues when David was being slandered. Silence is **not** always the best course of action to take. “He who refrains from defending the right is himself an accomplice in the wrong” (Spurgeon).

“*Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?*” Their silence rendered their judgment null and void. They did not judge uprightly.

**58:2:** “*in heart ye work wickedness*” - Literally it is “wickednesses” or “iniquities.” Sin begins in the heart. The hands then carry it out. These rulers actually worked wickedness because their hearts were corrupt. Instead of meeting out justice, these wicked rulers accurately weighed the evidence, and then rendered injustice, even to the point of administering “violence.” How hypocritical that “those very men who sat as judges, and pretended to so much indignation at the faults imputed to their victim, were in their hearts perpetrating all manner of evil” (Spurgeon). The words, “*weigh out*” describe the administration of justice. Even in our own country the figure of a woman holding scales in her hands is symbolic of “weighing out justice.” These wicked rulers were actually weighing the evidence, and then rendering a judgment that consisted of violence against those who were wronged. Spurgeon’s assessment is as good as we have found here: “As righteous judges ponder the law,

balance the evidence, and weigh the case, so the malicious dispense injustice with malice aforethought in cold blood” (Spurgeon).

**58:3:** Of interest in this verse is the “process” of apostasy. Men are not **born** in sin. We agree with Rawlinson, “This is the language of hyperbole, and is certainly not the profession of the doctrine of original sin” (Rawlinson, 9). The wicked become such through a process that begins “from the womb,” or as we might say, at a very early age. The word “estranged,” means to “go off, to depart.” The fact that they “go astray” suggests free moral agency, not total hereditary depravity. Their departure begins “*as soon as they are born,*” when they reach the capability of “*speaking lies.*” The language here is exaggerated, a form of poetic style. We learn from this verse the tremendous importance of providing training in righteousness at an early age. A young impressionable mind left to itself will go astray. If unchecked, the end result is wickedness.

Note the connection between verses 2 and 3. In verse 2 the Psalmist implies that these men were at least capable of looking at the evidence and coming to some kind of conclusion in the matter. But because of their stubborn and rebellious hearts they rejected the evidence and went astray. This verse suggests they began that journey into apostasy at an early stage in their life.

**58:4:** The fruit of the wicked is likened unto “*poison of a serpent.*” There seems to be a reference here to an evil tongue. Notice also James 3:1 ff. But like a deaf adder, the wicked do not hear the pleas from the righteous; they do not hearken to the word of God.

**58:5:** “*the voice of the charmers*” - The “charmer” is one who calms and controls the deadly serpent. The wicked are likened unto a serpent that cannot be brought under control. The last part of verse 5 is somewhat difficult. The words “*charming never so wisely*” has some reference to the charmers who sought to bring the serpent under control. The idea is that these wicked rulers spew out poison like an adder or serpent, and no man has it within his power to “charm” this deadly creature. Such a one is beyond the reach of common sense and all that is right and true. We think Albert Barnes’ comments are noteworthy: “The supposition is that there were serpents which, though deadly in their poison, might be charmed or tamed, but that THIS species of serpent could not” (Barnes). They were so intent upon wickedness that no one could dissuade them from their destructive course. One can hardly imagine the depths of



a depraved heart that simply cannot be touched with the Gospel. A careful study of 1 Timothy 4:1-4 will show that there is the real possibility that one can reach such a state of rebellion. The realization that such a state of spiritual stupor is possible should humble each one of us and cause us to turn away from sin before we become so captivated by its power that we cannot come to repentance.

**Condemnation: A Prayer That God Would Interpose  
And Render Justice  
Verses 6-9**

- 6 *Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O Jehovah.*
- 7 *Let them melt away as water that runneth apace: When he aimeth his arrows, let them be as though they were cut off.*
- 8 *Let them be as a snail which melteth and passeth away, Like the untimely birth of a woman, that hath not seen the sun.*
- 9 *Before your pots can feel the thorns, He will take them away with a whirlwind, the green and the burning alike.*

The description in verses 1-5 gives way to imprecation in verses 6-9. Metaphors are mounted up. Menace follows menace. In this section the wrath of God is invoked upon these evil-doers. Judgment is then pronounced and prophesied. None would escape the Almighty.

**58:6:** *“Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth”* - Serpent charmers would sometimes beat out the serpent’s fangs with a stone or a stick. The Psalmist changes the metaphor from that of a serpent to that of a lion that has its teeth removed. The writer desires that God would remove the power of the wicked and deprive them of their ability to do harm. The *“young lions”* come from a word that has reference to those with full vigor and strength. The Psalmist would have God treat them as a charmer does the serpent, by removing their fangs.

**58:7:** *“melt away as waters which run continually”* – The Psalmist’s desire was that these wicked enemies of the Lord might waste away like water that runs off and accomplishes nothing; like waters that flow off, or floods that run by, and are no more seen. Like rain that has been dried by the sun’s rays, or water spilt that cannot be recovered, so let the wicked be defeated in their doings.

*“When he aimeth his arrows”* - When the ungodly marches into conflict, may his arrows of maliciousness crumble, as “though they were cut off” or broken in two.

**58:8:** *“As a snail which melteth and passeth away”* – This may refer to the ancient belief that the slimy trail left by a snail actually represented the dissolution of its substance. Experience has shown us that ordinary salt sprinkled upon a snail literally dissolves him.

The *“untimely birth”* is from a Hebrew word that means literally “that which falls from a woman; and hence the word is used to denote an abortion” (Barnes). “Every unregenerate man is an abortion. He misses the true form of God-made manhood; he corrupts in the darkness of sin; he never sees or shall see the light of God in purity, in heaven” (Spurgeon). The Psalmist’s use of the word is a request that these wicked men might be so overthrown that their influence would be as if they had never been born in the first place.

**58:9:** *“Before your pots can feel the thorns”* means before the cook pots of a desert traveler can be heated by a fire fueled by thorns. His desire was that the destruction of the wicked therefore will be swift, instantaneous. Imagine a traveler stopping to build a fire in order to cook his meal. Even before the fire can be sufficiently kindled, along comes a wind and blows away the thorns, fire, and pot. The meaning is that before these wicked judges could enjoy the fruits of their wickedness the wrath of God will come upon them like a tempest and sweep them away along with their evil deeds.

The evil schemes of the wicked would be suddenly and completely defeated, even while the wicked supposed that all things were going well with him.

### **Conclusion: The Exultation Of The Righteous Verses 10-11**

*10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked;*

*11 So that men shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

**58:10:** There is nothing in the verse that might suggest a personal vendetta on the part of the Psalmist. God’s saints have, through the centuries, sought Divine judgment upon the wicked. The fact that

the “*righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance*” is no indication they derive pleasure from punishment inflicted upon evil doers.

Men everywhere approve of the just administration of law, even though it consigns the transgressors to prison or to death; and it is a matter of gratification to all who love law and order when a righteous government is maintained; when the wickedness is checked; when justice is administered in a community (Barnes).

“*He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked*” is strong poetic language designed to emphasize the complete overthrow of the enemy, and hence to come forth victorious. Barnes notes that the “allusion is to the feelings of satisfaction and triumph with which a victor walks over such a field” (Barnes). The whole of this portion of the Psalm is the expression of satisfaction when righteous prevails and wickedness is defeated.

**58:11:** “*So that men shall say*” - There is a time coming when all men will acknowledge God as the Almighty and Jesus as His Holy Son. In the long run truth and justice will have the final day and the righteous will be compensated for their faithfulness. Coffman provided an interesting illustration of Maximilien Robespierre’s reign of terror in France. The man had denied the existence of God, and ruled over France with an iron fist, sending multitudes to the guillotine. He was eventually brought to justice and taken to like punishment. One of the citizens gazed upon him and said, “Yes, yes, Robespierre, there IS a God!”

We will close our comments on this Psalm with this quote from Spurgeon: “Two things will come out clearly after all - there is a God and there is a reward for the righteous. Time will remove doubts, solve difficulties, and reveal secrets; meanwhile faith’s foreseeing eye discerns the truth even now, and is glad thereat” (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. There are three divinely ordained institutions. (1) The Church of our Lord, (2) the home, and (3) civil government. It is the responsibility of the civil rulers to meet out justice in a fair and equitable way. It is often the case, however, that earthly rulers fall far short of being what they should be. This is especially true when it comes to proper judgment. All such rulers should realize that someday they will give an account of their “stewardship.”

2. “To fail to learn righteousness is to learn wickedness. To fail to teach righteousness to our children is to teach them wickedness. Ancient Jews had a proverb which said, ‘He who teaches not his son a trade, teaches him to steal’” (Deaver, 350).
3. There is nothing inherently wrong with the righteous praying for the overthrow of the wicked. Such prayers must submit to the will of God, however, and personal vengeance, in any situation, is not man’s to render.
4. Men are not BORN astray; they go astray. The doctrine of ‘original sin’ is false to the core. God has always respected the free moral agency of mankind.

## ***“God Is My Defense”***

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle ascribes the Psalm to David. There is no reason to doubt that authorship. The Psalm was written "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." This incident is recorded in 1 Samuel 19:11. When we consider this Psalm with that incident before us we get a much clearer picture of both the events recorded by Samuel and the heart of David during that moment of conflict. David must have been aware of Saul's attempts to destroy him. But in spite of Saul's hatred for David, and the overwhelming odds that David faced, this "man after God's heart" was confident nonetheless that God would give the deliverance. These songs from David provide us with a deeper insight into the events recorded in the books of history. At what precise TIME the Psalm was written, whether at the very moment when the enemies had surrounded the house, or at some period AFTER the occasion in reflection, is not known. We have selected the title, "God Is My Defense."

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm naturally divides itself into two parts, both ending with the same declaration, "God is my defense." The first section describes the danger (1-9), the second a prayer that God will deal with the foes (10-17). We thus derive the following analysis:

#### **I. A Description Of The Enemy, 1-9**

1. Plea for deliverance, 1-2;
2. Description, 3-4;
3. Plea, 5;
4. Description resumed, 6-7;
5. God is my defense, 8-9.

#### **II. A Prayer For Deliverance, 10-17**

1. Assurance, 10;
2. Plea for Divine Retribution, 11-13;
3. Description, 14-15;
4. Praise, 16-17.

The astonishing thing about Psalms such as this one is the tremendous blessing that God can bring out of turmoil and adversity. Had David not suffered so unmercifully at the hands of Saul he may never have written this Psalm, and we would be the worse for it.

## **Commentary**

### **A Description Of The Enemy Verses 1-9**

- 1 Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: Set me on high from them that rise up against me.*
- 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, And save me from the bloodthirsty men.*
- 3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul; The mighty gather themselves together against me: Not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O Jehovah.*
- 4 They run and prepare themselves without my fault: Awake thou to help me, and behold.*
- 5 Even thou, O Jehovah God of hosts, the God of Israel, Arise to visit all the nations: Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah*
- 6 They return at evening, they howl like a dog, And go round about the city.*
- 7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth; Swords are in their lips: For who, say they, doth hear?*
- 8 But thou, O Jehovah, wilt laugh at them; Thou wilt have all the nations in derision.*
- 9 Because of his strength I will give heed unto thee; For God is my high tower.*

**59:1:** The verses suggest that David was in great danger of being overthrown by the enemies. Verses 1 and 2 are a plea for deliverance. In these verses we have (1) absolute dependence upon God, (2) a reference to the enemy as "workers of iniquity, and bloodthirsty men." It would seem that David was surrounded by the enemy and there was no way of escape. His plea to God was answered when Michal, the daughter of Saul, let David down through a window that he might escape (see 1 Samuel 19:12). Unbelief may have suggested that prayer in this situation was a waste of breath. Not so with David. As was his practice, occasions of distress drove him to the mercy seat, and faith in God produced a

way of escape. Actually, Saul had more cause to fear than David. While Saul had his sword and shield, David had the invincible power of prayer. As Coffman noted, "He [David] was one man, alone, hated, pursued, proscribed by the king, condemned to death without a trial, and an entire army at the disposal of his chief enemy had been commissioned to kill him. Hopeless? No indeed; God was with David" (Coffman, 487).

**59:2:** *"bloodthirsty men"* is an adequate description of these enemies of David. These men would stop nothing short of the complete destruction of David. And well might they have succeeded had it not been for God's providential answer to prayer.

**59:3:** *"For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul"* - Like some cunning animal that waits to trap the prey, these wicked rebels waited for an occasion to destroy the King and take his throne. "While the enemy lies waiting in the posture of a beast, we wait before God in the posture of prayer, for God waits to be gracious to us and terrible towards our foes" (Spurgeon, QV). Had there been only a handful, or had David need but face them one by one, the threat may not have been so great. But *"the mighty gather themselves together."* "No one of them was absent from the muster when there was a saint to be murdered. They were too fond of such sport to be absent" (Spurgeon).

The deceitful tactics and unjust treatment that David received at the hand of the enemy is here addressed. To "lie in wait," suggests the idea of setting a trap; watching for any occasion when they might destroy David. In addition, they gather together in great number. Although there might be just cause for someone to be persecuted when they have done wrong, David points out that there is no justifiable reason for such treatment as he was receiving. Throughout the Psalm David upholds his innocence and integrity. Those who persecuted him could not lay any blame at his feet. Bob Berard has this comment: "From righteous David's situation and response we are reminded that the innocence of the obedient will not preclude opposition, but rather will attract it. Even so it is far better to be opposed, oppressed, and seemingly obliterated by the wicked, rather than to approve, applaud, or join them in their fleeting pseudo-victories" (Berard, 353).

**59:4:** *"They run and prepare themselves without my fault"* - They hasten to accomplish their wicked end. "Prepare" refers to whatever means necessary to accomplish their goal. In this they were well

prepared, or carefully planned. David continues to uphold his innocence when he says "without my fault." There was no charge that they could lay at David's feet.

When David calls upon God to "*awake*" he is not suggesting that God actually sleeps. The language is a metaphor, designed to emphasize the appeal. F.C.Cook has noted: "The sleep of God, a bold metaphor, implies an apparent suspension of His providential government, when His foes are triumphant, and His servants defeated. It suggests, however, that the suspension is but temporary, and has more of hope than despondency" (Berard, 352-353). David was asking God to take cognizance of his case, to look with the eye of pity upon his plight and to exert power to relieve him from his distress.

A number of commentators noted that "*to help me*" has the marginal reading, "to meet me." David was praying that God might "meet" him and go with him to fight the enemy.

**59:5:** The request is expanded beyond the Psalmist's individual desire for deliverance; there is now a request for Divine retribution upon the enemies. This request, "*be not merciful*," is not motivated by hate for the enemy but righteous indignation. The Psalmist was aware that some had gone beyond the point of repentance and he thus desired that God would deal with them in a just way. Behind the words lay the sober reminder that Divine justice upon the wicked will be without mercy.

David pled with God to arise and render judgment, not only on those presently threatening him, but on "*all the nations*." What a petition! If men will not repent, they will face the judgment of God. While it is right to pray that men might come to repentance, it is just as right to pray that God will render righteous judgment upon those who refuse to repent.

**59:6:** "*They return at evening, they howl like a dog, And go round about the city*" - Here is an illustration describing the manner in which his enemies were coming upon him. They were like dogs, howling, seeking their prey. Like wild beasts that roam at night, the wicked prowl in the darkness of night. We had the opportunity to visit Wange Park in Zimbabwe in early 1990. As we observed the wildlife we could hear the howling of the wild "dingo" dogs in the distance as they prepared to attack their victim.



**59:7:** Notice how this verse coincides with verse 4. There David called on God to “awake” and respond to those who THINK God does not hear. By day the enemies of David would slip away, and by night they would return, snarling like dogs. Look at this word “Behold”!! Take a close look. Their malicious speech gushes forth; their mouths spew forth corruption. “*Swords are in their lips.*” All the while they presume that no one hears their words of hatred.

They are free from all restraint, they fear no God in heaven, and the government on earth is with them. When men have none to call them to account, there is no accounting for what they will do. He who neither fears God nor regards man sets out upon errands of oppression with gusto, and uses language concerning it of the most atrociously cruel sort (Spurgeon).

The words “*say they*” are not in the original and are supplied by the translators to clarify the passage. The Psalmist was simply pointing out that there seemed to be no fear on the part of the wicked, either for man, or for God. Is it any wonder that they pour forth such wicked words? Remove the fear of God and men will live unto themselves.

**59:8:** God does not “laugh” in the sense of expressing joy at the defeat of the wicked. The language is anthropomorphic, and expresses the final overthrow of the wicked who have so proudly set themselves at odds with God. While they laughed at David for his apparent weakness, in the final analysis it is God Who would have the “last laugh.”

**59:9:** “His strength” has reference to the strength of the enemy. Because of such strength the Psalmist recognized the necessity to rely completely upon God.

“*high tower*” - The KJV reads “defense.” The words appear three times in the Psalm (vs. 9, 16, 17).

There is perhaps no more beautiful description of what God is to His tried people. The phrase suggests at once strength and peace; a tower against which all the might of the foe hurls itself in vain. Our God is “a high tower so that the soul taking refuge in it is lifted far above the turmoil and the strife, and enabled to view from a vantage ground of perfect safety the violence which is futile and the victory of God” (Morgan, 242).

## A Prayer For Deliverance Verses 10-17

- 10 *My God with his lovingkindness will meet me: God will let me see my desire upon mine enemies.*
- 11 *Slay them not, lest my people forget: Scatter them by thy power, and bring them down, O Lord our shield.*
- 12 *For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, Let them even be taken in their pride, And for cursing and lying which they speak.*
- 13 *Consume them in wrath, consume them, so that they shall be no more: And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob, Unto the ends of the earth. Selah*
- 14 *And at evening let them return, let them howl like a dog, And go round about the city.*
- 15 *They shall wander up and down for food, And tarry all night if they be not satisfied.*
- 16 *But I will sing of thy strength; Yea, I will sing aloud of thy lovingkindness in the morning: For thou hast been my high tower, And a refuge in the day of my distress.*
- 17 *Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises: For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy.*

**59:10:** In this second part of the Psalm the cry of fear is gone. David has regained his hope so much so that he now speaks out in righteous anger. David wanted to see his enemies face to face; to confront them. The words “*my desire*” are not in the original text. The idea expressed is that God would bring about the victory for David. It implies that David believed that it would his enemies, and not himself, who would be utterly defeated. Courage will be ours when facing our enemies.

In our civil courts it is a common practice for the family of the victim to confront the accused and convicted. We think there may be something similar to that in that the conviction of the wicked is a pre-gone conclusion, and the Psalmist perceived himself as witnessing that conviction and sentencing. But in addition, we shall eventually see our enemies defeated, overthrown, and completely destroyed.

**59:11:** What shall we make of the words “*Slay them not*”? Keil & Delitzsch suggest that “the poet wishes that those who lie in wait for him, before they are totally swept away, may remain for a season

before the eyes of his people as an example of punishment” (Keil & Delitzsch). Barnes has this note: "The prayer of the psalmist, therefore, is that the fullest expression might be given to the Divine sense of the wrong which his enemies had done, that the salutary lesson might not be soon forgotten, but might be permanent and enduring" (Barnes). There was evidently a desire on the part of the Psalmist that the enemies would not be destroyed in one swift movement on God's part. Rather he wanted God to subdue them in order that their punishment might serve as an example unto others. Adam Clarke was once asked by a lady, "Dr. Clarke, why doesn't God just destroy all the wicked people and thereby put an end to sin? Clarke replied, "My dear Lady, if God did a thing like that, there would not be enough righteous people left on the earth to keep the lions and tigers from eating up the human race" (Coffman, 491).

**59:12:** *"Let them even be taken in their pride"* - Punishment of the evil-does is still foremost in the mind of the writer. Feed the foolish slanderer enough line and he will sink himself. David makes reference to the *"sin of their mouth," "the words of their lips," "cursing,"* and *"lying which they speak."* Perhaps the righteous would see through the deceit of these enemies and take note that God did not allow them to stand. We must keep in mind that all such imprecatory expressions arose out of a desire for absolute justice. So it is here. It is amazing the amount of damage that is here attributed to the misuse of the tongue. Notice in this connection James 3:1-7.

**59:13:** The plea for David's enemies to be utterly consumed does not derive out of any selfish motive on the part of the King. The only way the enemy could be so overcome as to remove any future threat was that they simply be removed from the ends of the earth. Evidently David realized that should any remnant be allowed to remain that the troubles would soon return. When sin is properly punished it serves as a warning to those who practice the same thing. But in addition it lets all men know that there IS a God in heaven, and that He indeed rules and protects His own. Matthew Henry wrote:

That is, follow them with one judgment after another, till they be utterly ruined; let them be sensibly, but gradually wasted, that they themselves, while they are in the consuming, may know, and that the standers-by may likewise draw this inference from it, That God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth" (Matthew Henry).

**59:14:** The original is the same as verse 6 with the exception of the word "and" at the start of the verse. The enemies of David surrounded the city to take David. They shrieked and howled as dogs do when they come upon their prey. David asks God to intervene and save him. Let them come as they may, with their threatening and growling. They will not find their prey. They will be like hungry dogs from which the prey has escaped. It should be noted that there is a sense in which God punishes the wicked with their own sin. In this case, their sin was hunting for David to make a prey of him. In their search for David it would appear that they were reduced to such extreme poverty that they should hunt about for meat to satisfy their hunger. Yet in their search, they would miss the meat as they missed David. They were not cut off at once, but scattered (cf. verse 11) and gradually consumed (verse 13). Indeed, those that die by famine die by inches, and feel themselves die.

**59:15:** *"They shall wander up and down for food"* - As they searched for David, so it would seem they searched for their daily food. But these brute beasts would not find their prey, and like the dogs that sought for their food but found none, so these enemies searched in vain for David.

*"And tarry all night..."* - The KJV reads "and grudge if they be not satisfied." The ASV here is superior. Barnes tells us that "the word which our translators have rendered *grudge* means properly to pass the night; then, to abide, to remain, to dwell; and then, to show oneself obstinate and stubborn" (Barnes). He then concludes, "the most natural meaning is that which the word properly bears - that of passing the night, as referring to their wandering about, disappointed in their object, and yet still hoping that they might possibly obtain it" (Barnes).

**59:16:** *"I will sing of thy strength"* - What a contrast. While his enemies searched in vain, he would praise God for the manifestation of Divine help in time of need. Divine lovingkindness is sufficient reason for singing aloud.

*"in the morning"* - While David may have been referring to the physical morning, we cannot help but feel that there is a play on words. "There is an allusion here, probably, to the fact that they encompassed the place of his abode at night; but there is also the implied idea that that night was emblematic of sorrow and distress" (Barnes). When the night of sorrow had passed, and the morning of

victory dawns, God's saints will have every reason to rejoice in God's lovingkindness.

**59:17:** *"Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing praises"* - David never lost sight of God's divine mercy. Deliverance not only caused David to see God's power and protection, but God's mercy in saving him from the hand of Saul. What else could he do but praise God. As Barnes noted, "The experience of David in the case referred to in this psalm should be an inducement to all who are in danger to put their trust in God; his anticipated feelings of gratitude, and his purpose to praise God when he should be delivered, should awaken in us the resolution to ascribe to God all the praise when we are delivered from impending troubles, and when our lives are lengthened out where we have been in imminent danger" (Barnes).

### ***Lessons***

1. The truly happy man is that man whose intercourse with heaven is not broken by the cares and troubles of life. David was a happy man. But who would question that this great man of God was pressed on every side.
2. "The innocency of the godly will not secure them from the malignity of the wicked. Those that are harmless like doves, yet, for Christ's sake, are hated of all men, as if they were noxious like serpents, and obnoxious accordingly" (Henry).
3. The enemies of God think God does not hear them. In their minds they imagine that God does not see them. But the Psalmist reminds us that God shall laugh at them for their folly. It is foolishness to think that He who planted the ear shall not hear. See also Psalms 2:4; Proverbs 1:26; Isaiah 37:22.

## *“Through God We Shall Do Valiantly”*

### ***Introduction***

In the subtitle the Psalm is ascribed to David. There is no reason to doubt his authorship. The occasion on which it is said to have been composed was after he had been engaged in war, and had evidently suffered some defeat. The subtitle says it was “when he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah, when Joab returned and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.” The events referred to are recorded in 2 Samuel 8 and 1 Chronicles 18. The name ‘Aramnaharaim’ has reference to the two rivers, more specifically the general country of Aramea which was between the Tigris and the Euphrates. The reference to “when Joab returned” would suggest that Joab was instrumental in the conquering of the mentioned area, and not David. Evidently there was some difficulty in conquering the area noted, as the context of the Psalm suggests. Victory finally came, but at great cost to Israel. The writer must have felt that the defeat here mentioned was due in some part to Divine displeasure. We shall entitle the Psalm, “Through God We Shall Do Valiantly.”

### ***Analysis***

We will use the following outline for the study of this psalm:

- I. Calamity (1-3), in which the Psalmist describes the disaster that had befallen the people of God;
- II. Cause (4-5), that the people of God were to carry the banner of truth;
- III. Conquests (6-8), in which the writer describes the dominion of David over various areas;
- IV. Challenge (9), as to WHO would lead the battle into unconquered Edom;
- V. Call (10-11), that God might give them victory;

VI. Confidence (12), in which the Psalmist expresses his deep sense of faith in God.

Occasionally we run across a Psalm that naturally lends itself to a homiletic presentation. This is just such a Psalm. In our study it became apparent that the experiences of David are so very much like our experiences. And although he fought physical battles, over physical enemies, our battle is no less important or significant. But first, some background information as pertains to OUR struggles and battles.

First, we must realize that our battle is a spiritual battle. In 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, the apostle Paul wrote: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full." Second, we must recognize that we are confronted on every hand with the enemies of the cross, including temptation, immorality, pride, apathy, indifference, worldliness, and materialism. In order to successfully face and overcome the enemy, we have been provided with sufficient and adequate armor to equip us for this battle (Eph. 6:10 ff). Third, we dare not ignore the fact that our foe is a formidable foe. "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Fourth, it takes a great faith to defeat the enemy! The apostle John reminds us that "For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4). Finally, we must not be ignorant of the devil's devices (2 Cor 2:11). Knowledge of his devices prepares us to recognize his attack when it comes. Too many of God's children are being swept away with every wind of doctrine for the simple reason that they have not the knowledge and wisdom to discern error or recognize Satan's attack when it comes.

So, what is the "battle plan"? How shall we overcome? We have before us a "*Battle Plan For Victory*." We would do well to study and learn!

## Commentary

### CALAMITY Verses 1-3

- 1 O God thou hast cast us off, thou hast broken us down; Thou hast been angry; oh restore us again.*  
*2 Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it: Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.*  
*3 Thou hast showed thy people hard things: Thou hast made us to drink the wine of staggering.*

**60:1-3:** The background to the Psalm is given in the introduction. There had evidently been a great defeat at Edom, and the Psalmist perceived that this was due to the sin of the people. Could it have been that the people were proud? Did they have some secret sin in their lives? Were they guilty of gossip, hatred, selfishness, idolatry? There was SOMETHING of which the Psalmist was aware which led him to believe that the absence of victory lay squarely upon their shoulders!

*"Thou hast cast us off"* is from a word that means "foul, rancid, offensive" (Barnes, QV). They were being treated AS IF God had been offended by His people! Spurgeon has aptly noted that "to be cast off by God is the worst calamity that can befall a man or a people; but the worst form of it is when the person is not aware of it and is indifferent to it" (Spurgeon). They had been "broken" and scattered in war; unable to maintain their fighting ability! "Breaches" existed in the walls of Zion. She was in danger of utter collapse. "It tottered to a fall; if not soon propped up and repaired it would come down in complete ruin. So far gone was Israel that only God's interposition could preserve it from utter destruction" (Spurgeon). And what about us? What can be said about the church of our Lord in this generation? "Breaches" exist in the walls of Zion! We have failed miserably in our efforts to evangelize! The gospel has been veiled due in large part to our indifference! And how has the Almighty reacted? The "INCREASE" promised in 1 Corinthians 3 has not come! We have "drank the wine of staggering." The medicine has been bitter; but the cure is promised. How grateful we should be "the great physician gives his patients potent potions to purge out their abounding and deep-seated diseases" (Spurgeon).



Notice in this connection the situation at Ai, in Joshua 7. When God's people do not LIVE like God's people, God will not allow them to be victorious! As a result, God has caused His people to come upon hard times, to see "hard things." The question remains as to whether or not we will learn from these reversals, disappointments, and set backs. Perhaps there is something in our lives which has brought about God's displeasure! Perhaps there is some hidden sin or some covetousness on the part of the congregation. Like David of old, we should beseech God's forgiveness, fall on our faces because of our lukewarmness, indifference, apathy and beg, Beg, BEG His divine mercy, and the return of His strength and power! God will not bless the church when she harbors sin. Notice the seven churches of Asia as recorded in Revelation 2 and 3. History attests to the fact that those churches had their candlesticks removed within one generation of John's epistle. Far too many congregations of God's people are not growing. They do not influence the world to change, but instead allow the world to bring them down to the level of the ungodly. As one has said, "There are people who make things happen, people who watch things happen, and people who don't know anything happened. Which are we?" Could it be that you have hidden the "accursed thing" in your life, and are holding back the progress of the church?

### CAUSE Verses 4-5

*4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, That it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah*  
*5 That thy beloved may be delivered, Save with thy right hand, and answer us.*

**60:4-5:** From these verses we note (1) God has given a banner; (2) He has given it to those that fear Him; (3) That banner is to be displayed; (4) The reason for the display of that banner is for the cause of truth; (5) The Psalmist desires deliverance; and (6) He fully trusted in Jehovah to provide that deliverance and answer his prayer.

There is a reason for our being here! There IS a cause. Consider the words of David when he came upon the scene of the armies of God terrified by Goliath. When rebuked, this young lad asked, "Is there not a cause?" (1 Sam. 17:29). Do we not have reason to be concerned? Is there not a justified CAUSE for our actions and reactions? Indeed there is!

Consider first, that a “banner” has been given, NOT TO THE WORLD, BUT THE PEOPLE OF GOD! The “banner” is a flag, a standard, something lifted up; a signal! When I was in the Coast Guard we flew the “banner” of Old Glory.” That flag stood for everything the United States of America believed in and practiced. It was a manifestation of our cause! The Christian’s banner is the Old, Old Story of Jesus the Christ! The GOSPEL! It is the proclamation of that distinctive message that sets us apart from every other religious system in the world.

To WHOM is this banner given? To them “*that fear thee.*” This is language descriptive of those who are God’s followers! Listen carefully, brethren! The denominational world DOES NOT CARRY THE BANNER OF TRUTH! Their cause is NOT the cause of God! They are NOT going to be the preservative of this world, nor the bearers of glad tidings to a lost humanity. “If we do not do it, then who will?”

And why is it “*displayed*”? NOT for vain parade or ostentation; not for our own glory or pride! But for the cause of “*truth.*” The TRUTH shall make men free (John 8:32); the TRUTH will enlighten! Implied in the word “displayed,” is the PUBLIC proclamation of the truth. It is NOT to be hidden (Matthew 5:13 ff). Why is it that men are so fearful of the truth? On more than one occasion we have actually come across those who were afraid to see what the Bible says. It’s sort of like going to a doctor. We put it off, procrastinate, and delay until we finally come to our senses and take the only sensible course of action that can address our illness. Are we afraid of the truth? Even some of my brethren are afraid to study some subject matters. Marriage and divorce seems to be a no-no in many locations. The idea seems to be that if we don’t deal with it, it will just “go away.” That is precisely what the devil wants you to believe. Perhaps we need to pick up our Bibles and study again passages like John 3:20-21, John 8:32-34 and John 17:17. Truth! There is the answer for all of man’s woes!

Finally, from these two verses we must note the ultimate end of this cause: it is that God’s people might be vindicated, and God glorified. The “beloved” is in the plural, meaning the “beloved ones.” The reference to “thy right hand” is suggestive of the hand that held the sword, by which the bow was drawn, the spear hurled. It is, in fact, a

request that God's POWER might be manifest to the enemy, God's people be delivered, and the Almighty glorified!

## CONQUESTS

### Verses 6-8

6 *God hath spoken in his holiness: I will exult; I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.*

7 *Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the defence of my head; Judah is my sceptre.*

8 *Moab is my washpot; Upon Edom will I cast my shoe: Philistia, shout thou because of me.*

**60:6-8:** It is not so much that God WILL speak, or that He IS speaking, but that He "*HATH spoken*," and that in His holiness. According to His promise unto Abraham, the conquest of the land and the inheritance on the part of the people of Israel, WOULD be granted. The enemies of God would be subdued. His cause would go forth victorious.

"*in his holiness*" - "Holy" or "holiness" has the idea of separateness, distinctiveness, set apart for a purpose or service. What is it that makes God "holy"? or "separate"? It is His omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, etc. It is everything and anything that makes Him different. And it is precisely because of His eternal qualities that His word is true, reliable, and sure. Hence, when God speaks "*in his holiness*" it is an affirmation that what He has said will, indeed, come to pass. "Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:17-18). There are some important truths to learn from this passage. **First**, God rules over all nations, and He will use them to the fulfilling of His purpose. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this the hard way. His kingdom was taken from him and he was made to dwell with the beasts of the field so that he might "know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:31-32). Those nations that fight against Him will be brought low. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov.14:34). Communist Russia sought to overthrow God and His truth, but after seven decades that nation went the way of others that fought against God. **Second**, when God speaks in His holiness, we can rest assured that what He

says will come to pass. Shechem was divided. Judah became God's scepter. Moab became God's wash pot to boil the idolatry out of Judah. Four thousand years of Old Testament history have demonstrated the truth that what God says will most assuredly come to pass. God does not vacillate. He does not renege on His promises. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jam. 1: 17). **Third**, God WILL WIN THE VICTORY! The heathen may rage and the nations imagine a vain thing (Psalms 2). Though they "set themselves against Jehovah and his anointed," God shall "have them in derision" (Psalms 2:1, 4). The connection of this verse with what has gone before is important. God has a banner that needs to be displayed. It has been passed to those that "fear" the Lord. We must march forward with that banner. But God wants us to know that we are not alone. He is with us. And He has promised that we "we are more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37). See Revelation 6:2. **Fourth**, God WILL perform His vows, oaths, threats, promises! "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11). **Finally**, "Faith finds honey in the lion, and a wash pot in filthy Moab" (Spurgeon).

## CHALLENGE

### Verse 9

*9 Who will bring me into the strong city? Who hath led me unto Edom?*

**60:9:** The "strong city" was probably the capital of Idumea. Barnes tells us that "this was the celebrated city *Petra*, situated in the rocks, and so difficult to be taken by an enemy" (Barnes, QV). The difficulty in this verse is determining precisely who is speaking. If it is David who is speaking, then not only does David ask the question, but he answers it is verse 10. Realizing that there was a distinct possibility that God had, indeed, cast him off (verse 1), David is asking precisely the same question that Peter asked: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). To whom can we turn if we do not have God? And here is the great lesson in this Psalm. If we do not have God, we have nothing! If God does cast us off, for what ever reason, then who is it that will

lead us into the strong city? Who will help us to overcome? Who will give us the victory?

On the other hand, if this is God speaking, He is looking for someone to do His bidding. There is a banner. It is for those who fear the Lord. It is the most important cause upon the face of this globe. Victory is promised. Taking all that into account, God asks: "Who will bring me into the strong city?" What a challenge. God gave the same challenge to Isaiah: "And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me" (Isa. 6:8). In David's situation, there was great CONCERN as to exactly WHO would lead the armies into the great enemy Edom? In Isaiah's situation, God was looking for someone to go speak to Israel regarding their sins! Herein lies the challenge! Who will take up the challenge and respond to God's call for helpers? There are cities, towns, and hamlets where God is not known. Most of the cities, and especially the larger ones, are citadels of Satan's armies. Who is going to take the message of God to those people? There are whole cities in our own country that have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Closer to home, there are families that you know who are without God, without Christ and without hope! God asks, "Who will bring me to that city? Who will bring me to that family?" What a challenge. Remember when we were children, and someone would DARE us to do some outrageous thing - and we simply could NOT turn away from the challenge? I learned to fly because someone challenged me to do so. I determined to preach the riches of Christ because someone gave me a challenge. And I stand before you today as one who presents a challenge. Who will take the Gospel to the lost? Who will dare to live differently? Who will hold faithfully to His word, veering neither to the left or the right? Who will help us visit the sick, the weak, the immature, the out of duty? Who will prepare themselves for the great battle that we face? Someone once wrote the following, the source and author not known:

### ***"I Dare You"***

*I Dare You* to prove that you are not asleep on the job.

*I Dare You* to spend more time reading God's word  
than the daily newspaper.

*I Dare You* to face your doubts and conquer them.

*I Dare You* to brave the snickers of your friends and  
live in the simple style which will enable you to  
spend more on Christ

- I Dare You* to talk with your friends about actually living up to their professed religion.
- I Dare You* to take Christ with you into the schoolroom, office, and workshop.
- I Dare You* to tell the truth in love whenever you speak.
- I Dare You* to live above the average standard of morals and be really virtuous.
- I Dare You* to be candid with yourself and evaluate the way you spend your leisure time in the light of your love for Christ.
- I Dare You* to be courageous and willing to accept criticism by trying to start some Christian work in your congregation.
- I Dare You* to speak out respectfully and yet frankly against those who are stifling Christ in the church.
- I Dare You* to risk your reputation by rising up in protest at the inertia which characterizes most congregations and members.
- I Dare You* to throw your whole soul into the worship of God every time you meet for that purpose.
- I Dare You* to work half as hard to save souls for whom Christ died as you work for your business.
- I Dare You* to act as if you believe that Jesus is the Christ.

Here are some challenges from God. "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). Or what about this one: "Bring ye the whole tithe into the store-house, that there may be food in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith Jehovah of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

### CALL Verses 10-11

- 10 *Hast not thou, O God, cast us off? And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.*
- 11 *Give us help against the adversary; For vain is the help of man.*

**60:10:** The KJV lends credence to the view that David was the one asking the question in verse nine. Here he answers: “Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?” With full realization that God may very well have cast him off, David still pleads for God’s mercy and asks that God might “give us help against the adversary.” David was not ashamed to seek God’s aid, nor should we be ashamed.

*“Vain is the help of man”* - What is said here of temporal troubles is even more true with regard to our spiritual and eternal necessities. When we are burdened down with guilt, or facing the unholy and arrogant enemies of the cross, the help of man is vain. Our help is in God alone. Man cannot guide us, nor can he comfort, pardon, or save. Any attempt to turn to man for spiritual strength and guidance is empty of power.

## **CONFIDENCE**

### **Verse 12**

*12 Through God we shall do valiantly; For he it is that will tread down our adversaries.*

**60:12:** Lets take a closer look at this word “*valiant*.” Webster says it mean, “Brave, courageous; intrepid in danger; performed with valor; heroic.” Barnes noted that in this passage it means “that we shall go forth with spirit and with courage to the war” (Barnes). Here is the confident assurance on the part of the Psalmist that God would indeed help him, and that through God’s strength they would achieve the victory. Hence, the Psalm closes with the assurance of God’s favor and with the firm belief that the desire of the Psalmist would be obtained. History shows that David’s prayer was answered and that Edom was overthrown. Consequently, David became a great hero in the eyes of his countrymen. In the generations to follow David was looked upon with great admiration and respect. He was, in their estimation, a great hero. “A true hero is the man who rises above the base cowardice of his own nature to do a noble and courageous deed when shaken by dread of its consequences” (Rimmer, 95). It was Emerson who wrote: “All history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.” Thomas Carlyle said, “Great men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look upon a great man without gaining something from him.” Have you ever known any heroes? What about those during the Los Angeles riot who acted valiantly? Daring

the mobs, going against all odds, they rescued those who needed help. And who will ever forget those scenes following the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995? Or what about those brave men and women who responded to the tragedy of 9-11? But you want to know where the real heroes are? Who is it that is valiant in the church? It is that young person who says NO to drugs; that young lady who declines an invitation to the local dance; that young man who refuses to follow the crowd to do evil; that business executive that will not compromise his/her values for the sake of position or promotion; that Christian who is willing to visit someone in need, for the purpose of saving their soul; that missionary willing to forsake family, country, etc. for the cause of Christ; that child of God who gives sacrificially so that missionaries can be sent; that elder willing to do what is good and right for the flock, without fear or favor of those little “groups” that might want to lead the congregation astray. Yes, there have been, and will continue to be, great heroes in the Lord’s kingdom. May their number increase.

And the amazing promise in this verse is that WE SHALL DO VALIANTLY! And why? Because God “*will tread down our adversaries*”! It is “through God” that we shall be victorious.

“*we shall do valiantly*” - This is the Old Testament equivalent of Romans 8:28, Hebrews 13:5-6, Matthew 28:20, and a host of other passages that promise us the victory in Jesus. “We will not be ashamed of our colours, afraid of our foes, or fearful of our cause. The Lord is with us, omnipotence sustains us, and we will not hesitate, we dare not be cowards” (Spurgeon, QV).

### ***Lessons***

1. The church has encountered enemies in every generation. None have escaped the call to uphold the banner of God’s word, nor shall any escape that sacred call. The words of Paul ring loud and clear: “And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:2-3).
2. “So long as soldiers see their banner *uplifted*, they flock round it with confidence. But when it is prostrate their spirits and hopes fall. The ‘*banner*’ is a pledge of safety, and a rallying point to those who fight under it” (A. R. Fausset).



3. God speaks “in his holiness.” All that God communicates to man is “holy” by the very nature of Who gave it. It is holy in its Source, it is holy in its content, it is holy in its purpose, and it is holy in its instruction. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We would do well to listen when God speaks in His holiness.

## *“The Rock That Is Higher Than I”*

### ***Introduction***

We have entitled this Psalm, "The Rock That Is Higher Than I." According to the subscript, it was written by David. The occasion, however, is not given. From the Psalm itself it seems to have been composed by one who was in exile (verse 2), and one that was king (verse 6). It was likely composed by David when he was driven into exile on the rebellion of Absalom. Notice 2 Samuel 17:22. The 42nd and 43rd Psalm seem to have been composed on the same occasion. We like G.Campbell Morgan's summary of this Psalm:

His longing is for restoration to God rather than to circumstances. All through there seems to breathe a sense of perfect confidence in God, together with a consciousness of present need, and a longing desire for a return to past experience. There is no uncertainty in his mind concerning God's help of him in days that are gone...The one impression from reading the psalm is that of the singer's sense that in the midst of trouble his hope is still in God (Morgan, 243).

### ***Analysis***

The language of the Psalm suggests that we have a prayer of thanksgiving from an expelled king who is returning to his throne. In these verses we have an earnest prayer (1-2) followed by expressions of confidence and trust in God (3-7). The Psalm then closes with an outpouring of praise (8). Metrically it consists of two strophes, each containing four verses and separated by the musical refrain "Selah."

We will use the following outline:

- I. REQUEST (vs 1-2);
- II. REFUGE (3-5);

III. REASSURANCE (6-7);  
IV. RESULT (8).

**Commentary**

**Request  
Verses 1-2**

*1 Hear my cry, O God; Attend unto my prayer.*

*2 From the end of the earth will I call unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.*

**61:1:** "*Hear my cry*" – The "cry" is a prayer, as the second part of this verse would attest. The Hebrew (*'rinnah*) expresses a shrill, a piercing cry, whether of pain or of joy.

*"Attend to my prayer"* – To "attend" is simply to listen, to answer, to give regard. "It is language such as would be produced by deep distress; when a sad and burdened heart gives vent to its feelings in a loud cry for mercy" (Barnes). "No situation can be bad enough that it does not call for prayer. When a man is through with praying, that man is through with any life that matters" (Coffman, 504).

Pharisees may rest in their prayers; true believers are eager for an answer to them: ritualists may be satisfied when they have 'said or sung' their litanies and collects, but living children of God will never rest till their supplications have entered the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth (Spurgeon).

**61:2:** "*From the end of the earth*" – The "*end of the earth*" is figurative, meaning to the uttermost limits. Though in exile, the author was determined to put his trust in God and cry unto Him for protection and deliverance.

*"When my heart is overwhelmed"* – Our English translates the Hebrew *'ataph*,' which means "to cover, as with a garment, then with darkness or calamity" (Barnes). The situation must have looked very bleak at the time David wrote these words. We learn from David's intention to pray while in exile that "no place is unsuitable for prayer. There may be an end of the earth, but there must not be an end to devotion" (Spurgeon).

*"Lead me to the rock that is higher than I"* – More accurately, "that is too high for me." Unattended, he could not reach that safety

which he sought at this time. He depended upon God. Our opinion is that the writer was referring to God. There is great comfort in these words for those who suffer for the cause of Jesus Christ. The words suggest the following:

- 1) First, that God is a strong defense; a ROCK, stable, firm, solid; none can over come;
- 2) *Second, the weakness of one's self to deliver him from this world's woes.***
- 3) Third, the need for proper guidance to discover that "Rock." We must beseech God to "lead" us unto Himself.

When the heart is overwhelmed, it is comforting to know that we can go to the Rock that is higher, more stable, and of greater strength than those things the world has to offer.

### REFUGE Verses 3-5

- 3 For thou hast been a refuge for me, A strong tower from the enemy.*
- 4 I will dwell in thy tabernacle for ever: I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings. Selah*
- 5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.*

**61:3:** "*For thou hast been a refuge*" – The Psalmist reflects on the past. Faith projects past deliverances into the future and our faith grows as a result. Practically speaking, we gather arguments from the past for our present confidence. The reference is to the former mercies that God had shown David. Such had shown (1) God's power to deliver, and (2) God's willingness to do so. Reflecting upon those past mercies, David believed that God would, as in times past, deliver him from the present distress and that he would then "*dwell in thy tabernacle for ever.*" No doubt David recognized the full significance of fellowship with God. How sweet is the soul's association with the heavenly Father. The earth offers no such joy or sublime peace as is ours when we are in fellowship with our Creator. "Hewers of wood and drawers of water in the tents of Jehovah are more to be envied than the princes who riot in the pavilions of kings" (Spurgeon).

*"a strong tower"* – A *'migdal'* is a great fortress. When we take refuge within the body of Christ we are safe. There are not darts of the evil one that can penetrate the wall of protection God affords us.

**61:4:** *"I will take refuge in the covert of thy wings."* As a young chick finds refuge under its mother's wings, so David would find protection with God. The language is figurative, signifying God's providential care for those who love and obey Him.

The *"heritage"* pertains to the unlimited, all-embracing, blessings that have been promised to those who love God and do His will. It was not the physical to which David looked, but to the spiritual. Peter wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5). But notice that the Psalmist says he would enjoy that inheritance with *"those that fear thy name."* Such are the comrades of the faithful.

### **REASSURANCE** **Verses 6-7**

*6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life; His years shall be as many generations.*

*7 He shall abide before God for ever: Oh prepare lovingkindness and truth, that they may preserve him.*

There are undertones of the Messianic reign in the closing verses of this Psalm, but it is not certain whether such was intended as a Messianic prophecy. Coffman has pointed out that "the Jewish interpreters for centuries before Christ interpreted these verses as applicable to the Messiah" (Coffman, 507).

The text is literally, "Days upon the days of the king thou wilt add." David was confident that God would spare his life in spite of the dangers which he faced at every turn. There is a note of victory in the Psalmist's writing.

### **RESULT** **Verse 8**

8 *So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, That I may daily perform my vows.*

David's heart has been comforted. Praise would be offered to God for answering his prayer. Spurgeon noted, "We ought not to leap in prayer, and limp in our praise...Because my prayer is answered, my song shall be perpetual; because Jesus for ever sits at thy right hand, it shall be acceptable; because I am preserved in him, it shall be grateful" (Spurgeon).

*"I may daily perform my vows"* - Promises to God are to be taken seriously and made soberly. We have witnessed those who, in a moment of distress, are quick to respond in obedience to the truth, but who, when once the crisis is past, forget their vows to Jehovah. "We ask no vacation from this heavenly vocation; we would make no pause in this sacred service. God daily performs his promises, let us daily perform our vows" (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

There is much comfort in this Psalm for those who have lost a loved one. Life is filled with many disappointments, such as loss of job, loss of belongings, or betrayal from our friends. But the greatest loss is that of a loved one whose eyes have closed in death. There is a place to go when such loss occurs. We dare not isolate ourselves. Times of sorrow and temptation are the time to flee to the Rock, the Shelter, the Strong Tower. Only there shall we find peace. Keep in mind, there is great responsibility that goes with God's blessings. I must "abide," "trust," and "perform."

## *“My Soul Waits On God”*

### ***Introduction***

The author of this Psalm is David, as per the subscript. The Psalm engages several of the expressions characteristic of David's writings. Phrases such as "my rock," "my refuge," and "my strength" serve as a sort of signature of David upon this beautiful Psalm. The time and occasion of the Psalm are not known. Some have suggested that it was written at some time during Absalom's rebellion. The Psalm was written "to the chief musician, to Jeduthun." Jeduthun was one of those appointed by David to preside over the music of the tabernacle. See in this connection 1 Chronicles 25:1-3. Barnes points out that "it is impossible to determine why this psalm, and the others where his name is found in the title, were dedicated to him, or committed to his special care" (Barnes).

The overall thrust of the Psalm is summed up in the title that Keil and Delitzsch give it: "Resignation To God When Foes Crowd In Upon One" (Keil & Delitzsch). The purpose of the Psalm is, quite naturally, to lead men to trust in God in times of despair and trouble. One curious aspect of the Psalm is the four-fold use of the word "only" (vs. 2, 4, 5, 6), leading Spurgeon to entitle the Psalm, "The ONLY Psalm" (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm is divided into three sections by the musical refrain, "Selah." These appear between 4 and 5, and again at 8 and 9. We will divide the Psalm as follows:

- I. TRUST, in which the author presents a simple statement of his trust in Jehovah, his rock and salvation, verses 1-2;
- II. DESCRIPTION of the enemies and their intentions and purposes, verses 3-4;
- III. TRUST, in which there is a renewal of the sentiments of the first two verses, 5-7;
- IV. EXHORTATION for others to likewise trust in Jehovah, and not in external, physical things, 8-10;

V. REASONS for trusting in Jehovah, 11-12, these being:

1. All power belongs to Him, verse 11;
2. He is merciful, verse 12;
3. He is just and equitable, verse 12.

Many years ago this author recorded the following outline in the margin of his American Standard Bible. Unfortunately the source has long been forgotten: (1) Rock, verses 1-2, (2) Rebellion, verses 3-4, (3) Refuge, verses 5-7, (4) Riches and Robbery, verses 8-10, and (4) Reasons, verses 11-12.

## **Commentary**

### **Trust Verses 1-2**

- 1 *My soul waiteth in silence for God only: From him cometh my salvation.*
- 2 *He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my high tower; I shall not be greatly moved.*

**62:1:** In the first two verses the Psalmist expresses his absolute trust in God. He recognizes that God is the true source of deliverance and salvation. He perceives of God as his rock, salvation, and high tower, and expresses confidence that he will not be moved by the enemy. We have before us a man who had seriously contemplated his life, the condition of his soul, and, having taken stock of all of his resources, declared, "My soul waits in silence for God alone. It is from Him whence I derive my salvation."

*"My soul waiteth"* - The Psalmist's mind was at ease in knowing that all was in the hands of God; there was naught that he could accomplish on his own. The Hebrew '*dumiyah*' means "silence," and is so rendered in the ASV with the words "waiteth in silence." The idea is that the Psalmist had a sense of calmness. All was in the hands of God; Jehovah was worthy of his trust and confidence. Barnes captured the Psalmist's sentiments: "The feeling is that which exists when we have entrusted all to God; when, having entire confidence in his power, his goodness, his wisdom, his mercy, we commit the whole case to him as if it were no longer our own" (Barnes). The New Testament equivalent is found in 1 Peter 5:7: "Casting all your anxiety upon him, for he careth for you." When once the soul realizes its complete dependence upon God for release



from its troubles, the peace for which one seeks will finally be his to enjoy. "Such is the calmness - the peace - the quiet - the *silence* of the soul when all is left with God" (Barnes).

*"From him cometh my salvation"* – The emphasis throughout the Psalm is the complete and unique assistance that God gives to His children. The Psalmist was writing to friend and foe alike and telling them, "It is from HIM, and HIM ALONE that my salvation comes." Our generation needs to learn this important lesson. We need to learn to listen to the voice of God as it is communicated in His holy word. Unfortunately, the noise of the world often drowns out the voice of God. It is often the case that men fail to hear God's message because they refuse to listen. If we would find true peace we must "wait upon God" and let Him direct us by His word. In this connection Spurgeon noted, "Faith can hear the footsteps of coming salvation because she has learned to be silent" (Spurgeon).

**62:2:** *"He only is my rock and my salvation"* – Old Testament history teaches us that God will not allow us to have His counsel mixed with the counsel of false gods. It is either ALL God, and ONLY God, or it is NO God at all. David would trust in none other, nor would he seek salvation from any other source. The New Testament equivalent is found in Acts 4:12, "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

*"I shall not be greatly moved" or "I shall not be much moved"* - The words suggest that the writer did not expect perfect security, or an escape from temporary defeats and set backs. None of us can expect a life free from persecution. Notice in this connection Paul's admonition to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:12). In this life we will have tribulation. But it is the "big picture" that we must keep before us. The ultimate outcome will be victory, not defeat. We may occasionally be "moved," but not "removed."

### **Description Verses 3-4**

- 3 *How long will ye set upon a man, That ye may slay him, all of you, Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?*
- 4 *They only consult to thrust him down from his dignity; They delight in lies; They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah*

**62:3:** In these two verses the writer describes the characteristics of his enemy. Their intentions were only that of destruction, while outwardly they hypocritically blessed. "*How long*" are words on the lips of all those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. In the case of the Psalmist, he was asking the enemy, "How long will you continue your attempts to destroy me?"

*"How long will ye imagine mischief"* - The "mischief" includes planning as well as the execution of their evil intentions. The question was directed toward those who were seeking to destroy David. It is as if David were setting the question to them, "How long will ye assail a man, that ye may put him to death?" Coffman picked up on the intensity of David's cry: "The same words in the Arabic imply 'coming in with cries and raised fists'" (Coffman, 512).

*"like a leaning wall...tottering fence"* - This has reference to the futility of the efforts of the enemies. Like a wall that is bowed out, or a fence that has no strength, the enemy would utterly fail. Their attempts to destroy David would be overthrown by the power and providence of the Almighty. "It is never well on our part to think highly of ungodly persons; whatever their position, they are near their destruction, they totter to their fall. It will be our wisdom to keep our distance, for no one is advantaged by being near a falling wall; if it does not crush with its weight, it may stifle with its dust" (Spurgeon).

**62:4:** *"they only consult"* - Here David describes the purpose and object of the counsel of those who opposed him. Their one aim was to "thrust him down."

*"They delight in lies"* - This suggests that Absalom is the perpetrator under consideration here. This rebellious son of David made use of falsehood to win the people to his side. Notice 2 Samuel 15:1-6. The height of hypocrisy is attributed to those who would destroy David. While blessing with the mouth and giving a pretence of friendship and integrity to the King, their lives proved otherwise. The words could as easily apply to so many who do not LIVE the Christian life. With their lips they claim allegiance to Christ; with their lives they deny Him. To lie is bad enough, but to "delight in lies" is beyond imagination, and certainly one of bleakest marks of infamy and dishonesty.

We like the summation of verses 2-5 offered by Keil and Delitzsch:

The poet, although apparently irrecoverably lost, does not nevertheless despair, but opposes one thing to the tumultuous crowding in upon him of his many foes, viz. quiet calm submission; not, however, a fatalistic resignation, but that which gives up everything to God, whose hand can be distinctly recognized and felt in what is now happening to him. [His] is the language of faith, with which in the face of all assault, established truths are confessed and confirmed; and with which, in the midst of all conflict, resolutions, that are made and are to be firmly kept, are deliberately and solemnly declared and affirmed" (Keil and Delitzsch).

### **Trust** **Verses 5-7**

- 5 *My soul, wait thou in silence for God only; For my expectation is from him.*  
6 *He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my high tower; I shall not be moved.*  
7 *With God is my salvation and my glory: The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.*

**62:5:** These verses are a repeat of the first part of the Psalm, in which the author once again expresses his trust in Jehovah. In addition to the thoughts in verse 1, the Psalmist refers to God as the rock of strength. The verses abound with confidence in God.

*"my expectation is from him"* - All that the writer expected or hoped for would come from God. The words "rock," "salvation," and "high tower" are expressive of the complete safety that is found in Jehovah God.

**62:6:** The difference between this and verse 2 is that the word "greatly" or "much" does not appear here. Barnes thinks the "language indicates more entire confidence showing that the slightest apprehension or fear which existed in the beginning of this psalm, had been wholly dissipated" (Barnes). What we have is the complete resignation on the part of the Psalmist to God and His divine will. No wonder David was called a "man after God's own heart," for the Son of David expressed the same sentiments when He prayed, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42).

**62:7:** *"With God is my salvation and my glory"* - To depend upon God for our salvation is wise, and to glory in that salvation is one of

the marks of the righteous man. Note the descriptive adjectives the Psalmist uses to describe God's protection and strength: "salvation," "glory," "rock," and "refuge." In addition notice the personal application the Psalmist makes of this abundant strength to his own life. The word "my" appears before each noun. Spurgeon concluded, "Ignorance needs but few words, but when experience brings a wealth of knowledge, we need varied expressions to serve as coffers for our treasure" (Spurgeon).

### **Exhortation Verses 8-10**

- 8 *Trust in him at all times, ye people; Pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah*  
9 *Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: In the balances they will go up; They are together lighter than vanity.*  
10 *Trust not in oppression, And become not vain in robbery: If riches increase, set not your heart thereon*

**62:8:** Here is a call unto others to place their confidence in God. It is the plea of, "Come follow me." The Psalmist gives reasons why men should follow God rather than place their trust in those things which the world exalts. There is a possibility that these words were addressed to those young men being tempted to align with Absalom in his rebellion.

*"Pour out your heart before him"* - Confession is good for the soul, and the man who confides in his God will find a refuge indeed. On the other hand, pride will bar us from heaven's mercy seat and rob us of divine blessings. "To keep our griefs to ourselves is to hoard up wretchedness. The stream will swell and rage if you dam it up: give it a clear course, and it leaps along and creates no alarm" (Spurgeon).

**62:9:** The word translated *"men of low degree"* means those who are blown about by every wind of the sea. They call to God today, but curse Him tomorrow. When hurricane "Hugo" devastated the Florida peninsula, one woman was heard to exclaim, "I don't believe in God anymore." We suspect that she did not truly believe in God in the first place.

The word translated "*men of high degree*" is the Hebrew word '*ish*' and refers to those of high estate, those who are exalted in the eyes of men. See also Isaiah 2:9 and 5:15. The idea seems to be that when it comes to the truly important things in life, we are not to put our trust in men. These men of high degree promise us the world, but only give the dregs. When relied upon, they disappoint us with broken promises. Our hope and trust must be in God. The more we rely on God, the more we shall come to learn that man is an empty cistern in which there is no water for the thirst of the parched soul. As for those who are of the "lower class," they are vain. As for those of "high degree," they are "a lie." As Barnes points out, "any prospect of protection or aid from men of rank and station, from any power which they wield, is unworthy to be relied upon" (Barnes).

*"in the balance they will go up"* – The KJV renders it, "to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity." The idea seems to be that, were they to be placed upon scales, their value would be surpassed by those things that are considered vain and useless. Their counsel and strength would "go up," being offset by even those things that are vain and of no value.

**62:10:** "*Oppression*" of men is not the means of strength, though despots throughout history have sought this means of greatness and security. Might does not make right, and force is no indication that the path they follow is the path of wisdom and strength. It is reported that Herod had a great number of his own family slain for fear that they would rise up in opposition to his power. We cannot hope to attain our object by oppressing others in an effort to extort their property or service.

*"not in vain robbery"* - The number of bank robberies in Houston in the years 1994-1997 were astonishing. Men have, through the years, sought to find solace and security through the dishonest acquisition of the money of others, whether through robbery, embezzlement, or cheating. No, such does not solve the ills of the soul, and there is no refuge in such living.

*"if riches increase"* - The honest acquisition of material things are no better than ill-gotten gain if they are considered our source of strength. See in this connection 1 Timothy 6:9.

None of these things (oppression, robbery, material gain) can supply the real wants of man, nor can they defend him from the perils of

life. Certainly, none can save his soul. He needs, above all else, and in fact excluded from all else, the hand of Almighty God.

### **Reasons For Trusting In Jehovah Verses 11-12**

- 11 *God hath spoken once, Twice have I heard this, That power  
belongeth unto God.*  
12 *Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth lovingkindness; For thou  
renderest to every man according to his work.*

**62:11:** In these verses the Psalmist sets forth some reasons why God should be the one in whom we place our trust and confidence. God speaks but once. But our desire and want to listen again and again is one of the traits of the godly man. He never grows tired of hearing the old, old story. And the message in which he delights? "*Power belongeth to God.*" He has "*power,*" He manifests *lovingkindness*, and He is "*just*" or "*equitable.*" The word "*lovingkindness*" appears frequently in the Davidic Psalms and "it surely must have been one of David's favorite words regarding God" (Coffman, 515). When one considers the stark contrast between God and the vain things man has to offer, he is impressed with the truth in the Psalmist's statement, "*power belongeth unto God.*"

**62:12:** Barnes has this concluding note regarding the Psalmist's mention of God's lovingkindness:

Power, indeed, belongs to God; but this is an attribute to be feared, and while, in one respect, it will inspire confidence, or while it gives us the assurance that God is *able* to defend us when all else shall fail, yet, unattended by any other attribute, it might produce only apprehension and alarm. What man, weak and sinful man, wants to know is not merely that God has almighty power, but *how* that power will be wielded, or with what other attributes it is combined (Barnes).

The Psalmist draws the Psalm to a close and reminds us that God will "*render[est] to every man according to his work.*" Salvation is conditional, and God's judgment is meted to each one of us according to our works. "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor 5:10).

## ***Lessons***

1. We are to trust in God "at all times" (verse 8). Life's circumstances vary. When the trials and tribulations of life come our way we are to trust in Him to see us through. When we find our self in a favorable circumstance, we are to trust in God and follow through with thanksgiving and praise.
2. We cannot serve God and mammon (Matt. 6:24). The Psalmist acknowledged that God alone was his refuge, rock, and salvation. As for the unrighteous, they "only consult" with the wicked, and that for unholy ends so as to "thrust him [the righteous] down from his dignity." We must make the choice between God and mammon. But we must keep in mind that God "renderest to every man according to his work."
3. Trust and obedience shine in this Psalm. Note what the Psalmist did: he "waited on God." He was patient, trusting in God to work things out in his life. Note also how he did it: with his "soul." He was devoted and committed solely to his God. "He only" was the Rock of the Psalmist. Finally, notice the blessings he received: Salvation was granted, and stability given. The Psalmist could confidently affirm, "I shall not be greatly moved."
4. "Waiting is nothing else but *hope and trust lengthened*" (Spurgeon).
5. Waiting on God is the soul casting its anchor into the realm of the unseen and trusting in the power of God to sustain. When the storms of life beat upon us, let us determine all the more that we will put our trust in God.
6. Note the following with regard to trusting in God (verse 8): I. The FACT ASSERTED: "God is a refuge for us." Men may ignore this truth, or simply not trust therein, but it is true nonetheless. II. A DUTY ENJOINED: "Trust in him at all times." There is no occasion or situation that may arise but that we must trust in Him. III. An ENCOURAGING DIRECTION URGED: "Ye people, pour out your heart before him."
7. The Psalmist speaks of our obligation with regard to riches. "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." Here is (1) a circumstance which most desire, (2) a possibility which some may possess, and (3) a duty which all should obey.





## *“My Soul Thirsteth For Thee”*

### ***Introduction***

This is a Psalm of David, as per the subscript. It was written when he was "in the wilderness of Judah," a deserted area east of Judah. Delitzsch locates this "wilderness" just west of the Dead Sea, a more arid and dry area than that east of the Jordan (Keil and Delitzsch). Barnes points out that "David was repeatedly driven into that wilderness in the time of Saul; and the general structure of the psalm would accord well with any one of those occasions" (Barnes). We are prone to place this during the time of Absalom's rebellion due to the reference in verse 11 to "the king." It would belong during the same time as Psalm 42, 43, and 61. But regardless the circumstance, the richness of the Psalm is not lessened.

Just as the sweetest of Paul's epistles were those sent out from a Roman prison, so some of the sweetest of David's Psalms are those that were penned, as this one was, in the wild desolation of the Dead Sea desert (Coffman, 517).

### ***Analysis***

In the first eight verses of the Psalm the writer expresses his deep desire for fellowship and association with God. He expresses his desire to return to the sanctuary (verses 1-2). Though pursued by his enemies (verse 9), he was confident that God would protect him (verses 7-8). In the last three verses he speaks of the overthrow of his enemies. We have selected to follow the outline obtained in chapel while a student at Brown Trail School of Preaching.

- I. Longing, 1-2;
- II. Promises, 3-4;
- III. Satisfaction, 5-8;
- IV. Victory, 9-11.

### ***Commentary***

## Longing Verses 1-2

- 1 *O God, thou art my God; earnestly will I seek thee: My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, In a dry and weary land, where no water is.*
- 2 *So have I looked upon thee in the sanctuary, To see thy power and thy glory.*

**63:1:** A curious feature of this verse centers around the Hebrew words for "God." Barnes points out

The first, '*Elohim*,' is in the plural number, and is the word which is usually employed to designate God; (Gen 1:1); the second, '*ail*,' is a word which is very often applied to God with the idea of strength; a strong, a mighty one; and there is probably this underlying idea here, that God was the source of his strength, or that in speaking of God as '*HIS*' God, he was conscious of referring to him as Almighty (Barnes).

*"earnestly will I seek thee"* - The KJV reads, *"early will I seek thee."* The word that is used, and is here translated "earnest" in the ASV and "early" in the KJV, has reference to the early dawn. But Keil and Delitzsch have this note: "The verb...signifies earnest, importunate seeking and inquiring, and in itself has nothing to do with the dawn; but since ver.7 looks back upon the night, it appears to be chosen with reference to the dawning morning" (Keil and Delitzsch). The earnestness with which one seeks Jehovah, whether in the early morning or late evening, has a direct bearing upon whether or not he will come to know God. A superficial search for God will not produce satisfactory results. The depth of David's earnest search is expressed in the next part of the verse. As one longs for water when he finds himself in a parched land, so David longed for God. Like David, we must make our search for God the top priority in our life. Matthew 5:6 reads, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Be that as it may, the reference in the King James to the early morning suggests the urgency on the part of the writer to seek his God. All too often we allow the things of the world to crowd out time with God. Those things that are really important to us are usually at the top of the list. "Observe the eagerness implied in the time mentioned; he will not wait for noon or the cool eventide; he is up at cockcrow to meet his God. Communion with God is so sweet that the chill of the

morning is forgotten, and the luxury of the couch is despised” (Spurgeon). Some years ago this author came across the following illustration of the importance of maintaining proper priorities. Unfortunately we were not provided the author’s name:

One day an expert on the subject of time management was speaking to a group of business students and, to drive home a point, used an illustration those students will likely never forget. As this man stood in front of the group of high-powered overachievers he said, "Okay, time for a quiz." Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed mason jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?" One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!" "No," the speaker replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all."

**63:2:** *“I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary”* - Here was something the Psalmist had done in the past and was evidently anxious to resume at some point in the future. His earnest desire to again worship God in that holy place was not lessened by the persecution he now endured. Often the trials and tribulations of life make us more aware of our spiritual needs.

### **Promises Verses 3-4**

*3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise thee.*

4 *So will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.*

**63:3:** *“Better than life”* - Life is a precious commodity and one of the most valued possessions this side of heaven. But David valued the favor of God even above life itself. Many a saintly martyr has had to pay the price for faithfulness to God. Such ones have demonstrated the same sentiments as David. Paul expressed the same, “But I hold not my life of any account as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

**63:4:** *“I will bless thee while I live”* - The New Testament equivalent can be found in Romans 12:1, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which* is your spiritual service.”

*“I will lift up my hands”* - David's love for God, above and beyond even life itself, led him to praise God by lifting up holy hands. The "hands" are used in the Bible as a metaphor for pure deeds and actions in one's life. David would *bless* God with a life that was pure and holy.

### **Satisfaction Verses 5-8**

5 *My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; And my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips;*  
6 *When I remember thee upon my bed, And meditate on thee in the night-watches.*  
7 *For thou hast been my help, And in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*  
8 *My soul followeth hard after thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.*

**63:5:** Though thirsty now, the Psalmist believed that he would eventually be satisfied. "As with marrow and fatness" denote "rich food." The comparison is between the pleasure of serving God and the satisfaction that one derives from partaking of food when hungry. It is not uncommon to compare the pleasures of religion with a feast or banquet (Isa. 25:6). Those who seek God and submit to His will enjoy the true "fatness" of life. It is the righteous, not the wicked, who feed upon the dainties of the royal banquet hosted by God the Father.

**63:6:** *"remember thee upon my bed"* - Nothing could be more proper than to think on God in the moments before we drift into sleep. We like Barnes' comments on this verse:

Nothing is better fitted to compose the mind to rest, and to induce quiet and gentle slumber, than the calmness of soul which arises from the idea of an infinite God, and from confidence in him. Often when restless on our beds, when nothing else will lull the body to rest, the thought of God - the contemplation of his greatness, his mercy, and his love - the sweet sense of an assurance of his favour will soothe us, and cause us to sink into gentle repose. So it may be when we are about to sleep the long sleep of death, for then the most appropriate thoughts - the thoughts that will best prepare us for that long sleep, will be thoughts of God (Barnes).

*"night-watches"* - Here is reference to the divisions of the night in which military or civil authorities might have stood guard on post. The "night watch" was likely the late hours from midnight to four, or thereabouts. Even in the late night watches, the Psalmist would meditate upon God.

**63:7:** *"Thou hast been my help"* - Experience had taught David that God was a help in times of trouble. Past experience was projected into the future and the Psalmist could confidently say, *"And in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."* See also Psalms 36:7; 57:1; and 61:4.

**63:8:** *"My soul followeth hard after thee"* - The Hebrew word *'dabak,'* means "to cleave to; to adhere; to be glued to; to stick fast" (Barnes). Like two pieces of wood glued together, so the Psalmist would hold fast to his God. So far as the Psalmist was concerned, there would be no separation.

The *"right hand"* of God is that which suggests the power of the Almighty, as well as close fellowship. The meaning is that "God sustained him in life, defended him in danger, and kept him from the power of his enemies" (Barnes).

### **Victory Verses 9-11**

9 *But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.*

- 10 *They shall be given over to the power of the sword: They shall be a portion for foxes.*
- 11 *But the king shall rejoice in God: Every one that sweareth by him shall glory; For the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.*

**63:9:** *"Those that seek my soul"* – Our opinion is that this refers to Absalom and his cohorts. Such individuals shall *"go into the lower parts of the earth."* They would ultimately be destroyed. As difficult as it must have been for David to have his own son rebel against him, he was still confident that God's judgment would be meted out upon all his enemies, regardless of their relationship to David. The words here mean that those enemies of the king would die.

**63:10:** *"They shall be given over to the power of the sword"* - The word rendered "they shall be given over" means properly "to flow, to pour out; then, to give up or deliver" (Barnes). The idea here is that of delivering over, as one pours out water from a basin or pitcher; they shall be delivered to the sword. In 2 Samuel 18:1 ff we read of Absalom's overthrow. Thousands were slain by David's army in that battle that ended the rebellion. Absalom was among that number.

*"They shall be a portion for foxes"* - Likely the reference here is to jackals. These are wild animals of the basest sort that roam in packs. They are the "final scavengers, consuming the remains of the kill rejected by larger beasts" (Coffman, 520). The Psalmist was simply saying that those who were his enemies would be destroyed and abandoned by God AS IF someone had been abandoned to these wild and hungry pack of animals. The accuracy of David's prophecy is quite amazing. Coffman commented on this:

What a remarkable fulfillment of David's prophecy came to pass. With no less than forty-thousand of Absalom's partisans to be buried, there was no earthly way that such a feat could have been accomplished. Thousands were left where they fell to become the food of beasts...David's prophecies here are among the most remarkable in the Bible...Never was a rebellion snuffed out as suddenly and thoroughly as was Absalom's, several facets of which were outlined in the prophecies: (1) The enemies went down to death. Absalom and Ahithophel, the leaders, led the way. (2) Forty thousand of the rebel army died in the forest of Ephraim. (3) The bodies of the dead provided food for the wild beasts. (4) Many were left unburied, for there was plenty left for the jackals. (5) The king rejoiced in God, throne restored, enemies all dead; back at home.

None of these details are missing from the prophecy (Coffman, 521).

**63:11:** The language of the writer implies that he understood that he was still the king, and that ultimately he would be restored to his rightful position as such. This is one of many verses where David's faith shines. Hounded by his enemies, exiled from the holy city, and hated by his enemies, he still believed his rightful position as king was intact.

### ***Lessons***

1. "While the Atheist says 'No God,' and the heathen worship 'gods many,' the true believer says, 'O God, thou art my God.' He is so, (1) by choice, (2) by covenant, and (3) by confession" (Spurgeon).
2. Seeking God "early" is applicable in a number of areas. We should seek God early in life, "youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them; before the sun, and the light, and the moon, and the stars, are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain; in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows shall be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low" (Ecc. 12:1-4). We should seek God early, before the activities of the day creep in upon us and rob us of precious time that must needs be spent with God. We should seek God early when the door of opportunity presents itself, lest we neglect the opportunity and lose it altogether.
3. Earnest seeking after God is an absolute must. God is not satisfied with half-hearted or divided allegiance (Matt. 6:24). The intensity of our search for God will determine the degree to which we will come to know Him.

## ***“A Prayer For Protection”***

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is "A psalm of David," as per the subscript. Efforts to assign a later date to the Psalm are not convincing. The structure of the Psalm is typical of other Psalms known to have been written by David. The time and occasion for the Psalm are uncertain. The language is such to suggest that it was during the time when David was fleeing from either Saul or Absalom. The frequent mention of the secrecy of the enemies regarding their evil schemes might indicate that the revolt of Absalom was yet in its formative stages.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have:

- I. A Prayer For Deliverance, 1-2;
- II. A Description of His Enemies, 3-6;
- III. A Reaction From God, 7-9;
- IV. A Plea To The Righteous, 10;

Some of my early marginal notes [penciled in from those early chapel studies on the Psalms] divide the Psalm similarly into Prayer (verses 1-2), Picture (verses 3-4), Plans and Plots (verses 5-6), Promise (verses 7-9), and Plea (verse 10).

### ***Commentary***

#### **A Prayer For Deliverance Verses 1-2**

- 1 *Hear my voice, O God, in my complaint: Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.*
- 2 *Hide me from the secret counsel of evil-doers, From the tumult of the workers of iniquity;*



**64:1:** These verses contain a prayer for deliverance from the enemy. It is not certain who the enemy is, but either Saul or Absalom seem most reasonable. David's request for God to "*hear my voice*" is no indication that God did not hear, but is rather a request for God to answer the prayer and grant his requests of the moment. The use of the word "voice" implies that David may have uttered his petition aloud. The word that is rendered "complaint" has been variously translated. The ASV has given the most common use of the word. Barnes points out that the word means "a state of mind caused by trouble and danger, when the deep meditation on his troubles and dangers found expression in audible words, whether complaint or petition" (Barnes).

David's desire to be preserved from the "*fear of the enemy*" suggests several thoughts. (1) There is such a thing as legitimate fear of those who would seek to destroy us. (2) But at the same time, it is possible to subdue those fears through help from God. (3) Communication with God will give us courage to face the enemy in spite of our fears. Coffman notes that the Psalmist

...does not pray for protection against the enemy, but that he may be delivered from the fear that might be caused by the situation. This makes good sense, because such deliverance would put an end to all impediments to clear thinking and firm resistance (Coffman, 524).

**64:2:** "*Hide me*" – The idea is that God might protect or hide him from those who seek to do him harm, as one is concealed so that the enemy could not find him. There is both an implied prayer that this might be done, and a confident belief that it would be done.

The "*secret counsel of evil doers*" suggests the subtle nature of their plans and schemes. The enemy evidently met for the purpose of determining how they would go about doing evil to David. They plotted his destruction and then set about to fulfill their most "secret counsel." The Psalmist was asking God to "circumvent their counsels; let their secrets be met by thy secret providence, their counsels of malice by thy counsels of love" (Spurgeon). As well, David desired protection from the "*tumult of the workers of iniquity*." The "workers of iniquity" are those who make sin their labor. Their life is characterized by iniquity. It is their daily portion. The word (*'righsha'*) means a "noisy crowd, a multitude" (Barnes). David was in danger of the excited passion of the multitudes, for if he escaped the "secret counsel" of those who were his enemies, he might be overcome by the multitude stirred up to action against him.

Much injustice has been executed upon the innocent because of an angry mob. Such rabble seldom considers a just cause, but are caught up in what we might call "mob mentality." In the 1992 riots in Los Angeles not a few of those who participated in the robbery and destruction of property later admitted they simply got "caught up" in the action.

### ***A Description of His Enemies Verses 3-6***

- 3 *Who have whet their tongue like a sword, And have aimed their arrows, even bitter words,*
- 4 *That they may shoot in secret places at the perfect: Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.*
- 5 *They encourage themselves in an evil purpose; They commune of laying snares privily; They say, Who will see them?*
- 6 *They search out iniquities; We have accomplished, say they, a diligent search: And the inward thought and the heart of every one is deep.*

**64:3:** These verses contain a vivid description of the enemy. We learn much from these "descriptive" portions of the Psalm. The enemies of God do not change in character, only in their means of carrying out their wicked deeds. If wicked men would spend half as much energy in the pursuit of truth and righteousness their time would be well spent.

*"Who have whet their tongue like a sword"* – They had sharpened their tongue so as to use words that will cut deep and penetrate the soul. Their "arrows" are their "bitter words." The language implies purposeful action, planning, and determination. The enemy had carefully calculated the means by which the most damage could be done, and then carried through on their actions. Adam Clarke was right on target: "They *devise* the evil they shall speak, and meditate on the most provoking, injurious, and *defamatory words*; as the soldier whets his sword that he may thereby the better cut down his enemies" (Clarke). Slander has always been a most effective weapon of Satan and his ministers. "As warriors grind their swords, to give them an edge which will cut deep and wound desperately, so do the unscrupulous invent falsehoods which shall be calculated to inflict pain, to stab the reputation, to kill the honour of the righteous" (Spurgeon). All of the sins of the tongue, including slander, lying,

sarcasm, name-calling, gossip, and taunting of all sorts, continue to be used against the righteous and all that is good and holy.

**64:4:** Their purpose was to do harm to David, while concealing the SOURCE of ruin. Barnes noted, "It was not an open and manly fight, where he could see his enemy, but it was a warfare with a concealed foe" (Barnes). It is said that they "fear not." The idea seems to be that they shot their "arrows" at David, and were confident that none were aware of their deeds, including God.

Note this word "*suddenly*." To their secrecy they add suddenness. The victim is not given a chance to defend himself. One can hardly imagine the vile heart that would inflict such injustice upon a fellow human being.

Is it possible for justice to invent a punishment sufficiently severe to meet the case of the dastard who defiles my good name, and remains himself in concealment? An open liar is an angel compared with this demon. Vipers and cobras are harmless and amiable creatures compared with such a reptile. The devil himself blush at being the father so [sic] so base an offspring (Spurgeon).

**64:5:** The enemy encouraged one another in their evil schemes and plans. "*They commune*" would imply verbal communication between the enemies as to how their plans were going to be carried out. In all of this there is a carefully calculated plan as to how they would do the most damage to David. And on top of all this, they felt very confident that their plans so well concealed. The one thing they forget is the all seeing eye of Almighty God.

**64:6:** "*They search out iniquities*" - Who can imagine a heart that spends its energy intently searching for ways to accomplish wickedness? The words suggest that there was a deep search, examining every nook and cranny so as to discover the means of success. The original word (*haphas*) is a word

...which is used to denote the act of exploring, as when one searches for treasure, or for anything that is hidden or lost, implying a deep and close attention of the mind to the subject. So here they examined every plan, or every way which was suggested to them, by which they could hope to accomplish their purpose" (Barnes).

The intensity of their search cannot be overemphasized. No effort was spared in their search to do mischief to the king. Spurgeon's comments are enlightening: "These are no common villains, but

explorers in iniquity, inventors and concoctors of evil. Sad indeed it is that to ruin a good man the evil-disposed will often show as much avidity as if they were searching after treasure" (Spurgeon). These wicked souls find great joy in devising a scheme that would crush the king. In their own minds they have found the perfect means of vengeance. Unfortunately it is the case that when men seek the means to achieve their wicked ends the Devil will provide the answer. "Exquisite are the refinements of malice! hell's craft furnishes inspiration to the artistes who fashion deceit" (Spurgeon).

### **A Reaction From God Verses 7-9**

*7 But God will shoot at them; With an arrow suddenly shall they be wounded.*

*8 So they shall be made to stumble, their own tongue being against them: All that see them shall wag the head.*

*9 And all men shall fear; And they shall declare the work of God, And shall wisely consider of his doing.*

**64:7:** The tables will be turned. God will deal with them as they intended to deal with others. One should note the sudden nature by which God would react. Seeking to surprise the righteous, these wicked enemies of David would themselves be surprised. All of their plans would be turned upon their own head. God will recompense, if not in this life, then certainly on that great Day of Judgment. As Coffman noted, "The judgment is an appointment that no many may cancel, ignore, or escape" (Coffman, 527).

**64:8:** "*All that see them shall wag the head*" - Punishment is designed, at least in part, to be a deterrent to wrongdoing. When sinners are punished it serves as a warning to others. There is also the matter of shame that one brings upon himself when he associates with those whose lives are openly wicked and in rebellion to God's will. "Who cares to go near to Herod when the worms are eating him? or to be in the same chariot with Pharaoh when the waves roar round him? Those who crowded around a powerful persecutor, and cringed at his feet, are among the first to desert him in the day of wrath" (Spurgeon).

**64:9:** "*And all men shall fear*" - Of particular interest here is the implication that the punishment that would come upon these evildoers would be seen and observed by others. As a result of God's

swift action upon the wicked, fear would be produced in the mind of others. Consequently they would declare the works of God and give serious consideration of God's "doing." They would see God's reaction to these evil doers. While this states a general rule it should be observed that there will always be those who, though they observe the wicked being punished, either do not recognize it as God's action against the wicked, or refuse to acknowledge such.

### **A Plea To The Righteous** **Verse 10**

*10 The righteous shall be glad in Jehovah, and shall take refuge in him; And all the upright in heart shall glory.*

**64:10:** The language here is typical of David's writing. The only genuine refuge is in God. Of particular interest here is the gladness that comes with the realization that the enemies of God will be punished. While sinners receive their just deserts, the righteous seeks refuge in God and enjoy the gladness that is associated with that promised safety. It is an undeniable truth that "He who fulfils his threatenings will not forget his promises...That which alarms the evil, cheers the good" (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. The fundamental lesson is that the righteous can find refuge in God despite the secret intentions and actions of the wicked.
2. Wicked persons (1) fight against the righteous, (2) are wicked in purpose, (3) are wicked in thought, (4) are wicked in heart, (5) are wicked in speech, (6) are wicked in conduct, and (7) are self-deceived (Deaver, 212).
3. While men may seek to hide their evil intentions and actions, the Bible teaches us that God knows of their sin and that He will bring them to justice, if not in this life then certainly in the Judgment to come.
4. Eternal gladness shall be the lot of the righteous. They shall see the enemies cast down and the cause of God Almighty vindicated.
5. Persecution has always been the lot of those who seek to live godly lives (2 Tim. 3:12).



## *“The God Who Answers Prayer”*

### ***Introduction***

According to the subscript, this is a Psalm of David. The exact occasion is not known, though it appears to have been composed after a much needed rain had been received. Barnes points out that it "may have been a song composed for some annual occasion, recounting the acts of God in the revolving seasons of the year" (Barnes). Morgan had these notes: "This is a great song of worship. The occasion would seem to be that of a harvest festival...It is the true attitude of worship. Reverent silence preparing for, and issuing in, adoring praise" (Morgan, 224). God's gracious benevolence comes to the forefront in this Psalm. It is one of the most delightful of all the Psalms.

### ***Analysis***

We found a number of good outlines for this Psalm. Roy Deaver divided the Psalm into (1) Praise, verses 1-4, (2) Power, verses 5-8, and (3) Provisions, verses 9-13. We will use the following outline penciled into the margin of our ASV more than 30 years ago:

- I. The blessedness of PRAISING GOD, 1-4;
- II. The REASONS FOR PRAISE, 5-13;
  - 1. He is to be praised for His POWER, 5-8;
  - 2. He is to be praised for his PROVISIONS, 9-13;

Coffman suggested at least two titles for the Psalm: "Man Does Not Live Alone," and "The Earth As Evidence of God's Love for man" (Coffman, 529). He then provides us with this summary analysis:

Many of the almost innumerable features of the earth itself which make it suitable for the home of God's human creation, many of which features appear to defy the very laws of nature, the entire result of which speaks eloquently of the providence of God.... All such marvelous providential arrangements of the earth are

dramatically stated in this psalm, 'Thou hast so prepared the earth' (verse 9).

## **Commentary**

### **The Blessedness of Praising God Verses 1-4**

- 1 *Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion; And unto thee shall the vow be performed.*
- 2 *O thou that hearest prayer, Unto thee shall all flesh come.*
- 3 *Iniquities prevail against me: As for our transgressions, thou wilt forgive them.*
- 4 *Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, That he may dwell in thy courts: We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, Thy holy temple.*

**65:1:** It would appear that the people had prepared to offer praise unto God. The mention of Mt. Zion suggests that it was written prior to the building of the temple. This was a common designation for the city of Jerusalem, and the place of worship used by David. Barnes points out that "the Hebrew is 'to thee is silence-praise'; a kind of compound phrase, not meaning 'silent praise,' but referring to a condition where everything is ready; where the preparations have been entirely made; where the noise usually attendant on preparation has ceased, and all is in readiness as if waiting for that which the arrangements had been carried forward" (Barnes). What is said of the congregation might as well be applicable to each individual. Worship is best offered from a heart that has made proper preparation. The confusion that is so often manifested in the "hurry up" attitude on the Lord's Day is not conducive to worship unto God. This is not to suggest that we should be somber, nor that we are to approach our gathering with a sense of foreboding. Those who come before the Almighty should come with a due sense of reverence. "Certainly, when the soul is most filled with adoring awe, she is least content with her own expressions, and feels most deeply how inadequate are all mortal songs to proclaim the divine goodness" (Spurgeon).

*"Unto thee shall the vow be performed"* - Vows are so often made in haste during some personal crisis yet broken once the crisis is past. We ought to be very cautious in making promises, and once made,



we ought to be very faithful in performing those promises. Coffman addressed this important point:

The vows of OT religion were not techniques of putting pressure on God or driving a bargain with him. They were a recognition that prayer for God's blessing must go hand in hand with consecration, and that thanksgiving can never be merely verbal, but must receive concrete expression in lives and goods. Thus both 'praise' and 'vows' are abundantly due to a bountiful God (Coffman, 531).

**65:2:** David believed that God answers prayers. Participation in prayer is proportionate to our faith. So too the answer that God provides. James told us that when we pray we are to “ask in faith, nothing doubting; for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord” (Jas. 1:6-7). What great comfort there is in knowing that we serve a God Who answers prayer. Reader, concentrate on the words of the Psalmist: *“O thou that hearest prayer.”* God not only *hears*, He answers! Barnes points out that the verse is literally, “Hearer of prayers, to thee shall all flesh come” ( Barnes). Let us take comfort in knowing that God turns His ear to our cries.

**65:3:** The marginal note on this verse reads, “Heb, words or matters, of iniquities.” The context would suggest that some matter of iniquity had prevailed over David, and he earnestly sought God's forgiveness.

The word rendered “forgive” is “purge” in the KJV. The Hebrew ('kaphar') is the word that is commonly rendered “to atone for.” It has reference in the scriptures to that which provides cleansing and atonement. What man is there in whose heart is the awareness of his sins that does not, upon approaching the Father, first beseech His forgiveness for those iniquities since last he prayed? Such a one is aware of the manifold mercy and grace of his God and trusts that forgiveness will be granted from the Father. Spurgeon stated it so well: “Our sins would, but for grace, prevail against us in the court of divine justice, in the court of conscience, and in the battle of life” (Spurgeon).

**65:4:** *“Blessed”* carries the idea of happiness; deep down, genuine, solid happiness. It does not speak of the happiness that is produced by physical or material achievements, but that peace and serenity of the soul that comes from a right relationship with God. And what man is genuinely happy? The man *“whom thou choosest, and*

*causest to approach thee."* God's selection, however, is not arbitrary. The scriptures teach us that the man whom God chooses is that man, and only that man, who chooses God. Here is the one who obediently submits to God's commandments. The man who obeys, God selects; the man whom God selects is permitted to *"dwell in thy courts"*; the man who is thus permitted to dwell in God's courts, is the man who is genuinely happy. The happiness comes because of the abundance of blessings found in fellowship with God.

*"We shall be satisfied"* - This implies complete provisions, abundant and adequate care from God. The blessings from God are here designated "the goodness of thy house." In the New Testament dispensation the house of God is the church (Eph. 2:19-21; 1 Tim 3:15).

### **The REASONS FOR PRAISE** **Verses 5-13**

Verse five begins the second major section of the Psalm. The writer will now present reasons for praising God. The first of these reasons is the POWER of God, the second being the PROVIDENCE of God. We will address these separately.

### **The Power of God** **Verses 5-8**

- 5 *By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness, Oh God of our salvation, Thou that art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, And of them that are afar off upon the sea:*  
6 *Who by his strength setteth fast the mountains, Being girded about with might;*  
7 *Who stilleth the roaring of the seas, The roaring of their waves, And the tumult of the peoples.*  
8 *They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.*

**65:5:** *"By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness"* - We see nothing in the verse, nor in the Psalm itself, that would force us to accept the language as a reference to God's outpouring of divine vengeance upon His enemies. The word "terrible" speaks of "awesome" things; things that astound us; things that produce awe and respect. When God answers prayer it is, more often than not,

such that we may be assured the answer is from God and not the result of mere chance. Spurgeon's assessment is probably correct:

We do not always know what we are asking for when we pray; when the answer comes, the veritable answer, it is possible that we may be terrified by it. We seek sanctification, and trial will be the reply; we ask for more faith, and more affliction is the result; we pray for the spread of the gospel, and persecution scatters us. Nevertheless, it is good to ask on, for nothing which the Lord grants in his love can do us any harm. Terrible things will turn out to be blessed things after all, when they come in answer to prayer" (Spurgeon).

*"The confidence of all the ends of the earth"* – These words express the sentiments of those who trust in God. Consequently, *"them that afar off upon the sea"* would have reference to the same classification of people as they journeyed upon the sea. We cannot help but see in this a reference to the obligation on the part of physical Israel to make Jehovah God known to the heathen nations. Those whose business might take them to distant lands were not to remain silent concerning their God. They, like the Psalmist, were to speak of this God Who answers prayer. Coffman noted as well:

The inspired author might have been trying to awaken Israel to their God-given mission of enlightening all the world with the knowledge of the One God, a mission which was never any big concern of the Chosen People, who stubbornly held to the conceit that they alone were the object of God's love and concern" (Coffman, 533).

**65:6:** *"Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains"* - This verse alludes to the mighty power of God, such power "as if he handled with ease those vast masses of matter, with their rocks and forests" (Barnes). The massive Grand Tetons north of Jackson, Wyoming, stand as a mighty manifestation of our God's creative power. Their very presence admits to the power of the One Who made it all.

### ***God and the Mighty Mountains***

by Tom Wacaster

When I travel, whether on vacation or lectures or meetings, I take my laptop along and try to do a little writing on the Psalms. It just so happened that our annual reading schedule finds us in the Psalms during this time of the year and more specifically the 65<sup>th</sup> Psalm. In that Psalm the writer sets forth some reasons for praising our God. Of

particular interest is verse 6, where the Psalmist, describing our wonderful Father in heaven, stated, "Who by his strength setteth fast the mountains, being girded about with might." I found it quite interesting that I would happen upon this Psalm, and this verse, while being surrounded by beautiful mountains. To the west lay the majestic Rocky Mountains. Mt. Evans stands at 14,900+ feet in altitude. To the southwest is Mt. Massive at 14,441 feet. Further to the south is Mt. Elbert at 14,433 feet. As you cross Freemont pass traveling west you are surrounded by the Mosquito Mountain range with peaks rising 13,000 feet, and the Collegiate Mountain range with Harvard, Princeton, and Penn Mountains, all over 14,000 feet. All of this stands as a mighty manifestation of our God's creative power. Their very presence admits to the power of the One Who made it all. Indeed, "nothing provides more evidence of the intelligence and love of God than his arrangement of the great mountain systems upon the five continents. These mountains actually are God's instrument for controlling the rainfall of all lands and the drainage system of the earth in its rivers" (Burton Coffman's comments on this verse). Only the fool would deny the great and mighty power of God. As I gaze upon the majestic scenery about me, I weep when I think that those in control of the institutions of higher learning and public education deny the very One Who made all this, and that the next generation may very well look at these same mountains and declare that it all happened by blind chance, giving the glory, NOT to the God of Heaven, but to the foolishness of man's anti-God philosophies. As Charles Spurgeon pointed out, "Philosophers of the forget-God school are too much engrossed with their laws of upheaval to think of the Upheaver. Their theories of volcanic action and glacier action are frequently used as bolts and bars to shut the Lord out of his own world. Our poet is of another mind, and sees God's hand settling the Alps and Andes on their bases, and therefore he sings in his praise." May we be of the same mind as the Palmist, objectively observe the handiwork of our Father, and bow in praise and thanksgiving to Him Who made it all.

**65:7:** *"Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people"* - In 1966 thru 1970 I served in the United States Coast Guard, and was stationed in the Pacific the first

two years of my duty. The ship aboard which I was stationed had occasion to serve on Ocean Station Victor, that body of water between Midway Island and Japan. It was not uncommon during the winter months to witness ocean swells as high as 35 feet. In 1966 we rode out a typhoon, and I can well remember the threatening of the mighty deep. Our God has the power to still such a tempest, and consequently calm the fears of those threatened thereby.

God's control of the seas is the sole factor that makes life on the earth possible. For example, if the moon were a hundred miles closer to the earth, the tides would roar over all lands hundreds of feet deep twice a day. Furthermore, if it were not for the great polar ice-caps, it is altogether possible that all inhabitable lands would be submerged (Coffman, 534).

Likewise, Jesus' calming of the stormy sea of Galilee declared His deity. But just as effectively does our God still the "tumult of the peoples." Unleashed and not kept in check by the Almighty, society would be mere anarchy. If history has taught us anything it is this: when a nation turns its back on God it opens the door for social upheaval and unrest. Nations are as difficult to keep in check as the sea, but neither is too powerful for our God to control. Human society owes its preservation to the governing power of the Almighty.

*"And the tumult of the peoples"* - It is not accidental that the writer makes reference to the "peoples" in conjunction with the reference to the troubled seas. One of the fundamental lessons from the prophet Daniel is the indisputable fact that God controls the people of this earth. He has appointed the bounds of their habitation (Acts 17:26), and it is He Who determines what kings rise and fall, and what nations come to power, or fade into infamy.

**65:8:** The *"tokens"* include those things in creation that attest to our God's power. They are not few, nor are they confined to any one region. Evidences of God's creative power are just as evident in Africa as in America, in Rhodesia as much as in Russia. This writer has witnessed some of the most beautiful and breath-taking sunsets while doing mission work in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. I have seen the Grand Tetons, Yosemite, Glacier National Park, Mount Fuji in Japan, and the beauties of the Pacific islands of Midway and Hawaii. No matter where I travel, God's marvelous creation serves as a "token" of His creative power and orderliness.

*"The outgoings of the morning and evening"* undoubtedly refer to the rising and setting of the sun. Any who have taken the time to

watch a beautiful sunrise or sunset will agree, "there is nothing on earth that speaks any more eloquently of the majesty and glory of the Creator than the magnificent wonders of the sunrise" (Coffman, 535-536). Brother Coffman shared the following story with his readers.

Alexander Maclaren tells the story of an atheist who traveled in the desert with an Arab. One morning, the atheist said, "Arab, a camel circled our tent last night." The Arab asked "How do you know?" The atheist said, "Why, I can see its tracks, of course." Then the Arab, who devoutly believed in God, pointed to the flaming glory of the sunrise in the eastern skies and said, "What a shame that you cannot see the tracks of the Almighty God" (Coffman, 536).

### **The Providence Of God** **Verses 9-13**

- 9 *Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it, Thou greatly enrichest it; The river of God is full of water: Thou providest them grain, when thou hast so prepared the earth.*
- 10 *Thou waterest its furrows abundantly; Thou settlest the ridges thereof: Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof.*
- 11 *Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; And thy paths drop fatness.*
- 12 *They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; And the hills are girded with joy.*
- 13 *The pastures are clothed with flocks; The valleys also are covered over with grain; They shout for joy, they also sing.*

**65:9:** This verse begins a discussion of the providence of God as a reason for praising Him. "When the Lord goes on visitations of mercy, he has abundance of necessary things for all his needy creatures" (Spurgeon). It is God Who waters this earth, sending forth the rain on the just and the unjust alike. This simple natural phenomenon enriches the earth and allows the crops to grow. How grateful man should be that "*the river of God is full of water.*" This is the Psalmist's way of expressing the inexhaustible storehouse of God's blessings for mankind. God cares for His earth and "*waterest its furrows abundantly.*"

"*The river of God is full of water*" - We never cease to be amazed at the massive amount of water that flows down the Mississippi River. And yet that river, after decades, yea centuries, of emptying its

contents into the Gulf of Mexico is as full as before. God's supply of water to His creation is abundant. After centuries, the rivers still run, the oceans remain full, and the rain continues to fall upon the earth. We see in these words a marvelous description of the mercy of our God.

*"thou preparest them grain"* - Jimmy Steward, acting the part of a secular farmer during the Civil War, would pray, "Lord, we plowed the land, planted the seed, and toiled the land. We did it all ourselves, but Lord, we thank you just the same." Man may toil and labor by the sweat of his brow but it is God who supplies, just as much so as if He had provided manna from heaven to Israel. Spurgeon stated it well. "It is as great a marvel that food should rise out of the dust, as that it should all from the skies" (Spurgeon).

**65:11:** *"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness"* - God not only supplies, He supplies abundantly. We have witnessed in our lifetime bumper crops from the farm lands of Kansas, Indiana, and Illinois, so much so that our beloved country has exported literally tons upon tons of grain to other countries. Each and every acre of land, when properly used, can, and does, supply a great abundance of goods. All of this is part of God's plan.

*"Thy paths drop fatness"* - This is a reference, we believe, to God's special providence for His children. While God is good to the whole of humanity, there is a sense in which He provides His children the "fatness" of heaven's blessings.

**65:12:** God not only supplies where man might dwell, but the Holy One provides for all of His creation, even in the *"pastures of the wilderness."* He knows that the smallest of creatures needs His provision. He takes care of the birds and the lilies, and that in great abundance. Using inanimate language, the poet pictures the *"hills...girded with joy."* Unfortunately, man is often ungrateful for heaven's blessings and demonstrates less gratitude than lifeless objects about him.

These words speak of the earth itself as being the provider for man's needs, being designed so to do by the loving Father in heaven. Of course, there was a bountiful harvest; but that is not the point here. The point is, "Where did they get it?" It came from God's providential arrangement of the mountains, the seas, the wilderness, the hills, the pastures, the valleys, the sun and the rains, as well as giving man the seeds that produced the grain (Coffman, 537).

**65:13:** If the inanimate objects offer praise, how much more should man offer thanksgiving to He Who made it all? Delitzsch was correct in his observation:

The closing words, locking themselves as it were with the beginning of the Psalm together, speak of joyous shouting and singing that continues into the present time. The meadows and valleys are not the subject, of which it cannot be said that they sing; nor can the same be said of the rustling of the waving corn-fields. The expression requires men to be the subject, and refers to men in the widest and most general sense (Keil and Delitzsch).

### **Lessons**

1. Worship that is carefully planned, and reverently executed, is worship that is acceptable to God.
2. Vows unto God **MUST** be performed; one cannot lightly make promises unto God and expect to be excused from keeping those vows.
3. Only the righteous will be permitted to come before God.
4. When all is said and done, it is God who does the choosing. That choice, however, is not arbitrary, but based upon our choice with regard to Him.
5. God will more than satisfy the hungry soul that comes to Him in loving obedience and a contrite heart.
6. Heavenly provisions call for earthly thanksgiving and praise.



## *“Jehovah The Deliverer”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is not given. Any attempt to identify the writer is nothing more than a guess. As to the author and background, Clarke's comments were concise:

It is not attributed to David either by the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, Septuagint, Vulgate, or Ethiopic. The Arabic alone prefixes the name of David. The Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, and Arabic, call it a psalm of the resurrection: but for this there is no authority. By many of the ancients it is supposed to be a celebration of the restoration from the Babylonish captivity. Others think it commemorates the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, their introduction into the Promised Land, and the establishment of the worship of God in Jerusalem (Adam Clarke).

It is evident that it was written after there had been some calamity in the life of the writer, followed by a great deliverance. Coffman was somewhat more specific as to the precise occasion of the Psalm:

If the psalm was written shortly after the deliverance of Israel from the army of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19), during the reign of Hezekiah, who himself had received a most remarkable deliverance from what was apparently his death-bed, by the miraculous help of God, then either Hezekiah, or someone writing upon his behalf might easily have composed the psalm, first extolling the deliverance of the nation, and then the personal deliverance of their king. This Psalm triumphantly celebrates a great national deliverance. So great that the whole earth is summonsed to join in the praise (Coffman, 540).

Although the "house of God" is mentioned we should remember that such language was used in reference to the tabernacle as well as the temple. We have entitled this Psalm, "Jehovah The Deliverer."

### ***Analysis***

The Psalms is basically one of thanksgiving. All people are called upon to praise God first, for the general instances of His sovereign dominion and power over the whole creation (verses 1-7), and

second, for the special tokens of His favor to His peculiar people (verses 8-12). The Psalmist then praises God for his own experiences of God's goodness to him in particular, especially in answering his prayers (verses 13-20). Further dividing the Psalm we have:

- I. The Call To Praise (1-4);
- II. An Invitation To See What God Has Done (5-7);
- III. Reflection Upon God's Deliverance (8-12);
- IV. Promise To Fulfill Past Vows (13-15);
- V. Praise For Answered Prayer (16-20);

At some point in time this author wrote the following outline in the margin of his Bible. The source has been forgotten: Exhortation, 1-4, Invitation, 5-7, Exultation, 8-12, Adoration, 13-15, and Attestation, 16-20.

This Psalm is an appeal to those who listen and read to lift up their voices in praise. In an effort to produce the desired effect, the Psalmist sets forth the admonition to praise God, along with reasons as to why He deserves this praise and honor. Garell Forehand wrote: "The appeal was to document facts about God which would literally draw the breath from one's body in a shout of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord" (G. Forehand, 393). Brother Forehand then sets forth four reasons why we should praise God. (1) Because Of His Crushing Power, (2) Because Of His Mighty Works, (3) Because He Brings Us Through The Crucible Intact, and (4) Because He Listens When We Pray. Spurgeon summed it up like this: "Praise is the topic, and the subjects for song are the Lord's great works, his gracious benefits, his faithful deliverance, and all his dealings with his people" (Spurgeon).

One special aspect of this Psalm is the promise that God will bless those who sincerely put Him to the test. There are a number of verses which we will notice as we pass through this Psalm that speak of God's great benefits to His children.

In the story of God's dealing with His people there is a recognition of His government through all the differing experiences of their history. By deliverance and by distress, by triumph and trial, He has conducted them to a wealthy place. Very full of comfort is the individual realization, following as it does this larger experience. In the economy of God the lonely man is not lost in the multitude, and the solo of his praise is as precious as is the chorus of the multitudes in worship (Morgan, 245).

## Commentary

### The Call To Praise Verses 1-4

- 1 *Make a joyful noise unto God, all the earth:*
- 2 *Sing forth the glory of his name: Make his praise glorious.*
- 3 *Say unto God, How terrible are thy works! Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.*
- 4 *All the earth shall worship thee, And shall sing unto thee; They shall sing to thy name. Selah*

**66:1:** "*Make a joyful noise*" - The Psalmist sets forth a call for praise unto the God of "all the earth." It would appear from verse three that God had provided some deliverance to the Psalmist. The deliverance was so astonishing that the writer wishes that all would observe and rejoice at such a manifestation of God's majesty and power. It should be noted that the word "noise" is used here to suggest that the loudest praise was not adequate to express the deep appreciation the Psalmist had for the deliverance he had experienced. The fact that "all the earth" is called upon to join in the praise suggests a deliverance of worldwide renown.

Some have suggested that it is left up to the individual as to precisely HOW one is to "*make a joyful nose unto God.*" Consequently, it is not uncommon to find modern day worship filled with full piece bands by which the "noise" offered to God is precisely that, and the music rivals that of a rowdy rock concert. In some instances the thinking of the "worshipper" seems to be, "The louder, the better." In this regard Spurgeon properly concluded, "The pomp of the ancient festivals is not to be imitated by us, under this dispensation of the Spirit, but we are to throw so much of heart and holy reverence into all our worship that it shall be the best we can render" (Spurgeon).

**66:2:** "*Sing forth the glory of his name*" - Verses 1 and 2 demonstrate one of the characteristics of Hebrew poetry in which two statements parallel one another, the later either explaining or complimenting the earlier. Making a "joyful noise" is synonymous with "sing forth the glory" of God. With regard to the words, "*make his praise glorious,*" Barnes noted: "Literally, 'Place honour, his praise'; that is, Give him honour; give him praise. Set forth his praise with songs that will be the appropriate expression of the praise which is due to him (Barnes). There is nothing in this Psalm

that authorizes the use of instrumental music in praise to God. Even if it DID authorize its use here, it is confined to the Old Testament worship, not worship in the church.

**66:3:** *"Say unto God, How terrible are thy works"* - Our English word "terrible" does not convey the proper meaning. "Awesome" is more precise. God's works are of such grandeur that it astounds the mind. The Psalmist was actually instructing his audience to declare the *awesomeness* of God's creative power when praising Him. We are to acknowledge God's greatness, power and might both in our lives, and in our worship unto Him.

The writer was confident that the enemies would eventually submit themselves unto God, either voluntarily, or in judgment. The marginal reading for the word "submit" is "Or, yield feigned obedience. Heb. lie" (ASV Bible). Barnes has this observation:

He had the power to subdue them, and to compel them to acknowledge his right to reign. It is the putting forth of mere power which is here referred to; and all that such power can do, is to secure outward and feigned submission. It cannot of itself secure the submission of the heart, the will and the affections (Barnes).

Men should desire to praise God because of His wonderful love for us. His mercy and love astound us, for "while we were yet sinners" our God came to this earth to dwell among men and to pay the ransom for our lost soul. Perhaps some sober reflection upon this wonderful trait of our Father would lend itself to a deeper appreciation for our God. While there is the need to keep in mind the anger and wrath of God, caution must be exercised that we lose sight of His great love for mankind. Charles Spurgeon put it so well:

Power brings a man to his knee, but love wins his heart...Tens of thousands, both in earth and hell, are rendering this constrained homage to the Almighty; they only submit because they cannot do otherwise; it is not their loyalty, but his power, which keeps them subjects of his boundless dominion (Spurgeon).

**66:4:** *"All the earth shall worship thee"* - It is not certain whether the writer is referring to the OBLIGATION, or the CERTAINTY that the earth would bow in worship to God's name. The fact that the Messiah presently reigns is abundantly clear from New Testament passages. It is likewise stated "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:11).

Whether in this life, or in eternity, all the earth SHALL acknowledge God as Sovereign Ruler of the universe.

### **An Invitation To See What God Has Done Verses 5-7**

- 5 *Come, and see the works of God; He is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.*  
6 *He turned the sea into dry land; They went through the river on foot: There did we rejoice in him.*  
7 *He ruleth by his might for ever; His eyes observe the nations: Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah*

**66:5:** “*Come and see*” - Here is the challenge to INVESTIGATE. God has not left Himself without witness (Acts 14:17). Those who disbelieve do so because they have not honestly investigated and evaluated the evidence. Here the Psalmist declares that the power of God and His compassion and kindness toward men are compelling evidence that God is indeed worthy of praise and honor.

“*He is terrible in his doing*” – The idea is that His acts are designed to inspire awe and veneration. Some have suggested that the Psalmist was referring to the destruction of Sennacherib's army. Our opinion is that the writer was calling for the hearer to simply take a close look at what God has done throughout history. Certainly the destruction of Sennacherib's army would be included among those “terrible” things; but so is the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the ten plagues upon disobedient Pharaoh.

**66:6:** “*He turned the sea into dry land*” - The reference here is to the crossing of the Red Sea and possibly the crossing of the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua. Here was a manifestation of God's great power, His “terrible” nature. Such was the power of God that where once there was a mighty sea, now there was dry ground on which the Israelites could walk.

It was no slight miracle to divide a pathway through such a sea, and to make it fit for the traffic of a whole nation. He who did this can do anything, and must be God, the worthy object of adoration. The Christian's inference is that no obstacle in his journey heavenward need hinder him, for the sea could not hinder Israel, and even death itself shall be as life; the sea shall be dry land when God's presence is felt (Spurgeon).

**66:7:** There are three significant truths set forth in this verse: (1) God is ruling, and will continue to do so "for ever." (2) He sees all; there is nothing that escapes His watchful eye. (3) There is a warning to the rebellious not to continue in their haughty path.

*"He ruleth by his might"* - God rules; He has always ruled; He will always rule. His dominion extends from age to age, and will stretch forward even unto eternity.

*"Let not the rebellious exalt themselves"* - The "rebellious" are those who are impatient under the restraints of the law of God and who are disposed to cast off His authority. All such persons should fear God, for they cannot escape His all-seeing eye. Though they plan in secret, God knows. To those nations that would seek to harm God's people, the message is clear: "You will give answer!" Indeed, "God's eyes keep searching watch among the peoples; the rebellious who struggle against God's yoke and persecute God's people, had better not rise against Him. It will go ill with them if they do" (Keil & Delitzsch).

In view of these mighty characteristics of our God, it is vain for those who refuse to submit to His will to continue in their path.

### **Reflection Upon God's Deliverance Verses 8-12**

- 8 *Oh bless our God, ye peoples, And make the voice of his praise to be heard;*  
9 *Who holdeth our soul in life, And suffereth not our feet to be moved.*  
10 *For thou, O God, hast proved us: Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.*  
11 *Thou broughtest us into the net; Thou layedst a sore burden upon our loins.*  
12 *Thou didst cause men to ride over our heads; We went through fire and through water; But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*

**66:8:** *"Oh bless our God, ye peoples"* – Here is a universal call to praise God. Consideration of the love and power of God should drive all men to their knees in praise to their Creator. God so richly blesses us; we should in turn "bless our God."

**66:9:** *"Who holdeth our soul in life"* - God is the giver of life: "In him we live, and move, and have our being;" (Acts 17:28). The phrase "in life" means literally, "among the living." The meaning is that God sustains our very existence. Not only has God granted us life, but He has sustained us in times of trouble and despair; He "suffereth not our feet to be moved." No wonder the Psalmist was anxious to praise his God.

**66:10:** *"Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried"* – Israel would have been under constant attacks at the hands of the Assyrians during this time in their history. Coffman has this interesting note regarding that barbarous nation:

The Assyrians were historically called 'The Breakers'; and their atrocious cruelties were terrible and inhuman. They flayed alive many of their captives; and the ancient artists of that sadistic people were more familiar with the human anatomy *without* the skin that they were with it. This is demonstrated by the so-called 'art' and sculpture which have been excavated from the ruins of ancient Nineveh (Coffman, 544).

If this description of the Assyrians is anywhere near accurate then indeed, Israel had been "proved," and "tried" by the presence of such a powerful and horrible nation. The suffering of the nation of Israel served to strengthen them. Our trials can strengthen us as well, if we will but allow them to drive us TO God and not AWAY from Him. The words of James ought to be stamped upon the mind and heart of every child of God: "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold temptations; Knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (Jas. 1:3-5). "All the saints must go to the proving house; God had one Son without sin, but he never had a son without trial. Why ought we to complain if we are subjected to the rule which is common to all the family, and from which so much benefit has flowed to them?" (Spurgeon).

When your troubles overwhelm you  
And your nights are far too long,  
When your heart is filled with sorrow  
And everything goes wrong...

Just remember God who loves you;  
He's your very special Friend;  
Ask Him for His help and trust Him;  
On His help you can depend.

God is always there beside you;  
He will hear your anguished prayers  
If you call on Him to help you,  
For God loves you and He cares.  
--Delphine LeDoux

**66:11:** Some have suggested that the "*burden*" here refers to the tribute that Israel was forced to pay under Assyrian rule. 2 Kings 18 contains the record of how Israel raised the necessary "burden" of financial tribute to Assyria so as to avert the impending destruction. Our opinion is that the word refers to much more than the tribute they had to pay to Assyria. There was a heavy weight of oppression upon Israel. The *loins* are mentioned as the seat of strength (comp. Deut 33:11; 1 Kings 12:10; Job 40:16); and the idea here is, that He had *put their strength to the test*; He had tried them to see how much they could bear; He had made the test effectual by applying it to the part which was able to bear the most. God had tried them to the uttermost. Spurgeon summed it up well:

God's people and affliction are intimate companions. As in Egypt every Israelite was a burden-bearer, so is every believer while he is in this foreign land. As Israel cried to God by reason of their sore bondage, so also do the saints. We too often forget that God lays our afflictions upon us; if we remembered this fact, we should more patiently submit to the pressure which now pains us (Spurgeon).

**66:12:** "*cause men to ride over our heads*" - The Psalmist may have had in mind ill treatment such as that received at the hand of the Egyptians. Like the mire in the road, Israel received mistreatment at the hand of their enemies. Their faith was tested; they went through fire and water, and eventually were delivered on the other side. "*Fire and water*" are metaphors used in Isaiah 43:2 to refer to perils the worst kind. But in spite of every attempt on the part of Satan to destroy that nation, God preserved His people so that His purpose and plan might be fulfilled. Hard labor and child murder were tried by Pharaoh, but Israel defeated the ungodly Egyptian monarch and marched victoriously across the Red Sea. The armies of Sennacherib could not breach the walls of Jerusalem. In all her ordeals, Israel outlasted the enemy. So shall the church be victorious. Though she may be forced to march through "fire and water," she will be the stronger for it.

"*Brought us out into a wealthy place*" - The New Revised Standard reads, "yet you have brought us out to a spacious place." The



Hebrew word (*revayah*) means "abundant drink, abundance" (Barnes). It occurs only here and in Psalms 23:5, where it is translated "runneth over." Delitzsch noted the antithesis here: "Israel was nigh to being burnt up and drowned, but God led it forth to an abundant fullness, to abundance and superabundance of prosperity" (Keil & Delitzsch). If Coffman's assessment of the occasion of this Psalm is correct, then the spoil that Israel took from the dead soldiers would have provided them with great wealth. Here are his comments:

That overwhelming tribute Hezekiah had just paid to the Assyrians would have been recovered after the death of the whole army, to say nothing of all the loot and wealth extracted from the cities of Judah that were in the process of being carried back to Nineveh by Sennacherib's rapacious soldiers (Coffman, 545).

Those godly saints who, in spite of tribulation and persecution, keep their eyes on God can sympathize with the Psalmist. The tribulation is but for the moment; rejoicing is for eternity. The poet expressed it well:

"The path of sorrow and that path alone,  
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown"

Spurgeon captured the sentiments of those who faithfully trust in their God with the faith that one day they shall enjoy the promised blessings:

The depths of our griefs bears no proportion to the height of our bliss. For our shame we shall have double, and more than double. Like Joseph we shall rise from the prison to the palace, like Mordecai we shall escape the gallows prepared by malignity, and ride the white horse and wear the royal robe appointed by benignity. Instead of the net, liberty; instead of a burden on the loins, a crown on our heads; instead of men riding over us, we shall rule over the nations: fire shall no more try us, for we shall stand in glory on the sea of glass mingled with fire; and water shall not harm us, for there shall be no more sea (Spurgeon).

### **Promise To Fulfill Past Vows Verses 13-15**

- 13 *I will come into thy house with burnt-offerings; I will pay thee my vows,*  
14 *Which my lips uttered, And my mouth spake, when I was in distress.*

*15 I will offer unto thee burnt-offerings of fatlings, With the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats.*

**66:13:** *"I will pay thee my vows"* - We ought to be slow in making vows, but once made we should be prompt in fulfilling them. How foolish to seek the Lord's help in times of crisis only to turn our back on Him once the crisis has passed. Coffman points out that "the future tenses here reveal that the psalmist wrote this psalm immediately after the great deliverance and even before he had had time to offer all the sacrifices and thanksgiving appropriate for such a marvelous answer of his prayers" (Coffman, 546).

**66:14:** *"When I was in distress"* - The Psalmist made his vow in a moment of distress. Once the distress was past he did not fail to follow through with his promises.

*"My lips uttered"* - The Hebrew word (*patzah*) means properly "to tear apart; to rend; and then, to open wide, as the mouth" (Barnes). It would seem that the writer had uttered the words somewhat hastily, perhaps from a heart overflowing with anxiety and distress. The vows were made under the influence of deep emotion rather than a calm and studied reflection on the situation. Be that as it may, he was determined that he would follow through with the promises that his lips had "uttered." The man of integrity will keep those promises, though they may have been made under duress. We learned from Psalms 15:4 that the man who shall dwell with God is the one who "swareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." We like Spurgeon's comments on this verse:

All men have trouble, but they act not in the same manner while under it; the profane take to swearing and the godly to praying. Both bad and good have been known to resort to vowing, but the one is a liar unto God, and the other a conscientious respector of his word (Spurgeon).

**66:15:** The abundance of the offering shows that the Psalmist was deeply grateful for the deliverance that was his. Take note of the writer's sincerity as it was expressed in sacrifice. It would also appear that this man of faith was not concerned with the cost of sacrifice, seeing the multitude of sacrifices was quite extent. He did not consider his gift to God as waste, nor did he esteem earthly treasures above those riches he laid up in heaven.

## Praise For Answered Prayer Verses 16-20

- 16 *Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.*  
17 *I cried unto him with my mouth, And he was extolled with my tongue.*  
18 *If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear:*  
19 *But verily God hath heard; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.*  
20 *Blessed be God, Who hath not turned away my prayer, Nor his lovingkindness from me.*

**66:16:** “Come and hear” - God does not fear investigation, and heaven's call has always been, "Come now, and let us reason together" (Isa. 1:18). The Psalmist was confident that his own personal experience, once made known to others, would be convincing and produce faith in others even as it had in him. It should also be noted that these words have a wider application than to Israel alone. It is to "all" those who "fear God."

**66:17:** “*He was extolled with my tongue*” – Silence is not always golden. Our innermost commitment is manifest by the words we speak. “But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak; we also believe, and therefore also we speak” (2 Cor. 4:13). Who knows but that a word of praise to our God may influence others about us to seek the God Whom we serve. Let us never fear to make known the wonderful worthiness of our God.

**66:18:** “*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear*” - The purpose of his heart was not at odds with his words and actions. God abhors sin. We can do no less. Keil and Delitzsch render this, “If I had aimed at evil in my heart, the Lord would not hear” (Keil & Delitzsch). A clean heart and a clear conscience is essential for effectual prayer (Isa. 59:2; Heb. 10:22; 1 John 3:21). “If there is still the love of evil in his heart; if he has some cherished purpose of iniquity which he is not willing to abandon; if there is any *one* sin, however small or unimportant it may seem to be, which he is not willing to forsake, he cannot hope that God will hear his prayer; he may be assured that he will not. *All prayer, to be acceptable to God MUST be connected with a purpose to forsake all sin*” (Barnes). The soul that listens to the devil will not have God listen to him.

**66:19:** *“But verily God hath heard”* – This is an expression of confidence on the part of the Psalmist. If there were iniquity in his heart, God would not have heard his prayer. But God “hath heard,” implying that there was no iniquity therein. When our prayers are answered it is a good indication, all other factors being equal, that we stand in a right relationship with God. Though this is not THE standard for determining our stance with God, it most certainly is an important indication that we are in compliance with God and His will.

**66:20:** What a wonderful consolation to know that our God hears our payers. “Thank you, heavenly Father, for being a God Who listens. And thank You for Your abundant lovingkindness, Your grace, and Your mercy that You have so shed upon this poor sinner. May it ever be so, until the eyelids have closed, and I have crossed the Jordan to those eternal shores where life is everlasting, and where we may join in singing the praises of which Thou art worthy, time without end.”

### ***Lessons***

1. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination” (Prov. 28:9). The soul who will not listen to and obey God’s law is wasting his time when he bows in prayer. Such hypocrisy is an abomination in the sight of God.
2. God invites all men to “come and see.” The truth does not fear investigation. Does your religion fear close examination?
3. Some of the most wonderful traits of our God appear in this Psalm: (1) He is worthy of praise (vs. 1-3); (2) He is great in power; He is omnipotent (vs. 7); (3) He sustains our soul (vs. 9); He chastens us and tries us in order that we may be proved worthy (vs. 10); (4) He invites us to investigate (vs. 5, 16); He hears our prayers (vs. 19-20).

## ***“Jehovah, The One Who Blesses All Nations”***

### ***Introduction***

The author is not given in the subscript. The language is much like that of other Psalms known to have been written by David, leading some commentators to attribute it to David. Spurgeon was dogmatic and concluded "he would be a bold man who should attempt to prove that David did not write it" (Spurgeon). There is nothing in the Psalm that might help us determine the precise time or occasion when it was written. While most of the commentators interpret this as a "*harvest Psalm*" in which the Psalmist offers thanks for the bountiful harvest provided by God, we must agree with Coffman that this Psalm is "an unequivocal prophecy of the conversion of the Gentiles" (Coffman, 549). Matthew Henry also held this view: "Here is first a prayer for the conversion of the Gentiles and the bringing in of them into the church. Then the psalmist is carried by the spirit of prophecy to foretell the glorious estate of the Christian church, in which Jews and Gentiles should unite in one flock" (Henry). It would be difficult for the reader to miss the reference to salvation for the Gentiles in phrases such as "God be merciful to us," "thy salvation among all nations," "let the peoples praise thee," "let the nations be glad," and "all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains an expression of praise for the merciful interposition that God had vouchsafed, and a prayer that the promise might be fully accomplished. Barnes has the following analysis of the Psalm:

- I. A prayer that God would still be merciful to them and bless them, verse 1;
- II. A desire that His ways - the principles of administration - might be made known to all the people, verse 2;

- III. A call on the people to praise God for what He had done, with the expression that all nations might be glad and rejoice, verses 3-5;
- IV. A statement of the fact that THEN the prophecy would be fulfilled, verses 6-7.

Roy Deaver divided the Psalm differently, with the following headings:

- I. WAY - The Psalmist prays that God's WAY might be known to all men, verses 1-3;
- II. JUDGMENT - The Psalmist prays that God's JUDGMENT might be known to all nations, verses 4-5;
- III. BLESSINGS - The Psalmist proclaims that God has BLESSED us all, verses 6-7 (Deaver, 221).

We will divide the Psalm as follows:

- I. PRAYER (1);
- II. PURPOSE (2);
- III. PRAISE (3-5);
- IV. PROPHECY (6-7).

### ***Commentary***

#### **PRAYER Verse 1**

*67:1 God be merciful unto us, and bless us, And cause his face to shine upon us; Selah*

**67:1:** "*God be merciful*" - Forgiveness of sin is the first step in attaining blessings from the Almighty. Here is the cry of a contrite heart. The request that God might "cause his face to shine upon us" is a plea for Divine approval accompanied by great blessings. There may be some reference here to the "sacerdotal benediction" in Numbers 6:24-26.

#### **PURPOSE Verse 2**

*2 That thy way may be known upon earth, Thy salvation among all nations.*

**67:2:** The pious heart has a great desire for God's name to be magnified, and for God's way to be made known. It is essential for man to be shown the way. Ignorance of God is everywhere condemned in the scripture. It was because of ignorance of God that Israel was destroyed (Hosea 4:6). "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children." The word of God is a "light unto our path" (Psa. 119:105). Without God's revelation to man, the human race would be in utter darkness. The happiness of man depends upon knowing the principles, laws, and precepts by which to walk. A farmer cannot know how to farm unless he be shown the way; a sick person cannot hope to get well without guidance from one who knows what medicine to administer; one cannot operate a computer unless shown the way. The examples could be multiplied. How foolish for man to think he can go through life without guidance from Jehovah. Specifically, it is the way of salvation that the Psalmist desired to be made known. If the Psalmist desired that men come to know the way of salvation in that twilight age of types and shadows, how much greater should be our desire that men come to a knowledge of God's saving grace and scheme of redemption in this the greater dispensation of divine revelation.

### **PRAISE** **Verses 3-5**

- 3 Let the peoples praise thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise thee.*  
*4 Oh let the nations be glad and sing for joy; For thou wilt judge the peoples with equity, And govern the nations upon earth.*  
Selah  
*5 Let the peoples praise thee, O God; Let all the peoples praise thee.*

**67:3:** "Let the people praise thee, O God" – Knowledge precedes praise. One reason why men fail to praise and worship God properly is because of their lack of knowledge. The vast majority are satisfied to leave God out of their lives. Others worship and serve Him in ignorance, following the traditions of their fathers or the dictates of their own heart. It is, therefore, a great blessing that God would make Himself known to man. How grateful we should be for having been granted the wonderful opportunity to know God. It makes us ponder the awesome responsibility that comes with this sacred privilege. Proper praise is a part of that great responsibility.

**67:4:** *“For thou wilt judge...and govern”* - The recognition that God governs the nations produces a great sense of peace. Had God left man to determine his own course, without heavenly intervention, man would have destroyed himself long ago. In the fall of 2002 we were knocking doors in preparation for an upcoming meeting at the congregation where I worked. We came across a man who was evidently bitter toward the world, angry with God, and completely disinterested in religion. His comment to me was frank: “It is because of religion that the world is in the shape it is in today. Just look what the Muslim religion did to the Twin Towers last September” (he was making reference to September 11, 2001). I commented, “Sir, that is the fruit of false religion; zeal without knowledge. Quite frankly, had it not been for God revealing Himself to mankind, you and I would not enjoy the freedoms we now enjoy.” Albert Barnes must have been thinking along the same line when he penned these words: “Nothing would diffuse so much happiness over a miserable and guilty world; nothing would furnish such an occasion for universal joy, gratitude, and praise, as the possession of the knowledge of the great principles on which God rules the world, and on which he blesses men” (Barnes). Or as Spurgeon put it, “Nations never will be glad till they follow the leadership of the great Shepherd; they may shift their modes of government from monarchies to republics, and from republics to communes, but they will retain their wretchedness till they bow before the Lord of all” (Spurgeon).

**67:5:** *“Let the people praise thee”* - The language is identical with verse 3, suggesting a natural division at this point. It is because of God's judgment that the peoples are to praise Him. The repeated call to praise suggests that the Psalmist was filled with the desire to praise and adore God for His most wonderful blessings.

### **PROPHECY** **Verses 6-7**

*6 The earth hath yielded its increase: God, even our own God, will bless us.*

*7 God will bless us; And all the ends of the earth shall fear him.*

**67:6:** God will bless those who make application of His will to their lives. The Psalmist referred to God as *“our own God.”* It is encouraging to know that God is a personal God. He is indeed, *“even*



*our God.*" Because He is personal, He is capable, and willing, to provide abundant blessings. The Psalmist had evidently witnessed a great harvest and attributed such to the Almighty. God is the One who blesses us with all of our physical necessities, and does so with great abundance. The word rendered "*increase*" means "produce, or that which the earth produces when properly cultivated" (Barnes). The verb is in the past tense, suggesting the occasion that led the Psalmist to call for praise unto Jehovah.

We see in the verse before us a connection between righteousness of a nation and the increase of the land. When we were doing mission work in Poltava, Ukraine, we had the opportunity to travel from Poltava to Kiev by automobile on a few occasions. Our journey would take us through the farmland of that country. There were vast acres of land, some cultivated, some sitting fallow. The wide expanse of farm land reminded us of the wheat fields of Kansas and our own "farm belt" in the United States. Unfortunately the biggest majority of the land we passed through sat fallow, and what should, and could be the breadbasket of Europe, was barely being used to feed its own people. The fruits of humanism and atheism over the past three quarters of a century have left a land unfruitful and a people spiritually and morally bankrupt.

**67:7:** "*God will bless us*" - The writer was confident that God would continue to bless he and his people. For this reason, he would fear God. In addition, he was confident that all the earth, upon recognition of the fact that God blesses those who praise and worship Him, would fear Him as well. The full extent of God's blessings are only to be recognized in Christ. It is precisely for this reason that we see in this Psalm a glimpse of what God intended for mankind. Who can doubt that God's special providence is upon those who seek Him, His kingdom, and His righteousness first in their lives (Matt. 6:33).

### ***Lessons***

1. Notice that the Psalm begins with "God be merciful to us," and ends with "Then shall the earth yield her increase." When men praise God, He will bestow great blessings upon them. It is no accident that for more than two centuries the United States of America has been the breadbasket for an increasing population both at home and abroad.
2. God will bless us when our eyes are toward the lost of every

nation. Material abundance is not to be squandered on ourselves, but used to glorify God by the proclamation of His word to all mankind.

3. It is essential that we follow God's way. The Psalmist prayed that "thy way" might be made known upon the earth. It is important that we preach the whole counsel of God.

## ***“God The Victor”***

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David. The occasion is not known. It is a triumphal song designed to celebrate victories that had been achieved. Rawlinson calls this Psalm the crown and gem of the Second Book” (Rawlinson, 8:2:42). It is without doubt a patriotic song, and was used by the Huguenots in times of battle. It is unfortunate that some critics have assigned the Psalm to a much later date than it deserves. These critics simply choose to ignore the ascription to David. Our opinion is that those who attached these subscripts at an early date were in a much better position to determine the time of the writing than our modernists who would attack the word of God at every turn. The Psalm itself provides some information so as to allow us to narrow the time frame. (1) It was not composed prior to the time of David because before his time Jerusalem was not the seat of royal authority, as verse 29 would suggest. (2) It was composed when the nation was one and united, as indicated by verse 27. (3) It was composed on some occasion of bringing up the ark and placing it in the holy place, as verses 16, 24, and 25 suggest. Barnes concludes that it was thus written when the ark was brought up from the house of Obed-edom and placed in the city of David as per 2 Sam. 6:12 (Barnes ). This seems to be the most reasonable occasion for the writing of this Psalm. There is an obvious reference to some “procession” in the Psalm, leading Coffman to give the title, “God’s Triumphal Procession” (Coffman, 554). We have selected the title, “God The Victor.”

### ***Analysis***

Of this Psalm Terry Hightower has written: "This Psalm can truly be hailed as the most fiery, most daring and most powerful which we have in the Psalter. Reading it is like riding a boisterous, exhilarating roller coaster of artistic song" (Hightower, 405). An analysis of the Psalm is most difficult, and we will confess our present inability to come to any definite conclusion as to the occasion. We include Spurgeon's analysis as a fair representation of

the view that it was written at the carrying up of the ark to the temple:

With the words of the first two verses the ark is uplifted, and the procession begins to move. In verses 3-6, the godly in the assembly are exhorted to commence their joyous songs, and arguments are adduced to help their joy. Then the glorious march of Jehovah in the wilderness is sung: verses 7-10, and his victories in war are celebrated in verses 11-14. The joyous shouts are louder as Zion comes in sight, and the ark is borne up the hill: verse 15-19. On the summit of the mount the priests sing a hymn concerning the Lord's goodness and justice; the safety of his friends, and ruin of his foes; verses 20-23. Meanwhile the procession is described as it winds up the hill; verses 24-27. The poet anticipates a time of wider conquest, verses 28-31: and concludes with a noble burst of song unto Jehovah (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

Albert Barnes had an excellent outline on this Psalm. We have edited it slightly to fit our understanding of this Psalm:

- I. Prayer - that God would arise and scatter all His enemies (1-2);
- II. Praise - A call that the people might praise God for His greatness (3-6);
- III. Reflection - upon the past and what God had done for them in bringing them to the promised land (7-14);
- IV. Victory - is described, with God leading captivity captive (15-18);
- V. Anticipation - of future victories, as derived from the history of the past (19-23);
- VI. Procession - description of the victory parade (24-27);
- VII. Anticipation - further anticipation of future victories, from the viewpoint of voluntary submission of kings and nations unto God (28-31);
- VIII. Praise - a call unto the nations to sing praise to this God (32-35).

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Prayer Verses 1-2***

- 1 *Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; Let them also that hate him flee before him.*
- 2 *As smoke is driven away, so drive them away: As wax melteth before the fire, So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.*

**68:1:** “*Let God arise*” - There seems to be a reference to the words used by Moses when moving the ark (Num. 10:35), leading some to conclude that the Psalm was written on such an occasion when the ark was moved from one location to another. The same kind of language was used by Solomon when the ark was moved to the temple (2 Chron. 6:41). The application is clear. It is only when God goes “before us,” leading the way, with us following, that we shall ever experience joy in life and victory in the hereafter. Those who follow God desire that He lead the way, for it is “not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23).

“*Let them also that hate him flee*” – It is utterly astonishing that men, any man, would “hate” God. What a wicked and depraved heart it must be that harbors hatred for He Who provides us with the blessings of life, yea, even life itself. Such insolence will not go unpunished. The Psalmist was asking that God arise and defeat those enemies troubling him.

If God but arise, all his impenitent and implacable enemies, that will not repent to give him glory, will certainly and speedily be scattered, and driven away, and made to perish at his presence; for none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. The day of judgment will be the day of the complete and final *perdition of ungodly men* (2 Pet. 3:7), who shall melt like wax before that flaming fire in which the Lord shall then appear, 2 Th. 1:8 (Henry).

**68:2:** “*As smoke is driven away*” - The enemies of God will “be scattered” like smoke in a breeze. Smoke is completely removed by the breeze. No trace is left. The enemies of God, the God-haters, rebellious, and disobedient shall be driven away like so much smoke. The fool says there is no God, and the wicked man who stands against God is no less foolish. What might they imagine for themselves is no more powerful than smoke that is driven by the wind.

“*As wax melteth*” - Like wax that melts before a fire, so is the defeat of those who would oppose Jehovah God. Wax may appear to be hard, but when it is placed next to the fire it soon melts. Men may think themselves mighty, but when the anger of God confronts them they melt away like so much wax in the presence of a hot flame.

**Praise**  
**Verses 3-6**

3 *But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God: Yea, let them rejoice with gladness.*

4 *Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: Cast up a highway for him that rideth through the deserts; His name is Jehovah; and exult ye before him.*

5 *A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, Is God in his holy habitation.*

6 *God setteth the solitary in families: He bringeth out the prisoners into prosperity; But the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*

**68:3:** Here is a song of victorious praise. While the wicked are driven away like the smoke in the wind, the righteous can rejoice and be glad because of their relationship with God. To "*exult*" and "*rejoice*" are essentially the same. Our rejoicing is to be done with "*gladness*." God loves a cheerful and joyful heart, and the Christian has every reason for which to rejoice. Our God is on the throne; He is in control of His world; victory shall be ours.

**68:4:** "*Sing unto God*" - It is unto God that we sing. While it is true that our singing is designed to teach one another, our praise and worship belongs exclusively to the Almighty.

"*praises to his name*" – Since the name is often put for the person himself, we conclude that the Psalmist was encouraging the faithful to praise God. The idea in this verse is that the way was to be prepared for the entrance of God into the city as represented by the carrying of the ark to its resting place. This language was typical of the procession that carried the ark, be it to battle, or into the Holy City.

"*Cast up a highway*" - KJV reads, "*Extol him*." The word rendered '*extol*' means to "raise up, as into a heap or mound" (Barnes). The idea seems to be that of making proper preparation. All obstacles were to be removed, and the road was to be made smooth.

The word translated "*deserts*" is translated "heavens" in the KJV. Our opinion is that the ASV is more appropriate. The LXX renders it, "Make way for him who is riding westward" (Barnes). It likely has reference to the desert area where the Israelites wandered and

through which they passed on their way to the promised land. The Arabs still use the word today to refer to that area of the world.

The KJV renders the closing portion of this verse, "by his name JAH." "Yah" is an abbreviated form of Yahweh (Heb.), the personal name for the covenant God of Israel, the pronunciation of which was lost because the Israelites considered it too sacred to vocalize (cf. Ex. 3:14). Spurgeon notes, "The name JAH is an abbreviation of the name Jehovah; it is not a diminution of that name, but an intensified word, containing in it the essence of the longer, august title" (Spurgeon). He then commented: "It should be our wish and our prayer, that in this wilderness world, a highway may be prepared for the God of grace...for where the God of the mercy-seat comes, blessings innumerable are given to the sons of men" (Spurgeon).

**68:5:** "*A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows*" - God's concern for the widows and orphans is manifest throughout the scriptures. See also Psalms 10:14, 18, Jeremiah 49:11, etc. "This is one of the most tender appellations that could be given to God, and conveys one of the most striking descriptions that can be given of his character" (Barnes). With regard to the widows, He will see that justice is done. Widows are often considered helpless victims by the unscrupulous, and are often preyed upon. To those who would so mistreat the widows, be forewarned that God will render justice.

The "*holy habitation*" has reference to Jerusalem where the ark was being moved at the writing of the Psalm. Thus, God's care for the orphans and widows was to emanate from that city. One cannot help but see in this verse the care and concern for the bereft that goes forth from the church, the "holy Zion" of this dispensation. "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). In both the Old and New Testament alike, our God is depicted as a God of compassion. Though He rides on the clouds of heaven, He remembers the poor of the earth. Barnes picked up on this: "This...conveys one of the most striking descriptions that can be given of his character. We see his greatness, his majesty, his power, in the worlds that he has made - in the storm, the tempest, the rolling ocean; but it is in such expressions as this that we learn, what we most desire to know, and we cannot elsewhere learn, that he is a Father; that he is to be loved as well as feared" (Barnes).

*"judge of the widows"* - There is no class of people more likely to be oppressed and wronged than widows. All those who "judge" widows unfairly, God will render judgment upon their head in return.

*"Is God in his holy habitation"* - Albert Barnes has as good a comment as any we have come across:

What a man is we see in his own home - when we get near to him; when we look upon him, not on great or state occasions, when he is abroad, and assumes appearances befitting his rank and office, but in his own house; as he is constantly. This is the idea here, that if we approach God most nearly, if we look upon him, not merely in the splendour and magnificence in when he appears in governing the worlds in his judgment, in storm and tempest, riding on the clouds and controlling the ocean, but, as it were, in his own dwelling, his quiet heavens - if we look most closely at his character, we shall find that character best represented by the kind and benignant traits of a father - in his care for widows and orphans (Barnes).

**68:6:** *"Solitary"* has reference to one alone, as an only child, or one that is forsaken. The idea is, not that God constitutes families of those who were solitary and alone, but that to those who are alone in the world, who seem to have no friends, who are destitute, wretched, forsaken, He gives comfort and consolation. There are overtones here of a greater family than that made up of earthly ties. God's family, the church, provides the companionship and comfort to those who have lost loved ones, whether widows or orphans. We also like Coffman's comments on this verse:

When a great diamond is found, it is always surrounded by a number of other large diamonds somewhat smaller; and this phenomenal fact in nature also recurs in God's creation of great men. Shakespeare was surrounded by men like John Milton, Christopher Marlow and others; George Washington was surrounded by Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, and others. Jesus Christ was surrounded by Peter, James and John, John the Baptist, and the Apostle Paul. It is one of the most remarkable facts that, 'God setteth the solitary in families' (Coffman, 556).

*"the rebellious dwell in a parched land"* - While God cares for and delivers the widows and orphans, He leaves the wicked and rebellious to perish in their own misery and want, as if they were in a parched land. Spurgeon put it this way:



Israel did not find the desert dry, for the smitten rock gave forth its streams; but even in Canaan itself men were consumed with famine, because they cast off their allegiance to their covenant God. Even where God is revealed on the mercy-seat, some men persist in rebellion, and such need not wonder if they find no peace, no comfort, no joy, even where all these abound. Justice is the rule of the Lord's kingdom, and hence there is no provision for the unjust to indulge in their evil lustings: a perfect earth, and even heaven itself, would be a dry land to those who can only drink the waters of sin. Of the most soul satisfying of sacred ordinances these witless rebels, cry, 'what a weariness it is!' and, under the most soul-sustaining ministry, they complain of 'the foolishness of preaching.' When a man has a rebellious heart, he must of necessity find all around him a dry land (Spurgeon).

### ***Reflection*** ***Verses 7-14***

- 7 *O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, When thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah*
- 8 *The earth trembled, The heavens also dropped rain at the presence of God: Yon Sinai trembled at the presence of God, the God of Israel.*
- 9 *Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, Thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.*
- 10 *Thy congregation dwelt therein: Thou, O God, didst prepare of thy goodness for the poor.*
- 11 *The Lord giveth the word: The women that publish the tidings are a great host.*
- 12 *Kings of armies flee, they flee; And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.*
- 13 *When ye lie among the sheepfolds, It is as the wings of a dove covered with silver, And her pinions with yellow gold.*
- 14 *When the Almighty scattered kings therein, It was as when it snoweth in Zalmon.*

**68:7:** “*When thou wentest forth*” - This section of the Psalm is, as one might guess, a reflection upon God's dealings with His people in the wilderness. What a wonderful consolation to know that our God goes before us. As it was in the "wilderness," so it is today. And where our God leads the way, the burning sands of the desert are no obstacle.

*"When thou didst march through the wilderness"* - It should be noted that though we sometimes speak of the "wanderings" of the children of Israel, they were actually under the watch care of God and their "wanderings" were more of a well-arranged and well considered march. The Egyptians thought the wilderness had shut Israel in, but with God as their leader, Israel was not lost, nor did they wander aimlessly during that time.

**68:8:** *"The heavens dropped rain"* - Literally, "The heavens distilled rain at the presence of God, this at Sinai, at the presence of God" (Barnes). Coffman thinks this "may be a reference to the manna that literally 'rained' out of heaven to feed Israel during the forty years. Such an understanding makes the 'rain' a metaphor of the blessings that sustained Israel in the wilderness" (Coffman, 557). Our opinion is that the Psalmist is speaking of God's presence at Sinai. Never did any people see the glory of God as Israel did at Sinai. It was there the earth shook, or the heavens seem to "drop" like "rain." The appearance of God would produce fear and dread in the people as well as encourage and strengthen their faith and dependence upon Him.

**68:9:** *"Thou didst send a plentiful rain"* - God not only sends the rain, He sends a *"plentiful rain."* This is figurative language for God's gracious and bountiful provisions during the wilderness wanderings (cf. Ex. 16:12-15). With the physical blessings He confirmed His covenant with Israel. The rain, the water in the wilderness, the manna, and the quail all stood as markers along the deserts highway that God would keep His promise.

God's *"confirmation"* often comes when we are the most discouraged, when we are weary with foreboding. Our gracious God knows exactly when we need confirmation the most. In the wilderness God cared for the infant nation. In all those forty years their feet did not swell, nor did their clothing grow old. Even when they were weary, God was not. And though He allowed them to become weary at times, He never abandoned them. In like manner our God cares for His church as she walks in the wilderness of this life, ever moving toward the Jordan across which lies the land of milk and honey and eternal bliss. Yes, our God takes care of us, and by His providential care for us, our faith is strengthened.

From this verse we glean great lessons for our encouragement:

- (1) It is God Who supplies our needs. His mercy and grace pour forth abundant provisions, even in the wilderness of this sin sick world.
- (2) God recognizes our needs. He sends his rain in due season, even if the season is one of drought and the place is a desert.
- (3) God's provisions are "plentiful," even beyond our expectations.
- (4) God is concerned about His "inheritance," spiritual Israel.
- (5) God recognizes when we are "weary," implying His continued watchfulness over us.

**68:10:** *"Thou, O God, didst prepare"* - God can prepare a table in the wilderness and provide a dwelling in the most remote habitation. Who would have ever believed that a nation could survive in the wilderness of Sin? But they did. Not only did they survive, they grew and developed into a mighty nation that came forth to conquer the foes of God with the strength of Jehovah before and behind them.

**68:11:** The KJV reads, *"great was the company of those that published it."* More literally, "The women publishing it were a great host." The Psalmist spoke of the enemy being near. Evidently at the sounding of the trumpet the women went forth throughout the camp, warning others of the news. The important thing here is the willingness to tell of the impending battle, and the subsequent victory, by those who are a part of the kingdom. Barnes thinks "the entire psalm refers to the ark, and its triumphs; and the idea here seems to be that in all the victories which had been achieved the 'word' or the command came from God, and that its promulgation was immediately made by a 'great company' who stood ready to communicate it or to publish it" (Barnes).

**68:12:** *"Kings of armies flee"* - Some see here the fleeing of the enemy at the advancement of the ark of the covenant. But the context would suggest that the Psalmist has in mind the fleeing of the enemy from Israel in the wilderness. The interesting thing in this verse is the dividing of the spoil between those who went to battle, and those who stayed home, "and she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil."

**68:13:** *"When ye lie among the sheepfolds, It is as the wings of a dove covered with silver, And her pinions with yellow gold"* - We admit to the difficulty of this verse. This may be some poetic language being used by the writer with which his audience was familiar. Is this some reference to the final heritage that Israel

would enjoy in the promised land? There is a progression from a “sheepfold” to some status described as “wings of a dove covered with silver.” The varying opinions as to the meaning are indicative of the difficult nature of the verse. Spurgeon may be close in noting that the gist is that “from the lowest condition the Lord would lift up his people into joy, liberty, wealth, and beauty” (Spurgeon). Matthew Henry may have been thinking along this line when he wrote

That from a low and despised condition they had been advanced to splendour and prosperity. When they were bond-slaves in Egypt, and afterwards when they were oppressed sometimes by one potent neighbour and sometimes by another, they did, as it were, *lie among the pots* or rubbish, as despised broken vessels, or as vessels in which there was no pleasure — they were black, and dirty, and discoloured. But God, at length, *delivered them from the pots* (Ps. 81:6), and in David’s time they were in a fair way to be one of the most prosperous kingdoms in the world, amiable in the eyes of all about them, *like the wings of a dove covered with silver* (Henry).

Barnes, using the KJV rendering, concluded:

There are few passages in the Bible more difficult of interpretation than this verse and the following. Our translators seem to have supposed that the whole refers to the ark, considered as having been neglected, or as having been suffered to remain among the common vessels of the tabernacle, until it became like those vessels in appearance - that is, until its brilliancy had become tarnished by neglect, or by want of being cleaned and furbished - yet that it would be again like the wings of a dove covered with silver, as it had been formerly, and pure like the whitest snow (Barnes).

**68:14:** The identity of “Zalmon” (or “Salmon”) has not been determined with certainty, but it probably denotes a wooded mountain near Shechem (cf. Judg. 9:48, 49). Victory belonged to God. Rawlinson gave the verse this meaning: “Professor Cheyne supplies ‘like snow’ and understands the passage to mean that, when the kings were scattered, ‘it was like snow when it snows on Salmon’ - the ground was covered with glistening arms, armour, and garments” (Rawlinson, 8:1:44). Barnes agreed: “Tholuck supposes it to mean that when war was waged on the kings and people, they fell as fast as snow flakes on Mount Salmon; and that the idea is not so much the *whiteness* of the land, as the fact that they fell in great numbers, covering the land as the snow flakes do” (Barnes).

Spurgeon had this: "A traveler informed the writer that on a raw and gusty day, he saw the side of what he supposed to be Mount Salmon suddenly swept bare by a gust of wind, so that the snow was driven hither and thither into the air like the down of thistles, or the spray of the sea: thus did the Omnipotent one scatter all the potentates that defiled Israel" (Spurgeon). Matthew Henry took the position that

these great things which God did for them were sanctified to them and contributed to their reformation (v. 14): *When the Almighty scattered kings for her (for the church) she was white as snow in Salmon, purified and refined by the mercies of God; when the host went forth against the enemy they kept themselves from every wicked thing, and so the host returned victorious, and Israel by the victory were confirmed in their purity and piety* (Clarke).

Whatever else the verse might mean, it certainly speaks of the utter defeat of the enemies of God's people.

### ***Victory*** ***Verses 15-18***

- 15 *A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; A high mountain is the mountain of Bashan.*
- 16 *Why look ye askance, ye high mountains, At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode? Yea, Jehovah will dwell in it for ever.*
- 17 *The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands; The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary.*
- 18 *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led away captives; Thou hast received gifts among men, Yea, among the rebellious also, that Jehovah God might dwell with them.*

**68:15:** "*The mountain of Bashan*" is to be identified as Mount Hermon (cf. v. 22; 42:6). Bashan far exceeded Zion in height. According to the Hebrew custom, those things that were considered great or remarkable were figuratively described as "the mountain of Bashan." We think that "Bashan" here stands for Zion.

**68:16:** "*Why look ye askance*" - He seems to be saying to the surrounding mountains, "Why do you look upon Bashan with envy? God selected this mountain for His abode." The KJV reads, "Why leap ye, ye high hills," but the Hebrew (*'ratzad'*) means "Why do ye watch insidiously? Why do you look askance at?" (Barnes). In

Arabic it means to watch closely. Barnes thus concludes, "The mountains around Palestine, as if conscious of their grandeur, are represented as looking *askance*, in their pride, at Mount Zion; as eyeing it with silent contempt, as if it were not worthy of notice" (Barnes). The "high mountains" represent the world that looks upon God's ways with contempt. How simple is the gospel, and how unlikely in the eyes of men that it should be God's means of saving man. God often chooses the lowly to accomplish great things. He used a young lad (David) to slay the giant that threatened Israel. He raised up the son of Jesse to the throne of Israel. He used a young Israelite captive (Esther) to save a nation. He used a manger to provide a birth place for the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yes, He often uses the lowly to accomplish great things.

**68:17:** While other countries gloried in their chariots and military might, God's chariots are "twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands." This is exaggerated language to suggest the inexhaustible power of our God to overthrow the enemy. The message is that God is absolutely able to maintain his position on Mount Zion.

**68:18:** There is no doubt that this verse, if not the whole Psalm, is messianic in its thrust. It was quoted by Paul in Ephesians 4:8 to refer to the conquering work of Jesus when He ascended on high and took His rightful place as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

*"Thou hast ascended on high"* – Here is the continuing majesty and triumph of our Lord as He marches onward through history toward the achievement of His purpose.

### ***Anticipation Verses 19-23***

- 19 *Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burden, Even the God who is our salvation. Selah*
- 20 *God is unto us a God of deliverances; And unto Jehovah the Lord belongeth escape from death.*
- 21 *But God will smite through the head of his enemies, The hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his guiltiness.*
- 22 *The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring them again from the depths of the sea;*
- 23 *That thou mayest crush them, dipping thy foot in blood, That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from thine enemies.*

**68:19:** The whole of this section speaks of God's providential care for His people. The abundant blessings poured forth on Israel are contrasted with the complete overthrow of the enemy.

*“daily beareth our burden”* - The KJV reads, *“Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits.”* One has rendered it, *“Whoever lays a load upon us, the Mighty God is our salvation.”* Delitzsch stays with the ASV. God's blessings are daily, not intermittent. His blessings are loaded, not light or sparse. His blessings are for all of Israel, namely “us.” If we are bowed down with sorrow, our God will provide us comfort; if with fear, God will give us courage. No matter the burden, our God will provide release from it. According to Barnes, the word rendered “loadeth” (KJV) means to “take up, to lift, as a stone” (Barnes, QV). He then concludes that it “means to impose or lay a burden or a load on one; and the idea here is, ‘Blessed be the Lord God *even if* he lays a burden on us, and if he does this *daily*’” (Barnes).

**68:20:** *“unto Jehovah...belongeth escape from death”* - Death surrounds us at every hand. We witness physical death almost every day of our life. Every obituary page in the newspaper and every funeral procession is a reminder that death is real. Spiritual death is just as real, yet carries far greater consequences. Men seek a cure to death, but it is in vain, for “it is appointed unto man once to die” (Heb. 9:27). We once read of someone who locked himself in a vault in an effort to escape death, but it was in vain. It is only in the Lord that the horrible consequences of death can be overcome.

**68:21:** There is a sound of victory that resonates throughout this Psalm. God will smite the head of our enemies according to His schedule and purpose. The later portion of this verse is admittedly difficult. Barnes had this: “The Hebrew word used here for *scalp* means the vertex, the top, the crown....and the idea is properly, *the dividing of the hair*. The blow would descend on the top of the head, producing death” (Barnes).

**68:22:** Just as a victory had been achieved over a formidable enemy, so God would deliver His people and save them from danger. Barnes concluded: “As Bashan was the remote frontier of the Holy Land, the meaning may be, that God would bring his people from the remotest borders where they should be scattered” (Barnes). Spurgeon, on the other hand, saw in this verse a reference to the futile attempts on the part of God's enemy to escape the divine hand

of justice: "As there is no resisting Israel's God, so is there no escape from him, neither the heights of Bashan nor the depths of the great sea can shelter from his eye the detection and his hand of justice. The powers of evil may flee to the utmost ends of the earth, but the Lord will arrest them, and lead them back in chains to adorn his triumph" (Spurgeon).

**68:23** *"That thou mayest crush them, dipping thy foot in blood"* - To us this verse may sound very harsh, but such language described the joyous victory over the enemy. We shudder when we think of the multitudes who shall face God in the judgment. How dreadful it will be to stand in Judgment having been an enemy of the Most High God. Coffman has this note:

The terminology seems very harsh; but this is due to a generally blindness to the biblical revelation that God's anger against wickedness is no light thing at all, but that the most terrible penalties that the mind of man can visualize shall at last be executed against all mortals who make themselves enemies of God...Therefore the proper reaction to terminology of this kind is not, 'How awful that punishment is,' but 'What an unspeakably awful thing is enmity against God (Coffman, 561).

### ***Procession Verses 24-27***

- 24 *They have seen thy goings, O God, Even the goings of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.*
- 25 *The singers went before, the minstrels followed after, In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels.*
- 26 *Bless ye God in the congregations, Even the Lord, ye that are of the fountain of Israel.*
- 27 *There is little Benjamin their ruler, The princes of Judah and their council, The princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.*

Rawlinson summed up this portion of the Psalm well:

Again we find a transition. The conquest of Canaan is complete; God is gone up into his sanctuary. The nations are led captive or put to tribute. Rebels are crushed; the last remnants of them sought out, brought back, and delivered into the hands of Israel. Now we have a description of God's "goings in the sanctuary" (ver.24)...God is from time to time glorified in his sanctuary by ceremonies which the poet describes (Rawlinson, 8:2:45).



**68:24:** *"They have seen thy goings"* - Friend and foe alike have witnessed the marvelous victories of Jehovah. Here is a description of the victory parade as it makes its way into the city of Jerusalem, and draws near to the temple.

**68:25:** The interesting thing about this verse is the priority placed upon the singing. Here is God's authorized music in the New Testament. Victory calls for singing, and the heart that is merry is instructed to sing songs of praise (James 5:14-16).

*"In the midst of the damsels playing with timbrels"* - The true construction of this passage is: "Behind were the players in the midst of damsels playing" (Barnes). This would confirm our conclusion that the singers were in a class by themselves, while the minstrels and damsels playing timbrels brought up the rear.

**68:26:** Israel was to be a fountain of life to a lost world. Unfortunately they failed miserably with regard to God's intended purpose, and their neglect of this God-given responsibility brought upon them their own destruction. It is this verse that leads us to the conclusion that there is a prophecy of Gentile salvation in this Psalm.

Albert Barnes is a fair representation of those who see in this verse a reference to the pedigree of the nation of Israel:

"The margin has undoubtedly expressed the correct idea. The appeal is to the Hebrew people represented as descending from a common stock or ancestor - Jacob or Israel - as a stream or river flows from a fountain...All the descendants of Jacob or Israel are thus called on to unite in solemnly praising the Lord their God" (Barnes).

**68:27:** Four tribes are mentioned as representative of the whole of Israel united in praising God. The fact that two of these tribes are from the extreme north and two from the south confirms our conclusion that this was the Psalmist's way of showing all Israel had joined in the praise. It is interesting to note that, "The same tribes are prominent in the New Testament, as foremost in the battle of the church against the world. Paul, the 'least' of the apostles (1 Cor. xv. 8-10), was by origin Saul of Benjamin (Phil iii.5). Christ, 'the lion of the tribe of Judah,' James and John, the brothers, the other James, Thaddeus, and Simon, were from Judah, and the other apostles were from Naphthalim and Zabulon, or Galilee (Matt. iv.13)" (Spurgeon).

## **Anticipation (28-31)**

- 28 *Thy God hath commanded thy strength: Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.*
- 29 *Because of thy temple at Jerusalem Kings shall bring presents unto thee.*
- 30 *Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds, The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples, Trampling under foot the pieces of silver: He hath scattered the peoples that delight in war.*
- 31 *Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God*

In this section the Psalmist turns to the future. He prays that God will complete that which He had begun.

**68:28:** “*Strengthen, O God, that which thou has wrought*” – This appears to be a plea on the part of the Psalmist for God to complete the wonderful work He had started. There is, without doubt, a prophetic reference to God’s spiritual work that would be accomplished in the church. True Israel IS strong. The victories that God supplied to physical Israel were but a type of the victory that we shall enjoy as members of the body of Christ.

**68:29:** “*Kings shall bring presents unto thee*” – Following the death of David and Solomon, and the collapse of the united kingdom, physical Israel offered gifts to those nations that conquered her rather than receiving presents from kings. They were few exceptions to this. The Psalmist was not looking at physical Israel, but spiritual Israel.

**68:30:** The “*beast of the reeds*” was probably the crocodile or the hippopotamus, either of which symbolized the empire of Egypt. Egypt was among the mightiest powers in David’s time. The “*bulls*” likely was a reference to Assyria that had as its principle emblem the human-headed and winged bull. Once these powers were defeated they would bring “*pieces of silver*” to Israel.

**68:31:** Once again the Psalmist speaks of the age of the Messiah. “*Princes shall come out of Egypt...Ethiopia shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God.*” Among the first converts to Christianity exclusive of the pure blood line of Israel was the Ethiopian eunuch. Interestingly, he was a treasurer, and among the first to “stretch

out...hands to God.” Terry Hightower addressed the prophetic element in this section: “The psalmist primarily sees a time when ‘because of the temple at Jerusalem’ earthly kings will bring earthly gifts unto God. But in the revelation to the apostle John, we are privileged to see a new heaven and a new earth with the holy city called the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven...’and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it...and they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it (Rev. 21:22-26)” (Hightower, 415-416). That the Psalmist had in mind something far greater than physical Israel is clear from Paul’s use of the 18<sup>th</sup> verse of this Psalm in his letter to the Ephesians (4:8).

### **Praise** *Verses 32-35*

- 32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; Oh sing praises unto the Lord; Selah*  
*33 To him that rideth upon the heaven of heavens, which are of old; Lo, he uttereth his voice, a mighty voice.*  
*34 Ascribe ye strength unto God: His excellency is over Israel, And his strength is in the skies.*  
*35 O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: The God of Israel, he giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.*

There is sufficient reason for all nations to praise God. The Psalmist will conclude this Psalm with a call to praise Jehovah based on sound reasoning and prudence.

**68:32:** This verse serves as a call to praise God. It is significant that the divine call to praise includes “singing.” Those invited (yea, commanded) to sing are the “kingdoms of the earth.”

**68:33:** Why is God worthy to be praised? First, because He “*rideth upon the heaven of heavens.*” “Behold, unto Jehovah thy God belongeth heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is therein” (Deut. 10:14). Solomon declared, “Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded” (1 Kings 8:27). The majestic omnipresence of God declares that He is worthy to be praised.

**68:34:** In addition to God’s omnipresence, there is His omnipotence. “*Ascribe ye strength unto God.*” The mighty works performed throughout the history of the nation of Israel were well known. Careful consideration of the strength of Jehovah God would

naturally lead one to bow in grateful appreciation and humble praise before his Maker.

**68:35:** The conclusion is abrupt. The strength of Israel lies in God. So long as they obeyed God, they remained strong. But rebellion and disobedience robbed them of the needed strength and they became prey to their enemies. Power and strength were not to be found in Egypt or Assyria. It was to be found in Jehovah God. Spiritual Israel must likewise find in God their source of strength. So long as we walk in the strait and narrow way, turning neither to the right or the left, God shall be our strength. All else is futile; all else will lead to failure.

### ***Lessons***

1. David's prayer should be our prayer. This "man after God's own heart" asked God to arise (1) for the confusion of his enemies, and (2) for the comfort and joy of his own people. When God arises, His enemies are utterly defeated. None can stand before God, and when He stands to avenge the enemies of His people victory is assured to the faithful.
2. When the enemy is defeated, he is utterly defeated. Legion have been those who have opposed God. From Vespasian to Voltaire, like so much smoke that is driven away or wax that melts before an open flame, all who oppose God shall be consumed in His wrath.
3. Our God is a compassionate God. He cares for the fatherless and widows. Our religion is pure when we, like Him, visit the orphans and widows in their affliction (Jas. 1:27).
4. Our God is a communicating God. "The Lord giveth the word" (verse 11).
5. Our God is a comforting God. He "daily beareth our burden" (verse 19). Not only does He see fit to bear our burdens, but he does so daily, never failing or forsaking those who cast their cares upon Him.
6. It is a horrible thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. He will "crush them, dipping thy foot in blood" (verse 23).

## ***Our Final Departure***

by Tom Wacaster

Paul once beseeched the brethren to permit him a little "foolishness," so that he might reflect upon his labors with those to whom he was writing (2 Cor. 11:1). His great concern was that the Corinthians might not be drawn away by false teachers claiming to be apostles of the Lord. Paul's great love for the church is most evident in his writings. One of his most tender epistles is that written to the Thessalonians. Therein he wrote, "But we were gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children: even so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were well pleased to impart unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were become very dear to us" (1 Thess. 2:7). Among Paul's tribulations was his "anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:28). Oh yes, Paul loved the brethren individually and the brotherhood collectively. Such love drove him to run the race with dedication and determination, and to preach the truth, only the truth, and all of the truth, without fear or favor of men. I can almost imagine the great satisfaction that must have been his as his earthly ministry drew to a close, and he peered through jail bars at the henchman's block upon which he was soon to be offered. With great confidence he wrote, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Tradition says that he was beheaded shortly after he penned those words. Were we permitted to visit with Paul, do you suppose he would have any regrets for having spent his life in service to his Master? I think not! Those immortal words penned to the Corinthians express his sentiments perhaps even more since his departure from his earthly tabernacle: "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens" (2 Cor 4:16-5:1). I ask you, dear brother and sister, are you looking at the things which are seen, or unseen? Are your eyes fixed on the earthly or the heavenly? the temporal or the eternal? And if on the seen, the temporal, and

the earthly, then when it comes time for you depart to realms unknown, will you be able to truly look back on your life with genuine satisfaction?

In connection with the above thoughts, permit me to share with you a quote from Henry Van Dyke. Here is his most notable tribute to the Book of books, the Bible: "Born in the East and clothed in Oriental form and imagery, the Bible walks the ways of all the world with familiar feet and enters land after land to find its own everywhere. It has learned to speak in hundreds of languages to the heart of man. Children listen to its stories with wonder and delight, and wise men ponder them as parables of life. The wicked and proud tremble at its warnings, but to the wounded and penitent it has a mother's voice. It has woven itself into our dearest dreams; so that love, sympathy, devotion, memory, and hope put on the beautiful garments of its treasured speech. No man is poor or desolate who has this treasure for his own. When the landscape darkens, and the trembling pilgrim comes to the valley of the shadow, he is not afraid to enter; he takes the rod and staff of scripture in his hand; he says to friend and comrade, 'Goodbye; we shall meet again;' and, confronted by that support, he goes toward the lonely pass as one who walks through darkness to light."

## *“Rescue And Deliverance”*

### ***Introduction***

If we believe the words of Paul in Romans 11:9 (and we do) then we must attribute this Psalm to David. As Coffman noted, “a single word from Paul is worth more than a whole library of critical denials that David wrote it” (Coffman, 568). The language is Davidic in style and there is nothing in the Psalm itself that would suggest another author.

The occasion, however, cannot be determined. It was written at a time when the Psalmist was suffering because of his faith in God. Some have concluded that the Psalm best fits the time in David's life when he was fleeing from Saul. One curious feature of this Psalm is the fact that, with the exception of Psalms 22, this one is quoted in the New Testament more than any other. The Psalm is definitely prophetic, but like many prophetic Psalms, it speaks of two men. The first man is, without doubt, David; the second, likewise without doubt, is our Lord. There is no question in our mind that the “footprints” of Jesus can be seen throughout the Psalm, and are noted by the New Testament writers. But there are some verses that simply cannot, and do not, speak of Christ. We will note some of these as we proceed through the Psalm. Hence, we conclude that the Psalm is designed to take even the best of men, like David, and show the absolute superior nature of the “seed of David” when held in comparison. This Psalm reconfirms our conviction, however, that there is much more of the prophetic element in these songs of David than perhaps we realize.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm seems to naturally divide itself into two parts, each with 18 verses. The first part describes the Psalmist's suffering, prophetic of the Savior's passion, as a result of his zeal for God. The second part of the Psalm is a plea for deliverance from, and punishment of, the enemies, closing with a promise of praise for that expected and anticipated deliverance.

- I. The Psalmist's suffering, 1-18;
  - 1. His complaint spread before God, 1-4;
  - 2. The cause for his suffering is his own zeal for God, 5-12;
  - 3. His call for help and deliverance, 13-18.
- II. A Plea for deliverance from, and punishment of, the enemy, 19-36;
  - 1. The conduct of his adversaries, 19-21;
  - 2. A call for their punishment, 22-28;
  - 3. His commitment to praise in view of anticipated deliverance, 29-36.

## **Commentary**

### **The Psalmist's suffering Verses 1-18**

#### **His complaint spread before God, Verses 1-4**

- 1 Save me, O God; For the waters are come in unto my soul.*
- 2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.*
- 3 I am weary with my crying; my throat is dried: Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.*
- 4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head: They that would cut me off, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: That which I took not away I have to restore.*

**69:1:** The writer is in some great distress, his soul being overwhelmed with trouble, as if a flood had rushed upon him. Applied to the Lord, we are reminded of the fact that "in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear" (Heb. 5:7). The Psalmist, and in like manner our Lord, suffered the anguish of a broken heart. Something had penetrated his inner being. He was cut to the heart. While there may have been some bodily anguish, there was something that produced a far greater pain than physical suffering. Does this not describe our Lord? Was not the passion in the garden as deep and painful as the nails that pierced His hands and feet?

**69:2:** The Psalmist's feeling of utter helplessness is seen in this verse. He has nowhere to stand; the floods overwhelm him. In



water he might have swam; but in the mire, his efforts were useless. On the cross, the "floods overflow" the Savior. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" expressed His great sorrow and grief. Truly the sorrows of the Psalmist were those of our Master.

**69:3:** *"I am weary with my crying; my throat is dried"* - This was an instance where one had called so long and so earnestly, that his strength was gone. The Hebrew for "dried" denotes to burn; to be kindled; and then, to be inflamed. Jesus wept for our sins. He prayed for our redemption. He spent hours in prayer with the Father, oft times all night.

*"I wait for my God"* - The word for "wait" is not used in the sense in which we might use it. It denotes one looking to God, and to Him alone. One who waits upon Jehovah seeks the aid that only God can give. Circumstances may have appeared desperate, but he would wait on Jehovah nonetheless.

**69:4:** *"They that hate me without a cause"* - David declares his innocence. His enemies had no cause to "hate" him. There was no just cause for their animosity. His enemies evidently accused him of taking something, and were demanding restoration. These enemies were so great in number that he could not contend with them. The enemies of the cross are numerous, and those that persecuted our Lord hated Him without a cause.

It was bad that they were many, but worse that they were mighty. All the ecclesiastical and military powers of his country were arrayed against him. The might of the Sanhedrim, the mob, and the Roman legions were combined in one for his utter destruction, "Away with such a fellow from this earth; it is not fit that he should live," was the shout of his ferocious foes. David's adversaries were on the throne when he was hiding in caverns, and our Lord's enemies were the great ones of the earth; while he, of whom the world was not worthy, was reproached of men and despised of the people (Spurgeon).

From the very moment of His birth, to His death on the cross, there were those who sought to discredit Him, and then to destroy Him. What irony that the One who is altogether lovely, holy, compassionate and kind would be so hated by those who were His own. As it was with David, so it was with the Christ. "Saul had the ability to marshal all the resources of the kingdom against David; and human nature being what it is, countless people were willing to take sides with Saul against David. Saul's enmity against David was

the only motivation that the people needed to hate David. The situation regarding the countless people who hated Jesus Christ without cause reflected perfectly the conditions that confronted David" (Coffman, 570). Jesus applied this verse to Himself in John 15:25.

*"That which I took not away I have to restore"* – The KJV is slightly different: "then I restored *that* which I took not away." Barnes suggested the following interpretation:

This seems to have a proverbial cast, and the idea is, that under this pressure of circumstances - borne down by numbers - he was compelled to give up what he had not taken away from others. They regarded and treated him as a bad man - as if he had been a robber; and they compelled him to give up what he possessed, "as if" he had no right to it, or "as if" he had obtained it by robbery (Barnes).

Is it possible that these words could describe the sacrifice of our Lord? Spurgeon seemed to think so: "In reference to our Lord, it may be truly said that he restores what he took not away; for he gives back to the injured honour of God a recompense, and to man his lost happiness, though the insult of the one and the fall of the other were neither of them, in any sense, his doings" (Spurgeon).

There is little doubt in our mind that the words written by the Psalmist were applicable to both himself and his Lord. If such a might man as David, and such a humble man as our Lord both suffered reproach at the hands of their enemies, what makes us think we can fair any better? "Yea, all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

### **The cause for his suffering is his own zeal for God, verses 5-12**

- 5 *O God, thou knowest my foolishness; And my sins are not hid from thee.*
- 6 *Let not them that wait for thee be put to shame through me, O Lord Jehovah of hosts: Let not those that seek thee be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel.*
- 7 *Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; Shame hath covered my face.*

- 8 *I am become a stranger unto my brethren, And an alien unto my mother's children.*  
 9 *For the zeal of thy house hath eaten me up; And the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me.*  
 10 *When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, That was to my reproach.*  
 11 *When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword unto them.*  
 12 *They that sit in the gate talk of me; And I am the song of the drunkards.*

**69:5:** *"Thou knowest my foolishness"* - There are two ways this might be taken. David could have been acknowledging his sin, thus seeking forgiveness in order that he might be forgiven and delivered from the enemy. Or this might have been a declaration of innocence. While the enemy accused David of wrongdoing, David was saying, "But God, you know whether or not I have been foolish; any sins that I might have are not hidden from You. Observe my innocence and deliver me from the enemy." David did not claim to be sinless, only blameless. Barnes held the position that David was confessing his sins:

Though conscious of innocence in this case - though he felt that his enemies hated him "without cause," and that they took what belonged to him and not to them, yet he was not insensible to the fact that he was a sinner, and he was not unwilling to confess before God, that, however conscious of uprightness he might be in his dealings toward people, yet toward God, he was a sinful man (Barnes).

If we take the position that David was actually declaring his innocence, then the next verse would be a prayer that he might maintain his integrity so that others might not "be put to shame through me." This seems the more reasonable position.

**69:6:** *"Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed"* – David recognized that should he fall under the hand of his enemies, that others might be ashamed of the cause for which he stood, and their faith be shaken. If he were deserted, others who had placed their faith in God might become discouraged and disappointed. None of us are an island unto ourselves, and we were reminded by Paul that "none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself" (Rom. 14:7).

*"Them that wait for thee...those that seek thee"* – David realized that he was not alone in the battles he faced. He also realized that his example might have an influence on the behavior of those who watched him. It should be noted here that David sets forth, whether intentionally or not, an essential character of those who walk with God. If we would "walk" with God, we must earnestly "seek" Him. The New Testament equivalent of this verse is Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

**69:7:** *"shame hath covered my face"* – It is not that David had been ashamed of religion or of his service to God, but that he had suffered shame, derision, reproach among people for his professed attachment to the truth. He was evidently hated for no other reason than the fact that he trusted in and served his God. This should not surprise us. John told us that Cain killed his brother Adam for no other reason than the fact that Abel's life was righteous (1 John 3:10). Where religion is hated, the reproach is proportionately more severe. As our society moves further and further away from God, the suffering on the part of God's people will increase. The language is such that it could most certainly speak of the Christ. Because He declared Himself the Son of God, He suffered reproach at the hands of the Pharisees.

**69:8:** *"a stranger unto my brethren...an alien unto my mother's children"* – A prophet is not without honor except among his own kinsmen and in his own country. These words could apply to both David and our Lord, for both found little comfort among family. We think it is significant that there is no reference to his "father's children," making the verse consistent with the prophecy of the virgin birth.

But the language could also apply to David in that he was "classified by the king as an outlaw, and the object of an all out hunt, as of a wild animal; and therefore David's brothers would have been mortally afraid either to help him or to be seen in his presence" (Coffman, 571). Barnes pointed out that the reference to "my mother's children" denotes the most intimate of family relations. "In families where a man had many wives, as was common among the Hebrews, the nearest relationship would be denoted by being of the same mother rather than of the same father" (Barnes).

*"I am become a stranger unto my brethren"* – It is ironic and tragic that Jesus "came unto his own, and they that were his own received

him not" (John 1:11). His chosen disciples fled at the arrest of the Lord and His own brothers in the flesh were of the opinion that Jesus was "beside himself" (Mark 3:21). Let us resolve to always be a "friend to Jesus."

**69:9:** *"zeal of thy house hath eaten me up"* – The zeal of David is easily seen in his lifelong ambition to serve God and maintain God's cause. But the words he wrote here spoke of One Who was the epitome of zeal, Jesus Christ our Lord. When Jesus cast out the money changers in the temple, the disciples recalled this passage (John 2:17). No one has ever come close to manifesting the degree of zeal as did Jesus. At a young age His zeal drove Him to the house of God to contend with and question the religious leaders of His day (Luke 2:49). He never compromised the truth, never ran from His enemies, never shied away from religious discussion, and never allowed the truth to suffer at the hands of false teachers. "His burning ardour, like the flame of a candle, fed on his strength and consumed it. His heart, like a sharp sword, cut through the scabbard. Some men are eaten up with lechery, others with covetousness, and a third class with pride, but the master-passion with our great leader was the glory of God, jealousy for his name, and love to the divine family" (Spurgeon). It is rather ironic that the more consumed a man becomes with the cause of the Lord, the more his enemies seek to do him harm.

*"the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen on me"* – The blaspheme once heaped upon God had now come upon David. But we see in the words of David a most fit representation of the vicarious suffering of our Lord. Isaiah viewed the suffering of our Savior and wrote, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). While Jesus was zealous of the Father's will, men were zealous for His death.

**69:10:** *"I wept...my soul with fasting"* – The words "and chastened," are supplied by the translators, both ASV and KJV. Literally the text reads, "And I wept (away) my soul with fasting." The idea is that he gave himself to so much fasting, accompanied with weeping, that his strength was completely exhausted. But such sorrow was to no avail, for his enemies observed that weeping and fasting, and heaped upon him further reproaches. Likely they accused him of being "overly religious," strict, and too serious. David was but a type of our Lord, and when Jesus came fasting, they reproached Him; when He came rejoicing, they called Him a "wine bibber." The more intense His

concern for the souls of men, and more earnest His prayers, the worse the reproach.

**69:11:** In becoming a "byword," he was the subject of jest, or of derision. They ridiculed David for his great faith and righteous character. The wicked treated our Savior with no less contempt. We can hardly imagine the wicked heart that would treat with contempt those who seek to offer up their devotion to God.

**69:12:** "*sit at the gate*" – The "gate" of a city was the place where business was transacted, a place of daily conversation, and frequently the place where courts were held. Those who gathered in these public places openly censured David.

"*song of drunkards*" – A drunkard will often make jest of things holy and high. There is little reverence on the part of a drunk man for one who is pious. David had become the object of ridicule by the town drunk. Is it not amazing that He Who would be worshipped by angels would be ridiculed by drunkards? We begin to get a glimpse of the disrespect David's enemies had for him, and the degree of hatred and disrespect rebellious Israel had for her King.

### **His call for help and deliverance, verses 13-18**

- 13 *But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Jehovah, in an acceptable time: O God, in the abundance of thy lovingkindness, Answer me in the truth of thy salvation.*
- 14 *Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.*
- 15 *Let not the waterflood overwhelm me, Neither let the deep shallow me up; And let not the pit shut its mouth upon me.*
- 16 *Answer me, O Jehovah; for thy lovingkindness is good: According to the multitude of thy tender mercies turn thou unto me.*
- 17 *And hide not thy face from thy servant; For I am in distress; answer me speedily.*
- 18 *Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: Ransom me because of mine enemies.*

**69:13:** "*But as for me*" – What a contrast. While David's enemies sought him harm, David sought refuge in God. While they talked ABOUT him, he talked TO God. He would not allow those things to

alter his course in life. Happy is the man who does not lose sight of his ultimate goal while others would seek to pull him off course.

*"In an acceptable time"* – No time for prayer can be more "acceptable" to God than when others are persecuting us because we are his friends. It should also be noted that opportunities often knock only once. On a number of occasions it is said that Jesus would have passed the disciples by, and had they not called on Him in the opportune moment, they might have missed the blessings God intended for them.

*"in thy abundance of thy lovingkindness...in the truth of thy salvation"* – David recognized two important truths when it comes to God's blessings for man. The first of these is God's lovingkindness and mercy. Man is not deserving of God's gracious love and kindness. But God in His mercy has extended His hand of help and turned His ear to our cry. The second is the realization that "truth" is the standard by which He will act. Man must, therefore, comply to God's revealed word and allow God's grace to instruct him in the paths of righteousness (Titus 2:11-14). God's answer is found in truth, not error. We are promised that truth will make us free (John 8:32-34).

**69:14:** There are a number of terms used by David to describe the terrible plight that he was in: *"The mire," "deep waters," "the waterflood"* (verses 15), *"the deep,"* and *"the pit."* The Psalmist was sinking; troubles encompassed him. He asked God to deliver him out of the mire, and from "them that hate me."

**69:15:** Words are heaped one upon the other to express the deep anguish of the author. If David was a type of our Lord, and his sufferings merely a mirror of our Lord's passion, how deep must have been the anguish of Jesus during His last few days upon this earth. While David was provided deliverance, the deepness of sin did in fact swallow up our Lord. But death was not permanent, and the pit was not allowed to shut its mouth upon our Lord, for His soul was not left unto Hades, and His body did not see corruption.

**69:16:** *"thy lovingkindness...thy tender mercies"* - What deep thoughts are stirred by this word "lovingkindness." We have a combination of two words ("loving" and "kindness"), both containing abundant consolation. But when combined absolutely overwhelm the mind and heart. David was evidently confident that God's help would be sufficient, for he leaves it in the hand of God that his

Heavenly Father would react “according to the multitude” of His “tender mercies.” Take note that David trusted in the “multitude” of tender “mercies” (plural). Though one crumb of God’s mercy and help far outweighs the threats of our enemy, David was confident that God would go beyond a single blessing and provide him with “multitudes.”

**69:17:** Jesus cried from the cross, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" He felt as if God had hidden His face, and indeed He had. When in distress and anguish of spirit, we do not want God to hide His face from us, but to look upon us with kindness, and that "speedily."

*"I am in distress"* - Literally, "there is trouble upon me." The case was one of urgent necessity. The Psalmist must have relief or he felt he would perish. Though it is not wrong to ask God for deliverance, we must not forget to pray and offer thanks in times of safety and peace as well.

**69:18:** *"Draw nigh"* – God is never far away from His saints. David’s prayer was a plea for immediate action. He may have *felt* God had distanced Himself at this precise moment, but we have no doubt that he was confident that God would come near with help at the needed moment.

*"Redeem it"* - If we will draw near to God, He will draw near to us. This He has promised. The price has been paid; all that remains is that we claim the promises by obedient faith.

**A Plea for deliverance from,  
and punishment of, the enemy  
Verses 19-36**

**The conduct of his adversaries, verses 19-21**

- 19 *Thou knowest my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor:  
Mine adversaries are all before thee.*
- 20 *Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness:  
And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; And for comforters, but I found none.*
- 21 *They gave me also gall for my food; And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*



This passage constitutes a prophetic picture of the agony and suffering of the Lord on the cross, with an allusion to verse 21 in all four Gospels (cf. Matt. 27:34, 48; Mark 15:23, 36; Luke 23:36; John 19:28-30).

**69:19:** *"Thou knowest my reproach"* – There may be times when it seems God is not aware of our plight. But the Psalmist was confident that God took notice. When Stephen was stoned, Luke tells us that Stephen saw "the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Yes, the Father and the Son are aware of the reproach heaped upon the saints by those who hate God.

*"Mine adversaries"* - The adversaries of our Lord were many. There was Judas with his treachery; Herod, cunning like a fox. Caiphas had his counsel, and Pilate his cowardly vacillation. The priests and scribes, the Jewish rulers, and the lawyers are all included. All of them will give answer and stand before the Almighty on that day when all shall give an account of their deeds to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**69:20:** *"Reproach hath broken my heart"* – There was no one to speak a comforting word to our Lord as He hung on the cross. Even the eternal Father hid His face. "Amongst ten thousand foes there was not one who was touched by the spectacle of his misery...His dearest ones had sought their own safety, and left their Lord alone. A sick man needs comforters, and a persecuted man needs sympathy; but our blessed Surety found neither on that dark and doleful night when the powers of darkness had their hour" (Spurgeon). Barnes noted, "Undeserved reproaches will be as likely to produce this result on a sensitive heart as any form of suffering; and there are thousands who are crushed to the earth by such reproaches" (Barnes).

**69:21:** *"They gave me also gall for my food"* - When he was in threat of perishing from hunger, "they not only refused to give me wholesome food, but they mocked my sufferings by giving me a bitter and poisonous herb for food, and vinegar for my drink" (Barnes). There are some who see nothing more than a "coincidence" between what occurred in David's situation and that of our Lord's crucifixion. Our opinion is that this passage was a prophetic glimpse of the suffering Savior on the cross. We know of no incident in David's life when someone gave him "gall" for his food.

## **A call for their punishment, verses 22-28**

- 22 *Let their table before them become a snare; And when they are in peace, let it become a trap.*  
23 *Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see; And make their loins continually to shake.*  
24 *Pour out thine indignation upon them, And let the fierceness of thine anger overtake them.*  
25 *Let their habitation be desolate; Let none dwell in their tents.*  
26 *For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; And they tell of the sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded.*  
27 *Add iniquity unto their iniquity; And let them not come into thy righteousness.*  
28 *Let them be blotted out of the book of life, And not be written with the righteous.*

Passages such as this give a great deal of problem to those who bubble over with such sweetness that they would cast God into the same mold as themselves. There are two sides of our God, one of longsuffering, patience, mercy and forgiveness, and the other of righteous indignation. God also demands justice, and He will punish evil doers. It is not inconsistent with a godly character, therefore, to expect the punishment of those who would seek to oppose God and His people. Much of this Psalm could as easily apply to David as the Lord. But the verses here are predictions of what should, and will, become of the unrighteous.

**69:22:** *"Let their table before them become a snare"* - The table is used for more than just eating. It is there that men often make their plans and calculate their evil deeds. The Psalmist was saying, "Let their own plans become a snare." Hamaan is one example of this very thing happening. Though he had gallows built upon which he would hang Mordecai, it was he and his sons who died thereon. "Those who despise the upper springs of grace, shall find the nether springs of worldly comfort prove their poison" (Spurgeon).

*"And when they are in peace, let it become a trap"* - The later portion of this verse is more difficult. The KJV reads, "and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap." If this rendering is correct, then the request was that even those things which had been intended for their good became a stumbling block to them. If we take the ASV then the request seems to be that as the enemy rested in the assumed peace that came from their

unrighteousness, even that peace would become a snare to them. The meaning of either is essentially the same.

Coffman has this note: "Up to this point in the Psalm, 'Christ and his passion have been foreshadowed'; but here the impassionate gulf between the Type and the Antitype, between David and Christ, begins to widen before us. Christ prayed for his enemies; David cursed his; Christ was not willing that any should perish, but here David actually prayed for his enemies to be blotted out of the Book of Life" (Coffman, 575).

**69:23:** *"Let their eyes be darkened"* - When men love darkness more than the light, even the light will blind them. God has so decreed in His wisdom that when men love the darkness that judicial blindness shall befall them. "Eyes which see no beauty in the Lord Jesus, but flash wrath upon him, may well grow more dim, till death spiritual leads them to death eternal" (Spurgeon).

**69:24:** *"Pour out their indignation upon them"* - Those who reject the light provided to them will suffer the wrath of God. It will be "poured out" upon them. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:6). To trifle with the anger of a holy, just, omnipotent, and infinite Being, is above all things to be dreaded. To have His holy indignation "poured out" upon us is too horrible to contemplate. It is, as Spurgeon noted, "inconceivably dreadful."

*"the fierceness of thine anger"* - Literally, "the burning of thy wrath." The Psalmist, no doubt, believed the enemies of God deserved such punishment. The Holy Spirit has warned us that "a man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified and unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28-29).

**69:25:** *"Let their habitation be desolate"* - Jesus used this verse to emphasize the desolate nature of the Temple which had once been the "dwelling place of God." When the Jews rejected the Son, their "house," the temple, was left desolate. God packed up and moved out!

We suggest that the words here have much deeper meaning than what may appear at first on the surface, and that the application is far reaching. When a marriage and family is not built upon God's word, their "house is left desolate." When my life is not grounded in Biblical truth, my "house is left desolate." When a nation runs head-long into sin and debauchery, their "house is left desolate." "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it" (Psalms 127:1).

**69:26:** The Psalmist was suffering affliction. He needed sympathy from others, but instead he received reproaches, persecution, and ridicule. "There was a disposition to take advantage of the fact that he was suffering at the hand of God, to increase his sorrows in all ways in which they could do it" (Barnes).

*"And they tell of the sorrow of those whom thou hast wounded"* – The KJV reads, "they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded." The idea seems to be that these enemies of the writer speak words that add to his sorrow. It may be that they were claiming that the affliction is the punishment of some crime that the suffering individual had committed. When our Lord hung on the cross those about Him taunted Him. Wounded for our transgression, chastised for us, and smitten of God in our behalf (Isaiah 53:4-5), He had to endure as well the taunts and jeers of those who stood at the foot of the cross.

**69:27:** *"Add iniquity unto their iniquity"* - Literally, "Give iniquity upon their iniquity." There are a number of interpretations that have been set forth by respectable commentators. Barnes, quoting Luther, set forth one view.

Luther understands this as a prayer that 'sin may be made a punishment for sin;' that is, that they may, as a punishment for their former sins, be left to commit still more aggravated, crimes, and thus draw on themselves severer punishment (Barnes).

This particular view finds support in passages like Romans 1:28. Another view was also set forth by Barnes thus:

There is an allusion here to the double sense of the equivocal term rendered 'iniquity' - '*avon*' - which properly denotes a sin as such, or in itself considered, but which sometimes seems to denote sin in its consequences or effects. Thus understood, it is a prayer that

God would add, or give, to their sin that which sin deserved; or, in other words, that he would punish it as it deserved (Barnes).

A careful study of Romans 1:18 ff suggests that God permits men to plunge themselves into the depths of sin. He does not restrain them once they choose to turn their back on the Creator. Three times in that chapter it is noted "God gave them up." "For men to be let alone to fill up the measure of their iniquity, is most equitable, but yet most awful" (Spurgeon). But God has seen fit in His judicial hardening of the hearts of men to allow sin and iniquity to harden even further. If men are bent on unrighteousness, then God will now only allow them to pursue that course, but will with their rebellion, allow them to become even more hardened in sin. Here is one reason why men should flee from sin at its very sight. It has within its bosom the ability to draw us away from God. An unknown poet put it this way:

He that will not when he may,  
When he would he shall have nay.

In the final analysis, "Those who choose evil shall have their choice. Men who hate divine mercy shall not have it forced upon them, but shall be left to themselves to aggravate their guilt, and ensure their doom" (Spurgeon).

**69:28:** "*Let them be blotted out of the book of life*" - From this verse we learn (1) that God keeps a "book"; (2) that it is a book pertaining to "life"; (3) that names are "written" therein; (4) that the wicked shall have their names "blotted out" of that book; (5) that there is now, and shall forever be, a separation of the righteous and wicked. See also passages such as Exodus 32:32, 33; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27. In view of such passages, we simply cannot agree with Barnes that "the language has no reference to the future world; it is not a prayer that they should not be saved" (Barnes).

### **His commitment to praise in view of anticipated deliverance, verses 29-36**

At this point in the Psalm the imprecations cease, the complaints end, and the remainder of the song takes on a mild note in which the Psalmist offers thanksgiving and praise for anticipated deliverance.

Here David longed to live on a higher plane than that which had been provided by the reciprocal hatred that brought only sorrow to his broken heart. Instinctively, this great Old Testament saint

recognized that Divine help alone could benefit him; and here he did what all men should do, he prayed for God's help. To live on that higher plane all of us desperately need the assistance of the Eternal God (Coffman, page 576).

**68:29:** *"Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high"* - God will bless the humble, but from the proud He will turn away His face. It is far greater to be "set up on high" in God's estimation than man's. Our Lord humbled Himself and was obedient, even unto the death on the cross, and He was exalted by God to a position of honor and power. As it was with our Lord, so shall it be with us. Let us not fear or fret because of our trials and tribulations. We shall be made to sit with Christ in the heavenly places.

**69:30:** *"I will praise...magnify him with thanksgiving"* - Even while suffering persecution, our Lord could look beyond the moment to the glory that would be His, and sing the song of thanksgiving. "In us also, faith foresees the happy issue of all affliction, and makes us even now begin the music of gratitude which shall go on forever increasing in volume, world without end" (Spurgeon). Matthew Henry had this discerning note:

This is a plain intimation that in the days of the Messiah an end should be put, not only to the sacrifices of atonement, but to those of praise and acknowledgment which were instituted by the ceremonial law; and, instead of them, spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are accepted — the calves of our lips, not the calves of the stall, Heb. 13:15. It is a great comfort to us that humble and thankful praises are more pleasing to God than the most costly pompous sacrifices are or ever were (Henry).

**69:31:** *"It will please Jehovah better"* - The song of the heart is far greater than the sacrifice upon the altar. Barnes noted that "the original here is, 'horning and hoofing;' that is, an ox whose horns were fully grown, and whose hoofs were compact and solid; a perfect animal in its kind, offered whole on the altar" (Barnes). The Psalmist was saying that the offering of a contrite heart is more acceptable to the Lord than the best sacrifice without it. This expresses a sentiment that is common in the scripture (cf. Psalms 51:16-17; 1 Sam. 15:22).

**69:32:** The key words here are "seek" and "live." The former is a pre-requisite, and the later is the attached blessing. "Here the psalmist feels that the most amazing fact of experience is not

distress, frustration, conflict, misunderstanding, retribution, or even death itself; it is that, *the Lord hears the needy*" (Coffman, page 578). The encouraging thing about this verse is the comfort it provides for those who find themselves in the same situation as that of the Psalmist. The poor, the needy, the oppressed would become acquainted with what had been done on behalf of the Psalmist and would thus take courage and be strengthened.

**69:33:** "*Jehovah heareth the needy*" – God is aware of those in circumstances of distress. The Hebrew word here translated "needy" (*ebyonim*) refers to a beggar. The Psalmist may be referring to the captives, many of whom were reduced to the most abject state of poverty, even to the point of begging bread from their heathen oppressors.

**69:34:** "*Let heaven and earth praise him*" – Here is a call for universal praise. The language is exaggerated, or hyperbolic.

**69:35:** The Psalmist was confident that God would protect and defend them. Whatever trouble they might face, God would not forsake His people but would interpose in their behalf. In the spiritual sense it is only Zion that God will save. Let men be sure that they are within the "cities of Judah," the church, and then let them abide therein.

**69:36:** "*The seed also of his servants shall inherit it*" – The New Testament equivalent of this verse is found in Galatians 3:29: "And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."

*"And they that love his name shall dwell therein"* – There is little doubt that the Psalmist was speaking of that eternal home that awaits every faithful child of God. "Thus a Psalm, which began in the deep waters, ends in the city which hath foundations. How gracious is the change" (Spurgeon).

## ***Lessons***

1. First, this Psalm teaches us that persecution shall be the unfortunate lot of those who seek to serve God in true faith and devotion. If David, the "man after God's own heart" could not escape it, if the apostles could not escape it, if the early church could not escape it, what makes us think we can do any better?

Those that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

2. Second, in times of persecution by our enemies, we should not seek to ESCAPE the persecution (through cowardice, compromise, etc.), but rather ask for Divine grace and help to ENDURE the persecution.
3. Third, it should be noted that zeal is the heat that keeps the fire burning. Jesus is nauseated with lukewarmness (Rev. 3:16).
4. Fourth, there is an opportune time to find God and to enjoy His blessings. The “acceptable time” (verse 13) is that time acceptable to Him. By human judgments there will never be a “good time” to come to the Lord, for there will always be something more important looming on the horizon. Let us learn to arrange OUR schedule to HIS schedule and we will be the better for it.



## *“Jehovah The Deliverer”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is attributed to David in the subscript. The occasion cannot now be determined other than the fact that it was designed to "bring to remembrance" some particular fact relative to the author's life. This Psalm resembles Psalm 40:13-17. The one is essentially the same as the other, with slight variations. Rawlinson concluded that "the psalm is a detached fragment of Ps. xl., separated probably for liturgical purposes" (Rawlinson, 8:2:58). Lockyer combined Psalms 70 and 71, and summed up the two Psalms thusly:

Taking the Psalms together, we can trace three thoughts: a desperate cry for immediate help in time distress; a fervent desire for God to exercise Himself speedily on behalf of His distressed servants; and the spirit of praise for His manifest and manifold deliverances (Lockyer, 132-133).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm is easily outlined. First, the Psalmist prays for a speedy deliverance (verse 1). It would appear that the enemy was engaged in cruel persecution and mockery. Lest he be overcome, the writer pleads for deliverance. Second, he prays that God would confound those who sought his destruction and who delighted in his hurt (verses 2-3). Third, he prays for those who truly seek God, that they may rejoice and be glad (verse 4). Finally, he asks for speedy delivery (verse 5). We will follow Roy Deaver's outline (Deaver, 241) for our study:

- I. Appeal, verse 1;
- II. Enemies, verses 2-3;
- III. Righteous, verse 4;
- IV. Self, verse 5.

## **Commentary**

### ***Appeal*** **Verse 1**

*1 Make haste, O God, to deliver me; Make haste to help me, O Jehovah.*

**70:1:** The words "*make haste*" are supplied by the translator. The Hebrew reads, "O God, to deliver me," giving the impression that the Psalm is fragmentary, stressing only the bare necessities in the writer's appeal unto God. The word translated "God," is 'Elohim.' It is proper, and acceptable in the sight of God, to cry unto Him during times of distress and danger. We must be careful, however, that we do not perceive of prayer as some sort of talisman and then fail to pray during times of peace as well.

### ***Enemies*** **Verses 2-3**

*2 Let them be put to shame and confounded That seek after my soul: Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonor That delight in my hurt.*  
*3 Let them be turned back by reason of their shame That say, Aha, aha.*

**70:2:** This verse reads essentially the same as Psalms 40:14 with the exception that the word "together" is omitted here. The Psalmist desired that God's enemies be put to shame; that they be "confounded." David's enemies sought to turn him away from the right road, but it would be God Who would do the turning, and drive them backward unto dishonor.

*"that delight in my hurt"* – It is difficult to image anyone deriving pleasure from the hurt of another. This gives us some insight into the character of those who sought to destroy David and take his throne from him.

**70:3:** *"Let them be turned back"* - The idea seems to be that the Psalmist wanted them to be forced into retreat; that they be so ashamed of their foolish plans and schemes that they turn away from persecuting the writer. The writer uses a milder term than that in Psalm 40 where he asks, "Let them be desolate." There is little

difference in the actual meaning. Malice controlled the hearts and ambitions of these ruthless enemies of David. They would soon learn, however, that it would not be David who would be “turned back,” but rather themselves. Practical experience has proven to us that God still turns the enemies of His people back from their wicked aims. In 1994 we participated in a small campaign to Poltava, Ukraine. The authorities sought to forbid our preaching and teaching, eventually succeeding in deporting us from that country in early 1996. But before the turn of the century those very men who sought our defeat were removed from their offices, and leaders more favorable to the Lord’s church took their place. Coincidence? Hardly! We prefer to believe it was God turning back the enemies of the cross.

***Righteous***  
***Verse 4***

*4 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee; And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.*

**70:4:** This verse describes the righteous. The providential care that God shows to His children should cause spontaneous joy and praise. We rejoice because of the deliverance that God gives us. The glory belongs to God, not to man. But it should be noted that rejoicing and gladness come to those who seek God. This calls for a diligent effort to learn the will of God, and then make proper application to our life.

*“Let God be magnified”* – God shall be lifted up. Every knee shall bow. His will shall be done. The encouragement of the writer that “such as love thy salvation” say, “Let God be magnified,” is an exhortation that we lead the way in submitting to His divine will, and by that means magnifying God in the eyes of those who are watching. When the enemies were overthrown, God was magnified. When we submit to God’s will, He is magnified in our lives. When men observe our moral integrity, God is magnified. When our neighbors see us attend services, God is magnified. When we give our best to those for whom we work, when we are honest in our business dealings with others, when our lives manifest and declare our faith in God, then He is magnified. No wonder the Psalmist would encourage us to say, “Let God be magnified.” Dear reader, does your life magnify the God of heaven? Do men see Christ living in you?

## ***Self***

### ***Verse 5***

*5 But I am poor and needy; Make haste unto me, O God: Thou art my help and my deliverer; O Jehovah, make no tarrying.*

**70:5:** “*But I am poor and needy*” – Without God’s assistance, we are but poor and needy. “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3). The poor in spirit recognize their complete dependence upon God for guidance and care. Without Him they are destitute. Realization that he was “poor and needy” caused him to declare that God was his help and deliverer. The writer did not depend upon his weapons, nor his skill, but upon the power of God to deliver. No wonder he asked, “*Jehovah, make no tarrying.*” The need for help was urgent. The enemy may have been on the very verge of overwhelming the Psalmist. But in spite of the enemy’s apparent strength, the writer still had absolute faith in God. As the Psalm began, so it ends, with a plea that God not tarry in providing deliverance.

### ***Lessons***

1. First, mark the cry for HELP! God seemed to delay. As the peril increased, the cry became more urgent. When our need is the greatest and the more urgent, we may be tempted to think that God does not hear. It is then that we should pray the more earnestly that God might help us in our time of distress.
2. Second, notice the response that would come as a result of David’s prayer of faith: (1) The enemies would be confounded, put to shame. (2) The victory is assured, in that those that seek God are told to rejoice. The prayer of faith asks, nothing doubting, and believing that God will indeed provide needed blessing. We have no doubt that David was fully confident that God would confound the enemies and that all those who were seeking God would find rest and relief.
3. Third, the Psalm is practical and relevant for every generation:

Then here is a psalm for such days or hours. Let us take it and use it, knowing that He would far rather have in our song an expression of an honest questioning than any affection of a confidence not possessed. Moreover, He would rather have from us such a song than silence (Morgan, 247).

## *“A Psalm of Sunset”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is without a subtitle. We do not know who the author is, although it is regarded as being Davidic by a number of commentators. Some have concluded that David wrote the Psalm in his old age while still besought by his enemies and near death. Coffman had this convincing note:

No less than twenty-three lines in this Psalm are taken from other Psalms of David; and it is much more reasonable to suppose that such a phenomenon was a product of David's remembering words and phrases he had previously used, than it is to suppose that Jeremiah, or some other alleged minstrel, was so familiar with the Psalms from his constant reading of them, that he would automatically substitute the words of David for his own vocabulary (Coffman, 584).

The occasion is not known. It falls into the class of Psalms that refer to the trials of the righteous. It was composed when old age was drawing near and in view of the trials and the blessings of life as considered from the contemplation of its approaching close. "This psalm is one of the most valuable portions of the Bible to a certain class of mankind, and may be to any of the living, as suggesting the proper reflections of a good man as the infirmities of age draw on, and as he reviews the mercies and the trials of the past" (Barnes).

### ***Analysis***

Of the Psalm G.Campbell Morgan says, "This is pre-eminently a song of the aged, and like old age, it is reminiscent. The singer passes from memory to hope, and from experience to praise" (Morgan, 247). This Psalm is a description of struggling but unstaggering faith.

There are any number of good outlines on this Psalm. Here are just a few.

The prophet, in confidence, prays for God's favor, vv. 1-5; recounts God's kindness to him from youth to old age, vv. 6-9; shows what his adversaries plot against him, and prays for their confusion, vv. 10-13; promises fidelity, and determines to be a diligent preacher of righteousness even in old age, vv. 14-19; takes encouragement in God's mercy, and foresees the confusion of all his adversaries, vv. 20-24 (Clarke).

- I. Refuge, 1-3;
- II. Hope, 4-6;
- III. Fellowship, 7-11;
- IV. Promise, 12-16;
- V. Time, 17-19a;
- VI. Confidence, 19b-21;
- VII. Victory, 22-24 (Deaver, 241).

- I. A prayer for deliverance from troubles and from wicked men, 1-4;
- II. An acknowledgment of God's goodness in early life, 5-8;
- III. A prayer that God would still preserve him as old age came on, and that he would still be useful to that generation and the next, 9-18;
- IV. A confident expectation that his prayer would be answered, 19-21;
- V. Praise offered in behalf of God's blessings, past and future, 22-24 (Barnes)

Finally, the Nelson Study Bible:

The structure of the psalm is as follows: (1) a confession of the psalmist's resolute trust in God (vv. 1-3); (2) petitions for God to deliver the psalmist from trouble (vv. 4-6); (3) a determination to praise God even in the midst of trouble (vv. 7, 8); (4) petitions for deliverance (vv. 9-11); (5) a call for judgment on the psalmist's enemies (vv. 12, 13); (6) a commitment to trust and praise God (vv. 14-16); (7) a renewal of the psalmist's petitions based on his experience of God's faithfulness (vv. 17, 18); (8) a renewal of trust in God (vv. 19-21); (9) a determination to praise God (vv. 22-24) (Nelson's Study Bible).

We will use the following outline:

- Prayer** concerning his enemies, verses 1-4;
- Acknowledgement**, verses 5-8;
- Prayer** concerning old age, verses 9-18;
- Confidence**, verses 19-21;
- Praise**, verses 22-24.

## **Commentary**

### **Prayer Verses 1-4**

- 1 *In thee, O Jehovah, do I take refuge: Let me never be put to shame.*
- 2 *Deliver me in thy righteousness, and rescue me: Bow down thine ear unto me, and save me.*
- 3 *Be thou to me a rock of habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: Thou hast given commandment to save me; For thou art my rock and my fortress.*
- 4 *Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.*

In these verses the Psalmist...

- (1) Declares his trust in God (1a);
- (2) Asks not to be put to shame (1b);
- (3) Petitions the Lord for:
  - A. Deliverance (2);
  - B. Means of escape (2);
  - C. Salvation (2);
  - D. That God be his rock of refuge (3a);
  - E. Deliverance from the wicked, unrighteous, and cruel man (4);

**71:1:** The Psalmist was asking that there be no cause to be ashamed that he had put his trust in God. Past experience had proven that God would deliver; the writer simply seeks the same kind of blessings to continue.

*"In thee, O Jehovah, do I take refuge"* - The KJV reads "do I put my trust." It was not in men, nor himself, but in Jehovah that the Psalmist placed his trust and confidence. We can do no less.

*"Let me never be put to shame"* - That is, let my confidence and trust in Thee never produce occasion wherein I should be ashamed of having sought Thee for my refuge. It is comforting to know that God will never abandon us. The prayer of David had been answered, not only for his sake, but for the sake of his seed. "Not only on God must we rest, as a man stands on a rock, but in him must we trust, as a man hides in a cave. The more intimate we are with the Lord, the firmer will our trust be" (Spurgeon).

**71:2:** *"Deliver me in thy righteousness, and rescue me"* - The deliverance granted to the writer would, in fact, demonstrate the righteousness of God. For God to rescue him from the troubles that presently were upon him would be a manifestation of God's righteousness.

*"bow down thine ear unto me, and save me"* - The desire for God to "bow down thine ear" does not mean that it was necessary for God to bend over, or in some way draw closer physically. It is poetic language expressing desire that God listen to, and grant the psalmist's request. "Like one wounded and left for dead by mine enemies, I need that thou bend over me and bind up my wounds" (Spurgeon).

There is a striking similarity between these first three verses and Psalms 31:1-2.

**71:3:** *"Be thou to me a rock of habitation,"* is rendered "Be thou my strong habitation" in the KJV. The "rock of habitation" has reference to some place where the Psalmist might make his safe abode. Of interest is the fact that the writer believed that the only true place of safety is a right relationship with God.

*"I may continually resort."* - No matter the circumstance or the danger, the child of God may find refuge in God, and protection from the ravages of life that might threaten. Indeed, "Fast shut is this castle against all adversaries, its gates they cannot burst open; the drawbridge is up, the portcullis is down, the bars are fast in their places; but, there is a secret door, by which friends of the great Lord can enter at all hours of the day or night, as often as they ever please" (Spurgeon).

*"Thou hast given commandment to save me"* - The reference may have been to some promise made to the people of God in general. God protects us, and His command has gone forth so that "destruction cannot destroy us, famine cannot starve us; but we laugh at both while God's mandate shields us" (Spurgeon). The Lord promised, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20).

*"for thou art my rock and my fortress"* - Notice that David uses the personal pronoun "my." Blessed is the man who can make such a



statement. David's intimate relationship with Jehovah enabled him to claim the promises offered. Reader, can you confidently say that God is your fortress?

There is a great joy in knowing that we can draw near to God. Consider this quote:

There is a door, and we have the key. No sentinel keeps us back; the dwelling is our own: and who dares to forbid us all its accommodations and contents? Kings, however disposed, cannot be always approachable. Owing to the multitude of their claims, and the limitation of their powers, and the importance of keeping up a sense of their dignity, they are only accessible at certain times, and with stately formalities. But the King of kings allows us to come boldly to the throne of grace; and enjoins us in every thing, by prayer and supplication, to make our requests unto him. We cannot be too importunate, or by our continual coming weary him (William Jay, quoted by Spurgeon)

**71:4:** *"Rescue me, O my God"* - The prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:16-17). "He who addresses such a prayer as this to heaven, does more injury to his enemies than if he had turned a battery of armstrongs upon them" (Spurgeon).

*"hand of the unrighteous and cruel man"* – It is not certain who this "cruel man" is. Saul, Absalom, or any other enemy of David would fit the description. The Hebrew word here translated "hand" actually refers to the palm. Notice the progression from "unrighteous" to "cruel." Those who turn away from God are not long in their mistreatment of their fellow man. "The "cruel man" is literally the leavened man, leavened with hatred of truth and enmity to God; and, therefore, a violent oppressor of God's people. In 1 Corinthians 5:8 we are cautioned against the "leaven" of malice and wickedness, which, in accordance with the figure, may pervade the whole natural character of an ungodly man, his faculties and affections. The language here is typical of David and lends support to our conclusion that the Psalm is Davidic.

### **An acknowledgment of God's goodness in early life Verses 5-8**

5 *For thou art my hope, O Lord Jehovah: Thou art my trust from my youth.*

- 6 *By thee have I been holden up from the womb; Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: My praise shall be continually of thee.*
- 7 *I am as a wonder unto many; But thou art my strong refuge.*
- 8 *My mouth shall be filled with thy praise, And with thy honor all the day.*

The Psalmist (1) acknowledges that God is his hope and that from his early youth, verse 5; (2) acknowledges that God has supported him from the womb, verse 6; (3) acknowledges that God is his strong refuge, verse 7; (4) seeks to praise and honor God, verse 8.

**71:5:** God is called the "hope of Israel" (Jeremiah 17:13). In view of the fact that God cannot lie, it is reasonable to conclude that our God is a stable hope, and that we may expect to see our confidence in Him fulfilled. Dr. Carl Menninger has said, "Hope is not a sentiment, but a medicine needed for the healing of the mind. In dealing with people, if you can give them hope, however small it may be, they begin to mend" (from the author's file on Hope, source not available). The late B.C. Goodpasture wrote:

In the hour of bleak adversity, hope holds forth the heartening prospect of something better later on. It is hope that gives wealth to the beggar in quest of alms; victory to those in the dust and ashes of defeat; freedom to the galley slave chained to his oar; release to the prisoner in his cell; health to the sick upon whose faded cheek has settled the hectic flush of death. It is hope that saves the Christian when the bitter night of utter helplessness settles over him. It is hope that brings to him the promise of life in the presence of death. It happens to the humblest saint that 'in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love hears the rustle of a wing.' It is hope that enables the believer to say 'Tomorrow' in response to earth's last 'Good night.' It is hope that makes death a 'narrow starlit strip between the separation of yesterday and the fond reunion of tomorrow' (B.C. Goodpasture, Gospel Advocate, February 21, 1980, page 100).

The Greek word translated "hope" is sometimes translated "expectation." For what do we hope? What are some of the identifying marks of this hope?

- It is a PURIFYING HOPE, 1 John 3:3;
- It is a SHAMELESS HOPE, Romans 5:4-5;
- It is a PATIENT HOPE, Romans 8:25;

- It is the ANCHOR OF THE SOUL, Hebrews 6:18-19;
- It is a LIVING HOPE, 1 Peter 1:3;
- It is a HOPE WORTH DEFENDING, 1 Peter 3:15.

*"thou art my trust from my youth"* - What a wonderful thing to be able to proclaim that God has been one's trust from his very youth. Solomon wrote, "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecc 12:1). Blessed is the man who can say that God has been his trust from his very youth.

An ingenuous master will not turn off a superannuated servant. When the proconsul bade Polycarp deny Christ and swear by the emperor, he answered: 'I have served Christ these eighty-six years, and he hath not once injured me, and shall I now deny him?' Jacob could say: 'God hath fed me all my life long unto this day; he hath been kind to me all my days, and I trust he will look to me even to the end; and shall I now turn my back on him?' Whither can I go to mend myself for a master? 'Thou only hast the words of eternal life.' He that hath been the stay of my youth, will be the staff of my age. I dare venture my soul upon his promise who hath hitherto maintained me by his providence (Spurgeon)

**71:6:** *"By thee have I been holden up from the womb"* - This is another way of expressing the same sentiment in verse 5. Not merely from youth, but from EARLY youth, even the womb. The Calvinists squirm at verses such as this.

*"my praise shall be continually of thee"* - Or, "my praise shall ascend to thee continually." When God is good to us praise should naturally follow.

**71:7:** *"I am as a wonder unto many"* - The word here translated 'wonder' means "properly a miracle; a prodigy; then things that are fitted to excite wonder or admiration; then, a sign, a token" (Barnes). The meaning is that God's dealings with him were such as to produce a sense of "wonder" or astonishment in the minds of those who were acquainted with the Psalmist. This may have occurred as a result of either (1) the number of calamities that the writer had suffered, or (2) the number of occasions in which God intervened in his behalf. And though some may consider the author's "string of luck" as nothing more than fortunate circumstance, the Psalmist is quick to admit, *"thou art my strong refuge."* Charles Spurgeon commented: "The believer is a riddle, an enigma puzzling the unspiritual; he is a monster warring with those delights of the flesh, which are the all in

all of other men; he is a prodigy, unaccountable to the judgments of ungodly men; a wonder gazed at, feared, and, by-and-by, contemptuously derided. Few understand us, and many are surprised at us" (Spurgeon). The Hebrew word translated "wonder" denotes anything uncommon, and wonderful, and admits a double meaning. Some interpreters are of opinion that it should be taken in the most favorable sense, and that the Psalmist represents himself as considered, by the many, as a prodigy of God's goodness. Coffman agrees, and wrote: "The general significance is 'something that clearly shows that God is at work.' How remarkable is it that a shepherd boy should have become King of Israel? Then there was that encounter with the Giant Goliath of Gath. In one of the most astounding actions of human history, that unarmed shepherd boy slew the mighty champion of the Philistines in full armor! Yes, indeed, God was at work in the life of David" (Coffman, page 585-586).

**71:8:** *"My mouth shall be filled with thy praise"* - This is a promise FROM the Psalmist to God, a consequence of God's gracious outpouring of grace and mercy. God continually cares for us; it is only proper that we should continually praise His name. This leaves no room for complaint, murmuring or doubt on our part.

**A prayer that God would still preserve him as old age came on, and that he would still be useful to that generation and the next**  
**Verses 9-18**

- 9 *Cast me not off in the time of old age; Forsake me not when my strength faileth.*
- 10 *For mine enemies speak concerning me; And they that watch for my soul take counsel together,*
- 11 *Saying, God hath forsaken him: Pursue and take him; For there is none to deliver.*
- 12 *O God, be not far from me; O my God, make haste to help me.*
- 13 *Let them be put to shame and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; Let them be covered with reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt.*
- 14 *But I will hope continually, And will praise thee yet more and more.*
- 15 *My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness, And of thy salvation all the day; For I know not the numbers thereof.*

- 16 *I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord Jehovah: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.*
- 17 *O God, thou hast taught me from my youth; And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.*
- 18 *Yea, even when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not, Until I have declared thy strength unto the next generation, Thy might to every one that is to come.*

In these verses the Psalmist points out...

- (1) That he would not be cast off in old age or when his strength failed (verse 9);
- (2) That his enemies had taken council against him (verses 10- 11);
- (3) That God would draw near unto him and help him (verse 12);
- (4) That his enemies would be confounded and consumed (verse 13);
- (5) That he would praise God more and more (verses 14-16);
- (6) That God had taught him from his youth (verse 17);
- (7) That he desired to show forth God's strength to this generation and the next (verse 18).

**71:9:** Old age may rob us of our strength and beauty, but God will never forsake us. It is natural for us to have feelings of dread when it comes to growing older. But even though the outward man decays, the inner man is renewed and our strength from the Father helps us face the sunset years of life with a sense of faith and confidence that God will NOT cast us off "in the time of old age....when my strength faileth." "A man can lay up nothing better for the infirmities of old age than the favour of God sought, by earnest prayer, in the days of his youth and his maturer years" (Barnes). John Wesley said, "What I would be afraid of if I took any thought for tomorrow, is that my body might weigh down my mind, and create either stubbornness through the decrease of my understanding, or peevishness by the increase of bodily infirmities; but "Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord, my God"" (quoted by Coffman, 587).

**71:10-11:** The enemy of David was malicious, plotting together as to how they might destroy him. They had assumed that "God hath forsaken him" (verse 11), and took counsel so as to "pursue and take him." Cf. 2 Samuel 17:1-4. Thinking God no longer protected him, they must have thought that they were safe in their plans, and justified in their attempts. Thinking he had been abandoned by God he would therefore be an easy prey.

**71:12:** *"O God, be not far from me"* - With God close by, we can be confident and comforted, like a child in the dark comforted by the presence of his father.

*"Make haste to help me"* is characteristic of the writings of David. Cf. Psalms 38:22, 40:13, and 70:2.

**71:13:** *"Let them be put to shame and consumed"* - The idea is that he desired that his enemies be so overcome that they were ashamed that they ever made any effort to destroy the Psalmist. His desire was that they be "covered with reproach and dishonor." Pharaoh is a good example of one who sought to destroy God's people, only to have God destroy him and bring him to utter shame and dishonor. How different it might have been if he had submitted.

**71:14:** The idea is that he would continue to cherish hope despite the threats from his enemies. "I will trust in God whatever may be the number, the power, and the confidence of my enemies" (Barnes). The Hebrew writer described our hope as an anchor of the soul (Hebrews 6:19). The dual significance of this verse is the hope that the Psalmist had in spite of all the trouble that had come upon him, and the determination that he would praise God even more and more than before. Men cannot rob us of hope. They may persecute God's church, they may lie in wait to destroy, they may ridicule, but they cannot remove our hope. In spite of the persecution, the Christian, standing firm upon that hope as an anchor of the soul, ever increases in his service and praise to God. "What a marvelous answer is this to the inevitable encroachments upon life of age and infirmity. It is not a time for slowing down in the pursuit of holiness; it is not a time for slackening zeal in our faithfulness to Christ and his Church. Indeed, No! It is time for trusting God, 'more and more.' It is time for greater fidelity, more loving devotion, and 'more and more' constancy in our adherence to the 'Faith once for all delivered to the saints'" (Coffman, 588).

**71:15:** The two things of which the Psalmist would speak were (1) the righteousness of God, and (2) the salvation that is offered to men. The "righteousness of God" has reference to the righteous character of God, and "salvation" is that of the Psalmist.

*"For I know not the numbers thereof"* - David knew his enemies, and likely knew the strength of their number. But when it came to God's mercies, and His providential help, David declared that he did not

know the number thereof. Who can count the blessings received at the hand of God? All taken into consideration, we cannot begin to number or enumerate the whole of God's graciousness unto us.

**71:16:** *"I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord Jehovah"* -- Literally, "I will come with the mighty deeds [more literally, *strengths*] of the Lord God" (Barnes). The Hebrew is used in other passages to denote the mighty ACTS of God. See for example Deuteronomy 3:24, Psalms 106:2, Job 26:14. The idea is that he would go forth in the strength of God, relying on no other, and making mention of no other. "Old age, trials, difficulties, arduous duties, were before him; and in all these he would rely on no other strength but that of the Almighty" (Barnes).

*"thy righteousness...thine only"* - The only righteousness that we may claim is the righteousness of God that is found in Christ. Paul wrote, "Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death" (Phil. 3:8-10). Let our only claim to righteousness be in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**71:17:** Coffman has this discerning note on verses 17-19:

There is a dramatic shift to the past tense, thence to the present, and again into the future. The Psalmist makes a triple argument as the grounds upon which he pleads for God's help. (1) Serving God is no new thing to David; (2) The infirmities of age are encroaching upon him and there is therefore a special need; (3) The Psalmist is not thinking merely of himself but of the coming generation who are in desperate need of instruction in the truth (Coffman, 589-590).

*"taught me from my youth"* - The man taught from his youth is more likely to remain faithful in the later years of life. David's earthly father taught him well, and instilled in him a faith that in later years was capable of withstanding the most severe trials and tribulations of life.

*"And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works"* - He evidently did this by his writings, his public example, and by defending and

maintaining the truth. God's works are "wondrous" in that they are so designed as to attract attention and lead the observer to faith.

**71:18:** *"Even when I am old and grayheaded"* - Literally the Hebrew reads, "And also unto old age and grey hairs, do not forsake me" (Barnes). David's youth was past. He was cognizant of approaching old age. His prayer was that just as God had blessed and protected him in his youth that he do likewise in his old age. "There is something touching in the sight of hair whitened with the snows of many a winter: the old and faithful soldier receives consideration from his king, the venerable servant is beloved by his master. When our infirmities multiply, we may, with confidence, expect enlarged privileges in the world of grace, to make up for our narrowing range in the field of nature" (Spurgeon). Quoting Wilson Jones, Coffman had this remark:

Among sensitive men and women of high culture and Christian feeling, there is a beautiful sacredness about the "hoary head," that wins for the aged abundant honor and care; but even under the most favorable and sympathetic circumstances the infirmities and incapacities of age are among the very saddest things that can happen to the human pilgrim; and in situations where Christian care are not available, the wretched misery of the aged is pitiful beyond description (Coffman, 589-590).

*"Until I have declared thy strength"* - That God be with him until he has completed the task of teaching the next generation the wonderful things about God's power and might.

*"thy strength unto the next generation, Thy might to every one"* - It is the responsibility of every generation to declare the truths of God's word to those who will follow. "Thou therefore, my child, be strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:1-2). Let us never be slack in telling those who will follow in our steps of God's strength and might. Interestingly, David continues to teach generations far beyond his time, even into the Christian dispensation, the wonderful power of God, and His providential care over us even as we near the end of our journey.



**A confident expectation that his prayer would be  
answered, Verses 19-21**

19 *Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high; Thou who hast done great things, O God, who is like unto thee?*

20 *Thou, who hast showed us many and sore troubles, Wilt quicken us again, And wilt bring us up again from the depths of the earth.*

21 *Increase thou my greatness, And turn again and comfort me.*

Here the Psalmist...

(1) Points out God's incomparable greatness (verse 19);

(2) Acknowledges God's care for him (verse 20);

(3) Expresses his faith God would continue to care for him, verse 21).

**71:19:** "*thy righteousness...is very high*" - That is, God's righteousness is sublime, unsearchable, exalted and glorious. In addition, "His plan of righteousness uplifts men from the gates of hell to the mansions of heaven. It is a high-doctrine gospel, gives a high experience, leads to high practice, and ends in high felicity" (Spurgeon).

*"Thou who hast done great things, O God, who is like unto thee?"* - Who can even compare with our God? The accomplishments of men do not even begin to compare with the mighty works of our God. Consider His wonderful power manifested in the creation. And what shall we say about His providence, His wonderful scheme of redemption, or the coming of Jesus in human likeness to show us how to live, and for what to live?

Adoration is a fit frame of mind for the believer. When he draws near to God, he enters into a region where everything is surpassingly sublime; miracles of love abound on every hand, and marvels of mingled justice and grace. A traveller among the high Alps often feels overwhelmed with awe, amid their amazing sublimities; much more is this the case when we survey the heights and depths of the mercy and holiness of the Lord (Spurgeon).

**71:20:** As God has demonstrated His power in the past by delivering them from "*sore troubles*," so the Almighty would "*quicken us again*," and provide deliverance "*from the depths of the earth*." By changing from the singular to the plural here, the writer "connects himself with his friends and followers, meaning that he had suffered with them and through them" (Barnes). No only had he suffered

individually, he had suffered because of the trials that had come upon them as well. The New Testament equivalent can be found in Paul's list of the trials and tribulations which he suffered. Not only were there outward tribulations, such as "perils of waters, in perils of robbers, mine own countrymen, perils by the heathen...in the city, in the wilderness," etc. but there was that "which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:26-28). There is something similar to this in the suffering of the Psalmist.

Behind every cloud is a silver lining, and every trial, when endured properly, will produce blessing (James 1:2-4). The faith of the Psalmist is evident in this verse. Though pressed down, he was confident that God would lift him up, even from the "depths of the earth."

**71:21:** Barnes sees in this an expectation that the Psalmist would be restored even beyond his previous status. "Thou wilt not merely restore me to my former condition, but wilt enlarge my happiness, and wilt do still greater things for me" (Barnes). There are a number of occasions when this was exactly the case, Job and Mordacai to mention only a couple.

### **Praise offered in behalf of God's blessings, past and future, Verses 22-24**

- 22 *I will also praise thee with the psaltery, Even thy truth, O my God: Unto thee will I sing praises with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.*
- 23 *My lips shall shout for joy when I sing praises unto thee; And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.*
- 24 *My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long; For they are put to shame, for they are confounded, that seek my hurt.*

The Psalmist...

- (1) Offers up praise unto God (verse 22);
- (2) Says that his lips will rejoice and sing unto God (verse 23);
- (3) Offers praise for past deliverance (verse 24);

These closing verses display a heart of genuine of thanksgiving. Outward praise is the natural result of a heart filled with gratitude for God's wonderful and beneficent care of His children.

**71:22:** *"I will also praise thee with the psaltery...with the harp"* – Even if it could be proved that David used the psaltery and harp with Divine approval, it would be an incredible jump to conclude that God sanctions the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. The emphasis in these closing verses is upon the praise David offered to God in sincere thanksgiving and adoration for God's gracious blessings he had received.

**71:23:** *"my lips...my soul"* – It was not only outward praise that David offered (though that is important), but the inward praise that arose from the depth of his heart, yea his very soul. The New Testament equivalent of this passage is John 4:24 where Jesus instructed us that the true worshipper is one who worships in spirit and in truth.

**71:24:** This verse tells us that the enemies had been overthrown, "put to shame," and "confounded," even as the Psalmist had asked. God does answer prayer, and those who might "seek my hurt" will be destroyed.

### ***Lessons***

1. Old age is not the time to quit serving God. Rather it is the time to press on with greater determination. The goal is nearer than before, and heaven's portal cannot be too distant.
2. God will grant us the victory over our enemies. The process of deliverance is clearly set forth in this Psalm. It closes with the realization on the part of the Psalmist that God will quicken us again, and that we will be delivered from the "depths of the earth."
3. When God is for us, the wicked are against us. When the wicked are against us, God is for us (verse 4).
4. Consider verse seven with reference to David, to Christ, and to the Christian:
  - I. With reference to David.
    1. David was a wonder as a man.
    2. As a king.
    3. As a servant of God.
  - II. With respect to Christ.

1. Christ was a wonder in his person:
  2. In his life.
  3. In his miracles.
  4. In his teaching.
  5. In his sufferings.
  6. In his ascension and mediatorial glory.
- III. With regard to the Christian.
1. The Christian is a wonder to himself.
  2. To the world.

## *“The Prayer Of A King”*

### ***Psalms 72*** ***"The Prayer Of A King"***

#### ***Introduction***

The subtitle on this Psalm in the King James Version reads, “A Psalm for Solomon.” In the American Standard Version it reads, “A Psalm Of Solomon.” If it is a Psalm OF Solomon then there is an apparent conflict with verse twenty which declares, “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” Spurgeon suggested

The best linguists affirm that this should be rendered, of or by Solomon...It is pretty certain that the title declares Solomon to be the author of the Psalm, and yet from verse 20 it would seem that David uttered it in prayer before he died. With some diffidence we suggest that the spirit and matter of the Psalm are David's, but that he was too near his end to pen the words, or cast them into form; Solomon, therefore, caught his dying father's song, fashioned it into goodly verse, and, without robbing his father, made the Psalm his own. It is, we conjecture, the Prayer of David, but the Psalm of Solomon (Spurgeon).

Albert Barnes confidently affirms that it was a Psalm “FOR” Solomon (Barnes). The Septuagint, Latin Vulgate, and Syriac all translate it “for Solomon.” While the Hebrew would support the Psalm being “of Solomon,” the context must be considered. Barnes addressed this possibility:

The contents of the psalm also demand this construction here. It is wholly improbable that Solomon would pen the predictions in the psalm as referring to himself; but not at all improbable that David would utter these predictions and prayers in reference to his son about to ascend the throne. The language of the psalm is every way appropriate to the supposition that it was composed by David in view of the anticipated glories and the peaceful reign of his son and successor, as an inspired production indicating what that reign would be, and looking onward to the still more glorious and peaceful reign of the Messiah as king. It seems to me, therefore,

that the evidence is sufficiently clear that the psalm was composed in reference to Solomon, and not by him; and, if so, the most natural supposition is that it was composed by David. The evidence, indeed, is not positive, but it is such probable evidence as to leave little room for doubt (Barnes)

The exact time and occasion of the Psalm are not given. It has been generally accepted that it was written at the close of David's life in view of Solomon's reign. Much of the language is applicable to Solomon, but there are also glimpses of the Messianic kingdom that was to come. It is, therefore, Messianic in its contents. G. Campbell Morgan noted: "This is a great psalm of the Theocracy...The King, appointed by God, and gaining his guidance from God, so reigning over his own people as to succor the needy, spoil the oppressor, and secure the prosperity of the righteous; and so reigning that the beneficial influence of the kingship and kingdom are felt over all the earth" (Morgan, 247). It seems clear to us that the general tenor of the Psalm alludes to that One Who is greater than Solomon. There are too many statements that can be applied only to the Christ.

We suggest the following reasons why we have concluded that much of the Psalm is prophetic of the reign of the Messiah. First, there is the testimony of tradition among early church fathers, but even more importantly, among the ancient Jews. The first verse of the Psalm as it appears in the Chaldee paraphrase reads, "O God, give the knowledge of thy judgments to the king the Messiah and thy righteousness to the sons of David the king" (Barnes). Second, there are a number of statements that simply cannot apply to David. We will note some of these as we go through the Psalm, but for sake of illustration notice verse 8. Solomon never did have "dominion from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth." That could only be said of our Lord. Third, the language used in this Psalm is similar to that used in other passages that most definitely apply to the reign of the Messiah. Compare, for example, verses 2 and 4 with Isaiah 11:4; verse 3 with Isaiah 9:6; verse 5 with Isaiah 9:7, and so forth. Finally, writers in the Old Testament frequently wrote with their pen pointed down the road of time to the reign of the Messiah.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm consists of a description of the reign of the coming Messiah, a reign that is righteous, verses 1-7; universal, verses 8-11; beneficent, verses 12-14; and perpetual, verses 15-17; to which are

added a doxology, verses 18, 19; and a postscript, verse 20. Barnes divided the Psalm similarly:

- I. A DESCRIPTION of the reign of the King, 1-17
  - 1. A Reign of Righteousness, 1-7;
  - 2. A Reign that would be Universal, 8-11;
  - 3. A Reign of Benevolence, 12-14;
  - 4. A Reign that would be Perpetual, 15-17;
- II. A DOXOLOGY, 18-19;
- III. A Concluding Subscript, 20

We will follow Barnes outline for our study.

## ***Commentary***

### **A Reign of Righteousness Verses 1-7**

- 1 *Give the king thy judgments, O God, And thy righteousness unto the king's son.*
- 2 *He will judge thy people with righteousness, And thy poor with justice.*
- 3 *The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.*
- 4 *He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.*
- 5 *They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.*
- 6 *He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.*
- 7 *In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.*

In these verses the Psalmist...

- (1) Prays for his son, verse 1;
- (2) Declares that his son's reign would be:
  - A. One of righteousness;
  - B. One of peace;
  - C. One of victory over his enemies;
  - D. One of prosperity;

**72:1:** David was asking God to provide Solomon with proper wisdom so as to administer righteous judgment. The "judgments" has reference to authority; the ability to execute justice and enforce laws.

The "*king's son*" has reference to Solomon directly, but by implication to each and every king, and eventually it was perfectly fulfilled in the reign of the Messiah. Albert Barnes pointed out, "there is no impropriety in supposing that the psalmist believed the reign of Solomon would be, in some proper sense emblematic of that reign, and that it was his desire that the reign of the one *might*, as far as possible, resemble that of the other" (Barnes).

**72:2:** "*He will judge thy people with righteousness, And thy poor with justice*" - The reign of the Messiah would be one of compassion, uprightness, fairness, and justice for all. Notice in this connection Isaiah 11:3-4.

**72:3:** "*The mountains shall bring peace to the people*" - Here the Psalmist describes the peaceful nature of the Messianic reign, that the land might be full of peace and the fruit of peace. It was Jesus who promised that the peace which He offers is not like that which the world offers (John 14:27). It is, as Paul explains, the peace that "passeth understanding (Phil. 4:7)." Peace always lends itself to growth and prosperity, while war produces nothing but destruction and desolation. As Spurgeon noted, "Where Jesus is there is peace, lasting, deep, eternal. Even those things which were once our dread, lose all terror when Jesus is owned as monarch of the heart: death itself, that dark mountain, loses all its gloom. Trials and afflictions, when the Lord is with us, bring us an increase rather than a diminution of peace" (Spurgeon).

*"and the hills, in righteousness"* - The King James renders this, "*the little hills by righteousness.*" The idea is that, as the righteousness of the Messiah's reign filled the earth, even the "little hills," or the most insignificant and seeming out-of-the-way places might feel the influence of the King's reign.

**72:4:** "*He will judge the poor*" - Reference here is to those who have no one to protect them; those most likely to be oppressed by others. The Righteous King would come to their aid and "*break in pieces the oppressor.*"



**72:5:** *"Sun...moon endureth"* - Here the Psalmist speaks of the everlasting nature of the Messianic reign. Literally the Hebrew is, "with the sun, and before the moon" (Barnes). We do not see how this language could refer to Solomon. His was a temporal reign, limited quite obviously to his lifetime and perpetuated, at best, through his sons for one generation. The reign of the Messiah would be the FINAL reign. He rules now, and will do so until He returns to turn the kingdom over to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

Even at this hour we have before us the tokens of his eternal power; since he ascended to his throne, eighteen hundred years ago, his dominion has not been overturned, though the mightiest of empires have gone like visions of the night. We see on the shore of time the wrecks of the Caesars, the relics of the Moguls, and the last remnants of the Ottomans. Charlemagne, Maximilian, Napoleon, how they flit like shadows before us! They were and are not; but Jesus for ever is. As for the houses of Hohenzollern, Guelph, or Hapsburg, they have their hour; but the Son of David has all hours and ages as his own (Spurgeon).

**72:6:** *"He will come down like rain upon the mown grass, As showers that water the earth"* - One significant feature of this Psalm is the numerous references to the physical and material blessings that are promised. The word "he" might as easily have been translated "it." In that case it would refer to the reign or the influence of His government. The word rendered "mown grass" means "a shearing, and is applied in Deuteronomy 18:4, and Job 31:20, to a fleece of wool...and has been supposed by some that there is an allusion to the dew that descended on the fleece spread out by Gideon" (Barnes). The meaning of this verse was expressed by Barnes: "The reign of the Messiah would resemble the gently, descending shower, under which the grass which has been mown springs up again with freshness and beauty" (Barnes).

The fruit of our Lord's reign is abundant and effective. Not so when men sow their tradition and false philosophies. There is nothing that touches the hearts of men like the truth. Wherever the gospel has gone, men have been happier when they submit to its precepts.

**72:7:** *"In his days shall the righteous flourish"* - This could certainly not be said of any of the earthly kings of Israel. The language of the Psalm clearly indicates that the reign of the Messiah is being considered. It is (1) fruitful, and (2) enduring, *"till the moon be no more."* "Many a so-called Holy Alliance has come to the ground ere many moons have filled their horns, because craft formed the league,

perjury established it, and oppression was the design of it" (Spurgeon).

### **A Reign That Would Be Universal** **Verses 8-11**

- 8 *He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.*  
9 *They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.*  
10 *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.*  
11 *Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.*

The King would...

- (1) Have dominion from sea to sea.
- (2) Rule over those in the wilderness.
- (3) Receive presents from the kings of Tarshish and Sheba.
- (4) Be served by all nations.

**72:8:** The various nations listed here, and the reference "*from sea to sea*," clearly speaks of the universal rule of the King of kings, Jesus Christ our Lord. Coffman points out that "all of the places mentioned here, at one time or another, have paid homage to the Lord Jesus Christ" (Coffman, 600). While Solomon may have ruled over the vast domain of Israel, the language in this verse suggests a universal, world wide reign. The only "Son of David" to ever rule over the whole of God's creation, is of course Jesus our Lord.

**72:9:** "*They that dwell in the wilderness...his enemies*" - There is a clear reference to the Gentile nations in this verse through verse 11. "They that dwell in the wilderness," or "isles," or "all kings shall fall down," show, without doubt, that the Psalmist was speaking of the nations. Verse 11 speaks of "all nations" serving him. Solomon never achieved such an extent in his rule.

This is expressive of the most thorough submission and abject humiliation. It is language derived from what seems actually to occur in Oriental countries, where men prostrate themselves on their faces, and place their mouths on the ground, in token of reverence or submission (Barnes).

There is a day coming when all men will bow before the Lord of lords and King of kings. Truly, "Tongues which rail at the Redeemer deserve to lick the dust. Those who will not joyfully bow to such a prince richly merit to be hurled down and laid prostrate; the dust is too good for them, since they trampled on the blood of Christ" (Spurgeon).

**72:10:** The "*tribute*" and "*gifts*" were expression of both submission and gratitude. While earthly kings often subdue through force, the rule of the Messiah would be of such a nature that the subjects would offer up their "*gifts*" of appreciation. True religion leads to generous giving. Those who have come into the Kingdom of the Lord are not taxed, but they give freely, generously, and with a cheerful heart.

**72:11:** "*All kings shall fall down before him*" - Could such language ever apply to Solomon? Certainly not. But it DOES apply to the Lord. All men shall bow before Him. One's rank and position in this life will not exempt him from standing before the judgment seat of Christ some day.

### **A Reign of Benevolence Verses 12-14**

- 12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.*
- 13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.*
- 14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.*

So far as the needy were concerned, the King would...

- (1) Deliver the needy when they cry.
- (2) Redeem their soul from oppression.
- (3) Be aware of the shedding of their blood.

**72:13:** The language in verses 13 and 14 simply cannot speak of David, Solomon, or any other king that ever ruled over physical Israel.

"*He will have pity*" is nothing short of a prophetic statement of God's marvelous grace. Those souls that are "poor in spirit" and in recognition of their need, "he will save." And what literal king over

physical Israel ever "redeemed" anyone in that nation? None. These two verses are a clear reference to the redemptive work of our Saviour.

**72:14:** *"He will redeem their soul"* – It is the soul that stands in jeopardy. All men mortgage their soul to the devil when they sin. Christ is our Great Redeemer.

*"precious will their blood be"* – This presupposes that some will lose their life because of their faith in God. "They that live godly lives in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). But though some may be called upon to suffer because of their faith, our Lord has promised genuine happiness for those who die "in the Lord." "And I heard the voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them" (Rev. 14:13).

### **A Reign That Would Be Perpetual Verses 15-17**

- 15 *And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised.*
- 16 *There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.*
- 17 *His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.*

In these verses the Psalmist speaks of

(1) Prayer offered to God, and that "continually."

**(2) Blessings shall be received from the bountiful hand of Jehovah.**

(3) The very name of Jehovah shall endure.

**72:15:** - *"And they shall live"* – The KJV renders this, "and he shall live." We are somewhat surprised that none of the commentators see in this verse a reference to the resurrection of our Lord and the consequent spiritual resurrection of those who are redeemed. Barnes got close:

This may refer to the king - the Messiah...[I]t means that the life of the Messiah would be perpetual; that he would not be cut off as other sovereigns are; that there would be no change of dynasty; that he would be, as a king, the same - unchanging and unchanged - in all the generations of men, and in all the revolutions which occur on the earth (Barnes).

*"to him shall be given the gold of Sheba"* - The idea is that those who are "redeemed" by him would, in return, bring the most precious thing they possessed so as to offer it to Him in adoration. Of course the word "gold" stands for all that is valuable to men, and there is no sense in which it can be taken literally. There is a remarkable similarity to Romans 12:1-2 where we are instructed to present our bodies a living sacrifice.

*"prayer...praise..daily"* - We are reminded of Paul's statement to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17).

**72:16:** Notice especially the fruitfulness of the reign of the King. The "fruit" in the Messianic kingdom is that of joy, peace, longsuffering, patience, etc. But there is also a sense in which God blesses His children physically. Certainly there is a glimpse here of God's divine providential care as was expressed in Matthew 6:24-34.

### **Doxology Verses 18-19**

- 18 *Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, Who only doeth wondrous things:*  
19 *And blessed be his glorious name for ever; And let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen.*

This second book of the Psalms closes with a doxology, as did Book I. Coffman suggests that "these doxologies were doubtless added by the devout men who compiled and organized the various divisions of the Psalms" (Coffman, 603). There is nothing, however, that would forbid the words from having been penned by the author rather than some redactor.

**72:18:** *"Who only doeth wondrous things"* – One characteristic of Jehovah God is His absolute holiness. Abraham recognized the truth the Psalmist expresses here and that faithful patriarch asked, *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* Whether in the realm of

justice, compassion, moral integrity and uprightness, “Jehovah God, the God of Israel...only doeth wondrous things.”

**72:19:** The Psalmist ends this doxology with a double “Amen, and Amen.” God’s very name will be glorious forever. Men may drag it through the mud, curse the holy name of God, blaspheme Him and ignore Him, but the name of God will remain glorious, and the whole earth will be filled with His glory.

### **A Subtitle Verse 20**

**72:20:** *“The prayers of David...are ended”* – The writer of these seventy-two Psalms had experienced God’s richest blessings. He was thankful to God for divine guidance. Even if the words recorded in these first seventy-two Psalms were nothing more than David’s earthly experiences, they would be rich nuggets of wisdom for us to meditate upon. But when we consider that these messages were given by divine inspiration, we stand amazed at the wonderful love of our God, and the deep commitment of those men who wrote them. The penman had done his job. He could now lay down his pen and rest upon the promises of God. “What more could he ask? He has climbed the summit of the mount of God; he desires nothing more. With this upon his lip, he is content to die. He strips himself of his own royalty and becomes only the *son* “of Jesse, thrice happy to subside into nothing before the crowned Messiah” (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. If the words are David’s, as we suspect they are, then it shows the deep concern that David had for his son Solomon. He asked that God endow Solomon with divine justice and divine righteousness. It is important for a king to rule with justice; he must also rule with righteousness. The former speaks of the equity of his decisions; the latter the biblical basis out of which his decisions are derived.
2. We get a glimpse of the characteristics of the reign of our Lord Jesus Christ. Note:

He rules with moral equity (verse 2).  
His reign is prosperous (verses 3 and 6-7).

His rule is protective of the needy and downcast (verse 4).

His rule is everlasting, even unto the end of the world (verse 5, 15 and 17).

His rule is glorious (verses 9-11).

His rule is compassionate (verses 12-14).

3. God considers the death of His saints as something very precious to Him (verse 14b). “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed *are* the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).
4. Where the gospel goes, the living standard of men are raised and the quality of life improves when the application of God’s truths are made to the life.
5. God cannot do evil. He “only doeth wondrous things” (verse 18). While earthly tyrants may abuse or neglect their subjects, our God only does what is good and right.

## *“Things Are Not As They Seem”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is the first of the “Psalms of Asaph,” to whom the subscript attributes this Psalm. There is no specific event in the mind of the writer. Rather he wrestles with the seeming prosperity of the wicked in comparison with the struggles that the righteous endure. No doubt every child of God has, at one time or another, struggled with the question as to why the wicked prosper. “Righteous people seem pressed down on every hand, often struggling for the very necessities of life, whereas openly arrogant and wicked unbelievers flaunt their godless lives, sometimes wallowing in wealth and luxuries. This Psalm addresses that very problem” (Coffman, 2). The Psalm sets forth the feelings of the Psalmist as he contemplated the state of the wicked in this life. The solution is found in the realization that there is a future state in which justice will be administered and all of the inequalities of the present system will be dealt with by God. Barnes concluded, “the idea of the psalm is, that these things cannot be explained except on the supposition that there is a future state; and the psalm, therefore, is an argument for a future state of existence. The affairs of earth cannot be explained, and the character of God cannot be vindicated, except on that supposition” (Barnes). In this Psalm the writer returns to a question that vexed David (Psa. 37), and which puzzled the anonymous author of Psalm 49. In this Psalm the mystery is answered. We liked Phillips’ assessment of these three Psalms:

In Psalm 37 the emphasis can be summed up in the word *wait*. God says, “Have patience and faith. The triumph of the wicked will be short-lived.” In Psalm 49 the emphasis is on the word *watch*. God says, “Money is powerless to save, and the advantages it secures are fleeting.” In Psalm 73 the emphasis is on the word *worship*. It is better to have your faith in the hand of God than to have it in the pocket of some rich sinner (Phillips, 604).



Asaph wrote a dozen Psalms (50, 73 thru 83). He was a Levite of the family of Gershon and one of the three chief musicians appointed by David to preside over the services of the sanctuary (1 Chron. 16:5). He was selected to lead the music when David brought the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:16-19). He was evidently a gifted singer and musician, and his impact upon his family lasted down through the centuries.

### ***Analysis***

The first half of this Psalm describes the perplexing problem with which Asaph wrestled. We are given a glimpse of the prosperity of the wicked. We see the Psalmist's *consternation* with regard to the prosperity of the ungodly (73:1-16). This is followed by a *clarification* in which the Psalmist comes to realize the ultimate destiny of the wicked (73:17-20). The second half of the Psalm tells us that Asaph came to acknowledge that God was guiding him and watching over him (73:21-28). Morgan summed up the Psalm thusly:

The whole psalm was written in the light of the conviction expressed in the last half, but it describes first the things which startled and perplexed the soul. The wicked prosper in life, and death itself seems to have not terror for them. They are satisfied, and more than satisfied, and because of these things men deny the knowledge of God, and turn their feet into the way of wickedness, affirming the uselessness of right-doing to procure benefits. The psalmist...attempted to unravel the mystery and find out why men succeeded and were satisfied without God...He went into the sanctuary of God. Then everything changed. He ceased to look at the present only. He saw the end of the wicked. A more spacious outlook, taking in the whole issue of things, corrected all the false seeming of the near vision...Out of the consciousness the song of praise was born (Morgan, 248).

Roger Jackson introduced this Psalm with these comments and outline:

The dilemma with which the writer grapples is as old as man himself and is indicative of his search as portrayed in the experience of one man. The reader is made to feel a kindred spirit with the writer as he describes the kind of doubts that we have surely experienced in days gone by when our faith was young. He grasps our attention in anticipation of an answer to a problem some men have only been able to resolve insufficiently in their minds. If it is true that God blesses the righteous because of their

righteousness, why do the unrighteous receive equal blessings, if not superior? If it is possible to be unrighteous and avoid the pitfalls of the righteous, would it not be just as well if we were unrighteous? Is there no apparent profit in serving God? The Psalm may be divided into the following particulars:

- I. Expression Of A Truth Brought Into Question (v.1).
- II. Construction Of A Dilemma Which Threatened His Faith (vs. 2-14).
- III. Doubt of the Propriety Of Publicly Expressing The Dilemma (vs. 15-16).
- IV. The Resolution Of The Dilemma (vs. 17-20).
- V. Affirmation Of The Steadfastness Of The Psalmist's Faith (vs. 21-28). (Jackson, 459).

For those who enjoy homiletic outlines, we provide the following major points from Phillips (Phillips, 603):

- I. The Problem Stated (73:1-3)
- II. The Problem Studied (73:4-16)
- III. The Problem Solved (73:17-28).

We do not recall the source of this outline, but it was written in the margin of this writer's ASV Bible some years back. We will use this outline in our study of this chapter.

- I. Realization - wherein the Psalmist expresses his knowledge of God's goodness toward those of a clean heart, verse 1;
- II. Reflection - a backward look at the seeming prosperity, pride, and procedure of the wicked, verses 2-14;
- III. Regard - concern for the children of God causes him to consider carefully his words, verse 15;
- IV. Revelation - the Psalmist is given a view of the final end of the wicked, verses 16-20;
- V. Repentance - wherein the Psalmist realizes the foolishness of his former way and is grieved over his sins, verses 21-22;
- VI. Reliance - the Psalmist expresses his complete dependency upon God for guidance, verses 23-28.

## ***Commentary***

### **REALIZATION**

#### Verse 1

*1 Surely God is good to Israel, Even to such as are pure in heart.*

*“Surely God is good to Israel”* – This Psalm is unique in that the author sets forth the conclusion and then follows with reasons why he has drawn that conclusion. The ASV marginal note reads, “Only good is God.” James wrote, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning” (Jam. 1:17). It should be noted that true goodness is not measured by what we may or may not possess in this life. This was a lesson the Psalmist had to learn.

*“Even to such as are pure in heart”* – It is not so much that God was good to physical Israel (which indeed He was), but that He is good to the righteous; to *true* Israel. All that He is, and does for His people, is good. But His goodness is extended to those who are “*pure in heart.*” Hence, the reference here is to those who are truly righteous since all true righteousness emanates from the heart. Our Lord said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). A changed life begins with a changed heart. Immoral behavior must be condemned, but it will take much more than words. In the Birmingham News, May 10, 1990, syndicated writer Cal Thomas wrote, “Dr. John Grant, the health officer of Caroline County, MD. has proposed that teenage girls be paid by the local government NOT to get pregnant.” After 20 years of watching pregnancy rates go up, Mr. Grant suggested that it is time to try anything. But as Cal Thomas pointed out, “The proposal by Grant won’t work because it fails to address why younger teenage girls become pregnant.” Until the heart is pure, the action will not follow; but change the heart, and moral behavior and responsibility will not be far behind.

Hence, at the very outset of the Psalm the author sets forth a divine truth that even God’s own people sometimes fail to realize. It is that genuine happiness is not measured by material prosperity or by the things that a man may or may not possess. One writer put it this way:

## ***The Time To Be Glad***

A young man lives in the future;  
An old man lives in the past;  
For youth, time is moving too slowly,  
For age, it is moving too fast.

A young man dreams of the gladness  
The years just before him will bring;  
An old man dreams of his pleasures  
When life held the magic of spring.

But youth and age are in error!  
The present alone can convey  
The joy and cheer and contentment  
We seek as we journey life's way.

Today is the time to be happy!  
No matter how young or how old,  
It's always today that must bring us  
The blessings our fortunes unfold!

--Author unknown

Yes, God has been good to Israel!

## **REFLECTION**

Verses 2-14

- 2 *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; My steps had well nigh slipped.*
- 3 *For I was envious at the arrogant, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*
- 4 *For there are no pangs in their death; But their strength is firm.*
- 5 *They are not in trouble as other men; Neither are they plagued like other men.*
- 6 *Therefore pride is as a chain about their neck; Violence covereth them as a garment.*
- 7 *Their eyes stand out with fatness: They have more than heart could wish.*
- 8 *They scoff, and in wickedness utter oppression: They speak loftily.*

- 9 *They have set their mouth in the heavens, And their tongue walketh through the earth.*
- 10 *Therefore his people return hither: And waters of a full cup are drained by them.*
- 11 *And they say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?*
- 12 *Behold, these are the wicked; And, being alway at ease, they increase in riches.*
- 13 *Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart, And washed my hands in innocency;*
- 14 *For all the day long have I been plagued, And chastened every morning.*

The Psalmist will now trace the steps that led him into the valley of despair. He would reflect upon the problem that confronted him, and the disastrous effect it had upon his faith.

**73:2-3:** *“But as for me, my feet were almost gone”* – Those who attempt to live within the confines of God’s law are often bewildered at the seeming prosperity and success of the arrogant. Why is it that the wicked sometimes seem to have all the wealth, all the power, and are free from care and concern? It is a test of one’s faith to be able to look beyond the present circumstance to that which lies beyond. If we fix our eyes on the here and now we, like the Psalmist, will find our feet slipping. This ability to look beyond the present circumstance to the promises of God is the theme of Hebrews chapter 11. This particular character trait of being able to look beyond the here and now and to focus on things eternal was summed up in the writer’s description of Abraham: “for he looked for the city which hath the foundations whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

*“my feet were almost gone”* - The Psalmist is speaking of his state of mind, not his literal feet. With regard to his faith, he was like a man who was standing on slippery ground about to slip from his sure footing. There was nothing to keep him from slipping, and he could say that his *“steps had well nigh slipped.”* Having taken his eyes off God, the Psalmist was telling us he had drifted. He had reached the point of despair and disbelief. Had it not been for a change in heart, his soul may very well have plunged over the precipice into complete apostasy.

**73:3:** *“I was envious at the arrogant”* - (“the foolish” in the KJV). In his despair the Psalmist had succumbed to envy. Seeing the

apparent peace that surrounded the arrogant and foolish, he actually wished he had followed their example rather than pursue the life of serving God. This same danger faces every child of God in every generation. There is a great temptation to be envious of those in the world. We sometimes envy their ease of life, or their apparent serenity with the world that surrounds them. They seem so “confident” of their position in life. But not all is as it appears to the physical eye.

*“When I saw the prosperity of the wicked”* – Keep in mind that the Psalmist was observing their PRESENT status. He would turn his attention to the “later” end of the wicked, but for now he is telling us that he had his eyes fixed on the situation as it presently stood. The “prosperity of the wicked” is literally, “the peace of the wicked” (Barnes). The context supports this since the Psalmist looks at their apparent freedom from trouble, particularly during the time of suffering and death.

**73:4-5:** *“For there are no pangs in their death”* - That is, there was no indication that they were anxious, or troubled, even when it came time for them to face death. Barnes points out that the word “bands” (KJV) or “pangs” (ASV) means “*cords tightly drawn*, as if one were twisted or tortured with pain, as a cord is closely twisted” (Barnes). Great men of this world, men with little spirituality, have often gone to their graves in, what appears to be, great peace of mind. They are firm in their past achievements. They are not troubled in their mind. On the surface they seem to have enjoyed life, and have no fear of what lies beyond the grave. There is, however, another side to this apparent boldness manifested in the face of death. The following quotes will illustrate the fear that resides in the hearts of those in whom there appears to be no “pangs in their death.” Clarence Darrow, the nationally known lawyer of this century wrote: “Life is like a ship on the sea, tossed by every wave and by every wind, a ship headed for no port, and no harbor, with no rudder, no compass, no pilot, simply floating for a time, then lost in the waves.” Charles Pettis M’Ilvaine wrote of the closing days of the famed atheist Thomas Paine. “Once it was his boast that, during a dangerous illness, he thought with new satisfaction of having written ‘Age of Reason,’ and found by experiment, that his principles were sufficient to sustain him in expectation of death. It was an empty boast! Let us see him when he was really dying. He would not be left alone day or night. ‘If ever the devil had an agent on earth, I have been the one.’ An infidel visitor said to him: ‘You have lived like a man; I hope you

will die like one.’ He turned to others in the room and said, ‘You see what miserable comforters I have.’ The woman whom he had enticed from her husband lamented to her neighbor her sad condition. ‘For this man,’ she said, ‘I have give up my family, my friends, my property, and my religion; judge then of my distress, when he tells me that the principles he has taught me will not bear me out.’ Well might she be distressed, when she heard his exclamations. He would call out, ‘O Lord Jesus help me, God help me, Jesus Christ help me, O Lord help me” (Rex Turner, 408). Perhaps one of the saddest laments ever to cross the lips of mortal men were those spoken by the brother of Robert Ingersol, famed atheist of the nineteenth century: “Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of a wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the un-replying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing. He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath, ‘I am better now.’ Let us believe in spite of doubts and dogmas and tears and fears that these dear words are true of the all the countless dead.” No, things are NOT as they appear!

**73:5:** *“They are not in trouble”* - Literally, “In the labor of men they are not” (Barnes, 254). There appeared to be some special intervention that separated them from the toils and tribulations of life. On the surface the wealthy seem to have escaped the various troubles that plague mankind in the journey through life. While the majority of the human race struggle to “make ends meet,” toiling for their very bread, and laboring to provide the necessities for their family, the wealthy seem not to be concerned about from whence those things will come. Ordinary domestic and personal troubles do not appear to molest them. This has led many an individual to falsely conclude that wealth is the solution to trouble and the avenue to genuine happiness. For others it has caused them to question the advantage of piety.

*“Neither are they plagued like other men”* - They face not the fierce struggles that the common man must wrestle with every day of his life. On the SURFACE it would appear that the life of the rich is one of ease and serenity. The calamities and setbacks that trouble other men do not seem to enter into their life. While others are afflicted, the wicked seemed to enjoy prosperity, happiness, and contentment. We must keep in mind, however, that these verses are describing the

wicked as they appear to be in the eyes of the Psalmist, not as they really are.

**73:6:** This verse, through verse 9, describes the arrogance alluded to in verse three. Pride is described as a “*chain about their neck.*” Could it be that these arrogant and wealthy actually “put on a show” as they face death, while deep inside they fear the unknown? Consider the characteristics of their life. They are proud, violent, lustful, never satisfied. “In their boastful arrogance they array themselves...They brag and bully, bluster and browbeat, as if they had taken out a license to ride roughshod over all mankind (Spurgeon). They imagine that they are actually *better* than others and that they have received their blessings for that very reason. In addition, “*violence*” is to them as a garment; their life is “clothed” therewith. While the lives of some are “clothed with grace,” here are those wicked and arrogant men who are clothed with violence.

**73:7:** “*Their eyes stand out with fatness*” - The wealthy are never satisfied. The pursuit of wealth is never ending. While these wicked and arrogant persons attain unto great riches and wealth, their heart continues to wish for more. Their lives are characterized by a futile search for those things that are “in the world” (1 John 2:16), namely the “lust of the flesh” (“they have more than heart could wish”), the “lust of the eyes” (“their eyes stand out with fatness”), and the “vainglory of life” (“pride is as a chain about their neck”). When will men learn that one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the **things** when he might possess? (Luke 12:15). One of the greatest struggles the church faces in our affluent age is the battle against materialism. One author put it this way: “There is no peril to which man is exposed, and against which he is so carefully guarded, as that involved in the accumulation and possession of wealth.” The German poet VanGoeth is credited with these words: “Everything in the world can be endured except continual prosperity.” Another has warned: “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven; we have grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which has preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined in our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom of our own. Intoxicated by unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God who made us.” Those words were written by the late President Abraham Lincoln.



**73:8-9:** Because of their pride, they “scoff” at others. Whether the Psalmist was referring to scoffing in general, or some specific incident in which they scoffed at him, is not known. It is not uncommon to find those who are wrapped up in the things of this world “scoff” and ridicule everything that is morally and spiritually good. They “utter oppression” and “speak loftily.” It is rather curious that the wicked cannot leave religion alone. The wicked are not content to simply ignore the righteous. Why is this the case? The answer is found in Hebrews 11:7. Noah is said to have “moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world...” When God’s people live the kind of lives that ought to be lived, they imply that others do NOT. This the wicked cannot stand!

But such wicked individuals cannot be satisfied with scoffing at the righteous. They also scoff at God and the things “in the heavens.” They use God’s name in vain, and speak of things which they have not seen as “foolishness.” Imagine that boisterous individual who speaks as if he were clothed with authority; as if **he** were somehow superior and could command the universe. Such individuals think the world revolves around them. Consequently they look down their nose at the righteous. They scoff those who teach humility and blaspheme their God who directs them in that way.

**73:9:** *“They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.”* The tongue of the wicked is personified. The damage done by an unruly tongue is truly a frightening thing. Words mean something. They communicate what is in the heart. They may be constructive, or devastatingly destructive. George Washington Robnett understood the force of words when he wrote the following:

Words may bring people together and bind them under banners of common ideals. Just as easily, words may separate men into hostile and warring camps. Lifting throats may give to words the magic of beauty through music - while the engineer may translate them into directive ingenuity and the skill of fine craftsmanship. The statesman may weave of words a fabric of strategy - the advertiser may transform them into personable salesmen - and the publist may convert them into persuasive agents of propaganda. Words are the woof and warp of romance and achievement - of hope and despair - of fiction and realism - of philosophy and religion - of everything that is part and parcel of life and civilization. Words! Words! Words! What glory - what tragedy! Without them life would

be meaningless - purposeless - a barren waste. With them life can be rapturous - thrilling - creative - productive - a treasure house of joy and accomplishment. For some, words are tools - for others they are weapons. The doctor - the lawyer - the engineer - the botanist - the anthropologist - and the soldier - each has his own peculiar kit of words" (George Robnett, as quoted by James Bales, 63).

The New Testament equivalent of this passage is James 3:1-12. James likens the unruly tongue unto a ship without a rudder, a fire out of control, and a beast untamed. The child of God must make a concentrated effort to control the tongue.

**73:10-11:** *"Therefore his people return hither"* - The difficulty in this verse is in determining the meaning of "his people." One possible meaning is that it refers to those who adapt and follow the same way of thinking as the arrogant and wicked men under discussion. Coffman suggests that "the thought here is that the 'followers' of wicked men partake of their earthly benefits and adopt their patterns" (Coffman, 5). Another possible meaning is that the Psalmist was speaking of the righteous who recognize that genuine blessings come from God but who struggle with the question now in the mind of the Psalmist. Consequently there existed the real temptation to give up their righteous life in exchange for the more seeming life of prosperity and wealth. Jackson so concluded: "The only cup that runs over with goodness that is enduring is the cup that the Lord fills. The cup the wicked offer is the cup of mundane pleasures and the cup of God's wrath follows it in the end. The Psalmist had opened the door just a little and considered that such a life just might be worth it" (Roger Jackson, 464). It may be that the full cup of the wicked appealed to the Psalmist. Indeed, how close the Psalmist was to slipping into the miry pit of self indulgence and diminishing faith. The doubt expressed by the Psalmist had almost caused him to slip (verse 2). There is a real possibility that he might have gone with the multitude in their wickedness. All of the evidence about him suggested that the wicked really DID have it better, and that God did NOT know. Barnes provides another view. According to him, *"his people"* refers to those who love God. Such ones *"return hither"* to this particular subject; it "occupies their minds, and they recur to it as a subject which perplexes them...The meaning is that the facts in the case, and the questions which arose in regard to those facts, and which so perplexed them, were like a bitter cup and that they, in their perplexities, exhausted the cup"

(Barnes).

The context suggests that the wicked are the ones under consideration. It is the wicked who are proud and arrogant. It is the wicked whose eyes stand out with fatness. Such men speak loftily, and set their mouth in the heavens and scoff at things that are holy and righteous. “His people” are precisely that – “his people.” It is not God’s people, but the people of the wicked and arrogant to whom the Psalmist refers. No man is an island unto himself. Those who are inclined to rebel against their God find solace in the apparent “success” of the unrighteous. And though they may occasionally give a passing glance at things spiritual, the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the vainglory of life” (1 John 2:15) they turn again to the cup of the world and it is “drained by them.” One generation begets another, and the cup of wickedness is passed to those who might choose to drink thereof. Unfortunately, like the prodigal who ended up in the pig pen, so those who choose to follow the path of the arrogant and wicked, their cup will be “drained” and they will find themselves in the spiritual pig pen, devoid of any purpose to life and having had the happiness they sought elude them.

**73:11:** “*They*” – Our opinion is that the writer is still speaking of the wicked. They are so arrogant as to question the divine attribute of the Creator and assume that the Almighty does not know what they think or what they do. It is as if they question the omniscience of God and proudly ask, “How can God know how we feel? How can He have knowledge of our inner attitudes and outward actions?” When men begin to question and doubt the divine attributes of their Creator they are well on the road to eternal ruin. Their reasoning becomes skewed, and they cease to think rationally and reasonably. They seem to think thusly: “How can it be that God sees all this, and yet continue to remain silent? It is a fair inference, therefore, that God does NOT see these things, and is not, therefore, an omniscient God.”

**73:12:** “*Behold, these are the wicked*” - This verse substantiates our conclusion that it is the “wicked” who are under consideration in the previous verse. “Behold, these are the wicked!” Look at them! Take a close look! Observe them carefully. “If there had been any doubt about the character of those men, the case would have been different. But there was none. They were men whose character for wickedness was well known, and yet they were permitted to live in peace and prosperity, as if they were the favorites of heaven” (Barnes, 257). This was the crux of the whole matter. On the surface

it appeared that there was no difference in the way a man lived insofar as his happiness was concerned. So why make such an effort to live a life of holiness if, in fact, the OTHER life is so much better? It is just as well to live a sinful life, to indulge in the flesh and enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. No wonder the Psalmist was troubled.

**73:13:** *“Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart”* - If it was the case that the wicked actually did have it better, then why all the bother about living a pure and clean life? All of the effort put into reforming the life, of cleansing the heart, were futile, IF IT BE THE CASE that the wicked actually are better off.

Notice the extent of the Psalmist's efforts to conform to the heavenly commandments. He had cleansed his heart, representative of the inner man. But in addition, his outward life manifested the integrity of the changed heart. The “hands” represented the moral goodness of his life and application of those things learned in God's word. Was such a concentrated effort vain? Had it all been for naught?

**73:14:** *“For all the day long I have been plagued”* - Why suffer the persecution that goes with living a godly life, if it is for naught? Evidently the Psalmist had suffered persecution at the hands of his enemies because of his righteousness. Such will be our lot when there is a diligent application of the word to our lives. “There were crowns for the reprobates and crosses for the elect; rest was given to the disturbers, and yet peace was denied to the peace makers” (Spurgeon).

## **REGARD**

Verse 15

*15 If I had said, I will speak thus; Behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of thy children.*

**73:15:** In this verse the Psalmist expresses his concern for the “children” of God. Had he expressed openly his doubts, he would have been a stumbling block to others by planting doubts and fears in their hearts. There are some things that are better left to the inner thoughts of the heart than uttered with the lips. Among these are the personal doubts and fears that often flood our soul during a time of discouragement. “We may entertain such doubts for a time without harm to our faith provided that we never lose sight of the fact that

there is an answer, although it might not be readily discernible. The faith of others might not be that strong” (Jackson, 465-467).

## REVELATION

Verses 16-20

- 16 *When I thought how I might know this, It was too painful for me;*  
17 *Until I went into the sanctuary of God, And considered their latter end.*  
18 *Surely thou settest them in slippery places: Thou castest them down to destruction.*  
19 *How are they become a desolation in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.*  
20 *As a dream when one awaketh, So, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou wilt despise their image.*

**73:16:** “*When I thought how I might know this*” – His search for the answer was evidently intent. Every “reasonable explanation” apart from the divine revelation of God was unreasonable. The answer to the Psalmist’s doubts was most difficult. In seeking the answer, he admitted it “*was too painful for me.*” From a purely human stand point, it IS painful. But the pain will cease when we look beyond THIS life and into the next.

**73:17:** “*Until I went into the sanctuary of God*” – The answer to that which he sought to “know” came upon his entry into the holy habitations of heaven’s truth. As is often the case, the Palmist was looking in the wrong place for the answer. The answer to our Psalmist’s question is not found in philosophy, nor is it to be found in the vast libraries of our world. Men cannot reason it out, nor can they come to “know this” until they enter into God’s “sanctuary.” The Psalmist quit looking at the things temporal, and began concentrating on the eternal. Surely the New Testament equivalent of this passage is Paul’s immortal words to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 4:16-18):

Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The Psalmist would now provide the answer to this seeming perplexity. As our title suggests, “Not all is as it seems.”

*“and considered their later end”* - Rather than a fixation upon the here and now, the Psalmist was allowed to gaze down the corridor of time and observe the final end of the wicked. If men could observe the later end of their actions, how many a wicked and wasted life would change in an instant! If the man imbibing alcohol could see the later end, his lips would not touch the glass he holds in his hand. Every action has an eternal consequence, and a consideration of that “later end” would divert men from walking the path of unrighteousness. The Psalmist manifested great wisdom in giving consideration to the final “end” of those who were so arrogant and haughty. Success is not measured by what one might gain in this life, but what shall be his lot in the life to come.

**73:18:** *“Surely thou settest them in slippery places”* - The *“latter end”* is one of destruction. While there may be some sense in which some evil men receive their just reward even in this life, the verse before us is looking to the judgment day when all men will stand before the Almighty, the righteous entering into life, the ungodly into eternal condemnation. All of this life will seem but a “moment” when once we have entered into eternity. Daniel Webster was once asked what he considered to be his most serious thought. Passing by all of the battles on the floor of Congress, he said that his most sobering thought was that of standing before God and giving account as to how he had lived. Yes, there is a “latter end,” and all men, great and small, rich and poor, good and bad, will stand before God. In the words of John Greenleaf Whittier, “Of all the words of tongue or pen, the saddest are, It might have been.”

**73:19:** *“How are they become a desolation in a moment”* - It is not certain here whether the writer speaks of the sudden change that comes upon the wicked at death, or the possible loss of material possessions that is common to those in possession of great wealth. Certainly the rich man and Lazarus could not foresee the reversal of status that would be theirs upon death. But should the “terror” not come in this life, it most assuredly will consume them in the world to come!

**73:20:** *“As a dream when one awaketh”* - Barnes wrote, “The reality is seen when the dream - the gorgeous dream - of life is over” (Barnes). When dreaming, one may imagine that he is rich, or in

great prosperity. But he will awake to find that those things were merely illusionary. When we enter into eternity, this life will seem only like a dream. As Spurgeon noted, “Who cares for the wealth of dreamland? Who indeed but fools? Lord, leave us not to the madness which covets unsubstantial wealth, and ever teach us thine own wisdom” (Spurgeon).

*“Their image”* is the imaginations of their heart. Again, Albert Barnes writes, “God will pay no regard to the dreams of human life, to the outward show, to the appearance; but the affairs of eternity will be regulated by what is real - by that which constitutes the character of the man” (Barnes).

## **REPENTANCE**

### **Verses 21-22**

*21 For my soul was grieved, And I was pricked in my heart:  
22 So brutish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee.*

**73:21:** In these two verses the Psalmist realizes the foolishness of his former way and is grieved over His sins. Any man who rejects the counsel of the Almighty and thereby walks in the counsel of his own wisdom might be accurately described as a “beast before” God. The repentance of the writer is indicative of his tender heart.

*“soul was grieved...pricked in my heart”* - Repentance is produced by Godly sorrow (2 Cor 7:10). Upon learning of his lack of faith and confidence in God, the writer felt deep anguish of soul and heart.

**73:22:** *“brutish”* - The KJV has “foolish.” Indeed, how foolish. He aspired to be LIKE THEM! “As the grass-eating ox has but this present life, and can only estimate things thereby, and by the sensual pleasure which they afford, even so had the Psalmist judged happiness by this mortal life, by outward appearances, and by fleshly enjoyments. Thus he had, for the time, renounced the dignity of an immortal spirit, and, like a mere animal, judged after the sight of the eyes” (Spurgeon). It is precisely this modern day rebellion against God and His word that has produced the immoral and socially unacceptable behavior of our present society. When men take their eyes off of heaven, eternity, and the only objective standard for right and wrong, there is nothing left but a plunge into the abyss of darkness and immorality that results in the behavior likened unto that of a beast of the field.

## RELIANCE

### Verses 23-28

- 23 *Nevertheless I am continually with thee: Thou hast holden my right hand.*
- 24 *Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, And afterward receive me to glory.*
- 25 *Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*
- 26 *My flesh and my heart faileth; But God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.*
- 27 *For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: Thou hast destroyed all them that play the harlot, departing from thee.*
- 28 *But it is good for me to draw near unto God: I have made the Lord Jehovah my refuge, That I may tell of all thy works.*

**73:23:** “*Nevertheless I am continually with thee*” - The closing portion of the Psalm is an expression of complete dependence upon God for guidance. One’s reception into glory is dependent upon staying close to God, and submitting to His guidance and direction. And while the road may at time be difficult, the reception into glory will make our struggles well worth the effort. Let us listen to God’s counsel. “It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). We must seek guidance from heaven if we are to arrive on the eternal shore. The Psalmist declared that he would stay close to God and no longer walk by his own human reasoning.

**73:24:** “*and afterward*” - Oh, the great glory that shall be ours “afterward.” It is just such a hope that provides us with an anchor for the soul. “The answer to all of earth’s inequities, maladjustments, injustices, and wretchedness is not to be expected in this life. Over against all the misfortunes and sorrows of the redeemed there is written the glorious words of the Son of God, ‘Great is your reward in heaven’” (Coffman, Vol. 2, 7). Our reward is not in this life! May we never lose sight of this important truth!

Note the marvelous strength God provides in times of weakness. He will (1) hold our hand, (2) guide us with His counsel, and (3) take us into glory in the hereafter. Of all these promises, however, there is not a one that is outside the power of man to reject. While God may hold our hand, and guide us with His counsel, it is up to man to appropriate.



**73:25:** *“Whom have I in heaven but thee?”* - Peter once asked, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Fanny J. Crosby picked up this refrain:

Thou the spring of all my comfort,  
More than life to me.  
Whom have I on earth beside thee,  
Whom in heav’n but thee.

**73:26:** *“But God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever”* - Isaiah 40:30-31 provides an excellent commentary on this verse. “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait on Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.” Barnes is correct in his analysis: “Not wealth, then; nor honour; not earthly friends; nor fame - will be my reliance and the ground of my hope; but that which I shall regard as most valuable - my supreme joy and rejoicing - will be the fact that God is my friend and portion” (Barnes). Indeed, such things will fail us, but God is our genuine strength! When the time comes for us to cross the valley of the shadow of death, God has promised that He will be with us. There is no other refuge when facing death. How sad that the majority of men have rejected Him, the only hope and stay for the troubled soul.

**73:27:** *“Thou hast destroyed all them that play the harlot”* - Departure from God is likened unto harlotry. Those who depart from God have cast off the only hope they have. Truly without Him, the answers to life’s most perplexing problems will go unanswered. Let us cling to Him for refuge, and pray for strength that we may speak of the great works of God unto others. There is nothing quite like being near to God! The closer we are to God, the less we are affected by the attractions and distractions of this world. “For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17-18). “If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

## ***Lessons***

“Is The Christian Life Worth Living?”

Intro: (1) Consider the condition of Israel at the time of this writing - might made right, wickedness was on the throne and the morals were in the gutter; (2) consider the man Asaph; (3) What did Asaph witness? what about us? (4) The effect this had on Asaph, vss 2, 13, 16; (5) Asaph's realization, vs 16-17; (6) Our question, "Is Christian life worth living?" Yes, if we are convinced of the following truths:

First, BLESSINGS ARE NOT MEASURED IN DOLLARS AND CENTS (cf. verse 1, God is "good" to Israel). In the movie, "It's A Wonderful Life," the fictitious character George Bailey was told by the angel Clarence, "You see George, you really did have a wonderful life." Mr. Bailey had come to realize a truth that so many in our materialistic age have missed. When a person's life is wrapped up in the here and now, such a one will stumble in his faith when those "things" are taken from him. The following tongue-in-cheek assessment of our material possessions may make us think

### ***"Stuff"***

Every spring I start stirring in my stuff. There is closet stuff, drawer stuff, attic stuff, and basement stuff. I separate the good stuff from the bad stuff, then I stuff the good stuff back in drawers and closets, attic and basement; then I stuff the bad stuff anywhere the stuff is not too crowded until I decide if I will need the bad stuff. when the Lord calls me home, my children will both want the good stuff; but the bad stuff, stuffed wherever there is room among the other stuff, will be stuffed in bags and taken to the dump where all the other people's stuff has been taken.

Whenever we have company, they always bring bags and bags of stuff and we have to move all of our stuff that's stuffed in every nook and cranny that's full of our stuff so they can hang and stuff their stuff.

When I visit my son he always moves his stuff so I will have room for my stuff. My daughter-in-law always clears a drawer of her stuff so I have room for my stuff. Their stuff

and my stuff - it would be so much easier to use their stuff and leave my stuff at home with the rest of my stuff.

This spring I had an extra closet built so I could have a place for all the stuff too good to throw away and too bad to keep with my good stuff. You may not have this problem, but I seem to spend a lot of time with stuff - food stuff, cleaning stuff, medicine stuff, clothes stuff, and outside stuff. Whatever would life be like if we didn't have all the stuff?

Whenever we travel we bring all our good stuff. We mix all the stuff we brought together, then when we get ready to go home, all our stuff is scattered and mixed with everyone else's stuff, and someone has lost some stuff. Finally, all our stuff is stuffed in the car, and we go home and unload all our stuff and start washing and arranging all the stuff with the stuff we left at home.

Now, there is all that stuff we use to make us smell better than we do. There is the stuff to make our hair look good, the stuff to cover a bad complexion, stuff to make us look younger and stuff to make us look healthier, stuff to hold us in and stuff to fill us out. There is stuff to read, stuff to play with, stuff to entertain us, and stuff to eat - we stuff ourselves with all the good food stuff.

Well, our lives are filled with stuff - good stuff, bad stuff, little stuff, big stuff, useful stuff, junky stuff and everyone's stuff. Now, whenever we leave all our stuff and go to heaven, whatever happens to our stuff won't matter. We will have all the good stuff God has prepared for us (Dan Manuel, 101)

Second, **HAPPINESS IS NOT MEASURED BY OUTWARD CIRCUMSTANCES.** The Psalmist was looking at the immediate situation. The wicked seemed to have it easy. Their life seemed to be void of "trouble." Even when facing death, they were strong and courageous. But the Psalmist could only see the outward. What were they like on the inside? Therein was the real test.

Third, **RIGHT AND WRONG ARE NOT DETERMINED BY WHAT'S POPULAR** (cf. verses 6-11). The Psalmist observed the wicked. Among their peers and their own "people" they drank life's cup to the fullest. It was an age of materialism, wealth and abundance. It was not popular to be humble. One generation appeared to be well off

without that “religious stuff,” and the next generation followed in their footsteps. Pride was the order of the day; violence ruled the hearts of men; corruption and oppression were popular; and the “tongue walketh through the earth,” blaspheming God and slandering men. Oh yes, wickedness was popular. But that did not make it right.

Fourth, OUR DECISIONS, ACTIONS, CHOICES, ETC. ARE NOT DETERMINED BY WHAT AFFECTS ME ONLY (verses 13-15). We live in the “me” generation. “What I do in the privacy of my own home is my business.” Some argue, “Abortion is right because it is a private matter.” Says who? The Texas Sodomy Law was overturned by the Supreme Court of our land because liberal judges seemed to think that what one does in the “privacy” of his own home is his business. But the Psalmist did not think that way. He gave some consideration to “the generation of thy children” (verses 15), and refused to voice his discouragement if for no other reason than what effect it might have on someone else.

Fifth, DIVINE JUSTICE IS NOT CONFINED TO THIS LIFE, NOR DOES IT WEAKEN WITH THE PASSING OF TIME (cf. verses 16-20). If justice is confined to this world then it is true that the wicked really have it better. But the Bible clearly teaches that there is a judgment day that awaits all men, and in that day the God of all the earth will administer justice and judgment that will extend even into eternity (2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Cor. 4:16-19).

Sixth, GOD'S COUNSEL IS THE ONLY THING THAT WILL LEAD ME TO ETERNAL REWARD (verse 24). Those who listen to the counsel of God in this life, will be received up into glory in the hereafter. The foolish listen to the counsel of the ungodly; but the righteous heed the wisdom that is from above (Psa. 1:1, James 3:15-17).

Finally, THINGS OF THE PRESENT ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT AWAITS THE FAITHFUL CHILD OF GOD (Rom. 8:18).

## *“An Appeal To God For Action Against His Enemies”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript reads, “Maschil of Asaph,” which may mean that it was composed FOR him, or BY him. The latter is more likely. The word Maschil means “didactic,” or adapted “to give instruction.” The Psalm was composed at a time when the temple was ruined, Jerusalem burnt, and the prophets scattered or destroyed. The occasion was likely the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. Consequently, the tone of the Psalm is one of complaint. Albert Barnes had this note:

The “language” could be applied either to the destruction of the temple in the time of the Babylonian invasion; or to the times of the Maccabees, and to the desolations brought upon the land Antiochus Epiphanes; or to some desolation before the temple was built. Rosenmüller, Venema, DeWette, some others, suppose that the reference is to the time of the Maccabees. The reason alleged for this opinion is founded on what is said in Ps. 74:4, 9, particularly Ps. 74:9, where it is asserted that “there is no more any prophet;” that is, no one to instruct the people, or to declare what the result or the issue will be.

It is alleged by them that at the time of the invasion by the Chaldeans there were prophets in the land, and particularly that Jeremiah was then living, who distinctly predicted what the result of it would be. But this is not a conclusive objection to the idea that the reference is to the destruction of the city and the temple by the Chaldees. The meaning of verse 9 may be that there was no divine teacher who could “save” the people, or who could “prevent” those desolations; the matter had gone so far that all divine interference and protection appeared to be withdrawn, and the nation seemed to be abandoned to its fate (Barnes).

## *Analysis*

The Psalmist complains of the desolation of the sanctuary, and pleads with God to remember Mt. Zion (vss. 1-3). He then speaks of the desolation that had come upon the city (vss. 4-8) and prays to God to act for them even as He had done for their fathers (vss. 9-17). He concludes the Psalm with another prayer wherein he asks God to arise and vindicate His honor against the enemies of God and the enemies of the people (vss. 18-23). We have divided the Psalm thus:

I. PRAYER - that God would remember Mount Zion, verses 1-3;

II. REASONS for the prayer:

1. Desolations that had come upon the city, verses 4-8;
2. There was no prophet among the people, verses 9-11;
3. Because God had, in times past, delivered His people, verses 12-15;
4. Because God rules over the earth and has control of all things, verses 16-17;

III. PRAYER - that God would not forget His cause, and that He would deliver them, verses 18-23;

Regarding this Psalm, Barton Bouchier had the following summary, as provided by Spurgeon:

There is one singularity in this Psalm which reminds one strongly of Psalm 44: there is not one mention of national or personal sin throughout, no allusion to the Lords righteous dealing in their punishment, no supplication for pardon and forgiveness; and yet one can hardly doubt that the writer of the Psalm, be he who he may, must have felt as keenly as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any other prophet of the captivity, the sins and iniquities which had brought all this sore evil upon them. But still, though there be expostulation, there is no complaint; though there be mourning, there is no murmuring; there is far more the cry of a smitten child, wondering why, and grieving that his fathers face is so turned away from him in displeasure, and a fathers hand so heavy on the child of his love. Or, as we might almost say, it is like the cry of one of those martyred ones beneath the altar, wondering at the Lords continued endurance of his heritage thus trampled under foot of the marauder and oppressor, and exclaiming, 'How long, O Lord, how long?' And yet it is the appeal of one who was still a sufferer, still groaning under the pressure of his calamities, 'Why hast thou cast us off for ever? We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet among us'" (Spurgeon).

The great value of this Psalm is that it teaches us how to pray when calamity comes upon us. To the Psalmist it seemed as if God had abandoned His people (verse 1), His possession upon Mt. Zion (verse 2), and His place in the sanctuary (verse 3). The later half of the Psalm shows us the writer still praying, asking God to “remember His people” (verses 18-19), respect His promise (verse 20), and reveal His great power (verses 22-23). Thus we see in this Psalm Asaph’s frustration in verses 1-11, and Asaph’s faith in verses 12-23 (Willmington, 256).

## **Commentary**

### **Prayer Verses 1-3**

- 1 *O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?*
- 2 *Remember thy congregation, which thou hast gotten of old, Which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance; And mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.*
- 3 *Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual ruins, All the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary.*

**74:1:** The circumstance which called forth this Psalm was one of national disaster in which even the temple of God itself had been desecrated. Here the Psalmist asks "Why?" For the Israelite that remained in the land, it must have been a time of great despair and doubt. The kingdom had been destroyed; the people carried captive; the glory of former days was now gone "for ever." Israel's wickedness had become so bad that punishment was necessary. Unfortunately, the faithful remnant would need to suffer along side the ungodly. Out of their despair they cried, "*Why hast thou cast us off for ever?*" It would appear that God had turned His back even on the faithful. It must not be forgotten that although the righteous may suffer the consequences of the sin of others, they do not suffer the guilt of sin.

*"thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture"* – Was God angry with those who remained in the land? Were these things happening because of God's wrath? All the Psalmist could do was ask, "Why?" Sometimes there are no answers and we must accept the situation by faith.

**74:2:** "*Remember thy congregation*" - The call to "*remember*" was a request on the part of the Psalmist that God treat the faithful favorably. It must be remembered that God's time schedule is not our time schedule, and what may often appear a long time to us is but a grain of sand in God's hourglass. God would not forget His people. But they would have to go through the fire so as to have their faith tested and their dedication proven. For now the Psalmist and the people were pleading for God to remember them, not for their own sake, but for the sake of God's glory and honor.

**74:3:** The mention of the "*the perpetual ruins*" suggests that the setting of the Psalm was the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 587. In no other period of Jewish history was there anything like this. The alternate reading as per the ASV margin reads, "The enemy hath wrought all evil in the sanctuary." Perhaps we could enter into the Psalmist's empathy if we consider the attack upon the Lord's church by unholy men; an attack that, at least for the moment, may appear to be having some success. The utter destruction of glorious Zion today is enough to break the hearts of those who love Jesus and love His beautiful bride.

### ***REASONS for the prayer*** ***Verses 4-17***

The Psalmist will open his heart to those who would listen. His words are engraved in stone, and you and I, though generations removed, are given a glimpse at the circumstances surrounding his lament.

First, *Desolations that had come upon the city* (verses 4-8):

- 4 *Thine adversaries have roared in the midst of thine assembly;  
They have set up their ensigns for signs.*
- 5 *They seemed as men that lifted up Axes upon a thicket of trees.*
- 6 *And now all the carved work thereof They break down with  
hatchet and hammers.*
- 7 *They have set thy sanctuary on fire; They have profaned the  
dwelling-place of thy name by casting it to the ground.*
- 8 *They said in their heart, Let us make havoc of them altogether:  
They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.*

The enemies of God had entered the city, even into God's assembly.



The elaborate “carved work” had been destroyed. The sanctuary had been set on fire. The very “dwelling place” of God (the Holy of Holies, the ark of the covenant, and the mercy seat) had been cast to the ground. All that was left were the blackened timbers that once adorned the Temple. But to make matters worse, these unholy adversaries planned and schemed among themselves to “make havoc” of God’s people (verse 8). Let’s take a closer look.

**74:4:** The dissolution of the Temple, and the setting up of *"ensigns for signs"* indicates the powerful presence of the Babylon army even amidst the ruins of the Temple itself. Barnes points out that the word translated "assembly" is a different word than that in verse 2. "This word means a meeting together by mutual appointment, and is often applied to the meeting of God with his people at the tabernacle" (Barnes). The enemy had entered into the "sanctuary" itself; the very place where God met man.

**74:5:** *"as men that lifted up axes"* - Like men who were wielding axes as they marched through some thicket, these men turned their destructive power upon the temple of God. "The conquering enemy soldiers assaulted the sanctuary just like a company of woodsmen chopping down a grove of trees" (Coffman, 14). While there were walls lined with cedar and decorated with beautiful carvings, it was the gold with which these things were overlaid that motivated the soldiers to desecrate and destroy the temple. It was necessary, therefore, that the wood over which the gold was laid, to be destroyed. Notice 1 Kings 6:21 ff.

War is the most wasteful and destructive exercise of man. That the beloved temple should be thus hacked and hewn to pieces was more than the devout singer could bear to recall. There they were, the hated foe, wantonly smashing to pieces the pride and joy of a people. The sights and sounds of the destruction were too much for the singer" (Phillips, 1:615).

**74:6-7:** Spurgeon made application of this verse to the false teachers who would bring destruction upon the body of Jesus Christ, the church:

In these days men are using axes and sledge-hammers against the gospel and the church. Glorious truths, far more exquisite than the goodliest carving, are cavilled over and smashed by the blows of modern criticism. Truths which have upheld the afflicted and cheered the dying are smitten by pretentious Goths, who would be accounted learned, but know not the first principles of the truth.

With sharp ridicule, and heavy blows of sophistry, they break the faith of some. Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans are but types of spiritual foes who labour to crush the truth and the people of God (Spurgeon).

The degree of destruction was complete. Utter ruin was the end result. This was not a mere invasion, it was utter annihilation.

**74:8:** *"They said in their heart"* – The evil plans of the enemy began in the heart. And what an evil plan they devised! Their intent was to *"make havoc of them altogether."* One rendered this, "We will force them down altogether!"

Their evil schemes were carried out and they *"burned up all the synagogues of God in the land."* The invading army stopped what little worship may have still existed by destroying the meeting places and dismantling the assemblies.

The mention of the "synagogues" is one of the stronger arguments in favor of a much later date than that of 587. See Keil and Delitzsch for argument in favor of the later date. To accept a later date based solely upon the mention of synagogues, however, seems to present more problems than it solves, especially in view of the utter destruction of the Temple. Anderson noted: "There may have been synagogues in Palestine by the Maccabean period, and perhaps earlier, but it is doubtful whether our Psalm refers to them" (Anderson, 541). The marginal reading in the ASV translates this as "the places of assemblies." The LXX renders the verse, "Come let us abolish the feasts of the Lord from the earth." The use of the word in other passages is a strong argument in favor of this translation. Barnes points out that the word rendered synagogues is "translated by the word 'seasons,' Gen. i.14; ex. xiii.10.; 'set time' Gen 17:21; 'time appointed,' Ex. 23:15" (Barnes). Some commentators suggest that the reference may be to the "schools of the prophets," a weak argument it seems to me.

The desolation of the city prompted the Psalmist to cry out to God. But there was more.

Second, *there was no prophet among the people* (verses 9-11):

9 *We see not our signs: There is no more any prophet; Neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.*

- 10 *How long, O God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?*
- 11 *Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand? Pluck it out of thy bosom and consume them.*

**74:9:** “no more any prophet” - It was not uncommon during a time of crisis for God to send a prophet and give direction to Israel. But there were no prophets in the land, and the Psalmist expresses a sense of bewilderment over the loss. Israel had been given opportunity to repent, but she rejected it. Jeremiah was likely a prisoner in Egypt at this time, or perhaps even dead. Ezekiel’s voice had been stilled, at least in and around Jerusalem. Daniel was in Babylon. Indeed, it was a time of “famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah” (Amos 8:11). But Israel had refused to hear the prophets when they were warning. Now there was lament for the loss of the word of God. When men refuse to listen, God eventually stops His pleading. That time had come for ungodly Israel to receive her punishment. While there were no prophets in Judaea, it does not necessarily mean that there were no prophets at all. Jeremiah would have been in Egypt, and the great prophets Daniel and Ezekiel were in Babylon. But the prophetic voice was silent in Israel.

**74:10:** “How long, O God” - The prayer of the Psalmist is intent. When our trials and tribulations overwhelm us, and when it appears that our God has drawn back His hand (vs. 11), it is not the time for us to sit with folded hands but to plead our cause before the throne of Him Who has it within His power to render aid.

**74:11:** “Why drawest thou back thy...right hand?” - The right hand of God represents His mighty power and authority. The Psalmist was asking for a clear manifestation that God was in control over the enemies. The expression here is equivalent to asking why God did not interfere and save them. But alas, there would be no response on the part of God. The time had come for national Israel to weep because of her sins. Coffman makes this observation relative to the Psalmist: “The Psalmist appears to be in a class with Jeremiah, that is, a member of God’s ‘true people’” (Coffman, 15).

Oh how the Psalmist wept! The city was desolate and there was no prophet in the land. This would have been enough to drive the Psalmist to his knees in prayer. But there was more.

Third, *because God had, in times past, delivered His people* (verses

12-15):

- 12 *Yet God is my King of old, Working salvation in the midst of the earth.*  
13 *Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: Thou brakest the heads of the sea-monsters in the waters.*  
14 *Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces; Thou gavest him to be food to the people inhabiting the wilderness.*  
15 *Thou didst cleave fountain and flood: Thou driedst up mighty rivers.*

**74:12:** "*Yet God is my King of old*" - What a remarkable statement of faith. In spite of the apparent abandonment, behind it all, the Psalmist knew that God was at work, fulfilling His purpose for Israel. The Psalmist may not have been able to see the light, but he was confident that Jehovah was "working salvation" for the good of all. In faith, he recalled God's past dealings with Israel.

There is great encouragement in that word "yet" (ASV, "for" in the KJV). It may appear that Babylon ruled, "yet" God was still on the throne and through Daniel the prophet taught king Nebuchadnezzar that God puts men on thrones whom He desires, and removes those whom He wishes. God was still God. All Israel's history attested to that truth.

The man of faith does not shut his eyes to the disasters which overtake men and nations, but he sees more than the incontrovertible facts of wretchedness and misery. He sees God. Therefore, his last word is never desolation, but salvation (Phillips, 618).

*"Working salvation in the midst of the earth"* - The "*midst of the earth*" may very well refer to Israel's captivity in Egypt. But do not miss the point the Psalmist is making. While the situation looked bleak, God was working out His plan. This author has now made more than a dozen trips into the former Soviet block nations. For seventy-five years that part of the world was deprived of God's word. When Lenin led the Bolsheviks to power in 1917, he was determined to take God out of the lives of the people. Atheism ruled for more than seven decades. Every school, every political platform, every theater and newspaper was a propaganda machine for spreading atheism. But God was working His salvation in the "midst of the earth," and in the early 1990's the "iron curtain" was pulled back and

the gospel of Jesus Christ was allowed entrance into that once spiritually dark part of the world. Let us, in any and every situation, not forget that "God is my King of old," and that He will indeed work out His salvation.

**74:13-15:** When the time came for God to act in behalf of His people, He was always faithful. This the Psalmist reflects upon. God had delivered Israel from the Egyptian army by providing passage across the Red Sea, and then crushing the "heads of the sea monsters," no doubt a reference to the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. God then provided sustenance for Israel while in the wilderness. When we think of Daniel, Esther, or Noah, we can see God's hand of deliverance.

Finally, the Psalmist cried out in faith *because he believed that God rules over the earth and has control of all things* (verses 16-17):

- 16 *The day is thine, the night also is thine: Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.*  
17 *Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: Thou hast made summer and winter.*

**74:16-17:** A recognition of the complete control of God over the universe serves as a source of comfort in times of trial and tribulation. A God that controlled the day and night, and Who makes the summer and the winter, could surely bring deliverance to the nation. The God Who created the earth, spoke the light into existence, and Who made summer and winter, can surely control any and every circumstance that might come along. What tremendous faith this Psalmist had in the power of his God.

### ***Prayer*** **Verses 18-23**

- 18 *Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O Jehovah, And that a foolish people hath blasphemed thy name.*  
19 *Oh deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the wild beast: Forget not the life of thy poor for ever.*  
20 *Have respect unto the covenant; For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of violence.*  
21 *Oh let not the oppressed return ashamed: Let the poor and needy praise thy name.*

- 22 *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee all the day.*
- 23 *Forget not the voice of thine adversaries: The tumult of those that rise up against thee ascendeth continually.*

**74:18:** "*Remember this*" - The Psalmist closes with a prayer that God would deliver them from the enemy. He asks God to remember His people.

*"a foolish people"* – Sometimes the word "foolish" describes a wicked person rather than one lacking in intelligence. Those who blasphemed God were, no doubt, foolish.

God DID remember! And 70 years after the captivity began, God returned Israel to her home land.

**74:19:** "*deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove*" - The metaphor of "turtle-dove" is used nowhere else in the scripture in reference to Israel. Barnes suggests "the turtle-dove is a name of endearment for one beloved" (Barnes), and that certainly seems to be the thought here.

**74:20:** "*The dark places of the earth*" - Coffman pointed out that "most of the scholars seem to think this refers to the hiding places such as caves, etc. where people tried to hide from Babylonian enemies, who, as this verse states, were systematically hunting them down wherever they could find them and killing them" (Coffman, 19-20). We tend to agree with Barnes, however, that it is "the lands from whence came the armies that had invaded Judea, and that threatened desolation. They were dark places of heathenism and idolatry" (Barnes). The New Testament equivalent of this verse is in 1 John 5:19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one."

**74:22:** "*plead thine own cause*" is literally "contend thine own contention" (Barnes). The Psalmist recognized that it was really God being assailed by the enemy, and not only God's people. Persecution of God's people is persecution of God. This important truth is seen in the persecution that Saul led against the church. When he was confronted by Christ he was asked, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

**74:23:** We agree with Coffman that "it was not God who needed to

be reminded of the covenant, it was the apostate Israel" (Coffman, 19). Her unfaithfulness needed to be called to her attention in hopes that she would be brought to repentance. This is the plea of a penitent heart, beseeching God not to forget His people. The Psalm is a wonderful demonstration of the faith of the Psalmist, despite the things that had come upon Israel. Right to the end, the Psalmist prays, and we can't help but believe that God answered.

### ***Lessons***

1. One of the benefits of this little Psalm is the insight it provides us into the heart of those who are suffering disappointment and discouragement. How did they react? What about us? When we see how faithful men of God trusted in their Lord and wrestled with their doubts in times of distress, we are thereby taught how to behave ourselves under similar circumstances. We learn moreover, that when the fiery trial befalls us, no strange thing has happened unto us; we are following the trail of a multitude who have experienced the same.
2. Sin will bring Divine retribution. Israel had refused to hear her prophets. The longsuffering of God eventually ran out and Israel had been carried into captivity. Now all the nation could do was lament. The answer to their "why" was as near as a reflection upon the past. The displeasure of God was the cause and bitterness of all their calamities. They look above the instruments of their trouble, who, they knew, could have no power against them unless it were given them from above, and keep their eye upon God, by whose determined counsel they were delivered up into the hands of wicked and unreasonable men. Yes, the "wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23).
3. The people of God must not think that because they are cast down they are therefore cast off. God stands ready to forgive if men will only repent.
4. When men refuse to listen to God's word, He will take the word from them. Israel refused to listen to her prophets for so long that God took the prophets away from His people. If we refuse to study God's word while we have the opportunity we stand in jeopardy of losing that opportunity.
5. Trials and tribulation provide opportunity to increase our patience and strengthen our faith. We, like the Psalmist, should turn to

God in times of trouble.

***Burdens We Bear***

by Mary Wacaster

When you feel a heavy burden,  
And your heart begins to sink,  
Then count it as opportunity;  
Take a moment to think  
How it can be for your learning.  
Gather strength from above  
From the arms of the Father,  
And His everlasting love.  
For He is always faithful  
To show us His care.  
His heart is always with us  
In the burden that we bear.



## *“God Our Sovereign Judge”*

### ***Introduction***

According to the subscript this is a “Psalm or Song of Asaph. ”As for the background of the Psalm, it is that of a “great national disaster looming starkly ahead and threatening the destruction of the people” (Coffman, 22). The precise occasion of the Psalm is difficult to determine. There is nothing in the Psalm itself which provides any help. It seems to have been a time of national danger; a time when wicked and powerful men had combined for the purpose of usurping the authority, and setting aside the legitimate claimant to power, or when there seemed to have been a universal dissolution of authority, or general anarchy (cf. Ps. 75:3, “The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved”). Some have suggested that the Psalm is associated with the defeat of Sennacherib. The threat by Sennacherib was indeed great, and it took a great deliverance to impress upon the nations around the magnificence of the God of Israel. But the language is too general to be dogmatic as to the historical background.

### ***Analysis***

The general theme of the Psalm is the sovereignty of God. The Psalmist asserts that in due time God will take vengeance on those who rebel against Him. The greatest difficulty in analyzing the Psalm is that of determining who is speaking in each verse. It would appear that verses 1, and 7-9 are from the Psalmist, with the remainder of the Psalm being the words of God. In the Psalm we have:

- (1) The Psalmist speaks his intent to praise God, verse 1;
- (2) God speaks and expresses His intent to judge, verses 2-3;
- (3) God warns the arrogant with regard to their rebellious and proud attitude and actions, verses 4-6;
- (4) The Psalmist speaks of God as the sovereign Judge, verse 7-8;
- (5) The Psalmist again speaks of his intent to praise God, verse 9;
- (6) God speaks and promises judgment for the wicked and reward for the righteous, verse 10.

We found a number of good outlines on the Psalm. Phillips concentrated on the sovereignty of God:

- I. God Is Sovereign In His Person (75:1)
- II. God is Sovereign In His Power (75:2-3)
- III. God is Sovereign In His Purposes (75:4-7)
- IV. God is Sovereign In His Punishments (75:8)
- V. God is Sovereign In His Praise (75:9-10)

Roy Deaver divides the Psalm thusly:

- I. Praise (1)
- II. Response (2-3)
- III. Admonition (4-8)
- IV. Joy (9-10)

Our analysis of the Psalm is this:

- I. Psalmist: "I will give thanks" (verse 1)
- II. God: "I will judge" (verses 2-3)
- III. God: "I will warn" (verses 4-6)
- IV. Psalmist: "God will judge" (verses 7-9)
- V. God: "I will punish and reward" (verse 10)

## ***Commentary***

### **Psalmist: "*I will give thanks*" Verse 1**

*1 We give thanks unto thee, O God; We give thanks, for thy name is near: Men tell of thy wondrous works.*

**75:1:** The Psalm may have been designed for use in public worship. Some event provided this occasion for rejoicing, leading some to suggest that the occasion was the destruction of Sennacherib's army. But any occasion of deliverance would provide the background for such thanksgiving.

*"We give thanks"* - Twice in this one verse the Psalmist declares his intent to "give thanks." The cessation of thanksgiving is the first step in complete apostasy. See Romans 1:20 ff. "Never let us neglect thanksgiving, or we may fear that another time our prayers will remain unanswered. As the smiling flowers gratefully reflect in their

lovely colours the various constituents of the solar ray, so should gratitude spring up on our hearts after the smiles of God's providence" (Spurgeon).

*"For thy name is near"* - The "name" is synonymous with God Himself and is often used to describe the presence of God. "The word name is often used to designate the person himself; and the idea here is, that God was near; that he had manifested himself to them in some special manner, and that for this there was occasion of praise" (Barnes). It was the "marvelous works" of God which serve as the foundation from which the praise and thanksgiving spring. Israel's reflection upon their past history would certainly provide ample reason for praise and thanksgiving. "We sing not of a hidden God, who sleeps and leaves the church to her fate, but of one who ever in our darkest days is most near, a very present help in trouble, 'Near is his name.' Baal is on a journey, but Jehovah dwells in his church" (Spurgeon).

### **God: *"I will judge"*** **Verses 2-3**

*2 When I shall find the set time, I will judge uprightly.*

*3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I have set up the pillars of it. Selah*

**75:2:** The KJV renders this, "When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly." Some have rendered this, "I will seize the moment." This verse has been construed as either (1) God speaking, or (2) the king that is about to be anointed speaking of the nature and character of his administration that would be carried out in his reign. The only difficulty in the later position is (1) the Psalm is attributed in the subscript to Asaph, not the King, and (2) some of the statements in this section simply cannot fit the role of an earthly king over Israel. Our opinion is that God is speaking here.

According to this interpretation, this is the language of God, as if implying that, although "the earth" was then "dissolved," or although disorders were allowed to exist, yet he would take a set time, or take the appointed time for judgment, and would pronounce a sentence on the conduct of people, and deal with them in a righteous manner, punishing the rebellious, and vindicating his own cause (Barnes).

Of special interest in the verse is reference to God's "set time." Coffman noted that "everything in the whole universe is, as it were,

scheduled according to the time God has set for it" (Coffman, 23). Jesus came "in the fulness of time" (Galatians 4:4), and while upon the earth frequently said, "My time is not yet come." Indeed, "all such declarations in the Bible indicate that God has set a time-clock monitor upon the entire progress of history" (Coffman, 23). The great mystery is how God works according to His schedule while responding to the prayers of His saints in times of need and desperation. Morgan has written, "All the appearances of the hour may be perplexing, but the heart may know that He knows, and awaits only the right moment to act. Chaos may characterize the outlook, but order enwraps it all, for God has set up the pillars" (Morgan, 248-249).

One interesting feature of this Psalm is its relation to Psalm 74. In Psalm 74 the Psalmist, discouraged by the destruction and desolation of the Temple cries out, "How long?" This Psalm is God's answer: "Until the right time."

**75:3:** *"The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved"* - The word "dissolved" means to melt, to flow down; to perish. The writer is describing the conditions that were present in the kingdom of Israel. The later part of the verse, then, is a statement of intent, "that amidst all the commotions of earth, and all that seemed to threaten ruin, his hand sustained all, and he would not allow things to proceed to permanent disorder" (Barnes). This verse presents a great difficulty to those who place them in the mouth of the Psalmist. Only God has the power to accomplish what is here stated. "When anarchy is abroad, and tyrants are in power, everything is unloosed, dissolution threatens all things, the solid mountain of government melt as wax; but even then the Lord upholds and sustains the right" (Spurgeon).

How can I sink with such a prop  
As my eternal God,  
Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,  
And spreads the heaven's abroad (author unknown).

**God: "I will warn"**  
**Verses 4-6**

- 4 I said unto the arrogant, Deal not arrogantly; And to the wicked,  
Lift not up the horn:*  
*5 Lift not up your horn on high; Speak not with a stiff neck.*

6 *For neither from the east, nor from the west, Nor yet from the south, cometh lifting up.*

**75:4:** *"I said to the arrogant"* - God of course speaks through His word. The message for the arrogant is that they cease their arrogance, and humbly submit to the Almighty. To the wicked He says, *"Lift not up the horn."* The wicked are to cease their haughtiness and self reliance. The "horn" was a symbol of strength. The image is that of an animal tossing its head in defiance. Here God addresses those who were causing the strife and disorder. The warning was simply, "Do not rebel against God's ordained authority." Do not be arrogant as if the wisdom of men were better than that of the Almighty. My, my, how men need to heed the warning today. The Psalms are indeed relevant. In an age when men are lifting up their heads against God's ordained pattern, we must remind them to "deal not arrogantly."

**75:5:** *"Speak not with a stiff neck"* - Do not "in a proud, self confident, arrogant, manner" rise up against God and His anointed. The word rendered "stiff" suggest a bold, impudent, wicked attitude in the heart. It is a reckless regard for truth, and a lack of submission to the commandments of God. "The outstretched neck of insolent pride is sure to provoke his axe. Those who carry their heads high shall find that they will be lifted yet higher, as Haaman was upon the gallows which he had prepared for the righteous man" (Spurgeon).

**75:6:** *"For neither from the east, nor from the west"* - It is not from the earth that rulers and powers to be are set into positions of prominence. It comes by the providence of God. As Barnes points out: "To lift up is not the work of men, or is not originated from any part of it, east, west, or south, but must come from God alone" (Barnes). Coffman also noted that "the significance of the omission of 'north' here lies in the fact that 'Foreign invasions of Israel generally came from the north; and deliverance would logically have been expected from some other direction'" (Coffman, 25).

**Psalmist: "God will judge"**  
**Verses 7-9**

7 *But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and lifteth up another.*

8 *For in the hand of Jehovah there is a cup, and the wine foameth; It is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same: Surely the*

*dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall drain them, and drink them.*

*9 But I will declare for ever, I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.*

**75:7:** "*But God is the judge*" - Here the language shifts back to that of the Psalmist. The theme of God's judgment continues. "All depends on him, not on the natural advantages of a country; not on human strength, human skill, or human prowess" (Barnes). Even now God is judging. It is God that rules over all; it is He that places men in positions of rule and authority. And just as God can place men in positions of authority and kingly rule, He can remove them. What is said of kings is applicable as well to countries.

**75:8:** There is within this verse a side of God that few men care to investigate, and of which only a minority are aware. In the hand of God there is a cup. The "*wine foameth*" translate the Hebrew 'hhamar' and may mean either to "boil up, or to be red." The idea is that the wrath of God, like wine that ferments, will eventually reach a state of completion. The patience of God with sinful men will eventually run out. At that time "*he poureth out of the same,*" and the "wicked" of the earth will "drink" the dregs of God's wrath. The "dregs" which lie at the bottom of the cup are bitter. When men refuse to submit to God, they bring upon themselves the bitter taste of God's judgment. If not in this life, then surely in that which is to come.

Oh the anguish and the heart-break of the day of wrath! Mark well, it is for all the wicked; all hell for all the ungodly; the dregs for the dregs; bitters for the bitter; wrath for the heirs of wrath. Righteousness is conspicuous, but over all terror spreads a tenfold night, cheerless, without a star. Oh happy they who drink the cup of godly sorrow, and the cup of salvation; these, though now despised, will then be envied by the very men who trod them under foot" (Spurgeon).

**75:9:** While the wicked can only partake of the "dregs" of God's wrath, the righteous will praise God through the endless ages. "They shall chant while the others roar in anguish" (Spurgeon).

**God: "*I will punish and reward*"**  
**Verse 10**

*10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; But the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up.*

**75:10:** There are two classes of humanity, namely the "wicked" and the "righteous." This great division appears throughout the pages of the Bible. There are two classes of people, traveling two roads, and with two destinations. The one (the wicked) will be "cut off," and the other (the righteous) will be lifted up. May each of us strive to be among the righteous when the time of eternal separation comes.

"In a rightly ordered society, good men are counted great men, virtue confers true rank, and grace is more esteemed than gold" (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. We see in this Psalm at least one of the means by which God is known, namely His mighty works (verse 1).
2. Notice the Individual determination to do what is right - at all costs (verse 2).
3. The present distressful situation in this world is only characteristic of men gone awry (verse 3).
4. A warning to the wicked - do not be arrogant; beware of the danger of pride. All such arrogance finds its root in humanism (verse 4).
5. God is in control. Power and position are given to kings by the Almighty (verse 6).
7. There is a "Cup" in the hand of God. God's judicial wrath fills the cup. But our Lord drank from the depths of that cup for us. All who do not flee to God for refuge will find themselves drinking the dregs on that great judgment day.
8. Notice the intent of the Psalmist to remain faithful in spite of the dangers that surround him; in spite of the "dissolving" of the kingdoms about him.
9. There will be a separation of the wicked and the righteous.

## *“The God Who Delivers”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is ascribed to Asaph, and there is no reason to doubt that authorship. The occasion is unknown and there is no internal evidence that might suggest something about the exact time of composition. It was evidently written on some occasion when an attack had been made on Jerusalem, in which the enemy had been repelled and defeated. Coffman was of the opinion that “the occasion here is the deliverance from the threat of Sennacherib’s army; and we must therefore understand the ‘Asaph’ of the title as designating not the original Asaph, but the division of the Levites named after him” (Coffman, 229). Likewise, Keil and Delitzsch declared that “it is hardly possible for there to be a Psalm the contents of which so exactly coincide with an historical situation of which more is known from other sources, as the contents of this Psalm confessedly does with the overthrow of the army of Assyria before Jerusalem” (Keil and Delitzsch). Our title reflects not only God’s miraculous intervention in that situation, but His continual watch care over us each and every day. The Psalm does, in fact, tell us of “The God Who Delivers.”

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains a declaration of God’s excellence in verses 1-10, and verse 12. In view of God’s great power, the author exhorts his hearers to make the appropriate response in verse 11. G.Campbell Morgan has the following:

The song has three movements. In the first, God is seen as the defense of the people (1-3). In the second, His victory over their enemies is declared (4-6). In the third, the truth is summarized, and appeal is made to His people and the surrounding nations to change their attitude toward Him (10-12). While the weapons of our warfare are spiritual, God is the same in might; and while He is in the midst our defense is sure. No weapon formed against the trusting people can prosper” (Morgan, 249).



Roy Deaver emphasizes certain character traits of God the Deliverer, and sees in the Psalm...

- I. His Fame, 1-3;
- II. His Glory, 4-6;
- III. His Terror, 7-9;
- IV. His Praise, 10;
- V. His Right, 11-12 (Deaver, 1:261).

We will follow brother Deaver for our study.

## ***Commentary***

### ***His Fame*** **Verses 1-3**

- 1 In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel.*
- 2 In Salem also is his tabernacle, And his dwelling-place in Zion.*
- 3 There he brake the arrows of the bow; The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah*

**76:1:** "God [is] *known*" - God has manifested His great care over Israel, and over the city of Jerusalem. He has manifested Himself there as perhaps nowhere else. The use of both Judah and Israel suggests that the Psalm was written during the time of the divided kingdom and that the whole of the nation is being addressed. In some way God had made His power known. "He has evinced his watchful care over the city so as to demand a proper acknowledgement; he has manifested himself there as he has not elsewhere" (Barnes).

**76:2-3:** "*In Salem...in Zion*" - Salem is the ancient name for Jerusalem. It was in Salem where Melchizedek rules and "king of Salem," and served as "priest of the Most High God" (Gen. 14:18). "Salem" means "peace," hence it is in the city of "peace" where the tabernacle resided. Here was God's "dwelling place." Sennacherib had come to Jerusalem with the intention of adding this city to his long list of conquered cities. But it was "there," outside the walls of Jerusalem, that God "brake the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword." Sennacherib's instruments of battle were taken from him, his armies thoroughly slain by the thousands. Coffman observed,

The big word here is 'there,' a reference to Jerusalem, which was exactly where the judgment of God fell upon the mighty army of Sennacherib. Note that all of the significant military weapons of the enemy were destroyed: the arrows, the shield, the sword, and the 'battle,' that latter word meaning 'everything' that was required in the fighting of a battle (Coffman, 2:30).

### ***His Glory*** **Verses 4-6**

*4 Glorious art thou and excellent, From the mountains of prey.  
5 The stouthearted are made a spoil, They have slept their sleep;  
And none of the men of might have found their hands.  
6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, Both chariot and horse are cast  
into a deep sleep.*

**76:4:** The Hebrew word here translated with our English "*glorious*" has reference to a luminous or shining object. God is glorious in His very nature. He is the light of men. The word "*excellent*" means exalted, noble, and great. Both of these words refer to the perfect nature of God.

The "*prey*" is that obtained by hunting. It has reference to the plunder of a victor. When Sennacherib was defeated no doubt Israel threw open the gates of the city and plundered the "mountains" goods left behind by the defeated, dead, and dying armies of Sennacherib. But the Psalmist quickly calls our attention back to the truth that it is God Who provided the victory. The victory was both great and glorious.

**76:5:** The "*stouthearted*" are the valiant men; those with great courage. But even these were made a "spoil." The "*sleep*" here is likely the sleep of death. This particular enemy had suffered complete defeat. In their hands there was no plunder. The Septuagint renders the last part of this verse, "have found nothing in their hands." They had nothing to show for their attack upon the great city; they had been turned back empty handed. What we see here is the utter defeat of the enemy of God, what Delitzsch calls "the field of corpses...the omnipotent energy of the word of the God of Jacob" (Keil and Delitzsch, QV).

**76:6:** One must keep in mind the part that God plays in this victory. It would appear from the language of the Psalm that the victory was

so overwhelming, so astonishing, that one could only conclude that it was wrought by God. It was at God's "rebuke." When He pronounced it so, both horse and rider were brought to defeat. The "chariot" has reference to the rider. The Hebrew 'recheb' may "mean riders, cavalry, as well as chariot" (Barnes). The idea seems to be that "both the horsemen and horses had fallen into a deep slumber, or that the rumbling of the chariot wheels had ceased, and that there was profound silence, like a deep sleep" (Barnes). Coffman quoted Maclaren's summary of this verse: "One word from the sovereign lips of the God of Jacob, and all the noise of the camp is hushed, and we look upon a field of the dead, lying in awful stillness, dreamlessly sleeping their long slumber" (Coffman, 2:32).

### ***His Terror*** **Verses 7-9**

- 7 *Thou, even thou, art to be feared; And who may stand in thy sight  
when once thou art angry?*  
8 *Thou didst cause sentence to be heard from heaven; The earth  
feared, and was still,*  
9 *When God arose to judgment, To save all the meek of the earth.*  
Selah

**76:7:** "*Thou, even thou*" - Notice the repetition of "thou." It is as though "the mind paused at the mention of God, and remained in a state of reverence, repeating the thought" (Barnes). Coffman sees in verses 7-9 "an announcement of the eschatological defeat of the nations at the last judgment" (Coffman, 2:32). Of course, any judgment upon men in the course of history serves as a type of the final judgment. And who IS it that "*may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?*" The implication is that none shall stand. That being the case, this verse serves as a prophecy of God's final blow against evil on that great judgment day.

**76:8:** "*Thou didst cause sentence to be heard from heaven*" – Men may stop their ears from hearing God's warning. They may refuse to listen to the gracious invitation, "Come unto me." They may even succeed in silencing the proclamation of the truth under limited and divinely permitted situations. But all men will hear the sentence, "depart from me" when God pronounces judgment from heaven.

*"the earth feared, and was still"* - The scriptures frequently use hyperbolic language, as if the earth were conscious of the presence of God. See also Psalms 65:12-13; 114:3-7; and Habakkuk 3:8-11.

**76:9:** “*When God arose to judgment*” – Sennacherib may have thought he was capable of defeating this city of God much like he had defeated other cities throughout Judah. But “when God arose to judgment” he learned that he was no match for God. Military might can not compete with the “meek of the earth.”

***His Praise***  
**Verse 10**

*10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee.*

**76:10:** The meaning is that the “*wrath*” of the invading host would give an occasion for God's power to be manifested, leading to praise from men. When the wrath of Sennacherib was defeated outside the walls of Jerusalem, it was a manifest token of God's power to intervene and overrule the wicked devices of men. In this way it can be said that the “wrath of men” shall praise God. Albert Barnes may have come close to the meaning:

The wicked conduct of a child is an occasion for the display of the just character and the wise administration of a parent; the act of a pirate, rebel, a murderer, furnishes an occasion for the display of the just principles of law, and the stability and power of government. In like manner, the sins of the wicked are made an occasion for the display of the Divine perfections in maintaining law (Barnes).

Coffman draws our attention to the case of Moses:

Pharaoh was angry with God's people and decided to exterminate all of them, by his edict commanding the destruction of all male children in the Nile River. Did that anger praise God? Indeed! Pharaoh's edict did not destroy God's people; it only bounced the infant Moses out of the River and into the lap of Pharaoh's daughter, from which position Moses eventually delivered God's people, destroying Pharaoh and all his host in the process (Coffman, 2:34).

## ***His Right*** **Verses 11-12**

- 11 *Vow, and pay unto Jehovah your God: Let all that are round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.*
- 12 *He will cut off the spirit of princes: He is terrible to the kings of the earth.*

**76:11:** “Vow, and pay unto Jehovah your God” – Doubtless during the hour of trial, when the army of Sennacherib threatened Israel, there were many vows and promises made unto God. The Psalmist reminds them that it is time to keep the promises made in that time of distress.

*“him that ought to be feared”* - In view of the great power of God, it would seem that men would fear their Creator. But history proves that men, for the most part, do not fear God. Too few offer thanks to their God. Too few render unto God His due. Too few are willing to present themselves as a living sacrifice. With every blessing comes the inherent responsibility to reciprocate to the One Who bestowed the blessing. This is especially true for that soul who has been delivered from the threat of sin by the armies of the devil. God has delivered you from the “power of darkness” (Col. 1:12-13).

**76:12:** “*He will cut off the spirit of princes*” – The defeat Sennacherib’s army is a warning to all other rulers. God can still humble the greatest and most powerful of nations. Just over a decade ago God brought Soviet Russia to her knees. There was an arrogant nation; a nation filled with hatred for God. But her rulers and her people soon learned you cannot mock God. And lest we think we in the United States are somehow exempt from God’s wrath, perhaps we should stand back and take a serious and sober look at our own hatred for God, and heed the warning that runs through this Psalm and through the whole of God’s word: “Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34). God can cut down the most mighty. None can stand before Him.

## ***Lessons***

1. Where God is truly known there is reverence for His very name. We wonder if the present abuse of our God’s name in social circles is any indication of the lack of knowledge of Jehovah God.

2. God's power is manifested in the church (Eph. 3:10-11). It is in His tabernacle where the arrows of the enemy are broken. Any attempt to overcome the fiery darts of the evil one separate and apart from a proper relationship with God is futile.
3. From verse 4 we learn the following: The world, compared with the church, is best described as a "mountain of prey." The world offers cruelty instead of love, and violence instead of praise. We also see in this verse what the church is when compared with the world. It is "glorious" and "excellent."
4. Perhaps the message in one of our hymns expresses the sentiment of the Psalmist:

Oh, worship the King, all glorious above,  
And gratefully sing, His wonderful love.  
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavillioned in splendor and girded with praise.

## *“What To Do When All Around Is Dark”*

### ***Introduction***

According to the subtitle, this is a “psalm of Asaph.” It is the sixth in a dozen Psalms attributed to this man. We cannot determine the exact occasion of the Psalm, but it would appear that the period just prior to the defeat of Judah and the carrying away into Babylon is the most likely occasion. We do know this much. The Psalm was written in a time of affliction, when it seemed that God had abandoned the writer and his people. The Assyrian captivity of the Northern Kingdom had passed into history. Now Judah was facing the divine wrath earlier poured out on her sister kingdom, Israel.

The terrible doubt and sorrow that depressed God’s faithful remnant among the notoriously apostate people of Israel in the period ending in their Babylonian captivity must indeed have reached epic proportions. The reprobate nation fully deserved to be cut off for ever, and their godless kingdom cried out to heaven for its destruction (Coffman, 2:37).

The situation appeared bleak. The Psalmist no doubt saw this impending doom and provided his audience with the solution as to what to do when all around is dark. Hence the title assigned to this chapter.

### ***Analysis***

In the Psalm we have (1) A general statement regarding the Psalmist’s cry unto God, verse 1; (2) A description of the afflictions which he suffered, and his thoughts during that time, 2-9. This is seen in his personal anguish (verse 2), his complaint (verse 3), his inability to sleep or speak (verse 4), his recollection of the past glories (verses 5-6), and his questions in view of the distress (verses 7-9). The author then expresses his determination to renew his spirit and speak of God (verses 10-12). He closes the Psalm by reflecting upon the goodness and power of God (verses 13-20), with

special attention to the power of God (verses 13-19), and the guidance of God (verse 20.).

G.Campbell Morgan gives this interesting analysis:

This is a song of healing of sorrow...Verse 10 is the pivot on which the whole psalm turns, from a description of an experience of darkness and sorrow to one of gladness and praise...The difference is that between a man brooding over trouble and a man seeing high above it the enthroned God. In the first half, self is predominant. In the second, God is seen in His glory. A very simple method with the psalm makes this perfectly clear. In verses 1-9 the first personal pronoun occurs twenty-two times, and there are eleven references to God by name, title, and pronoun. In the second, there are only three personal references and twenty-four mentions of God (Morgan, 249).

Some years ago this author wrote this outline in the margin of his Bible. Though the source has long been lost, we suspect that it originated with our studies on the Psalm while a student at Brown Trail in the early 1970's.

- I. Distress, verses 1-6
- II. Questions, verses 7-9
- III. Remembrances, verses 11-15
- IV. Power, verses 16-19
- V. Conclusion, verse 20.

## ***Commentary***

### ***Distress*** **Verses 1-6**

- 1 I will cry unto God with my voice, Even unto God with my voice; and he will give ear unto me.*
- 2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: My hand was stretched out in the night, and slacked not; My soul refused to be comforted.*
- 3 I remember God, and am disquieted: I complain, and my spirit is overwhelmed. Selah*
- 4 Thou holdest mine eyes watching: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*
- 5 I have considered the days of old, The years of ancient times.*



6 *I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart; And my spirit maketh diligent search.*

In these verses the Psalmist pours out his heart to God. We see his **prayer** (verse 1), his **pain** (verse 2), his **pathos** (verses 3-4), and his **pondering** (verses 5-6).

### ***Prayer***

**77:1:** “*I will cry unto God with my voice*” - In his distress the Psalmist prays and ponders. He never lost faith in the fact that God would answer (verse 1b). It was not so much that God refused to hear; it was that it appeared that God was not answering his prayer. Sometimes it may seem that God is simply not hearing our prayers. Could it be that we are not watching for His answer? Could it be that we are so preoccupied with our self and our own self pity that we fail to see the answer God gives to us?

“*with my voice*” – Twice in this one verse the Psalmist speaks of crying to God “with my voice.” This shows the earnestness of his prayer.

### ***Pain***

**77:2:** “*In the day of my trouble*” – Notice the personal anguish. It was at the moment of trouble that Asaph sought God's help. There is an interesting allusion to outstretched hands, which refused to give slack, indicative of persistence on the part of the writer with regard to his supplication unto God. The KJV reads, “my sore ran in the night.” But the ASV gives the better rendering of the Hebrew. The KJV translators believed there was some bodily disease, or some “running sore” that was the cause of the trouble. But Hebrew word translated “sore” is ‘*yad*,’ and it is never used in the sense of a sore or wound. The Hebrew for “ran” means to flow, to be poured out, and then “to be stretched out” (Barnes). The idea is that his hand was stretched out in earnest supplication, and this continued through the night when the troubles came upon him.

“*My soul refused to be comforted*” – The Psalmist's anguish was so great that every effort to provide comfort met with failure. Barnes suggests this meaning: “I resisted all the suggestions that came to my own mind, that MIGHT have comforted me. My heart was so melancholy and downcast; my spirits were so crushed; my mind was so dark; I had become so morbid, that I loved to cherish these thoughts. I chose to dwell on them” (Barnes). It is important to

learn here that a pious man may very well get into a state of mind in which nothing can be done or said to provide him peace or comfort. “Many a daughter of despondency has pushed aside the cup of gladness, and many a son of sorrow has hugged his chains. There are times when we are suspicious of good news, and are not to be persuaded into peace, though the happy truth should be as plain before us as the King’s highway” (Spurgeon).

### ***Pathos***

*“I remember God and am disquieted”* - He thought on God, perhaps recalling all the great deeds of the past, and was “disquieted.” He could not find words to speak which adequately expressed his feelings. The word rendered “complain” means rather “mused or meditated.” At least that seems to be the more likely meaning here. The Psalmist’s spirit was thus “overwhelmed” after he had so meditated. When one contemplates the marvelous goodness of God, or so reflects upon His great power, is it any wonder that the soul is “overwhelmed”? We can hardly imagine the depths of depression into which the Psalmist had fallen. But as we shall see, the darkness will give way to light, and the burdened soul will find release as we move through the Psalm and ever closer to its conclusion. “What often occurs in the case of even a good man - that by dwelling on the dark and incomprehensible things of the Divine administration, the soul becomes sad and troubled to an extent bordering on murmuring, complaint, and rebellion” (Barnes).

**77:4:** *“I am so troubled that I cannot speak”* - The idea seems to be that God overcame the writer’s natural inclination to close his eyes. The Psalmist was kept awake, he could not sleep. At the same time, he simply could not speak; he could not find words to express his inner feelings. “Words fail the man whose heart fails him” (Spurgeon). Barnes observed: “As the psalmist was a good man, it is of importance to remark, in view of his experience, that such reflections occur not only to the minds of bad men, of the profane, or skeptics, of infidel philosophers, but they come unbidden into the minds of good men, and often in a form which they cannot calm down” (Barnes).

### ***Pondering***

**77:5:** Finding no comfort, the Psalmist begins to think. *“I have considered the days of old, The years of ancient times.”* Facing the

hand of divine punishment, the Psalmist ponders the sacred record. He reflects upon ancient history, and recalls how God delivered Israel in years gone by. With the eye of faith, the Psalmist considers the “ancient times” and hopes that perhaps God will once again forgive and deliver Israel from the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Here is the medicine for a troubled heart. God delivered the faithful patriarchs from the jaws of defeat, and He will continue to see His saint through the troubled waters. “There is scarcely any theme more likely to prove consolatory than that which deals with the days of yore, the years of the olden time, when the Lord’s faithfulness was tried and proved by hosts of his people” (Spurgeon).

**77:6:** *“I call to remembrance my song in the night”* - The Psalmist recalled happier occasions. His meditations were deep. There had been times in his life when he could sing even in the midst of his trials. He seeks to recall those times and determine what it was that caused him to previously rejoice so that he might recapture that moment. He had derived much comfort from his “song in the night” in times past, but it would appear they did not help him on this occasion.

### **Questions Verses 7-9**

- 7 *Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favorable no more?*  
8 *Is his lovingkindness clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?*  
9 *Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah*

**77:7:** *“Will the Lord cast off forever?”* - It would appear that the Psalmist’s reflections upon the “ancient times” did not provide the comfort he desired. Consequently he remained depressed and confused. Has God abandoned him completely? Will he no longer enjoy peace and happiness as before? One cannot even begin to imagine what the world would be like if God’s lovingkindness should be gone “for ever.” Barnes notes, “All the hopes of mankind depend on that, and if that should fail, all prospect of salvation in regard to our race must be at an end” (Barnes).

**77:8:** *“Doth his promise fail evermore?”* – Could the Psalmist no longer rely on God’s word? Had the promises of God failed? Was this situation the Psalmist now faced permanent? Or could he expect some deliverance in the future? Temporary punishment and even

prolonged judgment were understandable. But at the moment it seemed to the Psalmist that Jehovah had forever ceased His care for Israel. One might find it surprising that the Psalmist would even ask such a question in light of the fact that he had “considered the days of old” (verse 5). In his discouragement he must have failed to see the truth in the sacred record that God will not fail us.

**77:9:** “*Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*” - God does **not** forget. While it might appear to the Psalmist that God was **not** being gracious, he failed to understand that God’s patience and longsuffering will eventually run out. The time of punishment had come. But behind God’s hand of wrath was His heart of mercy. Israel would survive through the years of divine punishment. In seven short decades she would be returned to her home land.

*“Hath he in anger”* - The Psalmist concluded that if God did withhold his mercies that it was due to God’s anger in view of the sins of men.

### **Remembrances Verses 10-15**

- 10 *And I said, This is my infirmity; But I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.*
- 11 *I will make mention of the deeds of Jehovah; For I will remember thy wonders of old.*
- 12 *I will meditate also upon all thy work, And muse on thy doings.*
- 13 *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: Who is a great god like unto God?*
- 14 *Thou art the God that doest wonders: Thou hast made known thy strength among the peoples.*
- 15 *Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah*

There is a marked change of attitude at this point in the Psalm. It is as if the Psalmist were saying, “This is my appointed sorrow, and I will accept it submissively.” He may have given serious consideration to the plight of physical Israel, and determined that he would accept the Lord’s punishment. It was the realization that the events of the moment were the result of God’s wrath. Because he was a man of faith, he was willing to accept the punishment and move forward. “When we perceive that our affliction is meted out by the Lord, and is the ordained portion of our cup, we become

reconciled to it, and no longer rebel against the inevitable” (Spurgeon).

**77:10:** *“This is my infirmity”* - While his soul wrestled with the tribulation which he presently faced, he would reflect upon the many occasions of victory which God had given. It was this searching which is here called “my infirmity.” The Hebrew more literally reads, “This makes me sick.” The apparent abandonment by Jehovah made the Psalmist sick; it afflicted him greatly. He would, therefore, seek a means of relief. The remainder of the chapter sets forth those things upon which the Psalmist thought.

The words, *“But I will remember”* are not in the original. Omitted, the passage reads, “The years of the right hand of the most High.” The idea is that the suffering and tribulation which the Psalmist experienced through the years were actually allotted by the Lord. Recognition of this fact provided strength to the Psalmist, and hope for eventual termination to his sorrow.

Until now everything has been pitched in a minor key; now the singer changes to a major key. Until now he has been growling in the bass; now he soars to the high notes. Suddenly the psalmist saw the years, all of them, even the years of tragedy and loss, as being at the right hand of the Most High Himself (Phillips, 640).

The cure for discouragement is a reflection upon the past blessings of Jehovah. “When upon life’s billows, you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged thinking all is lost...Count your many blessings, And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.”

**77:11:** The KJV reads, “I will remember the works of the Lord.” To “make mention” and “remember” are essentially the same, as are the “deeds” and “wonders of old.” Here is the answer to doubt. Think upon the deeds of God in time past; reflect upon the “wonders of old.” Our God does care, and the record provided for us proves this to be true. Lift up your eyes, discouraged one, and observe what He has done in times past; look at your own life and meditate upon what He has done for YOU! What makes you think He will not remain faithful to His promises? “Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens here granaries” (Spurgeon).

**77:12:** *“I will meditate and...muse”* - It was not conversation with others to which he turned. Instead, this man of God calmly meditated on God’s “work” and “doings.” He would put an

interpretation upon the present events that found its root in God's overall purpose and omniscient and omnipotent "doings." Memory, mention, meditate and muse might make a good sermon outline as a cure for spiritual doubt. Memory is the reflection upon what God has done for us; looking at what we HAVE rather than what we do NOT HAVE! The "mention" of those things is audible declaration of thanksgiving unto God for what He has given us. The "meditation" upon those things is a serious contemplation of what God's provisions mean to us, namely that He cares, that He watches over us, and that He will continue to care for us. Finally, to "muse" is synonymous with "meditate." Spurgeon has pointed out, "A meditative man should be a talker, otherwise he is a mental miser, a mill which grinds corn only for the miller. The subject of our meditation should be choice, and then our talk will be edifying; if we meditate on folly and affect to speak wisdom, our double mindedness will soon be known unto all men" (Spurgeon).

**77:13:** Of significance in this verse is the mention of the "sanctuary," followed by the mention of the greatness of our God. It is only when men enter the sanctuary that they come to realize the great power of Jehovah. The "sanctuary" is construed as that "place" where man comes into contact with God. In the Old Testament it was the holy of holies; in the New Testament it is His church. When man separates himself from God he simply cannot understand the reason or purpose for any single event or a group of events that might engulf his life. Barnes picked up on this important truth:

The evident inference from this in the mind of the psalmist, as bearing on the subject of his inquiry, is, that it is to be expected that there will be things in his administration which man cannot hope to understand; that a rash and sudden judgment should not be formed in regard to him from his doings; that men should wait for the developments of his plans; that he should not be condemned because there are things which we cannot comprehend, or which seem to be inconsistent with goodness (Barnes).

God's way will only be found in the "sanctuary." Until such a time as men enter into the presence of God the perplexities of life will continue to confound them. And when God's people are surrounded with doubt, they would be wise to enter into the presence of God in prayer to regain their faith.

**77:14:** *"Thou art a God that does wonders"* – The great contest between Jehovah God and Baal on Mt. Carmel should have forever

settled the question as to Who is the true God. One author noted, “it is a great wonder that men do not serve the wonder-working God of Heaven.”

**77:15:** The “arm” of God is representative of His strength and power. Joseph is mentioned here “because he was conspicuous or eminent among the sons of Jacob, and particularly because he acted so important a part in the affairs of Egypt, from whose dominion they were redeemed” (Barnes).

### ***Power*** **Verses 16-19**

*16 The waters saw thee, O God; The waters saw thee, they were afraid: The depths also trembled.*

*17 The clouds poured out water; The skies sent out a sound: Thine arrows also went abroad.*

*18 The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind; The lightnings lightened the world: The earth trembled and shook.*

*19 Thy way was in the sea, And thy paths in the great waters, And thy footsteps were not known.*

**77:16:** “*The waters saw thee*” – Twice in this verse the Psalmist speaks of the “waters.” Seeing the Psalmist desired to reflect on the “days of old,” and the “ancient times,” this is likely a reference to two occasions where Israel witnessed some miraculous manifestation of God’s great power. There was God’s great power demonstrated when Israel marched across the Red Sea on dry ground. The second occasion is the crossing of the Jordan under the leadership of Joshua. Once again Israel marched across on dry ground. The language is figurative in which the elements are depicted as having emotions. Such is common throughout the Psalms. The reference to the “depths” shows that “it was not a ripple on the surface; but the very depths were heaved into commotion at the Divine presence” (Barnes). “The water saw its God, but man refuses to discern him; it was afraid, but proud sinners are rebellious and fear not the Lord” (Spurgeon).

**77:17:** “*The clouds poured out water; The skies sent out a sound*” – The exact “wonder” under consideration here is not known. Barnes thinks that it may have had reference to some extraordinary manifestation of God at Mount Sinai. Spurgeon suggests the overthrow of the Egyptian armies. Whatever the event, the Psalmist saw it as a manifestation of God’s wonderful power.

**77:18:** *“The voice of thy thunder was in the whirlwind”* - The KJV reads, “They voice of thy thunder was in the heaven.” The ASV is, without doubt, the more accurate. The original word means “wheel, as of a chariot,” and later was used to denote the chaff or stubble that is driven along by the wind. The idea seems to be that in the raging storm, the voice of God was heard, and His power manifested. The majestic scenes at Sinai must have been in the mind of the Psalmist.

**77:19:** *“Thy footsteps were not known”* – There is something majestic about the “footsteps” of God. His ways are past tracing out; His mind so far above the mind of men. “Men cannot certainly *know* the purposes and intentions of Almighty God. His ways are above our ways; he has not revealed to men the reasons behind any of his actions...It is the duty of all believers to ‘trust where they cannot see.’ There are many conditions that upright people recognize as contrary to the will of God; and such things should not be allowed to foster doubt in Christian hearts” (Coffman, Vol. 2, 42-43).

### **Conclusion Verse 20**

**77:20:** Coffman quotes Leupold: “A man is well on the way to recovery from all uncertainty and doubts when he remembers the record of God’s guidance of his people in the past, and the fact of God’s always providing adequate leadership for his true followers” (Coffman, 43). What great comfort, to know that God has never forsaken His people. Barnes concludes this chapter with these encouraging words:

In view of the past, the mind ought to be calm; encouraged by the past, however incomprehensible may be God’s doings, men may come to him, and entrust all their interests to him with the confident assurance that their salvation will be secure, and that all which seems dark and mysterious in the dealings of God will yet be made clear (Barnes).

What a wonderful transition we have before us as the Psalmist moves from sorrow and distress to peace and hope. “Therefore, with devout joy and full of consolation, we close this Psalm; the song of one who forgot how to speak and yet learned to sing far more sweetly than his fellows” (Spurgeon).



## ***Lessons***

1. "The message of the psalm is that to brood on sorrow is to be broken and disheartened, while to see God is to sing on the darkest day. Once we come to know that our years are of His right hand, there is light everywhere, and the song ascends" (Morgan, 249).
2. "In the day of trouble" (verse 2) it is good and proper to turn to God. He is a comfort to those who seek His help. But we must maintain our closeness to God when the trouble has passed.
3. "Days of trouble must be days of prayer; in days of inward trouble, especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversions of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away"—*Matthew Henry*.
4. The man who would be blessed of God must be willing to "maketh diligent search" (verse 6) of God's will in his life. The verb signifies such an investigation as a man makes who is obliged to strip himself in order to do it; or, to lift up coverings, to search fold by fold, or in our own phrase, to leave no stone unturned.
5. "*Doth his promise fail for evermore?*" (verse 8). God's promises are sure and steadfast. He Who is eternal has told us, "Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Heb.13:5).

He who is the God of this salvation, and the Author of the promise, will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill brought low." Luke 3:5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other; Isa. 63:1: "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come, though he should find no faith on the earth. See Rom. 3:3. Cast not away your confidence because God defers his performances. Though providences run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure

and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves. The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season.—*Timothy Cruso*.

6. Our God is a “God that doest wonders” (verse 14). From His wonderful creation of this world, to His marvelous scheme of redemption, God has shown Himself to be not only powerful, but caring and loving.

## ***“Israel’s Unfaithfulness”***

### ***Introduction***

This is a Psalm of Asaph, as per the subtitle. The time and occasion for the writing of the Psalm cannot be determined with any certainty. Barnes suggests a later date, sometime after the division of the Kingdom. He bases this upon the reference to Judah and Ephraim. Internally, it bears the marks of having been written at some time subsequent to the reign of David. The writer sets forth, at least in part, an explanation as to why God selected Judah over Ephraim. The design of the Psalm is (1) to vindicate Ephraim’s rejection and Judah’s selection as head of the nation, and (2) to give Israel a warning based upon their history of repeated rebellion. In addition, Morgan suggests that “the supreme quality of this psalm is that throughout all its measures, over against the repeated failure of His people God’s persistent patience is set forth in bold relief. The purpose of the psalm, however, is to warn God’s people against unfaithfulness by the story of past failure” (Morgan, 249-250).

This Psalm reminds us that Israel’s propensity toward rebellion did not end with that generation which wandered in the wilderness. It is sad but true that “the history of Israel has been one long succession of miracles of mercy met by equally continuous ingratitude which has ever been punished by national calamities” (Coffman, 45).

### ***Analysis***

The first eight verses serve as a preface, setting forth the Psalmist’s purpose for writing. From verses 9-41 the theme is Israel in the wilderness. At verse 42 the Psalmist turns his attention to God’s goodness towards His people in bringing them out of Egypt. The history of the tribes is resumed at verse 53, and continued thru verse 66. The Psalm concludes with the transference of the leadership of Israel from Ephraim to Judah, verses 67-72. We found a number of good outlines for this Psalm. Darwin Hunter divides the Psalm thusly (Hunter, 42):

#### **I. Israel’s Unfaithfulness - A Warning to All, vs 1-8;**

- II. Israel's Unfaithfulness In The Wilderness, vs 9-41;
- III. Israel's Unfaithfulness In Forgetting The Exodus Wonders, vs 42-53;
- IV. Israel's Unfaithfulness In The Land Of Promise, vs 54-64;
- V. Israel's Leadership Transferred To The Tribe of Judah, vs 65-72.

Willmington provided this interesting homiletic outline:

- I. The Command (78:1-7) in which Asaph calls his people to hear lessons from the past
  - A. I will teach (78:1-3) – listen to the lessons from God's people;
  - B. You will teach (78:4-7) – tell the children of God's wonders
- II. The Consequences (78:8-72) in which Asaph relates the history of God's people;
  - A. Their rebellion against God (78:8-12, 17-20, 22, 34-37, 40-41, 43, 56-58)
  - B. Their retribution from God (78:21, 30-31, 33-35, 59-64, 67)
  - C. Their redemption from God (78:13-16, 23-29, 38-55, 65-66, 68-72)

We will follow brother Coffman's outline, he himself following Leupold (Coffman, 45):

- I. The Purpose of the Psalm, 1-8;
- II. Ephraim, a Typical Example of Infidelity, 9-11;
- III. Catalogue of God's gracious dealings with Israel, from the times of the Exodus, 12-31;
- IV. God's judgments and Israel's shallow repentance, 32-39;
- V. Israel's rebellion in the wilderness so quickly after God's mighty deeds in Egypt, 40-55;
- VI. Continued wickedness of Israel in Canaan, 56-64;
- VII. God's answer to the situation, 65-72;

## **Commentary**

### ***The Purpose of the Psalm*** **Verses 1-8**

- 1 *Give ear, O my people, to my law: Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.*
- 2 *I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,*
- 3 *Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us.*
- 4 *We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of Jehovah, And his strength, and his wondrous works that he hath done.*
- 5 *For he established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which he commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children;*
- 6 *That the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born; Who should arise and tell them to their children,*
- 7 *That they might set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep his commandments,*
- 8 *And might not be as their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that set not their heart aright, And whose spirit was not stedfast with God.*

Not all news is good news, and the chapter before us does not bear a great deal of glad tidings when it comes to the nation of Israel. The purpose for writing the Psalm is clearly stated in verses 7-8, “*that they [Israel] might set their hope in God...and might not be as their fathers.*”

**78:1:** The Psalmist begins by calling the people to attention. “*Give ear, O my people.*” If anyone should give close consideration to the words of the law, it is God’s people, and especially a “people” who had such a long history of rebellion. Hence, the Psalm finds its relevance in every generation as they are called to listen closely to what God has to say to them, particularly since all men sin and fall short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Morgan has these interesting thoughts regarding this Psalm and its application to us. “It would seem almost past belief to us as we read that a people so led could forget. Yet is not this sin of forgetfulness with us perpetually? In some day of danger and perplexity we become so occupied with the immediate peril as utterly to fail to think of past deliverances. Such forgetfulness is of the nature of unbelief in its worst form. It wrongs

God, and paralyzes our own prayer” (Morgan, 250). It was not the Psalmist’s desire that they merely “hear,” but that they “give ear,” pay close attention, and make the application. There is much that demands our attention, but the most important thing a person can listen to is God’s “law.” What follows is not exactly law in the sense that it was a rule to be obeyed; but it is something that is authoritatively said, and should have the force of law. The Psalm is a solemn warning against unfaithfulness. The only way to avoid such apostasy is, as the Lord directed, to “incline your ears to the words of my mouth.” While we live in a different dispensation, the warning is just as applicable. Subjection to God’s will is the only way to life.

**78:2:** *“I will open my mouth in a parable”* - Our Lord used parables frequently in His teaching (Matt. 13:34). The word itself means “a statement by analogy or comparison; that is, he would bring out what he had to say by a course of reasoning founded on an analogy drawn from the ancient history of the people” (Barnes).

*“I will utter dark sayings”* – Barnes tells us that these “dark sayings” are “maxims, or sententious thoughts, which had come down from past times” (Barnes). The parable itself begins in verse 9, and sets forth in no uncertain terms, sometimes in literal and sometimes in figurative and poetic language, the tendency of Israel to rebel and sin throughout her glorious and questionable history. Spurgeon had this: “The mind of the poet-prophet was so full of ancient lore that he poured it forth in a copious stream of song, while beneath the gushing flood lay pearls and gems of spiritual truth, capable of enriching those who could dive into the depths and bring them up. The letter of this song is precious, but the inner sense is beyond all price. Whereas the first verse called for attention, the second justifies the demand by hinting that the outer sense conceals an inner and hidden meaning, which only the thoughtful will be able to perceive” (Spurgeon). The great depths of inspired scripture are granted to those who would take the time to search. Parables are an effective way of presenting truth. This teaching method will reveal the truth to those who so desire to know it, and hide the deep truth from those bent on rebellion. Those who only superficially scratch the surface will never discover the wealth of enlightenment that belongs only to those who dig deep in God’s word.

**78:3:** *“Our fathers have told us”* - The writer learned these things from his father, as did each generation since the time of these events themselves. He would now pass these along to others. This is the

duty of each successive generation in the world, receiving, as a trust, from past generations, the result of their thoughts, their experience, their wisdom, their inventions, their arts, their sciences and the records of their doings, to hand these down unimpaired to future ages. This is especially true with regard to spiritual truths. See 2 Timothy 2:1-2. Every generation has the sacred obligation of passing the truth on to others.

**78:4:** *"We will not hide them from their children"* - The proper training of children in matters spiritual cannot be over emphasized. There rests upon every single parent the sacred obligation of doing all that he can do to instill in the mind of his children the truths of God's word. It was an obligation under the Old Testament (Deut 6:6-9), and is reiterated in the New Testament (Eph 6:1-3). May God raise up a generation of parents who faithfully fulfill that most important obligation. It should be observed that a failure to so teach the next generation is tantamount to hiding these things from them. The best education that a person can give to his child is an education in those things that are eternal, and which will provide life to those whom they teach. A good secular education is lacking if it is not coupled with a good knowledge of God's word. Someone once said, "Every satchel should have a Bible in it."

#### THE HEART OF A CHILD

Whatever you write on the heart of a child  
No water can wash away.  
The sand may be shifted when billows are wild  
And the efforts of time may decay.  
Some stories my perish, some be forgot,  
But this 'graved record time changes not.'  
Whatever you write on the heart of a child,  
A story of gladness or care  
That heaven has blessed or earth has defiled,  
Will linger unchangeable there.

**78:5:** *"For he established a testimony in Israel"* - Israel existed for the very purpose of maintaining Gods truth in the midst of surrounding idolatry. They were provided with the sacred oracles, and were appointed as guardians of the truth. History has proven them good stewards in this area. It is rather ironic that the record which they so well preserved contains the account of their own unfaithfulness and apostasy. "That the writer intended that the history of God's dealings with unfaithful Israel convey such instruction is apparent in the author's stated desire that the next

generation be schooled in the tragic errors of the past and exhorted to avoid the course of their wayward forebears [sic]" (Hunter, 42).

**78:6:** *"That the generation to come might know them"* - Thus the world progresses, learning from the mistakes and the successes of the succeeding generation. With each new generation the torch of Divine light is to be passed. The failure to provide adequate spiritual training can be seen in our present social ills.

**78:7:** The stated goal of the Psalm is now set forth: *"That they might set their hope in God"* - Here is the intended purpose in teaching successive generations the law of God. Our affluent society has captured the hope and hearts of a generation that has not received proper instruction from their fathers. The belly has become our god, and the present generation has bowed at the shrine of hedonism. We have sown the wind and now we are reaping the whirlwind.

*"And not forget the works of God"* - The best way to set one's hope in God is to keep in memory the marvelous "works of God." The same principle was used by our Lord when He instituted the Lord's Supper. A constant reminder of the atoning and sacrificial work of our Lord and Savior will go a long way to maintaining hope in God. Spurgeon wrote, "Grace cures bad memories; those who soon forget the merciful works of the Lord have need of teaching; they require to learn the divine art of holy memory" (Spurgeon). Men are prone to forget. Divine instruction is "Don't forget! But keep his commandments."

**78:8:** *"And might not be as their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation"* - The danger of forgetfulness is thanklessness, which in turn leads to rebellion. The root of Israel's stubborn obstinacy was a misguided heart that was out of synch with the law of God. When the heart is not aright, and the spirit is out of step with God, the end result is degradation, and the soul can only go down, Down, DOWN. See Romans 1:22 ff.

*"A stubborn and rebellious generation"* - This verse introduces us to the mistakes of a generation of Israelites who did not manifest trust and confidence in God. That generation was forced to wander in the wilderness until they had died off. "They had no decision for righteousness and truth. In them there was no preparedness, or willingness of heart, to entertain the Savior; neither judgments, nor



mercies could bind their affections to their God; they were fickle as the winds, and changeful as the waves" (Spurgeon).

There is implied in this section a cause (failure to teach successive generations) and effect (a stubborn and rebellious generation). In spite of all God had done for them, their heart was "stiffnecked and uncircumcised" (Acts 7:51-53). Interestingly, "This is as true of sinners now as it was of them, that they take no pains to have their hearts right with God. If they did, there would be no difficulty in doing it...Hence, nothing is more easy or natural than that they should rebel and go astray" (Barnes).

### ***Ephraim, a Typical Example of Infidelity*** **Verses 9-11**

We must agree with brother Coffman here: "What is in view here is not a single event, such as the rebellion against the son of Solomon, but a reference to 'the ill success of Israel under the leadership of Ephraim during the whole period of the Judges'" (Coffman, 49). While one would be hard pressed to locate any incident where Ephraim played the part of a coward, it is not difficult to see that tribe's overall failure to abide by God's law and walk in the heavenly graces granted to them. Barnes points out that "in the wars of the nation they refused to join with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in defense of the lawful government" (Barnes). It is possible, as some have suggested, that this verse is a metaphor of what is more clearly stated in verses 10-11. Spurgeon summed up Ephraim's spiritual condition like this:

Well equipped and furnished with the best weapons of the times, the leading tribe failed in faith and courage and retreated before the foe. There were several particular instances of this, but probably the Psalmist refers to the general failure of Ephraim to lead the tribes to the conquest of Canaan. How often have we also, though supplied with every gracious weapon, failed to wage successful war against our sins, we have marched onward gallantly enough till the testing hour has come, and then 'in the day of battle' we have proved false to good resolutions and holy obligations. How altogether vain is unregenerate man! Array him in the best that nature and grace can supply, he still remains a helpless coward in the holy war, so long as he lacks a loyal faith in his God (Spurgeon).

**78:10-11:** It was the wickedness of Ephraim that led to the removal of the place of worship from Shiloh. Though Ephraim is singled out here, what is said of that tribe is true of every single tribe of that

ungrateful nation. Among the sins of Israel were these:

- 1) They broke promises and forsook the covenant;
- 2) After being brought out of Egypt, they engaged in the sins of the other nations;
- 3) They committed fornication and idolatry;
- 4) They rebelled against God's established theocratic system and demanded a king;
- 5) They broke the Ten Commandments repeatedly throughout their history.

***Catalogue of God's gracious dealings with  
Israel from the times of the Exodus  
Verses 12-31***

- 12 *Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.*
- 13 *He clave the sea, and caused them to pass through; And he made the waters to stand as a heap.*
- 14 *In the day-time also he led them with a cloud, And all the night with a light of fire.*
- 15 *He clave rocks in the wilderness, And gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths.*
- 16 *He brought streams also out of the rock, And caused waters to run down like rivers.*
- 17 *Yet went they on still to sin against him, To rebel against the Most High in the desert.*
- 18 *And they tempted God in their heart By asking food according to their desire.*
- 19 *Yea, they spake against God; They said, Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?*
- 20 *Behold, he smote the rock, so that waters gushed out, And streams overflowed; Can he give bread also? Will he provide flesh for his people?*
- 21 *Therefore Jehovah heard, and was wroth; And a fire was kindled against Jacob, And anger also went up against Israel;*
- 22 *Because they believed not in God, And trusted not in his salvation.*
- 23 *Yet he commanded the skies above, And opened the doors of heaven;*
- 24 *And he rained down manna upon them to eat, And gave them food from heaven.*

- 25 *Man did eat the bread of the mighty: He sent them food to the full.*  
26 *He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens; And by his power he guided the south wind.*  
27 *He rained flesh also upon them as the dust, And winged birds as the sand of the seas:*  
28 *And he let it fall in the midst of their camp, Round about their habitations.*  
29 *So they did eat, and were well filled; And he gave them their own desire.*  
30 *They were not estranged from that which they desired, Their food was yet in their mouths,*  
31 *When the anger of God went up against them, And slew of the fattest of them, And smote down the young men of Israel.*

**78:12:** These verses provide an overview of the rebellion of Israel, in spite of God's marvelous graciousness, and the wonderful manifestation of His power and love for them. The contrast is even more vivid when we consider the goodness of God, along with His marvelous patience and longsuffering toward physical Israel. Those things were called "*marvelous*" because the things performed were designed to produce wonder and astonishment in Israel, and before their enemies.

It is notable that these things were done "*in the sight of their fathers.*" These were not mere legend, or folklore, but real, historical, factual events.

*"In the land of Egypt"* is a reference to the plagues done in Egypt at the hand of Moses and Aaron.

*"The field of Zoan"* - Barnes tells us that "the Septuagint renders this...in the plain of Tanis" (Barnes). Zoan (or Tanis) was an ancient city in lower Egypt, situated on the eastern side of the Tanitic arm of the Nile. "The Hebrews seem to have been located in this region, and it was in this part of Egypt - that is, in the country lying round about Zoan - that the wonders of God were principally manifested in behalf of his people" (Barnes).

**78:13:** God "*clave the sea*" when He divided the Red Sea and caused Israel to walk across on dry ground (Ex. 15:21-22). When God performed this wonder He literally "*made the waters to stand as a heap.*" The word rendered here "heap" means that which is "piled up." The idea seems to be that the waters were piled up on each side

of the Israelites as they walked through the basin of the Red Sea. See also our notes on Psalms 33:7. There was not a drop of water that was allowed to fall upon the Israelites as they cross the Red Sea to their freedom. What 'god' has ever delivered any people from their enemies as Jehovah has His people?

**78:14:** The cloud was the visible symbol of God's presence. It would also serve as a canopy of protection from the hot desert sun in the wilderness of Sinai. Israel was to follow the cloud in the day time, and the pillar of fire at night. These things served as a reminder of God's presence (Ex. 13:21 and 14:24). It is all the more impressive, therefore, that they "had the less excuse for rebelling against him" (Barnes).

**78:15:** There were two occasions when God "*clave the rocks*" so as to provide water for Israel. The first instance is recorded in Exodus 17:6. Moses was told to smite the rock, and water came forth. In the other instance Moses was instructed to speak to the rock, but in his anger he again smote the rock (Num. 20:11). This is why the plural "*rocks*" appears here.

*"And gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths"* - It is "as if he had formed a lake or an ocean, furnishing an inexhaustible supply" (Barnes). Our God supplies and He supplies abundantly. When Jesus fed the 5000, the multitudes were given adequate provisions, none went away hungry, and there was more taken up afterwards than was originally used to feed the multitude.

**78:16:** "*He brought forth steams...waters...rivers*" - There is a suggestion in this verse that the waters, once produced, continued to flow in abundance. Notice the plural "streams." This was not a mere trickle of water, not a single stream, but "streams" that ran "down like rivers."

**78:17:** "*Yet*" in this context is designed to catch our attention. What ingratitude! Literally the verse reads, "They added to sin against him. The idea is, that his mercies, and the proofs of his presence were only made the occasion of greater sin on their part" (Barnes). Their sin was multiplied, or "added" against God because they sinned against the greater light provided them. "The writer's words contrast the wonder of God's loving provision and protection over against the astonishing degree of the Hebrew's ingratitude" (Hunter, 48).

*"by provoking"* [KJV] or *"to rebel against"* [ASV] meaning literally, "embittered." When they rebelled, they provoked God to anger. This occurred *"in the wilderness"* after having witnessed God's great power and having been delivered by God's mighty hand. Barnes has these excellent comments:

In the very place where they were most manifestly dependent on him - where there were no natural streams of water - where their wants were met by a miraculous supply - even there did they provoke him. But sinners forget how dependent they are on God, when they sin against him. On what can they rely, if he withdraws from them, and leaves them to themselves" (Barnes).

**78:18:** *"they tempted God in their heart"* – The record of this incident is located in Exodus 16. Their ingratitude arose first in their heart, and was manifest in their habits. "They asked for that which would be more agreeable to them, and they did it with a complaining and murmuring spirit" (Barnes). It is not wrong to ask for those things that make life comfortable, but we should never ask out of a motive of self-gratification.

*"By asking food for their desire"* - The word "food" is "meat" in the KJV, and does not necessarily denote animal food, as it does with us. The fact is, the people asked for some food other than manna. This was done, not because it was necessary to sustain life, but because this is what the people wanted. It was for satisfaction of their lusts and desires. It was *"according to their desire"* (ASV). The Anchor Bible translates this, "They tempted God in their heart by asking food for their gullet." As is often the case, men seek those things that are "according to **their** desire" rather than **God's** desire. The variegated forms of worship in this modern age are an example of men doing what pleases them rather than what pleases God. It is one of the baser qualities of mankind that the more he is blessed, the more he turns away from the very source of the One Who has blessed him. As Spurgeon noted, "Ever is it the nature of the disease of sin to proceed from bad to worse: men never weary of sinning, but rather increase their speed in the race of iniquity" (Spurgeon)

**78:19:** *"Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"* - The question reflects a doubt on the part of the people regarding the power of God to provide and/or deliver. They actually called in question the ability of the Almighty, even after centuries of heavenly demonstration that indeed God **DOES** prepare a table in the wilderness. "The precise words used by the murmuring Hebrews are not quoted here, but the

substance of what they said is retained. The idea is, that what they spoke was *equivalent* to saying that God could not prepare a table for them; that is, provide for them in the desert" (Barnes). Again, from the prolific pen of Charles Spurgeon:

Alas, how have we also quarreled with our mercies, and querulously pined for some imaginary good, counting our actual enjoyments to be nothing because they did not happen to be exactly conformed to our foolish fancies. They who will not be content will speak against providence even when it daily loadeth them with benefits (Spurgeon).

**78:20:** *"He smote the rock...can he give?"* - Oh yes, God DID smite the rock and bring forth water. But to their way of thinking, that was no indication that He was capable of providing food as well. Their sin was that they doubted the power of God in one area, which had in fact been demonstrated well beyond any question in other areas.

**78:21:** *"Jehovah heard and was wroth"* - See Numbers 11:1, 10. God heard their murmurings and expressions of disbelief. As a result, He was "wroth," and the "fire" that was kindled was a manifestation of God's wrath. Fire was used as a form of punishment, as in other times. Cf. Leviticus 10:1-2.

**78:22:** *"They believed not...and trusted not"* - Here is the single cause of Israel's sin. It is summed up in one word: **"disbelief."** They did not believe His in power or His promises.

The Hebrews did not just challenge God's **ability** to supply their needs, but they questioned His **willingness** to save them from the ravages of hunger and death...How dangerous is a lack of trust in the goodness of God! Trust and obedience go hand in hand, and distrust and disobedience are the twins of apostasy (Hunter, 49).

The same disbelief characterizes men today. Those outside the church disbelieve in any such thing as hell, or judgment. Those in the church often demonstrate an equal disbelief regarding the Great Commission, the pattern of worship, the need for commitment, et al.

**78:23-24:** *"He commanded the skies...opened the doors"* - The great sin of Israel was their disbelief in spite of the abundant evidence. The Psalmist is using figurative language here. God had rained down manna upon them in such abundance that it could be likened unto a rain storm. See Exodus 16:4, 5, 14, and Numbers 11:7-9. "The

reference here is to the manna, and it is called "*corn*" (KJV) in the sense that it was food, or that it supplied the place of grain" (Barnes). The manna was considered "food from heaven" in that there was nothing about them, whether fields or markets, which supplied the manna. It was considered, therefore, to have come from heaven.

**78:25:** "*He sent them food to the full*" - The important thing about this verse is the abundance with which God supplied the needs of His people. He gave them as much as they needed and much more.

Gods banquets are never stinted; he gives the best diet, and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon them; they are free, full, and pre-eminent; they are of Gods preparing, sending, and bestowing. He is well fed whom God feeds; heavens meat is nourishing and plentiful. If we have ever fed upon Jesus we have tasted better than angels food; for "Never did angels taste above, Redeeming grace and dying love (Spurgeon).

**78:26:** "*East wind...south wind*" – The Old Testament record reads, "And there went forth a wind from Jehovah, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, about a day's journey on this side, and a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and about two cubits above the face of the earth" (Num. 11:31). Moses' record does not tell what direction from which the wind came other than the fact that the quails were brought from the sea.

**78:27-28:** The great abundance with which God supplied is repeated. Israel did not have to go hunting. The manna and quail were delivered "to their very doors," so to speak.

**78:29:** "*they did eat, and were filled...their own desire*" - God often condescended to the desires of Israel. His patience with that selfish and materialistic people was astonishing. He gave them "*their own desire*." The Psalmist repeatedly reminds his readers that Israel was "filled," nothing lacking whatsoever.

The word "*well*" is intensive. It means that they were abundantly satisfied, having no lack. "He gave them exactly what they asked. He gave them flesh to eat and he gave it to them in such quantities that no one could say that he had not enough" (Barnes).

**78:30:** In spite of all God's mercy and ample supply, Israel did not turn away from their sin. "The idea is, that they did not restrain their intense desire even when it should have been fully satisfied. They indulged to excess, and the consequence was that many of

them perished" (Barnes).

**78:31:** *"slew the fattest of them"* – The reference is to the most vigorous among them; the men most eminent for rank, for influence, and for strength.

*"smote down the young men"* – God made even the young to perish. It was not the aged only who were made to perish. It was not those who might be expected to die, but the young. An entire generation perished in the wilderness because of their unbelief. God's judgment does not consider age. Disobedient souls, regardless of their strength of youth or infirmity of old age, will suffer punishment when at last God's patience runs out.

***God's judgments and Israel's shallow repentance***  
**Verses 32-39**

- 32 *For all this they sinned still, And believed not in his wondrous works.*  
33 *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, And their years in terror.*  
34 *When he slew them, then they inquired after him; And they returned and sought God earnestly.*  
35 *And they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their redeemer.*  
36 *But they flattered him with their mouth, And lied unto him with their tongue.*  
37 *For their heart was not right with him, Neither were they faithful in his covenant.*  
38 *But he, being merciful, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: Yea, many a time turned he his anger away, And did not stir up all his wrath.*  
39 *And he remembered that they were but flesh, A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.*

**78:32:** The astonishing thing about this verse is the complete obstinacy and rebellion of a nation that, when fed to the full, and then punished when they disobeyed, **STILL WENT RIGHT ON SINNING!** We learn that neither abundance nor heavy judgment will necessarily lead men to refrain from sin. And in many instances they sin all the more. "Their unbelief was chronic and incurable. Miracles both of mercy and judgment were unavailing. They might be made to wonder, but they could not be taught to believe"



(Spurgeon).

*"And believed not in his wondrous works"* - That is, the mighty works of God in the wilderness did not produce faith in the Israelites.

**78:33:** *"Their days did he consume in vanity"* - God allowed that entire generation to waste away their years in the wilderness, in "vain and fruitless wanderings in the desert; they were kept there to wear out their life in tedious monotony, accomplishing nothing, wandering from place to place until all the generation that had come out of Egypt had died" (Barnes). We are provided a glimpse of Israel's superficial repentance. As Coffman noted, "In outward appearances, it seems that they really sought God in all earnestness; but verses 36-37 revealed that they were merely trying to escape punishment, having no regard whatever for God" (Coffman, 2:52).

*"their years on terror"* - For 40 long years, each member of that rebellious nation witnessed the death of their neighbor, loved ones, friend, and closest of companions. "Indeed, 'terror' must have haunted their every step on their trek of death, gripped as they were by the searching question of their troubled mind, *'Which one of us will be the next to die'*" (Hunter, page 50). Life apart and separate from God is summed up in this one word, "terror." Godless lives are best described as vain and empty existence, living from one crisis to the next, with no hope, and little purpose to life both here and in the hereafter. What a waste!

Doubtless much of the vexation and failure of many lives results from their being sapped by unbelief, and honey-combed by evil passions. None live so fruitlessly and so wretchedly as those who allow sense and sight to override faith, and their reason and appetite to domineer over their fear of God. Our days go fast enough according to the ordinary lapse of time, but the Lord can make them rust away at a bitterer rate, till we feel as if sorrow actually ate out the heart of our life, and like a canker devoured our existence, Such was the punishment of rebellious Israel, the Lord grant it may not be ours (Spurgeon).

**78:34:** *"When he slew them, then they inquired after him"* - All the calamities that Israel faced in the wilderness led to an occasional, but only temporary, reformation. Such half-hearted dedication even today might lead someone in time of sickness, or affliction, to turn to God and become concerned about their spiritual status, but when the heart has only a shallow devotion the length of dedication will not be

any better. As Barnes noted, "a deep impression seems to be produced only as long as the hand of God rests upon them...Resolutions of repentance are formed only to be forgotten when the affliction is removed and the days of prosperity again return" (Barnes). Such individuals have just enough religion to be miserable.

*"sought God earnestly"* - The KJV reads, "enquired early after God." The word rendered "enquired early" has reference to the first rays of sunlight, or the early morning dawn. It then came to denote the beginning of anything. It seems here to denote the fact that the Israelites, at the first sign of trouble, sought God's help, only to once again turn their back on Him and sin when the crisis had passed. "Israel became suddenly religious, and repaired to the tabernacle door, like sheep who run in mass while the black dog drives them, but scatter and wander when the shepherd whistles him off" (Spurgeon).

**78:35:** - The fact that God was *"their rock, And the Most High God their redeemer"* was a statement of fact by the Psalmist and not necessarily an acknowledgement on the part of the people. Any allegiance to God was only "with their mouth" (verse 36). Lip service was the order of the day while the enemies threatened them during their time of crisis. When the storm passed they were quick to cast off the laws of God in exchange for their own sinful deeds. The reason was that *"their heart was not right with them."* When the heart is corrupt, the whole man is corrupt, and the people were not faithful to his covenant.

**78:36:** *"flattered him with their mouth"* - Their professions were (1) false, and (2) superficial. They were the mere reflections during a time of need, void of any conviction on the part of the people, and without any true love and devotion to the God of their salvation. The LXX and the Latin Vulgate render the phrase, "they loved with their mouth." And all such promises made during the hour of need were so much smoke in the wind when the affliction had passed. Coffman quotes Alexander Maclaren: "Such seeking after God is not properly seeking him at all, but only seeking to escape from evil. Such repentance neither went very deep or stayed very long. It was only lip reverence, proved to be false by their lives, and quickly terminated. 'Their heart was not steadfast.' The pressure being removed they at once returned to their habitual position, as all such penitents do" (Coffman, 52-53). Like little children who got caught

with their hands in the cookie jar, given more favorable circumstances they would do it all over again. Such is "worldly sorrow," a type of sorrow that does not produce genuine repentance. The only repentance that produces lasting results is repentance that results from godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10). Charles Spurgeon said it well:

Their godly speech was cant, their praise mere wind, their prayer a fraud. Their skin-deep repentance was a film too thin to conceal the deadly wound of sin. This teaches us to place small reliance upon professions of repentance made by dying men, or upon such even in others when the basis is evidently slavish fear, and nothing more. Any thief will whine out repentance if he thinks the judge will thereby be moved to let him go scot-free (Spurgeon).

**78:37:** *"Their heart was not right with him"* - The Hebrew word means "to fit, to prepare; and the idea is, that the heart was not adjusted to such a profession, or did not accord with such a promise or pledge" (Barnes). This Psalm actually zeroes in on the basic fault with Israel, that being a lack of faith.

Their promises were no sooner made than broken, as if only made in mockery. Good resolutions called at their hearts as men do at inns; they tarried awhile, and then took their leave. They were hot to-day for holiness, but cold towards it to-morrow. Variable as the hues of the dolphin, they changed from reverence to rebellion, from thankfulness to murmuring. One day they gave their gold to build a tabernacle for Jehovah, and the next they plucked off their earrings to make a golden calf. Surely the heart is a chameleon (Spurgeon).

**78:38:** *"But he being merciful"* - What an amazing demonstration of our God's longsuffering and patience. The very fact that God did NOT destroy that wicked and sinful nation is a manifestation of His great mercy. This did not happen just once, but *"many a time turned his anger away."* Literally, "He multiplied to turn his anger away" (Barnes). This text does not tell us, but we learn in Exodus that Moses interceded in their behalf. The very fact that God allowed Israel 40 years to repent while they wandered in the wilderness is a token of His gracious mercy and longsuffering. Certainly He could have destroyed them immediately. Oh how wonderful the amazing grace of our God!

***Israel's rebellion in the wilderness so  
quickly after God's mighty deeds in Egypt  
Verses 40-55***

- 40 *How oft did they rebel against him in the wilderness, And  
grieve him in the desert!*  
41 *And they turned again and tempted God, And provoked the Holy  
One of Israel.*  
42 *They remember not his hand, Nor the day when he redeemed  
them from the adversary;*  
43 *How he set his signs in Egypt, And his wonders in the field of  
Zoan,*  
44 *And turned their rivers into blood, And their streams, so that  
they could not drink.*  
45 *He sent among them swarms of flies, which devoured them;  
And frogs, which destroyed them.*  
46 *He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, And their labor  
unto the locust.*  
47 *He destroyed their vines with hail, And their sycomore-trees  
with frost.*  
48 *He gave over their cattle also to the hail, And their flocks to hot  
thunderbolts.*  
49 *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, Wrath, and  
indignation, and trouble, A band of angels of evil.*  
50 *He made a path for his anger; He spared not their soul from  
death, But gave their life over to the pestilence,*  
51 *And smote all the first-born in Egypt, The chief of their strength  
in the tents of Ham.*  
52 *But he led forth his own people like sheep, And guided them in  
the wilderness like a flock.*  
53 *And he led them safely, so that they feared not; But the sea  
overwhelmed their enemies.*  
54 *And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, To this  
mountain, which his right hand had gotten.*  
55 *He drove out the nations also before them, And allotted them for  
an inheritance by line, And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in  
their tents.*

The Psalmist reminds us of the stubborn rebellion of Israel in spite of the wonderful miraculous deeds performed during their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. How a generation could turn their back on the very One Who delivered them, and that in such a short period of time, is one of the mysteries of human depravity.

*"And grieve him in the desert"* - Barnes points out that "the word here rendered *grieve* means (1) to work, to fashion; (2) to suffer pain, to travail, to be afflicted; and then (3) to cause one to suffer

pain, or to afflict. The meaning is that the conduct of the Hebrews was such as was fitted to cause pain, as the conduct of a disobedient and rebellious child" (Barnes). When God is grieved it should cause us to grieve. No doubt the prodigal felt deep remorse for the grief he had brought upon his father; and such remorse helped him come to himself and begin the journey home.

**78:41:** *"And provoked the Holy One of Israel"* - KJV renders it, "and limited the Holy One of Israel." According to Barnes, "the original, *'tavah'* occurs but three times in the Scriptures" (Barnes). See 1 Samuel 21:13, where it is rendered *'scrabbled,'* and Ezekiel 9:4, where it is rendered *'set.'* Barnes quotes Alexander: "On the Holy One of Israel [they] set a mark." The idea in the word would mean that of making a mark for any purpose; and then it means to delineate; to scrawl; or to set a mark for a limit or boundary. Thus it might be applied to God, as if, in estimating his character or his power, they set limits or bounds to it" (Barnes).

**78:42:** *"They remember not"* – They were not of such a frame of mind as to recall with confidence and trust the things that God had done when He delivered them from Egyptian captivity. What is astonishing is that their "lapse of memory" occurred within such a short period of time. It is not that they actually forgot as much as forgetting practically. When men forget the blessings they have received it is not long before they forget their responsibilities.

**78:43:** *"He set his signs in Egypt"* - Those things which God did in Egypt should have impressed them with His great power to deliver AND to providentially protect. This they refused to retain in their memory. The verses which follow categorize the various "signs" or "plagues" which God wrought upon Egypt by the hands of Moses and Aaron. The historical record is found in Exodus 8-11.

**78:44:** The Nile was not the only river turned into blood. The whole of Egypt's natural rivers were poisoned so that they had to go dig in the land to find water. It was a paradox that Egypt placed so much confidence in the Nile, boasted of her beauty and abundance, and were then made to loathe it probably more than they had ever loved it.

**78:45:** The account of the plague of flies is found in Exodus 8:24 ff. The record there tells us it was a "swarm" of flies without any reference to specific type. Barnes has this interesting note:

The Rabbins explain the word as denoting a mixture, or a conflux of noxious insects, as if the word were derived from *arab* to mix...The common explanation of the word now is that it denotes a species of fly, the gad-fly, exceedingly troublesome to man and beast, and that it derives its name, *arob* from the verb, *arab*, in one of its significations *to suck*, and hence the allusion to *sucking* the blood of animals" (Barnes).

Regarding the use of such a small creature to render judgment, Spurgeon had this:

Small creatures become great tormentors. When they swarm they can sting a man till they threaten to eat him up. In this case, various orders of insects fought under the same banner; lice and beetles, gnats and hornets, wasps and gadflies dashed forward in fierce battalions, and worried the sinners of Egypt without mercy. The tiniest plagues are the greatest. What sword or spear could fight with these innumerable bands? Vain were the monarchs armor and robes of majesty, the little cannibals were no more lenient towards royal flesh than any other; it had the same blood in it, and the same sin upon it. How great is that God who thus by the minute can crush the magnificent" (Spurgeon).

*"And frogs"* - See Exodus 8:6. It should be noted that the Psalmist does not present the plagues in the same order as that of the Exodus account.

**78:46:** The "caterpillar" means literally "the devourer." The caterpillar and locust are the same.

**78:47:** Reference to the "vines," "sycamore trees" and "frost" are poetic. Some have suggested that these may have been additional features in the various plagues, but such a position is only speculation at best. "In the account in Exodus the hail is said to have smitten man and beast, the herb, and the tree of the field. In the psalm only one thing is mentioned, perhaps denoting the ruin by what would be particularly felt in Palestine, where the culture of the grape was so common and so important" (Barnes).

As for the word "frost," Barnes has this: "The word occurs nowhere else. It is parallel with the word *hail* in the other member of the sentence, and denotes something that would be destructive to the trees" (Barnes).

**78:49:** *Anger...wrath...indignation...trouble*" - Note how the

Psalmist piles up the words. Each plague was more staggering than the preceding, with the final crushing blow, the death of the firstborn, at the end.

*"A band of angels of evil"* - They are called "angels of evil" for the simple reason that they brought evil upon Egypt, not that they were in and of themselves evil or wicked. "What is meant is simply that all of the visitations upon Egypt which God accomplished during the Exodus were executed by the instrumentality of angels" (Coffman, 2:55). Barnes thinks that this verse has particular reference to the slaying of the first born. Notice in this connection the use of the word angel with that particular plague as seen in Exodus 11:4-5, 12:29-30.

**78:50:** *"He made a path for his anger"* - That is, God took away anything that might hinder the expression of His anger upon Egypt. Consequently, he gave the Egyptians unto death and the pestilence.

**78:51:** The *"chief of their strength"* would be the first born that would, or should, have taken over leadership in the land.

The "tents of Ham" has reference to Egypt. Compare with Genesis 10:6, Psalms 105:23, 27, and 106:22.

**78:52:** In contrast, God *"led forth his own people like sheep."* He showed Himself willing and ABLE to do this. It was to Israel's discredit that they failed to remember these mighty works when at last they found themselves in the wilderness.

The contrast is striking, and ought never to have been forgotten by the people. The wolves were slain in heaps, the sheep were carefully gathered, and triumphantly delivered. The tables were turned, and the poor serfs became the honoured people, while their oppressors were humbled before them. Israel went out in a compact body like a flock; they were defenseless in themselves as sheep, but they were safe under their Great Shepherd; they left Egypt as easily as a flock leaves one pasture for another (Spurgeon)

**78:53:** As this section draws to a close, we are given this breath of fresh air in which God's deliverance is set forth. Following a very brief reference to Israel's entering into the promised land, once again, blessings were followed by ingratitude, and the next generation followed their forefathers in the same path of stubborn rebellion.

**78:54-55:** These verses describe the whole of the closing portion of the wilderness wanderings, and the time of Conquest and Settlement under Joshua.

*“He brought them to the boarder of his sanctuary”* – The Hebrew *‘kodsho’* literally means “his holy place,” and stands for the land of Canaan.

*“He drove out the nations”* - The period of Conquest and Settlement was a time of literally disposing those nations in Canaan and reassigning the tribes their respective allotments. God “drove” those nations out because their sin was full. Spurgeon’s lengthy comment is worth consideration:

Not only were armies routed, but whole peoples displaced. The iniquity of the Canaanites was full; their vices made them rot above ground; therefore, the land ate up its inhabitants, the hornets vexed them, the pestilence destroyed them, and the sword of the tribes completed the execution to which the justice of long provoked heaven had at length appointed them. The Lord was the true conqueror of Canaan; he cast out the nations as men cast out filth from their habitations, he uprooted them as noxious weeds are extirpated by the husbandman. ‘And divided them an inheritance by line.’ He divided the land of the nations among the tribes by lot and measure, assigning Hivite, Perizzite, and Jebusite territory to Simeon, Judah, or Ephraim, as the case might be. Among those condemned nations were not only giants in stature, but also giants in crime; those monsters of iniquity had too long defiled the earth; it was time that they should no more indulge the unnatural crimes for which they were infamous; they were, therefore, doomed to forfeit life and lands by the hands of the tribes of Israel. The distribution of the forfeited country was made by divine appointment; it was no scramble, but a judicial appointment of lands which had fallen to the crown by the attainder of the former holders (Spurgeon).

### ***Continued wickedness of Israel in Canaan*** **Verses 56-64**

Verses 56-59 provide a brief history of Israel during the time of the Judges. The object of this section is to show that Israel’s disobedience was not limited to that first generation, but every successive generation.

**78:56:** After the wilderness wandering, and entrance into the land,



that next generation followed in the steps of their disobedient fathers, and behaved in precisely the same way that their forefathers had behaved. Change in condition had not altered their behavior. Once settled in the land they continued in their rebellious ways. They practiced falsehood, and though they knew the truth, they forgot it; though they knew God's will, they disobeyed it. They perverted God's grace and viewed it as an opportunity for further transgression.

**78:57:** *"turned aside like a deceitful bow"* - They were like a bow whose arms were not equal in length. Consequently, when the arrow was fired, it would miss the mark. Just as the arrow missed the mark, so Israel failed repeatedly to strike the mark of holiness and righteousness. The new generation was no different from the generation that perished in the wilderness.

**78:58:** The *"high places"* were those locations in which idolatrous worship would be offered to the false gods. These were usually on mountains or hills. See Leviticus 26:30, 1 Kings 3:2, 12:31, and 2 Kings 17:32. Coffman pointed out that "these centers featured religious prostitutes who were the chief attractions of those old pagan shrines" (Coffman, 2:56). Rather than destroy these places, Israel allowed them to remain to some degree throughout their history.

**78:59:** *"When God heard this"* - That is, when God became aware of this, *"he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel."* He heard their prayers addressed to false gods, and observed their conduct. This led God to wrath. *"Greatly"* shows the intensity of His anger.

**78:60:** Shiloh was a city within Ephraim. It was there that the ark of the covenant came to rest after it was brought into the promised land. Notice Joshua 18:1, Judges 18:31, 21:12-19, 1 Samuel 1:3, and 4:3-4. The meaning here is, that in consequence of the sins of the people, the place of worship was finally and forever removed from the tribe of Ephraim. Judah was granted the privilege of having the "temple" built within her borders, Mt. Zion being the specific location. There is little doubt that the removal of the ark from Shiloh was symbolic of God's wrath and final removal of His pleasure and fellowship from rebellious Ephraim and those who would follow in her steps.

*"the tent which he placed among men"* - There is more here than a simple reference to the removal of the tent. It is the final withdrawal

of God's association with Israel on such an intimate relationship as that sustained and enjoyed prior to the time when that tent was taken from Shiloh.

**78:61:** The ark of the covenant was considered the symbol of God's power. It was the emblem of God's presence. The allusion here is to the time when the ark was taken by the Philistines in the days of Eli. See 1 Samuel 4:3-11. On that occasion God's glory was given *"into the adversary's hand."*

**78:62:** When the ark was taken, Israel suffered a great loss. Thirty thousand of the children of Israel were destroyed. Cf. 1 Samuel 4:10. The two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain. Eventually Eli himself suffered death as a consequence of the ark's capture by the Philistines.

**78:63:** Those young men whom the virgins would have married were slain in war and/or by God's wrath. Notice Numbers 21:28. As a consequence there was no "marriage-song." Israel had failed to instruct the younger generation in the fear of the Lord and the nation suffered as a result. Is there not a warning for our generation as to the responsibility we have to teach capable men who will be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:1-2)?

**78:64:** *"their widows made no lamentation"* - We cannot improve on Barnes' comments:

The public troubles were so great, the danger was still so imminent, the calamities thickened so fast, that there was no opportunity for public mourning by formal processions of women... The meaning is not that there was a want of affection or attachment on the part of the friends of the slain, or that there was no real grief, but that there was no opportunity for displaying it in the customary manner (Barnes).

As to why God brought all this about, Coffman's summary states the case:

The wickedness of Ephraimite leadership of Israel would have ultimately ruined the entire 'Chosen People'; but God would first establish the Davidic dynasty to rule Israel, and then restore the ark of the covenant, bringing it not to Shiloh, but to Jerusalem. The book of Judges explains fully the disastrous conduct of Israel that led to this crisis (Coffman, 2:57).

**God's answer to the situation**  
**Verses 65-72**

- 65 *Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.*  
66 *And he smote his adversaries backward: He put them to a perpetual reproach.*  
67 *Moreover he refused the tent of Joseph, And chose not the tribe of Ephraim,*  
68 *But chose the tribe of Judah, The mount Zion which he loved.*  
69 *And he built his sanctuary like the heights, Like the earth which he hath established for ever.*  
70 *He chose David also his servant, And took him from the sheepfolds:*  
71 *From following the ewes that have their young he brought him, To be the shepherd of Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.*  
72 *So he was their shepherd according to the integrity of his heart, And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.*

Darwin Hunter groups these verses under the heading, "**Israel's Leadership Transferred To The Tribe of Judah**" (Hunter, 56). It was not that God was sleeping, but rather that the time had come for God to render vengeance. Notice Exodus 15:3, and Psalms 24:8. God is depicted as a warrior going forth to battle.

**78:66:** *"He smote his adversaries backward"* – There are two possibilities as to the meaning. First, God smote them as they fled in retreat. Second, this might have reference to the "emrods" which they suffered. "The emrods rendered them ridiculous, and their numerous defeats made them yet more so. They fled but were overtaken and wounded in the back to their eternal disgrace" (Spurgeon).

*"perpetual reproach"* - Theirs was not a temporary defeat, but an ongoing reproach which the enemy suffered.

**78:67:** *"He refused the tent of Joseph"* – The idea is to show that there had been a transfer of the pre-eminence from the tribe of Ephraim to the tribe of Judah, and from Shiloh to Zion. Joseph is mentioned here as the ancestor of Ephraim. Poetic parallelism equates the two. These closing verses may very well be the main point of the Psalm. The rest of the Psalm sets forth justifiable cause

for the Divine decision to transfer the power from Ephraim to Judah.

**78:68:** *"God chose the tribe of Judah"* - Instead of Ephraim, God chose Judah, and David as ruler and king. Notice the fulfillment here of the prophecy contained in Genesis 49:8-10.

**78:69:** We cannot help but see in these closing verses a glimpse of the eternal and spiritual Kingdom of the coming Messiah. The eternal duration of the church, the kingdom of God, is spoken of in a number of Old Testament passages such as Daniel 2. There never was any indication that physical Israel would continue "forever." The reference to David is literal, but David only foreshadowed the coming King, and David's righteous reign was a type of the righteous reign of our Lord during the church dispensation.

**78:70:** *"took him from the sheepfolds"* – David was selected to be the King of Israel while David had no intentions of such royal honor and power. He was not a member of the royal family, and actually had no claim to such position and power. While yet serving the sheep assigned to him by his father, David was selected by his heavenly Father to oversee God's nation Israel.

**78:71:** Notice the exaltation of David. This man after God's own heart rose to power and prominence, not by his own power, but by God's mighty plan, purpose, and power. As a Shepherd over his sheep, so God watched over Jacob His people, and *"Israel his inheritance."* "The single word rendered *the ewes great with young* is a participle from '*alah*', to ascend, to go up; and then to bring up, to nourish" (Barnes). God brought David up from a small shepherd boy, to be ruler over the people of God.

Exercising the care and art of those who watch for the young lambs, David followed the ewes in their wanderings; the tenderness and patience thus acquired would tend to the development of characteristics most becoming in a king. To the man thus prepared, the office and dignity which God had appointed for him, came in due season, and he was enabled worthily to wear them, It is wonderful how often divine wisdom so arranges the early and obscure portion of a choice life, so as to make it a preparatory school for a more active and noble future (Spurgeon).

**78:72:** The KJV reads, *"so he fed them..."* He did this out of *"integrity of his heart,"* according to His eternal purpose and promise. Barnes says, "The idea is, that he administered the

government with integrity and uprightness. This is a beautiful tribute to the integrity and purity of the administration of David" (Barnes).

*"by the skilfulness of his hands"* -- This is "evidenced in the fact that David through his victories on the battlefield brought Israel to the zenith of its power and prosperity, thus securing a peaceful reign for Solomon, under whom the decline of Israel began" (Hunter, 57).

### ***Lessons***

1. "The whole psalm is a beautiful argument showing why the government had been transferred from Ephraim to Judah, and why it had been placed in the hands of David" (Barnes).
2. The warning rings through the halls of history. Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. We should strive to avoid the horrible mistake of physical Israel, and submit to our God before it is too late.
3. God's goodness should motivate us to turn away from sin and turn to God in thanksgiving. Rebellion in the face of Divine goodness is the height of selfishness.

## *“A Prayer For Deliverance”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript tells us this is a Psalm of "Asaph," being composed BY him or FOR him. The most probable supposition is that it was composed as the author reflected upon the destruction of the temple and the city by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans, just prior to the carrying away into Babylonian captivity. Matthew Henry had this interesting note regarding the occasion of this Psalm:

This psalm, if penned with any particular event in view, is with most probability made to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the woeful havoc made of the Jewish nation by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar. It is set to the same tune, as I may say, with the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and that weeping prophet borrows two verses out of it (v. 6, 7) and makes use of them in his prayer, Jer. 10:25. Some think it was penned long before by the spirit of prophecy, prepared for the use of the church in that cloudy and dark day. Others think that it was penned then by the spirit of prayer, either by a prophet named Asaph or by some other prophet for the sons of Asaph (Matthew Henry, QV).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm is a cry of distress. There was an overwhelming calamity upon which the writer was reflecting. Of the Psalm G.Campbell Morgan says,

This is the quality of those old songs of the men of faith which makes them living and powerful in an age utterly different from the age in which they were written. A careful perusal of this song will show three things as most evidently forming the deepest conviction of the singer's hope. First, there is the sense that all the calamity which has overtaken them is the result of their own sin...Behind this is a great idea of the power and goodness of God. These things need not have been had they been faithful, for God is strong and tender...Finally, the very fact of the song is a revelation of the underlying confidence in God. In distress the heart seeks its way

back to some hiding place, and finds it in the name of God, who, by suffering is dealing with them (Morgan, 251).

In the Psalm we have...

- I. PERSECUTION**, 1-4 - in which the Psalmist describes the calamity which had come upon the nation. The city lay desolate, the sanctuary had been defiled, the inhabitants had been murdered;
- II. PRAYER**, 5-6 - in which the Psalmist seeks Divine interposition;
- III. PURPOSE**, 7-13 - in which the author presents various reasons why God should intervene and deliver:
  - 1. The enemy had devoured Jacob, 7;
  - 2. The people, on account of their sins, had been brought low, 8;
  - 3. The Divine glory was at stake, 9-10;
  - 4. The people were suffering, 11;
  - 5. Justice demands action, 12;
  - 6. Such interposition would lay the foundation for praise, 13.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***PERSECUTION*** **Verses 1-4**

- 1 *O God, the nations are come into thine inheritance; Thy holy temple have they defiled; They have laid Jerusalem in heaps.*
- 2 *The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be food unto the birds of the heavens, The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.*
- 3 *Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; And there was none to bury them.*
- 4 *We are become a reproach to our neighbors, A scoffing and derision to them that are round about us.*

These first four verses tell us why the Psalmist was lamenting Israel's calamity. The temple had been "defiled," the saints had been slain, and Israel had become a "reproach" to her neighbors.

**76:1:** The "*nations*" could have application to any number of nations that had, at one time or other, invaded the land. There is no doubt that this particular invasion was that of the Chaldeans under the

leadership of Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the Babylonians had destroyed the city, invaded the temple, and carried away the instruments therein to their own land. See 2 Chronicles 36:17-21 for a description of the event referred to here. The fact that a Gentile nation had been used to chastise Israel was of great reproach. Of all the judgments upon Israel, this one was, without doubt, the worst.

**79:2:** Here is a description of the wide spread carnage and slaughter which took place during the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar. The slain bodies would often be left on the field to be devoured by wild animals. Anderson had this note:

The corpses were, apparently, left unburied because the number of dead may have outnumbered the living (Deut. 28:25 ff, Jer. 7:33, 8:2, 9:22, 16:4), and the invaders would not trouble themselves with such a task. According to widespread ancient beliefs, to be left unburied was a grievous misfortune, or a terrible punishment (Anderson, 578).

We must keep in mind that most of the population had been carried into captivity or slain by the sword, leaving few, if any, to attend to such a task of burying the thousands slain by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar. They experienced first hand the slaughter that surrounded them.

**79:3:** *"blood shed like water"* - This simply means that the slaughter was very great and life had little value to those invading the city of Jerusalem. Blood flowed like water, as it does so often in time of war.

There is no event in the history of the Hebrews to which this description would be more applicable than to the Babylonian invasion. The language might indeed be applicable to the desolation of the city by Antiochus Epiphanes, and also to its destruction by the Romans; but, of course, it cannot refer to the later, and there is no necessity for supposing that it refers to the former (Barnes).

**79:4:** Because of the utter destruction of Jerusalem, the nations round about looked upon Israel with disdain. It is as if the nations would mock the God of the Hebrews because He had allowed His "people" to be destroyed. This is supported by verse 10. It was a belief of ancient times that any victory over a people was a victory over their god. The capture of Israel along with the destruction of



the Temple was, to Babylon, a sign that God did not have the power to protect them.

**PRAYER**  
**Verses 5-6**

- 5 *How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou be angry for ever? Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?*  
6 *Pour out thy wrath upon the nations that know thee not, And upon the kingdoms that call not upon thy name.*

**79:5:** Anderson renders this, "How long, O Yahweh, will you be exceedingly angry?" (Anderson, 578). The Psalmist evidently believed that the overthrow of his city and nation was a result of God's wrath upon His people. The author was correct in his reasoning, for indeed God's patience had run out. A study of the Old Testament certainly confirms this. The people were carried into the captivity because of their unfaithfulness.

Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand (2 Chronicles 36:14-17).

The cry of the Psalmist is not one of impatience, but a cry of anxiety; one of wonder and concern.

The Psalmist's question of "How long," had already been answered by the prophets. Israel would remain captive for 70 years.

**79:6:** "*Pour out thy wrath*" - The word translated "pour" is used with reference to a cup containing a mixture of something to drink, particularly of intoxication or of poison. Here is a prayer that God might pour forth his wrath upon the wicked nations. It must be noted that the Psalmist was not asking God to pour forth His wrath because they did not know God, but because they had so treated

God's people with contempt. It must also be kept in mind that God's wrath is not an emotional upheaval, but a judicial reaction to the sin of men. Notice the similarity between these verses and Jeremiah 10:25. This has led some to conclude that Jeremiah quoted from this Psalm.

**PURPOSE**  
**Verses 7-13**

- 7 *For they have devoured Jacob, And laid waste his habitation.*
- 8 *Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers: Let thy tender mercies speedily meet us; For we are brought very low.*
- 9 *Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; And deliver us, and forgive our sins, for thy name's sake.*
- 10 *Wherefore should the nations say, Where is their God? Let the avenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed Be known among the nations in our sight.*
- 11 *Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee: According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to death;*
- 12 *And render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.*
- 13 *So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture Will give thee thanks for ever: We will show forth thy praise to all generations.*

In this section the author presents various reasons why God should intervene and deliver:

**Reason #1:** The enemy had devoured Jacob, verse 7:

The idea is that they had eaten up what the land had produced. The words "devoured" and "laid waste" describe the complete desolation that the enemy had wrought upon the land of Israel.

**Reason #2:** The people, on account of their sins, had been brought low, verse 8:

This is the language of a penitent heart. "It is not their own iniquities which are particularly referred to, but the iniquity of the nation as committed in former times. The effects of sin pass over from one generation to the next, and involve it in calamity" (Barnes). Israel had been "*brought very low*," words used to describe complete

failure or exhaustion of strength.

**Reason #3:** The Divine glory was at stake, verses 9-10:

The Psalmist was crying out, pleading for God's mercy. But his prayer was not one of selfish complaint, but of respect for God. *"Help us...for the glory of they name...for thy name's sake."*

This is masterly pleading. No argument has such force as this. God's glory was tarnished in the eyes of the heathen by the defeat of his people, and the profanation of his temple; therefore, his distressed servants implore his aid, that his great name may no more be the scorn of blaspheming enemies (Spurgeon).

*"forgive our sins"* - The prayer of the Psalmist was motivated, at least in part, by the realization that they shared in some sense with the sins of their fathers. It is important to note that the Psalmist was pleading for divine justice so that the glory and honor of God might be defended and promoted. "Sin, - the root of the evil - is seen and confessed; pardon of sin is sought as well as removal of chastisement, and both are asked not as matters of right, but as gifts of grace" (Spurgeon). It would also appear that the Psalmist equated deliverance from bondage as a sign of divine forgiveness. It would be possible, however, to be forgiven by God while still suffering the consequence of their sins.

God is the avenger. The blood of His martyrs cries out from the ground. It is of interest that the Psalmist was not so much concerned about his own suffering, or the suffering of his people, but rather that the name of God among the nations should so suffer. The victory over Israel prompted the nations to mock God. *"Where is their God"* is a sarcastic rhetorical question from the enemies, designed to express derision upon the nation of Israel and their God.

**Reason #4:** The people were suffering, verse 11:

The reference here is to those taken prisoner and carried into Babylon. Their *"sighing"* was because of the destruction of their home land, and their having been carried into captivity. The Psalmist evidently felt that the captives faced death, and that the only means of deliverance would be a great manifestation of the power of God.

**Reason #5:** Justice demands action, verse 12:

The "*neighbors*" probably refers to those nations about Israel who refused to come to their aid during the invasion from Babylon. "*Sevenfold*" means complete or full. The "*bosom*" is an allusion to the fold formed by one's outer garment overhanging the girdle, which served as a sort of pocket. See in this connection Exodus 4:6, Proverbs 6:27, Isaiah 65:6 and Jeremiah 32:18, and Luke 6:38. The Psalmist was asking that God might render justice to such an extent that none would fail to understand the implications nor misunderstand the purpose behind the divine punishment.

They denied thine existence, mocked thy power, insulted thy worship, and destroyed thy house; up, therefore, O Lord, and make them feel to the full that thou art not to be mocked with impunity (Spurgeon).

**Reason #6:** Such interposition would lay the foundation for praise, verse 13:

The Psalmist had determined that in some way the events leading to their punishment, and the captivity in Babylon, would be preserved for future generations to read and examine. Barnes has noted that "No work has been more faithfully done than that by which the records of God's ancient dealings with his people have been preserved from age to age - that by which the sacred Scriptures have been guarded against error, and handed down from one generation to another" (Barnes).

Coffman quotes Baigent in his summary of the horrible plight that Israel faced at this precise moment:

All of the symbols of Israel's security were shattered - their nationhood, their capital, even the temple. Judah's erstwhile allies had deserted her; alone she had faced the foe - and lost! Survivors of the ensuing bloodbath looked to God, their only hope in a cruel, friendless world. Behind them lay the grim tragedy of 587 B.C. Ahead of them lay a question mark regarding both their own and their nation's survival. Heartbroken, they gathered around the ruined shrine to lay their anguish before the God of Judah (Coffman, 2:69).

## ***Lessons***

1. One important lesson that comes from this Psalm is that the inevitable consequences of sin will eventually catch up with us.

Israel had disobeyed God. They refused to heed the warnings from God, persisted in their rebellion, and eventually paid the price. The condition of Israel prior to the captivity was summed up by the Chronicler:

Moreover all the chiefs of the priests, and the people, trespassed very greatly after all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of Jehovah which he had hallowed in Jerusalem. And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent to them by his messengers, rising up early and sending, because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

Consequently the wrath of God was poured out on His people. Be certain, dear reader, that your sins will eventually catch up with you, for “whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7).

2. God may, on occasion, allow the wicked to defeat His people. He is, however, mindful of the truly penitent soul, and will bless him upon repentance.
3. We also learn from the Psalm that God is merciful to His people. The prayer was answered in due time, though according to God’s divine timetable.

## *“God’s Vineyard”*

### ***Introduction***

According to the subscript, we have another Psalm from Asaph. The occasion is the same as that of the previous Psalm. There is, however, a difference in the two Psalms in that the former deals with the disaster that had come upon the nation, and this one begins by reflecting upon the past relationship of God and His people. There is also a strong resemblance between this Psalm and Psalm 74 and 79. Though the occasion cannot be stated with any certainty, the language is such that it would easily fit into the time of the Babylonian Captivity, and the destructions brought upon Judah by the Chaldeans under Nebuchadnezzar.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm naturally divides itself into three parts, each ending with the refrain, “Turn us again, O God” (verses 3, 7, and 19). The first portion of the Psalm is a plea to God asking Him to “turn us again...and we shall be saved” (verses 1-3). The next section contains a lamentation over the national woe (verses 4-7). The last section presents a beautiful allegory of Israel as a vine (verses 8-19). Morgan points out that “the burden of the psalm is expressed in the thrice repeated prayer (verses 3, 7, 19). The suffering of the people is due to their own sin in turning away from God as Shepherd, Husbandman, and King. Their restoration can come only as He turns them back to Himself. Notice the ascent in these verses in the names which the singer uses for God. ‘God,’ ‘God of hosts,’ ‘Jehovah God of hosts’” (Morgan, 251).

We like Phillips’ homiletic outline of this Psalm:

“The Ravaged Vineyard” (Phillips, 657)

- I. The Vengeance of God (80:1-7)
  - A. The Lord Does Not Assure Our Protection Anymore (80:1-3)
  - B. The Lord Does Not Answer Our Prayers Anymore (80:4-7)

- II. The Vineyard Of God (80:8-19)
  - A. The Royal Vine (80:8-11)
  - B. The Ruined Vine (80:12-13)
  - C. The Restored Vine (80:14-19)

We will study the Psalm under the following headings:

- I. God as Shepherd of His People
- II. God Punishing His People
- III. God as Husbandman of His People

### ***Commentary***

#### ***“God As Shepherd Of His People” Verses 1-3***

- 1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that sittest above the cherubim, shine forth.*
- 2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up thy might, And come to save us.*
- 3 Turn us again, O God; And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.*

**80:1:** *"Give ear, O Shepherd"* – It is as if God were inattentive to the requests and pleas of the Psalmist. But deep in his heart, the Psalmist knows that God is still the Shepherd of Israel. In the previous Psalms the writer confessed that Israel was “the sheep of his pasture” (79:13).

*"Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock"* - The name "Joseph" seems here to be used in a poetical sense to refer to the whole people of Israel. It was God's divine providence that took Joseph into Egypt in preparation for saving the infant nation of Israel. Joseph thus became a sort of “second father, and kept them alive in Egypt. It not inconceivable that Israel was known to the Egyptians as “*the family of Joseph.*” If so, it seems most natural to call them by that name in this place.

*"Thou that sittest above the cherubim"* – The Lord's special presence was manifested upon the mercy seat between the cherubim. But here the Psalmist acknowledges that God is not an equal to the cherubim, but that He is **above** the cherubim. What is particularly interesting is the historical fact that when the Psalm was written, the temple lay destroyed in Jerusalem. Its sacred enclosures had been defiled by

the enemy as lamented in the previous Psalm. However, God still dwelt between the cherubim, in the "true tabernacle." The destruction of the temple taught the Psalmist to lift his thoughts higher than earthly relics and symbols of God's presence, and look even to heaven itself.

**80:2:** "*Ephraim...Benjamin...Manasseh*" - These three tribes always went together, marching behind the ark. Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph, and besides Joseph, Benjamin was the only son of Rachel. As to WHY only Joseph, and these three tribes are mentioned to the exclusion of the other tribes, consider the following: (1) The context suggests the coming out of Egyptian bondage, and Israel's being established as a "vine." It would be natural, therefore to refer to "Joseph," his being the prominent character in that story. It would likewise be natural to make reference to his two children, Ephraim and Manasseh. Benjamin would be referred to since he is a descendent of the same natural mother. Therefore, it seems that the mention of these three characters in Old Testament History, as well as their having been tribes in Israel, suggests a reference to the people of Israel as a whole. It is not just a part of Joseph, but all of Israel that is spoken of here.

**80:3:** This verse appears three times in the Psalm in slightly different form, thus making for a natural division at verses 3, 7, and 19. "*Turn again*" means properly "to bring us back; cause us to return; restore us" (Barnes). One of two applications is possible. Either (1) restore us to a place of prominence and prosperity, or (2) bring us back from captivity. Of interest is the fact that the Psalmist asks God to "turn us," and not so much "turn back the captivity." The best "turn" is not that of circumstance, but one of character. God rejoices in the heart that determines to "turn again" in repentance.

*"Cause thy face to shine"* – The Psalmist was asking that God bestow favor upon the nation. He was pleading, "Lord, turn us to thee in a way of repentance and reformation, and then, no doubt, thou wilt return to us in a way of mercy and deliverance."



**“God In Anger Punishes His People”**  
**Verses 4-7**

- 4 *O Jehovah God of hosts, How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?*  
5 *Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears, And given them tears to drink in large measure.*  
6 *Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbors; And our enemies laugh among themselves.*  
7 *Turn us again, O God of hosts; And cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.*

**80:4:** “*Jehovah God of hosts*” – Literally, “God of armies.” The language has reference to either (1) the worlds above and about us, or (2) the armies mustered for war. The idea seems to be an allusion to the great power of God to deliver, and especially the “hosts” which are at His disposal for providing deliverance. Jesus acknowledged that there were more than twelve legions of angels at His disposal (Matt. 26:53).

*“How long...angry?”* The marginal note reads, “How long wilt thou smoke” (ASV marginal reading). It is common Old Testament language to compare wrath with fire.

*“against the prayer of thy people”* – The Proverb writer pointed out, “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination” (Pro. 28:9). If Israel was still in Babylonian captivity, which we believe provides the historical backdrop of this Psalm, then perhaps that disobedient nation had not yet fully repented. Truly the horrible plight in which they found themselves contributed greatly to their call for God’s help. But God’s refusal to answer suggests that at least at the point in time when the Psalm was written the sin had not yet been purged from their hearts.

**80:5:** *“Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears...tears to drink”* - The tears seemed to moisten their bread, and fill their cups to overflowing. So abundant were the tears shed in their affliction that it might be said they constitute their drink and spoil their food. “Their meat is seasoned with brine distilled from weeping eyes. Their meals, which were once such pleasant seasons of social merriment, are now like funeral feasts to which each man contributes his better morsel” (Spurgeon). How sorrowful that captive nation must have been.

*"in large measure"* - The Hebrew word that is used here ('shalish') means "properly a third." "The idea seems to be, not so much that God gave tears to them in great measure, but that he measured them out to them, as one measures drink to others" Barnes). But God had a reason for sending them through the fire of suffering. The sin would be purged from the nation and they would return to the promised land more faithful. Jeremiah spoke of that yet distant day: "Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy" (Jer. 31:16). It may have appeared they were drowning in their tears, with little concern on the part of God. In another Psalm the author would acknowledge the bitterness of their present sorrow while in captivity in contrast to the hope that better days lay ahead: "The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa. 126:3-6). "There are many that spend their time in sorrow who yet shall spend their eternity in joy" (Adam Clarke, QV).

**80:6:** *"Thou makest us a strife unto our enemies...our enemies laugh among themselves"* - One translation reads, "Our enemies mock us." It was an occasion of strife among the enemies of Israel "to see who will get the most of our spoils; or of contention, to see which could do most to aggravate their sufferings, and to bring disgrace and contempt upon them" (Barnes). When God punished Israel, that rebellious nation became a laughing stock to the nations round about. The enemies of God exulted in the defeat of God's people and found some sense of sadistic joy in their misery. "The seed of the serpent follow their progenitor and rejoice in evil...A neighbor's jeer is ever most cutting, especially if a man has been superior to them, and claimed to possess more grace. None are so unneighbourly as envious neighbours" (Spurgeon).

**80:7:** *"Turn us again"* - The verse is essentially the same as verse 3. The repeated use of the words, 'God of hosts,' suggests a renewed faith on the part of Israel, and the recognition that God had the power and ability to send an army, a force, to deliver them from the present distress. As Barnes noted, "This indicates greater earnestness; a deeper sense of the need of the interposition of God, indicated by the reference to his attribute as the leader of hosts or

armies" (Barnes).

*"Cause thy face to shine"* – The Psalmist besought God to find favor with them. But the Psalmist also recognized the need for Israel to repent. The author did not ask that God turn, but that God turn **them**. When Israel would turn to God, then God in turn would save Israel.

### ***God As Husbandman Of Israel*** **Verses 8-19**

- 8 *Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt: Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.*
- 9 *Thou preparedst room before it, And it took deep root, and filled the land.*
- 10 *The mountains were covered with the shadow of it, And the boughs thereof were like cedars of God.*
- 11 *It sent out its branches unto the sea, And its shoots unto the River.*
- 12 *Why hast thou broken down its walls, So that all they that pass by the way do pluck it?*
- 13 *The boar out of the wood doth ravage it, And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.*
- 14 *Turn again, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine,*
- 15 *And the stock which thy right hand planted, And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself.*
- 16 *It is burned with fire, it is cut down: They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.*
- 17 *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.*
- 18 *So shall we not go back from thee: Quicken thou us, and we will call upon thy name.*
- 19 *Turn us again, O Jehovah God of hosts; Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved.*

Verses 8-11 speak of the vine as it once was; verses 12-19 speak of the vine at the time when the Psalm was written. Prior to the Babylonian captivity, God bestowed great favor on this "vine." God brought Israel out of Egypt (verse 8), and "plantedst it" (verse 8b). The "nations" were driven out of Canaan to make room for the planting and growth of Israel. Proper preparation was made (verse 9), and consequently it took "deep root," suggesting strength and health. This "vine...filled the land" (verse 9). Its influence was far

reaching (verses 10-11). But alas, the vine dried up, and it was thence "burned with fire" (verse 16).

**80:8:** *"Thou broughtest"* – It is noted: (1) The deliverance from Israel is attributed to the power and might of God; it was HE who brought them out of Egypt. (2) At the time of their deliverance they were already likened unto a "vine." (3) God drove out the nations from the land of Canaan so as to give Israel her inheritance. (4) God "planted" Israel in that land. He had in fact planted the people as one plants a vine in a field.

Other writers used the metaphor of a vine to represent Israel. See Isaiah 5:1-2 and Jeremiah 2:21. Christ's reference to Himself as the "true vine" (John 15:1) is a declaration that He is the true vine of God. Any who are in Him share in that distinction as the "Israel of God" (Gal 6:16) by virtue of their association with Him. We like Spurgeon's summary of this section of the Psalm:

Glorious was the right hand of the Lord when with power and great wonders he removed his pleasant plant in the teeth of those who sought its destruction...Seven nations were digged out to make space for the vine of the Lord; the old trees, which long had engrossed the soil were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine. It was securely placed in its appointed position with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceeding weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruitbearing plant (Spurgeon).

**80:9:** The Hebrew word for "preparedst" means to turn, to turn the back...then it comes to mean to remove, or to clear from impediments so as to prepare the way (Isaiah 11:3, 17:14, Mal 3:1). God took all necessary measures to prepare the land for the nation of Israel. The ungodly nations were removed so as to make the land a suitable place for Israel's inheritance; a place free from the influence of those ungodly nations that possessed the land prior to Israel's entrance. As a consequence "it" (Israel, under the figure of a vine) struck roots deep into the earth and became firm. It "filled the land," her influence reaching to the uttermost bounds of the earth.

**80:10:** *"The mountains were covered with snow"* - The language describes the extent of Israel's influence as a nation. The language is poetic, describing the extent of Israel's growth and strength. Israel

became so great that the other nations felt her influence. During Solomon's reign the tiny nation of Israel occupied a place of prominence among nations larger than herself.

**80:11:** The "sea" has reference to the Mediterranean, and the "River" is the Euphrates, "for so the river usually means in the Scriptures" (Barnes). But alas, the majestic beauty of physical Israel was cut short by sin, and her prominence pictured here soon withered away.

**80:12:** The "walls" is rendered "hedges" in KJV, but the word properly means a wall or an enclosure. The idea seems to be that God had allowed Israel to be so ravaged that the enemies were not hindered from getting the spoils of Israel. There was nothing to prevent the nations round about from coming up to the "vine" and plucking the grapes. "A vine unprotected is exposed to every form of injury: none regard it, all prey upon it: such was Israel when given over to her enemies...With God no enemy can harm us, without him none are so weak as to be unable to do us damage" (Spurgeon).

**80:13:** The word rendered "boar" is simply "swine." The word rendered "ravage" (ASV) or "waste" (KJV) "occurs nowhere else" (Barnes). It means to cut down, or to devour; to lay waste. Israel had been so defeated that the Psalmist likened it unto beasts coming into a vineyard that has been left unprotected. These wild beasts were pictured as feeding on it to their hearts content. There was no protection for Israel from her enemies. "Fierce peoples, comparable to wild swine of the forest, warred with the Jewish nation, until it was gored and torn like a vine destroyed by greedy hogs" (Spurgeon).

**80:14:** "*We beseech thee*" - One is impressed with the sincerity and the beauty of the language which appears in this verse. There is a REQUEST that God would, in His tender mercy and compassion, look down upon "this vine" and RESTORE her to her former glory; that God would give consideration to "this vine" and RENDER unto her those things necessary for prosperity, as in the former days. One cannot read the verse without seeing the earnestness of the Psalmist.

**80:15:** "*The stock which thy right hand planted...thou madest strong*" - The rise of Israel was the result of God's planting them; it was not due to their own power and might, but solely through the Divine Providence of God. Thus it is with any nation that rises to prominence. In addition, the nation of Israel was made strong FOR GOD; for His glory and honor, and to accomplish His purpose. What

is said of Israel, is true of any nation.

*“and the branch that thou madest”* - Coffman capitalizes "Branch," and gives this explanation:

That title belongs to no other in heaven or earth except the Son of God. The alternate reading for 'Branch' in this passage is 'Son,' another word which we capitalize, because it appears to this writer that there are definitely Messianic overtones in this fervent plea of God's people for salvation (Coffman, page 75).

**80:16:** *“burned...cut down...perish”* - The extent of Israel's destruction is noted. It is likely that the words describe a real situation where Israel suffered from fire, as well as the leveling of the physical structures in their cities. Barnes comments on the later part of this verse: "At the frown on thy face, as if God has only to look upon men in anger, and they perish" (Barnes).

**80:17:** *“Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself”* - The phrase is somewhat ambiguous and may refer to either favor or wrath that was to be upon the "man of thy right hand" to either protect him or punish him. The former seems to be the more likely. The context suggests that the author was beseeching God's help for deliverance. Thus the Psalmist is asking that God's "hand" of deliverance be upon "the man of thy right hand," whom God had made "for thyself." There is little doubt that the passage is Messianic. While it is true that Israel was God's chosen nation, the reference to the "son of man" seems to indicate some specific individual. Coffman capitalizes "Son of man," and sees in it as a specific reference to Christ.

**80:18:** *“so shall we not go back from thee”* - The Psalm closes with a promise unto God. Men often make promises in their distress, only to be broken when the burden is lifted. If men would keep the vows make to God in times of trouble, the world would be a much better place in which to live. There is no reason to doubt that the Psalmist was sincere in his promise, and we are confident he kept his promises set forth in the Psalm.

**80:19:** *“Turn us again”* - On this verse Coffman notes:

Here is the climax of the psalm. God will turn to Israel when Israel turns to God. The great change so desperately needed is not in the

attitude of God, but in that of the degenerate vine with its wild grapes (Coffman, 2: 77).

*“Cause thy face to shine”* – Oh for God’s favorable glance! Our desire, above all else, is that He will turn His face toward us and express divine approval. “Men can do little with their arm, but God can do all things with a glance. Oh, to live for ever in the light of Jehovah’s countenance” (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. Favor with God is far greater than all the favor of men, and the suffering saint will turn to God in times of trouble with no greater desire than that God “cause his face to shine” in order that “we might be saved.”
2. Five times in the Psalm the writer asks God to “turn us again.” While God may be said to “turn” the hearts of men, the means of that turning is the word of God (consider Psalms 19:7 ff, where the power of God’s word is detailed). Each man must manifest a tender heart that can be touched with the word of God, and then allow God to “turn” him by submitting to the will of God.
3. “Fundamental Message: Note that the Psalmist does not blame God for the terrible desolation. He recognizes that it was their own sins which brought about the condition. In spite of the desolation and the consequent despair, there is great confidence that God can and will forgive the people and restore them to His favor. When we find ourselves in difficult circumstances – perhaps circumstances brought about by our own sins and our own faithfulness – may we have the courage and the confidence to know that God can and will help us, deliver us, forgive us, restore us to His favor – upon the condition that we genuinely repent of our sins” (Deaver, 1:180).
4. The Psalmist pled, “Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved” (verse 19). Salvation can be nothing less than full restoration. There is no middle ground between condemnation and acceptance. Either God’s face will shine upon us with approval, or He will frown with disapproval. It is man’s sin that hides God’s face. Too many men want a “half-in-half” religion that allows them to keep on foot in the world while attempting to keep the other in the church, living in hope that they shall be saved, and fearing that they shall be lost. Our Lord stated

plainly, “No man can serve two masters” (Matt. 6:24).



## *“God Will Bless If Men Will Obey”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is attributed to Asaph in the subtitle, and is “*to the chief musician upon Gittith.*” Morgan says this is a Psalm designed for use in the Feast of the Trumpets, the feast which prepared the way for the day of Atonement and the feast of Tabernacles. The feast of Trumpets occurred on the first day of the seventh month, followed by the Atonement on the tenth day of the same month, and the feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth. Barnes believes that the occasion was the Passover. Whatever the occasion, it is apparent that the Psalm was designed to remind the people of the goodness of God in the past, and a call to submit to and obey Him so as to receive blessings in the future. It is assumed to have been composed by or for the Asaph who was the contemporary of David, and who was appointed by him to preside over the music of the sanctuary. The “Gittith” was some sort of a musical instrument used at Jewish festivities and occasions of rejoicing. There is an anticipation of victory in this Psalm. The Psalmist was confident that, if Israel would return to God and walk in His ways, God would bless them abundantly. Hence, our title: “God Will Bless If Men Will Obey.”

### ***Analysis***

There are two distinct parts to the Psalm. Rawlinson admits that “it is difficult to trace any connection between the joyous opening strophe (vers. 1-5) and the sad and chastened monody which follows (vers. 6-16)” (Rawlinson, 8[2]:167). Some have even suggested that we might have two separate Psalms thrown together by some penman or copyist. In verses 1-5 the Psalmist exhorts Israel to **rejoice**. They are encouraged to “*sing aloud,*” to “*raise a song,*” and to do so on some particular feast day. He tells them that this was according to the “statute for Israel.” In verses 6-16 he exhorts them to **remember**. In these verses the Psalmist would call to memory some of the more prominent events in Israel’s history: the

deliverance from Egyptian captivity, the giving of the law at Sinai, the provisions of water at Meribah. But he would also remind them of those occasions where the nation had been disobedient and rebellious. We like Roy Deaver's outline, and will follow it in our study of this chapter:

I. The Psalmist... (verses 1-5)

1. Speaks of God as our strength, and as the God of Jacob;
2. Exhorts his brethren to sing unto God; to sound the timbrel and harp;
3. Explains that such is for an appointed time, a solemn feast day; that such was a statute for Israel, ordained by God for a testimony;

II. God... (verses 6-16)

1. Reminds Israel of His deliverance for them;
2. Pleads for Israel to hearken; to put away the false gods;
3. Charges Israel with not listening, thus giving them over to their own stubborn hearts;
4. Pleads for Israel to listen, and walk in His ways;
5. Promises that He would subdue their enemies, and abundantly bless them.

Regarding the second section (verses 6 ff), Morgan had this interesting note:

They [Israel, TW] failed in refusing to hearken and obey, and therefore He abandoned them to their choice...It is still the same burden of the faithfulness of God, and the unfaithfulness of His people. The people's panic and defeat are always due to their departure from God. The enemies who overcome us are without strength in the conflict against Him. When they overcome us it is because we have departed from Him" (Morgan, page 252).

## ***Commentary***

### ***The Psalmist Verses 1-5***

- :1 Sing aloud unto God our strength: Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.*
- 2 Raise a song, and bring hither the timbrel, The pleasant harp with the psaltery.*

- 3 *Blow the trumpet at the new moon, At the full moon, on our feast-day.*  
 4 *For it is a statute for Israel, An ordinance of the God of Jacob.*  
 5 *He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony, When he went out over the land of Egypt, Where I heard a language that I knew not.*

In this section the Psalmist will (1) speak of God as our strength, (2) exhort his brethren to sing unto God, and (3) explain that the occasion for such is the “feast day.”

**81:1:** “*Sing aloud unto God...raise a song...blow the trumpet*” – Songs have long served the purpose of stirring the hearts of those who hear and thereby motivating them to action. But not just any song will do. The Psalmist is calling for audible song (“sing aloud”), a song offered to the proper object of praise (“God of Jacob”), and a song that expresses the deep devotion of the heart of the worshipper (“a joyful noise”). Song is the natural outpouring of a cheerful heart. James instructs us, “Is any among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise” (James 5:13).

“*God our strength*” – The strength of God had been demonstrated in the deliverance from Egyptian captivity. The Psalmist realized that Jehovah was the source of his strength and he calls upon others to sing praises to He Who had manifested such wonderful strength. There is no better reason to sing songs of praise than the fact that God is our strength.

**81:2:** “*Raise a song*” - Literally, “lift up a psalm,” or as we might say, “raise the tune.” There is great encouragement when men lift their voices in song. In time of war, patriotic songs can stir men to courage. In times of distress, songs of hope can drive away the anxiety. In times of lethargy and apathy, singing can move men to action. Shortly after our nation suffered the tragedy of terrorist attacks in New York City, our hearts were lifted from the depths of despair when our nation’s leaders stood on the steps of the capital building in Washington, D.C., and sang “God bless America.” Whether in times of sorrow, or times of rejoicing, it is of great benefit to have men “raise a song.”

“*the timbrel...the harp...the trumpet*” – Those who seek to find justification for instrumental music in our worship today fail to keep in mind that we live under a new dispensation. Even if it could be established that David and Israel used instrumental music in worship with God’s approval, it does not authorize such in our

worship in the church. The instrument we are to use is the voice (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

**81:3:** *“Blow the trumpet”* - Barnes tells us that "The trumpet was a common instrument of music, and was employed on all their festive occasions. It was at first made of horn, and then was made similar in shape to a horn" (Barnes).

*“new moon...full moon...feast day”* – It is generally agreed that the “feast” under consideration was the Passover. The word which is used ('hhodesh') means commonly the new moon, but can also mean a set time, such as a month. Hence the King James Version reads, “in the time appointed.”

**81:4:** *“a statute...an ordinance”* – The instructions for the Passover are recorded in Exodus 12:3 ff. The writer was simply pointing out that the command to render praise to God, and to celebrate the Passover, is a perpetual ordinance for Israel. Spurgeon made this most discerning observation: "When it can be proved that the observance of Christmas, Whitsuntide, and other Popish festivals was ever instituted by a divine statute, we also will attend to them, but not till then. It is as much our duty to reject the traditions of men, as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. We ask concerning every rite and rubric, Is this a law of the God of Jacob? and if it be not clearly so, it is of no authority with us, who walk in Christian liberty" (Spurgeon). It is unfortunate that men think they have the prerogative to worship God as they see fit. The only acceptable worship to God is that worship that is established by “a statute” or “ordinance” from God.

**81:5:** *“He appointed it in Joseph”* - The word "Joseph" stands for the whole of the Hebrew people. It was literally "in his going out of the land of Egypt," having reference to the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity. It was the night before Israel's departure from Egypt when God gave the instructions for the observance of the Passover.

*“Where I heard a language that I knew not”* – Literally, “the lip of one that I did not know, I heard” (Barnes). The author is placing himself at the time of the Exodus, as if he were among them. The Jews, during the whole of their time in Egypt, preserved their native tongue. Thus the Egyptian, and the language of Egypt, was foreign to the Hebrews. But Coffman suggests another possible meaning:

"He could be saying that the current sins, rebellions, and pagan worship at that time being indulged by God's Israel were indeed a 'language unknown to him,' the same being as hard for him to understand as a foreign language with which he was not familiar" (Coffman, 2:82).

It is possible that the latter half of this verse, beginning with the words "Where I heard a language," is the Lord speaking. Spurgeon held this position and explained it thusly:

Surely the connection requires that we accept these words as the language of the Lord. It would be doing great violence to language if the "I" here should be referred to one person, and the "I" in the next verse to another. But how can it be imagined that the Lord should speak of a language which he understood not, seeing he knows all things, and no form of speech is incomprehensible to him? The reply is, that the Lord here speaks as the God of Israel identifying himself with his own chosen nation, and calling that an unknown tongue to himself which was unknown to them. He had never been adored by psalm or prayer in the tongue of Egypt; the Hebrew was the speech known in his sacred house, and the Egyptian was outlandish and foreign there (Spurgeon).

### ***The Lord Speaks*** **Verses 6-16**

- 6 *I removed his shoulder from the burden: His hands were freed from the basket.*
- 7 *Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder; I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah*
- 8 *Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wouldest hearken unto me!*
- 9 *There shall no strange god be in thee; Neither shalt thou worship any foreign god.*
- 10 *I am Jehovah thy God, Who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt: Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.*
- 11 *But my people hearkened not to my voice; And Israel would none of me.*
- 12 *So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart, That they might walk in their own counsels.*
- 13 *Oh that my people would hearken unto me, That Israel would walk in my ways!*
- 14 *I would soon subdue their enemies, And turn my hand against their adversaries.*

- 15 *The haters of Jehovah should submit themselves unto him: But their time should endure for ever.*  
16 *He would feed them also with the finest of the wheat; And with honey out of the rock would I satisfy thee.*

In these verses the voice shifts from that of the Psalmist, to that of God. Here Jehovah (1) reminds them of their deliverance, (2) pleads for Israel to listen to His voice and put away the false gods, (3) charges Israel with disobedience, (4) pleads for Israel to repent and listen and walk in His ways, and (5) promises that He would subdue their enemies and bless them.

**81:6:** *"I removed his shoulder"* - The speaker here is God. In the previous verse it was the Psalmist. Such an abrupt change in speakers is common in the Psalms. Here it is affirmed that God removed the burdens and set them free, referring to their captivity in Egypt. The "basket" from which they were freed is likely a reference to the basket used to carry the clay, or the straw, in making the bricks in Egypt. God is the great "burden lifter." The greatest burden men could ever bear is the burden of sin, burden which men needlessly carry. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

**81:7:** *"I delivered thee"* - God continues to speak. He reminds Israel that it was God Who provided the deliverance. Jehovah demonstrated His great power *"in the secret place of thunder,"* or at Mt. Sinai. He proved them at Meribah, by having Moses strike the rock, thereby providing them with abundant water (Ex. 17:1 ff). How quickly that disobedient nation could forget God. On numerous occasions Israel turned away from God. Now once again God speaks to Israel and reminds them of that great deliverance and providential care in the wilderness. Unfortunately, "the story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin; great is the mercy of our God: let us reflect upon both, and pause a while" (Spurgeon). Our generation is no different. While many are genuinely thankful, so many forget their redemption and turn back to the world. Let us never forget God's wonderful benefits, and let us never cease to render our genuine heartfelt thanksgiving.

**81:8:** *"Hear, O my people"* – This is a call to repentance. This call demands an obedient response. If they would listen, God would "testify" to them. This passionate plea from God is astonishing. God is saying, "Oh Israel, if you had only heeded my word, what blessings of joy would have been yours!" One is reminded of the pleading words of Jesus over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37-38: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" It should be noted that Israel's lost condition was not due to any absence of mercy and love on the part of God. Their problem lay in their unwillingness to respond to God's love. There our Lord summed up the cause for the alienation of Israel from God with the words, "but ye would not."

**81:9:** *"no strange god...no foreign god"* – Here was the root of the problem. Israel had turned to idolatry. When the Psalm was written idolatry was rampant in Israel. It took the destruction of their homeland, and seventy years as captives in a foreign land to rid them of their idolatrous practices. The language of the Palmist would suggest that at the time of the writing pagan idolatry must have been in practice. The spiritual application finds its absolute fulfillment in the church. *"There shall be no strange god in thee"* is a marked trait of new Israel, the church. Those who are faithful to His calling have "come out from among them," and have cast off every idol that would stand between the Christian and his God.

**81:10:** *"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it"* - Like a baby bird with her mouth opened for the mother to feed it, so Israel was instructed to open and receive. "Open thy mouth wide" refers to the heart. If Israel would open their heart, God would provide them with abundant spiritual blessings. Implied, of course, is the power of the Almighty to fulfill the promise.

**81:11:** *"Israel would none of me"* – The idea is that Israel was not disposed to worship God and to thus find happiness in the Almighty. Literally, the Psalmist was saying, "Israel did not will me," or "did not incline to me; were not attached to me; were not disposed to worship me and find happiness in me." Notice similar language in Isaiah 1:19, Job 39:9, Proverbs 1:25, Exodus 32:1 and Deuteronomy 32:15 and 18. Israel would not listen to the prophets, would not walk in God's commands, and longed instead for the ox-goads of Egypt. Their hearts had been bewitched by the idols of the nations about

them, and they had been drawn away into idolatry to such an extent that they would have nothing to do with God.

**81:12:** "*So I let them go*" - When men are determined to rebel against God, the Divine will is to allow them that freedom in choice. When the prodigal took his inheritance and went to the far country, the "Father" did not hinder him from going. Sometimes a parent has to allow a child to suffer the consequences of his foolish decisions. When men love evil more than good, God will withdraw the divine restraints and let them wallow in the pig-pen they have dug. Men plead for absolute freedom; freedom to do as they please. But there is nothing more disastrous than for man to be allowed to do exactly as he pleases, with little or no restraints whatsoever. We like Spurgeon's assessment of this point:

Men deserted of restraining grace, sin with deliberation; they consult, and debate, and consider, and then elect evil rather than good, with malice aforethought and in cool blood. It is a remarkable obduracy of rebellion when men not only *run* into sin through passion, but calmly *walk* in their own counsels of iniquity (Spurgeon).

It is a dark night in a man's existence when God chooses to "let him go."

**81:13:** "*Oh that my people would hearken unto me*" - This verse provides us with an excellent definition of what it means to "**walk**" in God's ways. Walking in God's ways includes hearkening unto God, keeping His commandments, and doing His will. And there is no way one can possibly hearken to God's word unless he knows that word through diligent study (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15).

**81:14:** "*I would soon subdue their enemies*" - The word "subdue" means "to bow down; to be curved or bent; and the idea is, that he would have caused them to bow down, to wit, by submission before them" (Barnes). The important thing about this verse is the willingness of God to overthrow and destroy the enemies of Israel. With only a few exceptions, Israel's history is replete with their struggles with other nations. When we consider verses 13 and 14 together the truth emerges that God's providential care for His people is conditioned on their obedience.

**81:15:** - The special point in this verse is the use of the words "*haters*



*of Jehovah.*" All sin is offensive to God, and in the final analysis, those who travel the path of sin are nothing less than God haters. It is incredible that Israel had reached the point where they could be described as "God haters." Had they walked in the pathway of righteous they would have "endured for ever." What an astounding indictment against a nation that CLAIMED to love God, when all the while they were described as God haters.

**81:16:** Had Israel submitted to God's commands, He would have blessed them, both in quantity and quality of goods. "Pure religion, obedience to God, morality, temperance, purity, honesty, and industry...are always eminently favourable to individual and national prosperity; and if a man or a nation desired to be most prospered, most successful in the lawful and proper objects of individual or national existence, and most happy, nothing would tend more to conduce to it than those virtues which piety enjoins and cultivates" (Barnes). The inspired apostle Paul reminds us that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). God can, and will do great things for those who obey Him. When we walk in the light (1 John 1:6-8), seek to maintain holiness in all respects, then the joy and peace that is ours far exceeds what the world has to offer.

### ***Lessons***

1. Deliverance is something to sing about! Israel had a glorious history. God had manifested His great power in delivering Israel from Egyptian captivity. If Israel truly appreciated that past deliverance, they should lift their voices in praise. They should "sing aloud." "Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise" (Jas. 5:13).
2. Past deliverance is no guarantee of future blessings. Israel enjoyed the providential care of Jehovah, and witnessed His great power. But even as the Psalmist wrote this song, there were dark clouds looming on the horizon. God was about to leave them to the stubbornness of their heart. Unless they were willing to repent, put away their idolatry, and walk in God's ways, the time of judgment was coming. Unfortunately Israel did not repent, and Israel was carried into Babylonian captivity.
3. God will provide abundantly! If we would but open our hearts, God will fill us with those blessings necessary to genuine happiness and joy.

4. “Among the saddest words every spoken are those we utter concerning what *might have been*. Lost opportunities; neglected duties; mischance that was within a hair breadth of good fortune; misunderstandings that a little candour or patience would have prevented; voices we do not listen to, but to whose echoes haunt us; the joy, wealth, success, love, happiness, within our grasp, if we had not let them slip; what a weight of meaning, depth of sadness, these put into the words, ‘It might have been.’ How many lives are wearing themselves out in the gloom of failure or disappointment! What countless multitudes have closed in sorrow and shame, whose whole course would have been different, if at some ‘parting of the ways,’ perhaps in the early morning of life, they had not taken the wrong turn! A more awful depth of meaning and pathos belongs to the closing verses of this psalm. *God’s lamentation over man’s lost opportunities*. We speak of what *mighthave* been and *has* been; God speaks of what *ought* to have been on men’s part, and surely *would* have been on his” (Rawlinson, 8 [2]:169).

## *“God The Righteous Judge”*

### ***Introduction***

It is generally accepted that Asaph wrote the Psalm. There is nothing in the Psalm to suggest the occasion. It is evident that it was written in view of injustices being practiced on the part of civil magistrates and rulers. It sets forth principles to guide rulers at all times and in all countries. It was "written at a time when there was much that was unjust and oppressive in the administration of justice; when the magistrates were corrupt; when they could be bribed; when they were forgetful of their obligation to defend the poor and the fatherless - the afflicted and the needy; when manifest consequences of the evil administration of justice prevailed in the land, and 'all the foundations of the earth' seemed to be 'out of course'; and when those in power were haughty and arrogant, as if they were not men, and were not to die" (Barnes). The Psalm addresses the injustice that was being exercised by the rulers of the land. Consequently, the Psalm is very relevant. The judges of our land, and those of other lands, must give heed to the truths taught in this little Psalm.

### ***Analysis***

Barnes suggests the following outline:

- I. A reference to God as the Supreme Ruler, to Whom all the rulers and magistrates must answer, verse 1;
- II. The character of the magistrates at the time the psalm was written, pertaining to their unjust and partial administration, verse 2;
- III. The duties of the rulers with regard to the poor and needy, verses 3-4;
- IV. A further statement regarding the magistrates as it pertains to their walking in darkness, verse 5;
- V. A solemn appeal to them as mortal men, verses 6-7;
- VI. A call on God to arise and to execute judgment in the earth, verse 8.

Roy Deaver has a somewhat different outline:

- I. Assembly: The Psalmist pictures God in a solemn assembly with earthly judges (verses 1-4);
- II. Charges: The Psalmist makes certain charges against the judges (verse 5);
- III. Men: God again speaks to the earthly judges, stressing that they are exalted, but still they are men (verses 6-7);
- IV. Prayer (verse 8).

There are essentially three movements in the Psalm. In the first part of the Psalm the author announces that God is the supreme Judge. He is the standard, His word the authority and guide. The judges of the earth had erred in that they showed respect for the wicked and departed from God's word in their dealings with the widows and the poor. The second movement sets forth the responsibilities and function of earthly judges. These wicked judges had the authority given to them, but utterly failed to exercise proper judgment in the treatment of the downcast. Finally, the Psalm ends with a prayer that God will arise and judge the earth. Morgan captured the essence of this Psalm with these words:

This is ever the cry of the man of faith when he stands in the presence of the wrongs and oppressions obtaining among the poor and the afflicted. There is nothing the world needs today more than the administration of strict and impartial justice, and there is no greater comfort to the heart than the conviction that the prayer of the psalmist, multiplied ten thousandfold in the passing centuries by all who have been, and still are, conscious of prevailing injustice, will yet be answered. God's day of judgment will be a day of mercy in the largest sense (Morgan, page 252).

We recommend the following outline for the study of this chapter:

- I. God's Indictment Upon Earthly Judges, verses 1-2;
- II. God's Instruction For Earthly Judges, verses 3-4;
- III. God's Further Indictment Upon Earthly Judges, verses 5-7;
- IV. God's Inheritance of All The Nations, verse 8.

## ***Commentary***

### ***God's Indictment Upon Earthly Judges Verses 1-2***

- 1 God standeth in the congregation of God;  
He judgeth among the gods.*  
*2 How long will ye judge unjustly,  
And respect the persons of the wicked? Selah*

**82:1:** “*God standeth...He judgeth*” - The idea is that God judges among those of high rank and position in life. He is supreme over them and holds them responsible for their actions. The Almighty is cognizant of every action, every ruling of those in positions of authority.

The second use of the word "God" is rendered "mighty" in the KJV. This is not unusual since the “Almighty” is one of the names given to God. According to the ASV the Psalmist speaks of “God” standing in the “congregation of God.” It would seem, however, that the KJV gives some consideration to the overall context, and thus renders the first portion of verse 1, “God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, he judgeth among the gods.” From Exodus 22:28 and John 10:34 we learn that God calls those who administer justice as “gods.” What we have before us is a courtroom scene in which THE Judge of all the earth is judging the judges of His people. Spurgeon assessed the situation thusly:

He is the overlooker, who, from his own point of view, sees all that is done by the great ones of the earth. When they sit in state he stands over them, ready to deal with them if they pervert judgment. Judges shall be judged, and to justices justice shall be meted out...A higher authority will criticize the decision of petty sessions, and even the judgments of our most impartial judges will be revised by the High Court of heaven (Spurgeon).

“*He judgeth among the gods*” - While these mighty men are "gods" to other men, Jehovah is God to them. Their authority derives from the Father, and they act to judge men only insofar as God allows them to do so. Those granted such authority over others should realize that ultimately they will answer to the Lord for how they used, or abused, that God-given authority.

**82:2:** “*How long will ye judge unjustly*” - These mighty men were not exercising proper justice. They respected the "persons of the

wicked." Barnes points out that literally, these judges would "lift up the faces of the wicked." They were showing favor and being influenced by the wealth, rank or position of the wicked. Such language was common when describing someone who showed favoritism or partiality. Judgment was being administered based upon what someone WAS, rather than on what was right and wrong.

### ***God's Instruction For Earthly Judges*** **Verses 3-4**

*3 Judge the poor and fatherless:*

*Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.*

*4 Rescue the poor and needy:*

*Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.*

**82:3:** "*Judge the poor and fatherless*" - It was, and is, the responsibility of those in positions of power to administer to the needs of the poor. To this Biblical principle the poor owe a great deal of gratitude. "The poor and the needy; the widow and the fatherless; owe to the religion of the Bible a debt which no language can express" (Barnes). One of the responsibilities of the government is to assure equitable justice and judgment regarding the mistreatment of the poor and fatherless. There are two extremes to which a government can go with this regard. The first is that of having no concern whatsoever for the poor and needy. Such a position allows evil men to take advantage of the plight of the needy. The other extreme is to provide unlimited hand-outs and encourage slothfulness. Every society will have its loafers and indigents, but the government does not have to encourage them in their slothfulness by giving entitlements to those who refuse to work. The church also plays an important role in the help for the needy. But like civil government, caution must be exercised lest we dole out the Lord's resources to those who refuse to work and live responsibly. Unfortunately there will always be those who would rob the Lord's church by their constant barrage of demands under the guise of genuine needs. While the genuine poor and needy ought never to be turned away, careful stewardship should be exercised lest we ignore the truly needy while providing hand outs to those who refuse to work. The message of the Psalmist to the unruly judges was plain: "Do not hunt down the peasant for gathering a few sticks and allow the gentlemanly swindler to break through the meshes of the law...Your pity for their circumstances must not make you behold the scales unfairly: but if you give men no more than justice, at least be

sure that you give them that to the full" (Spurgeon).

**82:4:** "*Rescue...deliver*" - This is a continuation of the thought in verse 3. The wicked were evidently taking advantage of the poor and the fatherless, and the Psalmist was calling upon those in positions of power to deliver the needy out of the hand of the wicked. Note that it is not enough to simply be aware of the plight of the needy, but government must use their power to provide necessary assistance in delivering them from the unfair and unethical treatment at the hands of wicked men.

### ***God's Further Indictment Upon Earthly Judges*** **Verses 5-7**

*5 They know not, neither do they understand;  
They walk to and fro in darkness:  
All the foundations of the earth are shaken.*  
*6 I said, Ye are gods,  
And all of you sons of the Most High.*  
*7 Nevertheless ye shall die like men,  
And fall like one of the princes.*

**82:5:** "*They know not*" - If these words refer to the magistrates and leaders of Israel whose duty it was to protect and judge with regard to the needy and the fatherless, then perhaps Barnes is correct: "They not merely judged unjustly, and were not merely partial in the administration of justice, but they did not desire to understand their duty, and the true principles on which justice should be administered" (Barnes). Not only were they ignorant of the plight of the needy and fatherless, but they chose to remain that way. They continued to "walk to and fro in darkness," willfully remaining in ignorance of the plight of the truly needy. Barnes points out that "all just judgment must be based (a) on a true knowledge of what the law is, or what is right, and (b) on a knowledge of the facts in a particular case" (Barnes).

*"All the foundations of the earth are shaken"* – It is not the physical earth to which the Psalmist refers, but the social order of nations and governments. Part of the stability of this world with regard to social order rests upon the exercise of right and just laws, among these the proper treatment of the poor and needy. The proper administration of justice is absolutely essential to the stability and well being of any society. With its corrupt judicial system, Israel was on very shaky ground and in danger of collapsing. Once a country's judicial system

becomes corrupt, that nation's collapse is not far off. "When the dispensers of law have dispensed with justice, settlements are unsettled, society is unhinged, the whole fabric of the nation is shaken. When injustice is committed in due course of law the world is indeed out of course" (Spurgeon).

**82:6:** *"Ye are gods"* - The word "gods" is used in an accommodative sense. The meaning seems to be that God had conferred upon these earthly judges an appellation that indicated nearness to God and judicial authority beyond other men. The Psalmist was not suggesting that these magistrates were divine.

*"Sons of the Most High"* - Here God reminds the rulers that He has put them in their positions to discern honestly and equitably. As they uphold the moral principles that naturally flow from God to man, they are acting in God's place in rendering their judgments among men (Deut. 1:17; 2 Chron. 19:6; Rom. 13:1-2). An example of this delegated authority can be seen in the fact that magistrates would have no right to condemn the guilty had God not established the government as the administrator of law and the executor of punishment.

**82:7:** *"Ye shall die like men"* - It has often been said that death is the great equalizer. It is in undeniable fact that all men die. The Psalmist calls attention to this fact. Barnes tells of an "ancient monarch directed his servant to address him each morning in this language: 'Remember, sire, that thou art mortal' (Barnes). The realization of our mortality helps us keep things in proper perspective. This is true of government leaders, but it is also true of all men.

*"fall like one of the princes"* - The writer's reference to the "princes" is to impress upon their minds that men in position of authority, like themselves, would not escape death. Death is common to all men, rulers and servants alike. It is likely that there is a judicial element in this verse that is being pronounced upon these corrupt leaders of Israel.

### ***God's Inheritance of All The Nations*** **Verse 8**

*8 Arise, O God, judge the earth;  
For thou shalt inherit all the nations.*



**82:8:** *“Arise, O God, judge the earth”* - Since there was a failure on the part of the rulers over the land to exercise the necessary justice, then the writer calls upon God to render judgment. The word for “inherit” simply denotes possession or proprietorship, without reference to the question of HOW the possession is obtained.

### ***Lessons***

1. The Psalm begins with a reference to the fact that “God standeth.” The Almighty is observant of all that takes place. But it is also notable that it was the place of the “judge” to sit, while the accused would stand. In Exodus 18:3 we read, “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.” This Psalm is a solemn warning that when judges consider the cause of the poor and needy that this is God’s cause, and to pass judgment upon the poor and needy unfairly is to treat God with injustice as well.
2. Judges and rulers have been given their authority by God. They shall answer to God for how they use that authority.
3. Finally, God is concerned about the poor and needy. We are the instruments in His hand to mete out God’s care for the unfortunate and needy.

## *“Be Not Still, O God”*

### ***Introduction***

This is another Psalm of Asaph, and the last by this author that we shall encounter in the book. The author is likely the same person referred to in 2 Chronicles 20:14. The Psalm was written in view of some battle. The Psalmist is seeking God's vengeance upon the enemy as a demonstration of might and power. He sees the confederacy of the enemies of God and their determination to completely annihilate the name of Israel. He was aware, no doubt, of the serious nature of their confederacy. The Psalm is a prayer for the destruction of this confederacy. His prayer was answered when the confederation broke up their league and ended up destroying one another. Brother Deaver, quoting from the *Cambridge Bible*, noted, “On the whole, the invasion recorded in 2 Chronicles 20 offers the closest parallel and the best illustration, and the Psalm may have been written with reference to it” (Deaver, 1:292). We have taken our title from the first verse in the Psalm.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have the following: (1) In verse 1 we have the prayer of the Psalmist asking that God no longer remain silent; that He no longer be “still.” (2) This is followed in verses 2 through 5 by a statement of the occasion for the prayer. There was some conspiracy that had been formed against God's people. (3) The Psalmist then enumerates the nations that have combined their efforts to defeat Israel, verses 6-8. (4) The Psalmist next asks God to intervene as He had in times past, and then sets forth a number of examples of Israel's past deliverance in verses 9-12. The Psalm closes with a plea that God would utterly overthrow and confound the enemy, verses 13-19.

We originally obtained the following outline in chapel services at Brown Trail, and brother Roy Deaver later used it in his homiletic commentary on the Psalms:

- I. **Call** (verse 1) - a prayer that God would no longer keep still or be silent;
- II. **Conspiracy** (verses 2-8) - the Psalmist sets forth the occasion for the prayer, naming the conspirators, and their evil actions;
- III. **Condemnation** (verses 9-12) – The Psalmist asks God to interpose as He had done in former times in Jewish history;
- IV. **Consumption** (verses 13-17) - in which the Psalmist desires that the enemies might be utterly overthrown and confounded;
- V. **Consequence** (verse 18) – so that men might know that Jehovah is Lord over all the earth.

Willmington had a similar outline: First, there is the *Plot Against Israel* (83:1-8), containing (A) the iniquity (verses 1-4), and (B) the identity of the nations (verses 5-8). This is followed by the *Petition by Israel* (83:9-18). This is a petition *concerning those nations* (verses 9-17), and *concerning his name* (verse 18).

We will use brother Deaver's outline in our study.

## **Commentary**

### **Call Verse 1**

*1 Oh God, keep not thou silence: Hold not thy peace, and be not still,  
O God.*

A crisis had arisen. If the nation was to be spared, God must intervene. Notice other passages where the Psalmist calls for God to "arise" (Psa. 3:7; 7:6; 44:26; 68:1; et al). It was the Psalmist's prayer that God would not be indifferent to their wants and the danger that was threatening.

### **Conspiracy Verses 2-8**

*2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult;  
And they that hate thee have lifted up the head.  
3 Thy take crafty counsel against thy people,  
And consult together against thy hidden ones.*

4 *They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation;  
 That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.*  
 5 *For they have consulted together with one consent;  
 Against thee do they make a covenant:*  
 6 *The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites;  
 Moab, and the Hagarenes;*  
 7 *Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek;  
 Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre:*  
 8 *Assyria also is joined with them;  
 They have helped the children of Lot. Selah*

**83:2:** *"Thine enemies"* - Israel's enemies are also the enemies of God. So it is to day that the enemies of spiritual Israel, the church, are actually enemies of God. The reference to these enemies lifting up the head is simply a description of their rebellion against God. The *"tumult"* suggests that they were agitated, furious, rushing to accomplish their planned desires. Like a pack of hungry dogs, these enemies "make a tumult" in an effort to cast off God's restraints and destroy God's people. The world's hatred for God stems from a dislike of the moral values and standards which God demands of men. Men are not satisfied with God's pattern for worship. Since they cannot lash out at God, they propose to do harm to God's people.

**83:3:** *"They take crafty counsel"* - Such a confederacy as described by the Psalmist could not have taken place without a considerable amount of planning and plotting. Barnes points out that the single Hebrew word translated *"take crafty"* means "to make naked; and then, to be crafty, cunning, malignant, 1 Sam. xxiii.12" (Barnes). The enemy had made their plans in a crafty, malignant manner. The word rendered *"counsel"* means a couch or divan. The image is that of the enemy being assembled in a common place to make plans against Israel. This enemy had formulated their plans and were now seeking to carry out those plans. It is often the case that the wicked counsel in secret, with cold-blooded deliberation.

*"Against thy hidden ones"* – This would refer to God's people; those protected by Him. It is true that God places a "hedge" about His people. Their enemies may not think this is so, but they might as well attempt to siege the throne of God itself as to destroy God's "hidden ones."

**83:4:** *“Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation”* - This has long been the intent of the enemies of Israel, that they might destroy Israel as a nation. They would be satisfied with nothing less than utter annihilation. This coalition of wicked nations sought complete extermination so that “the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.” Evil is completely intolerant of good. Israel had great influence upon the nations about her. It was because of her influence that the nations sought to destroy her. Spiritual Israel is to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world. When she exercises her influence for righteousness, persecution follows (cf. 2 Tim. 3:12). “Men would be glad to cast the church out of the world because it rebukes them, and is thus a standing menace to their sinful peace” (Spurgeon).

**83:5:** *“Against thee...a covenant”* – Literally the idea is, “they have entered into a covenant against thee.” A formal treaty of some sort seems to be intended. They had one intent, that of destroying Israel. The enemies of God, while often at odds with one another, often unite in opposition against God and His people. Pilate and Herod became friends in opposition to Christ (Luke 23:12).

**83:6-8:** *“The tents of Edom”* – Edom was the nearest of kin to physical Israel, but listed first here among the enemies of God. The Edomites often invaded the land of Israel but were never able of themselves to gain a victory.

*“Ishmaelites”* – The warlike spirit of the descendants of the bond woman perpetuated the grudge between the descendants of Sarah and Hagar.

*“Moab”* – The Moabites were Lot’s offspring as a consequence of his daughter’s incestuous relationship with their father. The ongoing feud between Israel and Moab lasted throughout Israel’s history. Little did Lot realize that his “seed” would be an unrelenting enemy of Abraham’s posterity.

*“Hagarenes”* – These were probably the descendants of Hagar by a second husband. But whoever they were it is stated by the Psalmist that they cast their lot with the enemies of God and sought the ruin of Israel.

*“Gebal”* would have been a near neighbor to Edom and might be identified with the Gebal in the region of Tyre and Sidon.

*“Ammon, and Amalek”* – Amalek was a grandson of Esau. It is difficult to tell whether the Psalmist is referring to the man Amalek or the Amalekites who actually existed in the days of Abraham. Easton provides this summary of the Amalekites:

A tribe that dwelt in Arabia Petraea, between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea. They were not the descendants of Amalek, the son of Eliphaz, for they existed in the days of Abraham (Gen. 14:7). They were probably a tribe that migrated from the shores of the Persian Gulf and settled in Arabia. They dwelt in the land of the south...from Havilah until thou comest to *Shur*' (Num. 13:29; 1 Sam. 15:7). They were a pastoral, and hence a nomadic race. Their kings bore the hereditary name of Agag (Num. 24:7; 1 Sam. 15:8). They attempted to stop the Israelites when they marched through their territory (Deut. 25:18), attacking them at Rephidim (Ex. 17:8-13; compare Deut. 25:17; 1 Sam. 15:2). They afterwards attacked the Israelites at Hormah (Num. 14:45). We read of them subsequently as in league with the Moabites (Judg. 3:13) and the Midianites (Judg. 6:3). Saul finally desolated their territory and destroyed their power (1 Sam. 14:48; 15:3), and David recovered booty from them (1 Sam. 30:18-20). In the Babylonian inscriptions they are called Sute, in those of Egypt Sittiu, and the Amarna tablets include them under the general name of Khabbati, or 'plunderers' (Easton, QV).

*“Philistia...Tyre: Assyria”* – These last three nations were constant threats to Israel.

Barnes suggests that "the purpose of destroying the Hebrew people had been originated by the Moabites and Ammonites, and that they had called in the aid of the surrounding nations to enable them to carry out their plan" (Barnes). There is nothing that suggests what nation might have initially suggested this "covenant," but it is not outside the possibility that Moab was the instigator given her opposition to Israel from an early date. Perhaps the reason for the Psalmist's calling attention to this confederation of nations against Israel was to teach Israel the need to trust in God. Israel was literally surrounded by the enemies of God. There was no where to turn. When God's people are hemmed in, with nowhere to turn, it is then that they are driven to their knees. God may permit things to occur so as to make it apparent that if we would find victory in the midst of our enemies, we must turn to God.

There is no Biblical record of such a coalition having occurred. There are two explanations that satisfy this student. (1) The

language is a sort of poetic figure describing the nations that, throughout history, constantly assailed Israel. (2) Or it may be that the situation was a real historical event and God simply chose not to record this present threat against Israel other than here in this Psalm. The first seems to make more sense, particularly when we consider the next few verses in the Psalm.

### **Condemnation** **Verses 9-12**

- 9 Do thou unto them as unto Midian,  
As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the river Kishon;  
10 Who perished at Endor,  
Who became as dung for the earth.  
11 Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb;  
Yea, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna;  
12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves in possession  
The habitations of God.*

**83:9-12:** The complete overthrow of the Midianites is recorded in Numbers 31. Sisera was slain by Jael, recorded in Judges 4. The "river Kishon" is a stream which rises near Mt. Tabor, and is referred to in the song of Deborah in Judges 5:21. "Oreb and Zeeb" were princes or rulers of the Midianites, slain by Gideon, and recorded in Judges 7:25. Zebah and Zalmunna were kings of Midian, also slain by Gideon (Judges 8:1-21). The Psalmist was not talking about a single event, but a whole series of events throughout the history of Israel wherein it is made abundantly clear that in each and every case, victory belonged to God's people. Just as God had defeated the enemies of the past, so the Psalmist pleads for God to intervene and deliver Israel from her present distress.

### **Consumption** **Verses 13-17**

- 13 O my God, make them like the whirling dust;  
As stubble before the wind.  
14 As the fire that burneth the forest,  
And as the flame that setteth the mountains on fire,  
15 So pursue them with thy tempest,  
And terrify them with thy storm.  
16 Fill their faces with confusion,  
That they may seek thy name, O Jehovah.  
17 Let them be put to shame and dismayed for ever;*

*Yea, let them be confounded and perish;*

**83:13-14:** The prayer of the Psalmist is that the enemy might be utterly destroyed. The images are those of complete and utter destruction. *"Make them like the whirling dust,"* like dust blown by the wind, scattered and dispersed. Like "stubble" of the grass that is blown away after it has been mown, and like a forest consumed by fire. Even so the Psalmist desired that God's enemies be scattered.

*"As the fire that burneth the forest"* - In 1988 we attended the Teton Family Encampment in Wyoming, and while there visited Yellowstone National Park. Lightning had struck that forest and the fire that started early that summer would consume tens of thousands of acres before it had run its course. Trees consumed by fire were utterly destroyed. The Psalmist was asking that God destroy the enemies as the fire destroys the forest.

**83:15:** *"So pursue them with thy tempest"* - The ASV is to be preferred over the KJV's "persecute them with thy tempest." While some would criticize the Psalms for such "imprecatory" requests, they are nonetheless proper and right. Barnes has this note:

What it is right for men to attempt, it is right to pray for; what it would be right for them to do if they had the power, it is right to ask God to accomplish; what is free from malignity in the act, and in the design, may be free from malignity in the desire and the prayer; and if men can carry with them the idea that what they are endeavouring to do is right, whether as magistrates, judges, rulers, defenders of their country, or as private men, they will have very little difficulty in regard to the so called "imprecatory psalms" (Barnes).

**83:16:** *"Fill their faces with confusion"* – If the enemy is confused, he is not in a position to carry out his plans. A good example of the power of complete confusion can be seen in the record of Babel. When God confused the languages of men, their ungodly goal was defeated.

**83:17:** *"Put to shame...dismayed...confounded...perish"* - Let them be ashamed because their plans have been foiled. Let their confederacy be disabled, and their evil schemes confounded. These nations could not be "shamed" into abandoning their reckless course, so God would mete out punishment by bringing complete destruction upon them.



## ***Consequence***

### **Verse 18**

*18 That they may know that thou alone, whose name is Jehovah,  
Art the Most High over all the earth.*

**83:18:** The Psalmist's "imprecatory" prayer was not for self-glory. It was rather that God might be glorified and that the enemies might come to know that God rules over all the earth. Behind the request of the Psalmist was the ultimate glory of God. Any desire for vengeance upon the enemy was not a personal vendetta, but a desire for God to be exalted. Morgan stated it well: "These singers of the ancient people were all inspired supremely with a passion for the honor of God. With them, as with the prophets, selfish motives were unknown. Selfishness sings no song, and sees no visions. On the other hand, a passion for the glory of God is capable of great sternness as well as of great tenderness" (Morgan, 252).

### ***Lessons***

1. God may appear to be "silent," leaving the impression that His longsuffering is an indication of His approval. But God's timetable is not measured by hours, days, weeks, months or years. He will ultimately arise and render a verdict against His enemies, followed by swift and sure punishment. Just because it may appear that God is silent at any given moment is no indication that He will remain silent or wink at sin and ungodliness indefinitely.
2. If Cain slew Abel because "his works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12), we should not be surprised when men rise up against God's people with the intention of destroying them. There have always been, and still are, those who will "take counsel together against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, And cast away their cords from us" (Psa. 2:2-3). Let us rejoice in the fact that God will be victorious and all His enemies will be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire.
3. Not all unity is good. When men unite AGAINST God they have entered into an unholy union. Not all unity is good; and not all division is bad.

## *“Dwelling In God’s House”*

### ***Introduction***

The author of the Psalm is unknown. It bears a resemblance to Psalms 42, and it is probable that David may have written this Psalm as well. The occasion of the Psalm was one in which the author was deprived of access to the house of God. It may have been due to sickness, exile, or imprisonment. The most likely time would be when King Saul sought to destroy David (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1 ff). We like the title Roy Deaver has given the Psalm and will use it for our study. Of this Psalm, Charles Spurgeon has written: "For our part it exhales to us a Davidic perfume, it smells of the mountain heather and the lone places of the wilderness, where King David must have often lodged during his many wars. This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called The Pearl of Psalms. If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred-and-third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of Peace" (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

Pilgrimages to the temple were an important part of Jewish life. When David was barred from Jerusalem, he was likewise barred from the pilgrimages which brought pious Jews to the Holy City for worship. The great love that David had for God drove him to express those feelings in this Psalm, especially in the absence of freedom to participate in those things that were most holy and sacred. The Psalm naturally divides itself into three parts, with the Hebrew *Selah* appearing at the close of part I and II. Morgan thus divides the Psalm into:

- I. The Pilgrim's HOPE (1-4)
- II. The Pilgrim's EXPERIENCE (5-8)
- III. The Pilgrim's PRAYER (9-12)

We also liked Phillips' homiletic outline of the Psalm, which we will use in our study of this chapter:

- I. Dwelling in the sanctuary of God (84:1-4)
- II. Drawing on the strength of God (84:5-8)
- III. Delighting in the service of God (84:9-12).

## ***Commentary***

### ***Dwelling In The Sanctuary Of God Verses 1-4***

- 1 *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts!*
- 2 *My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah; My heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God.*
- 3 *Yea, the sparrow hath found her a house, And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, Even thine altars, O Jehovah of hosts, My King, and my God.*
- 4 *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: They will be still praising thee. Selah*

**84:1:** "*How amiable are thy tabernacles*" - The original for "*amiable*" means "dear, beloved; as a token of endearment" (Barnes). The marginal rendering is "lovely." The Psalmist does not attempt to explain that loveliness, perhaps because he could not do so in words that would express the fullness of his feelings. The idea seems to be that the place and occasion of worship were very dear to the writer. The plural form of "tabernacles" may have been used as a reference to the two departments of the holy place, each regarded as the dwelling place of God. Every detail stood out in the Psalmist's imagination. Even though he was in exile, he is reminiscing about the past, perhaps longing for the occasion when he can once again come into God's temple and commune with his God.

It should be noted that these tabernacles were considered "*thy tabernacles*." God has directed; man must follow. The ordinances of holy things are designed by God for the fulfillment of His purpose, and belonging to Him, God's order and pattern must be honored and respected. What is true of the Old Testament tabernacle is doubly true when it comes to the divine pattern in things pertaining to New Testament worship and service to our God.

**84:2:** The writer was pining after the opportunity to enter into the courts of the tabernacle. Barnes points out that the word would "denote such a longing or desire as to make one faint or exhausted; that is, it indicates intense desire" (Barnes). The words of Augustine reflected this same truth when he wrote, "Our hearts, O God, were made for thee; and never shall they rest until they rest in thee." Coffman has noted, "There is a deep and unquenchable thirst in the hearts of all men for the knowledge of God, and nothing on earth can satisfy it except the worship and adoration of the Creator" (Coffman, 102). In David's case, there was a "holy lovesickness upon him, and [David] was wasted with an inward consumption because he was debarred the worship of the Lord in the appointed place" (Spurgeon).

The reference to the *"heart and my flesh"* simply means the whole being; all the longing of the heart were in that place. We should have the same inner longing to gather together with those of like precious faith, and enter into sweet communion with our God. It is a puzzle to this author why some make such feeble attempts at attending worship as they should. It makes little difference to them whether the doors to the church are opened or barred. Their heart is not in heaven, but upon the earth and they would as soon associate with those who are earthly as with those who are spiritually minded.

**84:3:** *"The sparrow hath found her a house"* - The word used here is a "name given to a bird from its chirping or twittering. It is rendered sparrow in Lev. 14:4" (Barnes). In the crevices of the city walls, and unto the temple structures, the birds found lodging. There the life of the sparrow (in this illustration) was preserved. In like manner, the life of the Psalmist was bound up in the anticipation of the opportunity to go before God. "The peace and security which these small creatures found in their temple location suggested to the psalmist the peace and security that he himself felt in coming there to worship" (Coffman, 102). David longed to be able to go freely into the house of worship even as the birds could now enter and leave freely. Even though David was in exile, he had fond memories of earlier days when he could come and go into the house of God.

**84:4:** *"they that dwell in thy house"* - The reference is likely to the priests and Levites who had their permanent abode near the tabernacle, as opposed to those who only had occasional opportunity of going up to the house of worship. Such "full time" workers in the tabernacle were certainly blessed. In the New Testament all of God's

people are priests and have constant access to the temple, being a part of the temple itself. This is the first of three blessings pronounced upon the righteous. The second appears in verse 5, and the third in verse 12.

### ***Drawing on the strength of God*** **Verses 5-8**

- 5 *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; In whose heart are the highways to Zion.*  
6 *Passing through the valley of Weeping they make it a place of springs; Yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings.*  
7 *They go from strength to strength; Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.*  
8 *O Jehovah God of hosts, hear my prayer; Give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah*

**84:5:** “*In whose heart are the highways to Zion*” – Those who have put their trust in God rejoice in all the ways that He may lead them. They not only walk in those ways, they have them in their heart. Nothing is closer to their heart than the ways of Jehovah. If we have the “new” Jerusalem in our heart, we will not love this world and its allurements. Our eyes are fixed on that heavenly city and the road that takes us there. Herein lays true happiness. “These are not roads, in the ordinary sense; they are ‘in the hearts’ of those who love God. These ‘ways’ are being pondered (in men’s hearts); and they refer to ‘directions,’ or ‘courses of action’ that should be followed in specific situations” (Coffman, 104).

The blessedness of sacred worship belongs not to half-hearted, listless worshippers, but to those who throw all their energies into it. Neither prayer, nor praise, nor the hearing of the word will be pleasant or profitable to persons who have left their hearts behind them. A company of pilgrims who had left their hearts at home would be no better than a caravan of carcasses, quite unfit to blend with living saints in adoring the living God (Spurgeon).

**84:6:** “*valley of weeping*” – The Psalmist continues his metaphorical language. The Hebrew ‘*bacca*’ means “weeping, lamentation; and then it is given to a certain tree - not probably a mulberry tree, but some species of balsam - from its weeping...The true rendering is ‘valley of lamentation,’ or weeping” (Barnes). True religion and devout dedication to Jehovah turns that which is gloomy into that which is joyful. It makes a world of tears into a world of comfort. The joys associated with faithfully serving the

Lord will make us soon forget the discomforts that sometimes come our way in our journey toward heaven. Our trails will be triumphs, and our tears will but strengthen our resolve to reach that heavenly home. The prophet Isaiah wrote, "And the parched ground shall become a pool" (Isaiah 35:7). Job expressed the same sentiment in Job 35:10, "Who giveth songs in the night." As Albert Barnes has noted: "For religion can diffuse smiles over faces darkened by care; can light up the eye sunk in despondency; can change tears of sorrow into tears of joy; can impart peace in scenes of deepest sorrow; and make the most gloomy vales of life like green pastures illuminated by the brightness of noonday" (Barnes). All of us must pass through the "valley of weeping" at one time or another. Some, like Job, may have to pass through a multitude of such valleys before reaching that heavenly home. But whether few or many, we find great comfort in knowing that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward" (Rom. 8:18).

The 'Valley of Weeping' is any period of loss, sorrow, grief, deprivation, or disaster through which God's child must pass during his earthly sojourn; and the glory of God's service is that it enables the worshipper to change even sorrows into springs of praise and thanksgiving. The rains mentioned in the same context are reference to God's blessings upon those who suffer (Coffman, 104).

**84:7:** *"they go from strength to strength"* – Rather than being wearied by the trials and tribulations of life, they are strengthened thereby.

As they pass along, as they come nearer and nearer to the end of their journey, their strength, their ardour, their firmness of purpose increases. By their conversation, by their songs; by encouraging one another, by seeing one difficulty overcome after another; by the fact kept before their minds, and increasingly apparent, that they are constantly approaching the end of their journey - that the distance to be traveled is constantly diminishing - that the difficulties become less and less, and that they will soon see the towers and walls of the desired city - they are invigorated, cheered, comforted. What a beautiful illustration of the life of Christian pilgrims as they journey on towards the end of the course (Barnes).

*"Every one of them appeareth before God in Zion"* - The last portion of this verse is one of great strength. All of us will appear before God, but only those who have been faithful unto Him will appear "in

Zion," in that heavenly realm. There their joy will be complete; there the long cherished desires of their hearts will be fully gratified; there all that they ever hoped for, and more, will be realized. And it is not only a few of those who travel the "highway to Zion," but "every one of them." Dear brother or sister, let not you "valley of weeping" turn you aside for your journey toward heaven, for your trials are but for the moment.

### ***The Way To God***

by Helen Steiner Rice

If my days were untroubled  
    and my heart always light,  
Would I seek that fair land  
    where there is no night?  
If I never grew weary  
    with the weight of my load,  
Would I search for God's peace  
    at the end of the road?  
If I never knew sickness and never felt pain,  
    would I reach for a hand to help and sustain?  
If I walked not with sorrow  
    and lived not with loss,  
Would my soul seek sweet solace  
    at the foot of the cross?  
If all I desired was mine day by day,  
    would I kneel before God and earnestly pray?

I ask myself this,  
    and the answer is plain -  
If my life were all pleasure  
    and I never knew pain,  
I'd seek God less often  
    and need Him much less,  
For God's sought more often  
    in times of distress -  
And no one knows God  
    or sees Him as plain  
As those who have met Him  
    on the pathway of pain

**84:8:** "*Jehovah...hear my prayer*" - The Psalmist is confident God will answer, but he pleads none the less. There are two distinct thoughts of great practical value to the Christian in this short prayer. There is the sense of *divine majesty*, and the consciousness of *divine relationship*. As "*Lord of hosts*," He is almighty in power; as the "*God of Jacob*," He is infinite in mercy and goodness to his people.

Prayer has been called "the breath of saints." The child of God who has ceased to pray is either dead spiritually, or he is in the process of dying.

***Delighting in the service of God***  
**Verses 9-12**

- 9 *Behold, O God our shield, And look upon the face of thine anointed.*
- 10 *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*
- 11 *For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield: Jehovah will give grace and glory; No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*
- 12 *O Jehovah of hosts, Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.*

**84:9:** "*Behold, O God our shield*" - When David could not be hidden in the secret of God's tabernacle (Psa. 27:5), being at a distance from it, yet he was confident that God was his shield wherever he might be.

*"look upon the face of thine anointed"* – The Hebrew *'mashiyach'* means "God's anointed." The word was used to refer to God's appointed king, in this case David. It is true that this word was applicable to other kings, and also to priests and prophets, but the circumstances in the case concur best on the supposition that David is referred to. The allusion here is not to Christ as some have suggested.

**84:10:** "*For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand*" - "Better" carries the idea here of "more to be desired." The Psalmist would find more happiness, more true joy, in one day spent in the house of God, than anywhere else. When we come to the end of life, to that time when we shall review the past, and ask where we have found most true happiness, most that was satisfactory to the soul, most that we shall delight then to dwell on and to remember, most that we should be glad to have repeated and perpetuated, most that would be free from the remembrance of disappointment and care, it will not be the things of this world that will bring fond memories, but the happy times which we shall have spent in communion with God. Or, as Coffman put it, "Christians should not have any trouble in seeing that one day in worship is better than a thousand on the



beach" (Coffman, 105).

*"I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God"* – The marginal reading is, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold." Barnes points out that "the verb here used is derived from a noun signifying 'still' or 'threshold,' and it would seem to mean here to stand on the threshold; to be at the door or the entrance, even without the privilege of entering the house: I would prefer that humble place to a residence within the abodes of the wicked" (Barnes). The idea is not actually that of being a door KEEPER, as much as it is the idea of having the privilege of just standing there, and looking in, even if entrance was not permitted. "He would prefer standing of the door of the house of worship to dwelling within the abodes of wickedness - that is, to being admitted to intimacy with those who occupy such dwellings, however splendid, rich, and gorgeous those abodes might be" (Barnes). The truth of the matter is that God's worst is better than the devil's best. Of course we are not suggesting that there is anything "bad" about what God has to offer, but when all is considered, the best the devil can offer does not even begin to compare with what God can give His children. "God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury" (Spurgeon).

There is another lesson that must be noted before passing, and that is "the implication here that non-worshippers of God are assumed to be 'wicked'" (Coffman, 106).

**84:11:** *"For Jehovah God is a sun and a shield"* - As the sun gives light and warmth, so our God provides happiness, warmth, and protection to the soul. God will bestow every necessary blessing upon His people. What a great comfort to know that God will not withhold anything that is good for us. We should pray that God will give us the wisdom to distinguish between those things that are truly "good" from those things we THINK are good and/or necessary. One should note the condition connected with God's bestowal of blessing. It is for *"them that walk uprightly."* Jesus stressed essentially the same promise in Matthew 6:33.

But it is not enough that God supply us with the sun to warm us, and provide light for our way. The Psalmist also recognized that our God is a "shield" from our enemies round about. Pilgrims traveling the road to heaven are both comforted and protected. The blow of life's trials and tribulations are softened, while the arrows of the enemies

are deflected. We scarce can understand how anyone could travel this sojourn without their God, but alas multitudes attempt to do so, and in the process bring upon themselves great sorrow and eventual destruction.

**84:12:** *“Blessed is the man that trusteth in thee”* - The Psalm comes to a close with a description of the "man" who is under discussion in these verses. It is the man that trusts in God; who manifests an unwavering faith in God's providential care and protection. Such a man is blessed, or happy, in the true sense of the word. Oh that men would try it, and experience in their own souls the happiness, the real genuine, deep, permanent joy, of trusting in God.

### ***Lessons***

1. There is a loveliness about worshipping God. The true child of God longs for the opportunity to enter into that place where saints lift up their hearts in praise and adoration. It is significant that the Psalmist said his “soul longeth...for the courts of Jehovah.” The desires of the heart are a good barometer of a man’s spiritual condition. If we wish to know the devotion of a man, we should observe that for which he longs the most. One can deceive others when it comes to what he “says,” for a man can easily pick up the “language of Ashdod” and say the right thing to impress others. A man may also deceive others by the things that he does, for a good action can be done out of a sense of duty or self discipline. But a man cannot hide or conceal the things for which he longs the most in life.
2. We learn that worship and service to God will help make the rough paths of life a little easier to pass over (cf. verses 5-6). When a man puts his trust in God, even the “valley of weeping” becomes a place of refreshing springs.
3. Learn, next, that true values lie not in the things of this world, but the truly lasting values of eternal things. A single “day” with God brings more reward than a thousand without Him. It is tragic that many a man seeks to live his life without God and strive instead to fill his life with those things that are only temporal. But the real tragedy is, such a man knows not that he is missing the true joys of life.
4. Finally, we thought our fellow preachers might enjoy the following

homiletic outline on verses 5-8 from John Phillips:

*“Drawing On The Strength Of God”*

In this section we take a look at where we are on our journey home. We are still down here. We are pilgrims! We are going home. Our feet are shod, we have our staff in our hands.

- A. Our Heart Is Right (84:5)
- B. Our Highway Is Rough (84:6-7)
  - 1. Weeping in the Valley (84:6)
  - 2. Walking on the Mountain (84:7)
- C. Our Hope Is Real (84:8)

## *“A Prayer For Restoration”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is entitled, “For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah” (ASV). There is nothing in either part of this title that might help us determine the author, or the occasion upon which it was written. Internally, the Psalm speaks of some “captivity” (verse 1), but the precise captivity is not identified. While we are tempted to restrict the Psalm to the post-Babylonian period, we simply cannot be dogmatic.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm consists of three parts. The first three verses are an allusion to God’s gracious interposition in previous times. At some point God had delivered them from some “captivity,” and had forgiven Israel of her iniquities (verses 1-3). This is followed by a description of the condition of Israel at the time the Psalm was written. The Psalmist, and the nation, were suffering from calamity, and were pleading for help from God (verses 4-7). The Psalm closes with a confident hope that God would once again deliver His people (verses 8-13). Morgan likewise divides the Psalm in a “threefold movement” (Morgan, page 253), using the same verse divisions.

- I. THANKSGIVING OFFERED (1-3) in which there is an allusion to God’s Divine intervention. The people had been conquered, led away into captivity; God had thus forgiven them.
- II. PETITION PRESENTED (4-7) expressing the desire that God would turn away His anger and show mercy.
- III. CONFIDENCE AFFIRMED (8-13)
  - 1. Submission so as to hear God’s word, 8;
  - 2. Faith in the nearness of God, 9;
  - 3. Mercy and truth offered, 10-12;
  - 4. Hope, verse 13.

Some years ago this author copied the following outline into the margin of his large print ASV Bible (likely during one of the chapel

services at Brown Trail). We will use this outline in our study of the Psalm:

- I. Remembrance, verses 1-3;
- II. Request, verses 4-7;
- III. Reassurance, verses 8-9;
- IV. Righteousness, verses 10-13.

## ***Commentary***

### **Remembrance Verses 1-3**

- 1 Jehovah, thou hast been favorable unto thy land; Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.*
- 2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah*
- 3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath; Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.*

**85:1:** “*Thou has been favorable...brought back*” – The Psalmist refers to some former period in their history when God had been favorable to the people and had blessed the land. At that particular time, the land had been invaded, and God, in His providence, had overthrown the enemy and restored the people to their former state. The circumstances best fit some time after the Babylonian captivity. Looking at what God had done, the writer would turn his faith in God toward the future in expectation that God would forgive their present iniquity and deliver them once again. It should be noted that Israel’s very existence depended upon God’s favor toward His people. “The favour of God is the spring-head of all good, and the fountain of happiness, to nations, as well as to particular persons. It was by the favour of God that Israel got and kept possession of Canaan (Ps. 44:3); and, if he had not continued very favourable to them, they would have been ruined many a time” (Matthew Henry, QV electronic notes). What God had given to Israel still belonged to God, and thus the Psalmist speaks of the land as “thy land.” Israel was merely a steward of what God had given to them. The same is true with us. “Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

**85:2:** “*Thou has forgiven*” – The calamities of which the Psalmist spoke had come upon Israel as a consequence of their sins. He saw in this particular captivity God’s punitive hand upon the nation. It is

apparent, however, that God's anger had passed away and that His judgment had been withdrawn. Literally the passage reads, "Thou has lifted up, or borne, the iniquity of thy people."

*"covered their sin"* – The Hebrew word (*'kaphar'*) is commonly rendered "atonement." When God withdraws the tokens of His anger it is evidence that He has forgiven sin.

**85:3:** *"Taken away all thy wrath"* - Having removed the sin, He has taken away His wrath as well. Literally, "Thou didst turn from the heat of thine anger" (Barnes).

The Lord can clear the darkest skies,  
Can give us day for night,  
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise  
To rivers of delight (author unknown).

The Psalmist gives us a glimpse of God's wonderful mercy. Like an ever flowing fountain, the blood of Jesus flows backward toward eternity, and forward from the cross till He should come again.

What a marvelous passage we have just studied. Israel was praising God for His wonderful forgiveness. They remembered the ***favor*** of God (85:1), the ***forgiveness*** of God (85:2), and the ***fury*** of God (85:3). In faith now they could look forward to their ***future*** with God, a future filled with ***fellowship***. But in order to achieve that wonderful fellowship, there would need to be national repentance and revival, as will be seen in the next section.

### **Request Verses 4-7**

- 4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, And cause thine indignation toward us to cease.*  
*5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?*  
*6 Wilt thou not quicken us again, That thy people may rejoice in thee?*  
*7 Show us thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, And grant us thy salvation.*

**85:4:** These verses contain three petitions. The first appears in verse 4, "Turn us"; the second is in verse 6, "quicken us again"; and

the third in verse 7, ""grant us thy salvation." Something akin to the captivity mentioned in verse 1 was now threatening the nation. The Psalmist considered it a token of God's anger. For this reason he asks that God's indignation against them cease. The word rendered "cease" (*'parar'*) means "to break; then, to violate; and then, to annul, or to bring to an end" (Barnes). Coffman points out that the "tone of these verses is radically different from that in the first three; and they can be explained only by understanding them to refer to a period subsequent to the glorious return of the Chosen People from Babylon" (Coffman, page 109). A careful study of Haggai and Malachi helps us understand the situation that had developed in Israel following the return of Israel to their home land. They had set themselves to amassing wealth. There was little, if any, interest in rebuilding the Temple of God, the people turning instead to their own houses and their own self interest. The worship of God had been neglected, and to some extent, perverted. The people were "robbing God" of that which rightly belonged to Him. Now wonder God had become angry with Israel again!

**85:5:** *"Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?"* - The present manifestation of God's anger had continued so long as if to make the Psalmist think that it may never cease. The plea is that God's judgment might cease and not extend to succeeding generations.

*"Wilt thou draw out thine arrow to all generations"* - Barnes' assessment is as good as any we came across:

The idea is that of a determined purpose, in retaining his anger, as if his wrath would cease of necessity unless there were such a direct exercise of will...so that not merely the generation which has sinned, shall suffer, but the next, and the next, and the next, for ever. The plea is that the judgment might terminate, and not reach coming generations (Barnes).

**85:6:** *"quicken us"* - The idea is that of causing to live again; of recovering them from their condition as one might provide life from the dead. The consequence would be that "thy people may rejoice in thee." Joy follows forgiveness, when peace is restored between fallen man and his God.

**85:7:** *"lovingkindness...salvation"* - The blessings bestowed would be a manifestation of the great mercy and love of God. The "salvation" referred to here is not necessarily that of spiritual salvation, but that of deliverance from the enemy. But in this case it includes both.

## Reassurance Verses 8-9

*8 I will hear what God Jehovah will speak; For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: But let them not turn again to folly.*

*9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him, That glory may dwell in our land.*

**85:8:** “*I will hear what God Jehovah will speak*” – The contrast in this verse is that of God’s wisdom and man’s folly. Until Israel listened to what God was saying through Haggai and Malachi, God’s wrath would not be turned away. It is folly to think men can mock God and get away with turning their ear away from God’s commandments.

“*let them not turn again to folly*” – The path Israel was traveling was “folly,” an apt description for the way of sin. In addition, there was a great danger in returning to such a path of folly once forgiven and restored. The New Testament describes such a course of action as similar to that of a dog returning to his own vomit, or a sow that washed to wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:20-22). Israel had just spent 70 years in captivity because of their sinful rebellion against God. In lovingkindness God had delivered them from captivity and safely lead them home, only to have them neglect their spiritual duties and “rob God.”

Biblical history has shown us that all too often when God’s chastising hand is removed, men tend to revert to their ungodly practices. A careful study of the book of Judges reveals that once the “deliverer” succeeded in overthrowing those who afflicted them, Israel would revert to their idolatry and unholy living, only to see the cycle repeated. While it is true that following the Babylonian captivity Israel never worshipped pagan gods, their conduct both spiritually and morally was a shame and reproach upon the Chosen People of God. Barnes commented on this unfortunate human weakness:

Nothing is more common than for a people who have been afflicted with heavy judgments to forget all that they promised to do if those judgments should be withdrawn... This passage is a solemn admonition to all who have been afflicted, and who have been



restored, that they return not to their former course of life (Barnes).

Any return to the former state of sin will result in the patience of God being exhausted, and the latter state being worse than the first. This truth is manifest in the action that God took against Israel when they rejected the Christ. "As a result of this 'return to folly' on Israel's part, God finally rejected the Old Israel, replaced it with the New Israel 'in Christ,' and ordered the total destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and the whole religious apparatus of the Hebrews" (Coffman, 111).

**85:9:** *"Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him"* - The Psalmist expresses confidence that God WOULD intervene and deliver them from the troubles that pressed upon them on the condition that they "fear Him." The New Testament equivalent of this divine truth was stated by Peter: "Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

*"That glory may dwell in our land"* - The "glory" has reference to the blessings that would attend God's mighty deliverance. We cannot help but think that the word also carries the idea of fellowship and reconciliation of Israel to God.

### **Righteousness Verses 10-13**

*10 Mercy and truth are met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

*11 Truth springeth out of the earth; And righteousness hath looked down from heaven.*

*12 Yea, Jehovah will give that which is good; And our land shall yield its increase.*

*13 Righteousness shall go before him, And shall make his footsteps a way to walk in.*

**85:10:** *"Mercy and truth are met together"* - In human governments, the balance between truth and mercy are often difficult to achieve. If punishment is inflicted to the full measure, then there is no mercy shown, and hopelessness sets in. On the other hand, if mercy is shown and justice ignored, the unlawful go

unpunished and lawlessness reigns. It is only in the Divine government that mercy and truth come together in exact proportion. This finds its ultimate fulfillment in the atonement of Christ our Lord. The situation in Israel seemed to suggest an alienation between righteousness and mercy, between justice and pardon.

There is another important lesson that surfaces here. Mercy and truth are inseparably linked together. If God is to maintain His holy and righteous nature, mercy can only be extended so far as truth allows. He will never contradict His own word, nor will He grant mercy contrary to His divine promises. But what great benefit there is for fallen man when mercy and truth meet.

*“Righteousness and peace have kissed each other”* – God’s righteousness demands that justice be administered when the law is broken. He rules over His domain according to truth. “The soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezek. 18:20). But somewhere God’s mercy holds out the hand of peace, and sinful man is provided an avenue of salvation. What tender language the Psalmist uses to inform his audience that God’s mercy has been, and will continue to be extended to them. But it is not mercy void of truth, nor is it peace at any price. If men would enjoy the benefits of divine grace, they must “walk in the light as he is in the light” (1 John 1:7).

**85:11:** *“Truth springeth out of the earth”* - There are varying opinions as to the meaning of this phrase. Rawlinson sees in this a “growth of righteousness among men” (Rawlinson, 8[2],203). Spurgeon was thinking along the same line: “Promises which lie unfulfilled, like buried seeds, shall spring up and yield harvests of joy; and men renewed by grace shall learn to be true to one another and their God” (Spurgeon). Anderson thought that “verses 11-12 are simply a restatement of verse 10, using slightly different word-pictures: The right relationship with God produces harmony between man and nature” (Anderson, 612-613). Perhaps we are being somewhat bold to suggest that this is a prophetic reference to the coming Messiah. Did He not say that He is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)? Who would argue that God’s mercy and truth met ultimately in Christ? And was it not by the coming of our Savior that righteousness and peace kissed? Paul wrote that Jesus is “our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition...that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross” (Eph. 2:14-16). If the language is NOT prophetic,

it certainly finds its greatest application in Jesus as our redeemer.

*“And righteousness hath looked down from heaven”* – It is pressing the verse to suggest that peace comes from the earth while righteousness comes from heaven. *“Looked down”* translates a word that means “to 'lay upon, or over'; then 'to project, lie over, look forward” (Barnes). The language is anthropomorphic and pictures God leaning over and looking down at the necessities of man. “As the rain and the sunbeams seem anxious to bestow their blessings on man, so God seems anxious to bestow on man the blessings of salvation” (Barnes).

The fulfillment of these verses came to pass in the person of Jesus Christ. No doubt the Psalmist was not fully aware of what he was writing, but neither was Isaiah when he wrote of the suffering of our Savior on the cross (Isa. 53:1 ff).

**85:12:** *“Jehovah will give that which is good”* - All that is truly good, God will give unto His children. The problem comes when our definition of what is “good” conflicts with God’s definition of the same. We should always trust in God to provide those things that are needful, and best for our well-being.

**85:13:** *“Righteousness shall go before him”* – Our opinion is that there is a prophetic note here concerning the work of John the Baptist. “The idea seems to be that in order to his appearing, there would be a proclamation of righteousness, and a preparation for his advent by the diffusion of righteousness among the people” (Barnes).

*“And shall make his footsteps a way”* – The ASV adds the words, “to walk in.” The idea seems to be that when “righteousness goes before him” there will be provided instruction regarding the “way” in which men should go. That is, the steps which would be taken by him would indicate the way in which his people should walk. His coming would have the effect of turning the people to the paths of righteousness and truth. These words cannot be speaking of any “way” other than that provided by the Savior. As Coffman pointed out, “Who besides Jesus Christ, ever established footsteps as a way for men to walk in?” (Coffman, 112).

## ***Lessons***

1. There is little doubt that the fundamental lessons focuses on the wonderful mercy of God. Fallen man needs reconciliation.

Forgiveness takes place in the mind of God. But if man is judged solely by law, then there is no hope. God in His infinite wisdom and mercy provided a means by which truth and mercy can come together to life man out of the depths of despair and reconcile him to his God. As a result of His wonderful Scheme of Redemption, God's eternal righteousness and peace with man kiss one another, and man is the beneficiary of Heaven's offer. Why in the world would any man refuse to take advantage of God's gracious offer?

2. It is inevitable that justice and peace shall embrace; for there is such a league between these two, that where peace is made without justice, it cannot long continue: and mercy and truth must; for it is inconsistent with mercy to be in concord with falsehood.
3. God's longsuffering will eventually give way to justice and judgment. When Israel was allowed to return to their home land, God gave them time to rebuild. But when they turned inward, building their own houses and neglecting God's house, God's patience ran out, and Israel was chastised. Pleading for divine mercy, the Psalmist never loses sight of man's responsibility to fear God and submit to the "way" provided.
4. Man must listen to what God has to say (verse 8). God has provided the way, and He speaks to us through His Son (Heb. 1:1). Unfortunately men are not listening.
5. It is folly to return to the filthy pits of sin when once we have been washed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Wisdom dictates that we remain faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10); folly ignores heaven's warnings.
6. Adam Clarke had this wonderful summary of the Psalm:

This is a remarkable text, and much has been said on it: but there is a beauty in it which, I think, has not been noticed. Mercy and peace are on one side; truth and righteousness on the other. Truth requires righteousness; mercy calls for peace. They meet together on the way; one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences on certain considerations, not here particularly mentioned are adjusted; and their mutual claims are blended together in one common interest;

on which peace and righteousness immediately embrace. Thus, righteousness is given to truth, and peace is given to mercy. Now, Where did these meet? In Christ Jesus. When were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary" (Adam Clarke, QV electronic notes).

## **Mission of Mercy**

by Tom Wacaster

Several years ago one of the major television networks produced a made-for-television movie based on the true story of two pilots who attempted to fly two, single-engine crop dusters from the West Coast to Australia. As the story developed, one of the planes never got airborne from the lay over in Hawaii, and the second pilot, at the encouragement of the first, continued the journey alone. Due to the combination of unforeseen circumstances, malfunction in equipment, and pilot error, our lone pilot became lost over the Pacific somewhere northeast of Auckland, New Zealand, now without the necessary navigational equipment to get him safely to his destination. As he radioed for help, a commercial jetliner, enroute to New Zealand, heard of the pilot's predicament, and agreed to do what he could to locate the small plane that was, by best estimates, somewhere in the vicinity.

It was like looking for the proverbial "needle in a haystack." But with the consent of the proper authorities, the passengers on board, and the jetliner's crew, the search and rescue effort began. It called for descent in altitude, deviation from the scheduled flight pattern, and a certain amount of increased "risk" with every passing minute. In addition, it would delay the scheduled arrival of the flight, and present no little inconvenience to the passengers on board. Accordingly, the movie was entitled "Flight 511: Mission of Mercy." As I watched, I was touched by the concern that so many had for this lost pilot, and all that went into this most unusual search and rescue effort.

When our God created man, along with heaven's crowning achievement He began a mission of mercy that had been planned from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Somewhere in the immense universe, the world and its two lonely inhabitants sped on toward eternity, both lost, without hope, separated from the Creator as a result of sin (Isa. 59:1-2). But God in His infinite and eternal wisdom, began the journey toward the cross (Eph. 3:10-11). God was not obligated to save man; but because of His longsuffering,

"not wishing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9), He "struck out for Pentecost." Even while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), God in His immense love, began to enact His wonderful plan, that paradise might be restored and that all men might be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20). Was it a mission of mercy? Indeed! Only His eternal love made Him act in our behalf. For approximately 4,000 years that plan unfolded. In types and shadows of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1), through the prophets, "in divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb 1:1), God unfolded and enacted His wonderful mission. Then in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), stage two of heaven's mission of mercy began.

In His great love, our Lord surrendered the riches of heaven that were His to enjoy, and He took upon Himself "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man" (Phil 2:5-8). Nestled in the womb of Mary, our Lord's human body developed and grew, until that moment when heaven's angels announced to the shepherds that indeed "there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). In time, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52), until the moment when He fulfilled all righteousness in submitting to John's baptism, and the voice out of the heavens announced, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). For three and one half years, Immanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23), trod the face of His own creation, speaking with all authority, and manifesting the wonderful compassion of heaven's Godhead Three with miracles of healing, and the promise of life eternal. Aware of the ultimate price that would have to be paid, our Lord maintained steadfastness, and was "faithful to him that appointed him" (Heb 3:2). The crucial moment in heaven's mission of mercy came in the night when our Savior entered the garden to seek strength that the mission might not be aborted. If there was any other way, He desired that the "cup" might pass from Him (Matt. 26:39). So earnest were His cries to the Father that "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). Were the mission to succeed, the Son of David would have to taste of death for every man (Heb. 2:9). But the Son of God would not simply die; He would not close His eyes in peaceful sleep, for the death which He would face would be the "death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Yes, the mission of mercy had a price. If lost humanity was to be redeemed, it would not be with "silver and gold...but with the precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). And so, because of His great love for you and

me, our Lord went to the cross. Nailed between two thieves, He suffered excruciating pain for six long hours. Look at the Savior, beloved, and whisper again those words: "mission of mercy." Now the price was paid! God's wrath could be satisfied. The mission was almost complete. With His dying breath, our Lord could truly say, so far as His part was concerned, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

There was yet more to be accomplished before the mission could be complete. Yea, much more. To the consternation of Satan, and in answer to the angels who in wonder and amazement had desired to "look into" these things (1 Pet. 1:12), Jesus burst the bonds of death, and was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Enthroned at the right hand of God, our King reigns in righteousness. In fulfillment of His promise, step three of the mission of mercy could now be initiated. The Holy Spirit, in faithful obedience to the eternal plan, could now be sent forth from heaven to "guide the apostles into all the truth" (John 16:13). This He did, and the words of the mystery were "written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Floundering in the sea of sin, lost humanity now has a "lamp" and "light" to show the way (Psa. 119:105). How grateful we should be that God, in His wonderful wisdom, and in His eternal plan, saw fit to record these things that we might be able to read and come to understand the mystery of man's redemption (Eph 3:3-5).

For almost 2,000 years the lighthouse of the Gospel has cast its beam across the treacherous sea of life's perilous journey, pointing the way for lost humanity unto the shores of safety. The torch has been passed to this generation, and we must not, we cannot let the flame be extinguished. Heaven's mission of mercy is depending on you and me to "Go...into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Let us go forth with the life saving Gospel, and continue with zeal and determination, heaven's mission of mercy.

## *“God’s Wonderful Mercy”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David, and designates it as a "prayer." The occasion of the Psalm is not known. Verse 14 would suggest that it may have been written during the rebellion of David's son Absalom. It was written on some occasion of trouble in which the writer sought strength and deliverance. This is the only Psalm in the Third Book that was written by David. This is the prayer of an afflicted and humble servant of God, intermixed with outbursts of praise and thankfulness.

### ***Analysis***

There are a number of interesting features of this Psalm. First there is the repeated use of *'adonai'* in addressing God (verses 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12 and 15), a title which expresses the consciousness of specially belonging to God, of standing under His immediate guidance and protection. Second, while the Psalm is beautiful in and of itself, it is largely composed of quotations from other Psalms, revealing the author's familiarity with them. The Psalm quotes from, or is quoted in, Psalms 6:10; 9:1; 17:6; 22:27; 25:1, 4, 6, 20; 26:3; 27:11; 28:2; 31:2; 40:3, 17; 50:15, 23; 54:3; 55:1-2; 56:13; 57:1-2; 72:18; 77:2, 13; 83:18; 90:5; and 116:6. Finally, each petition is accompanied by a reason why the petition should be granted.

We found the Psalm particularly difficult to divide. Metrically, the Psalm seems to divide itself, like Psalm 85, into three strophes, two shorter, and one longer. The first portion of the Psalm is predominately a prayer (verses 1-5). The second strophe praise is predominant, though prayer is not completely absent (verses 6-10). The third strophe is almost equally divided between prayer and praise (verses 11-17).

The following outlines might be helpful to the student in analyzing the Psalm. First, Harold Willmington's homiletic outline is very



helpful:

- I. David's Troubles: What He Seeks from God (86:1-4, 6, 11, 14, 16-17):
  - A. His Persecutors (86:14): Insolent, violent, God-rejecting people are trying to kill him.
  - B. His Petitions (86:1-4, 6, 11, 16-17):
    - 1. "Hear me" (86:1)
    - 2. "Protect me!" (86:2)
    - 3. "Be merciful to me!" (86:3, 6, 16)
    - 4. "Give me happiness!" (86:4)
    - 5. "Teach me" (86:11)
    - 6. "Give me a sign!" (86:17)
- II. David's Testimony: What He Says about God (86:5, 7-10, 12-13, 15)
  - A. You are good and forgiving (86:5)
  - B. You answer prayer (86:7)
  - C. You deserve to be worshipped by all nations (86:9)
  - D. You deserve to be worshipped by me (86:12)
  - E. You are unique (86:8)
  - F. You are a worker of miracles (86:10)
  - G. You love me greatly (86:13)
  - H. You are merciful and gracious (86:15)

Adam Clarke analyzed the Psalm thusly:

This Psalm is a continued prayer, and may be divided into four parts:

- I. The first part is a petition for safety, drawn from his own person, [verses 1-4](#).
- II. The second, a quickening of the same petition, drawn from the person and nature of God, [verses 5-13](#).
- III. The third, taken from the quality of his adversaries, [verse 14](#).
- IV. The fourth, a conjunction of all these three; the first, [verse 15](#); the second, [verse 16](#); the third, [verse 17](#).

Finally, Roy Deaver divided the Psalm into four parts. We will follow his outline in our study:

- I. Prayer, 1-7;
- II. Praise, 8-13;
- III. Problem, 14-15;
- IV. Plea, 16-17.

## ***Commentary***

**Prayer**  
**Verses 1-7**

- 1 *Bow down thine ear, O Jehovah, and answer me; For I am poor and needy.*
- 2 *Preserve my soul; For I am godly: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.*
- 3 *Be merciful unto me, O Lord; For unto thee do I cry all the day long.*
- 4 *Rejoice the soul of thy servant; For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*
- 5 *For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness unto all them that call upon thee.*
- 6 *Give ear, O Jehovah, unto my prayer; And hearken unto the voice of my supplications.*
- 7 *In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee; For thou wilt answer me.*

These verses contain the prayer of a humble servant of God. The petitioner is first described as *poor*, then *godly*, next *trusting*, after that as *crying*, and finally as *lifted up to God*. In addition, each epithet has a fitting verb associated with it: *bow down* to the poor, *preserve* the godly, *save* the trusting, *be merciful* to him to cries out, and *rejoice* to the lifted up. Now notice each part.

**86:1:** “*Bow down thine ear*” – The Psalmist uses language familiar to men, and adapted to their thinking. He was asking God to listen carefully and attentively. When God hears prayer it might be said that He “bows down his ear.” One of the amazing traits of our God is that He condescends to man.

“*I am poor and needy*” – Material poverty is not under consideration here. The New Testament equivalent is found in Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Those who are poor in spirit can call upon God with the full assurance that God will bow down His ear to listen to their requests.

When our prayers are lowly by reason of our humility, or feeble by reason of our sickness, or without wing by reason of our despondency, the Lord will bow down to them, the infinitely exalted Jehovah will have respect unto them. Faith, when she has the loftiest name of God on her tongue, and calls him Jehovah, yet

dares to ask from him the most tender and condescending acts of love (Spurgeon).

**86:2:** *"Preserve my soul"* – Something threatened the Psalmist's life. He felt unsafe and desired that God intervene. The "proud" and "violent men" sought his life (verse 14), leading him to plead to God for the preservation of his life. He based his request for preservation upon (1) his "holy" life and (2) his trust in Jehovah. Let's take a closer look at each of these.

*"I am godly"* – The KJV reads, *"I am holy."* Our English translates the Hebrew *'hasid,'* having a marginal reading of, "One whom thou favourest." The Psalmist had devoted himself to God and felt it proper to appeal to God for deliverance.

*"thy servant trusteth in thee"* – It was the fact that the Psalmist trusted in God that made him "holy." Rather than trusting in himself, he relied upon God for deliverance and strength.

**86:3:** *"Be merciful unto me"* – It was not justice that David wanted from God, but mercy. When it comes time for a man to call on his God for deliverance, he must, like David, look to God's mercy to grant the desires of his heart. He who prays to God on a daily basis may be confident that God will grant His mercy in times of need.

**86:4:** *"Rejoice the soul of thy servant"* – An answer from God would bring rejoicing great rejoicing on the part of the Psalmist. If deliverance would be granted, he would rejoice at the measure of God's wonderful mercy extended to him.

*"Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul"* – The idea here is that of a soul in need putting forth every effort and giving all diligence to draw near to God. The words indicate an intense effort on the part of the writer to seek and serve God. The New Testament teaches us that we should "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). We are promised if we "seek" we shall "find" (Matt. 7:7). There is no place for insipid efforts at finding and serving God.

**86:5:** *"For thou, Lord, art good...ready to forgive...plenteous in mercy"* – The three-fold description of God's wonderful compassion and mercy is striking. His "goodness" implies that He stands ready to grant blessings. The compassion and longsuffering of our God is one of the major themes of both the Old and New Testaments. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down

from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jas. 1:17). But in addition to His goodness, He is *willing* to grant blessings to His children. He is "*ready to forgive*." Listen to how Micah described God: "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea" (Micah 7:18-19). The writer of Hebrews emphasized both the ability and willingness of God to grant blessings to His children with these words: "for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5b). The fact that God will not "fail" us suggests His power to deliver; and the fact that He will not "forsake" us suggests His willingness to do so.

But not only is our God, by His very nature, able to deliver ("*thou, Lord, art good*"), and not only does He stand ready ("*ready to forgive*"), but the *provisions are abundant* ("*and plenteous in mercy*"). The wealth of heaven is incapable of going bankrupt, and God's abundant blessings are inexhaustible. No wonder the Psalmist was willing to put his trust in the God of all mercy and grace. No wonder he had no fear of the enemy. No wonder he anxiously pled to the God in Whom he had trusted these many years. He knew that God was willing to deliver; and he knew God was capable of providing deliverance.

"*unto all them that call upon thee*" - All who seek will find that God readily responds. God is READY to forgive; He is anxious to take us as His children. The bottom line is that we must make the effort to call upon Him. The "call" is not just some verbal proclamation, but an earnest endeavor to apply the commands of God to our lives.

**86:6:** To "*give ear*" is to draw closely, as if to hear the prayer; to "hearken" is to answer that prayer. This is the idea of the request.

**86:7:** The intent of the Psalmist is expressed. It is not as though the writer would call upon God ONLY in times of trouble, but ESPECIALLY in times of trouble. The reason for his beseeching God is his confidence that God would answer him. The clear message of the Bible is that God is a God that answers prayers. Oh, that each one of us would be more diligent in our communication with God!

**Praise**  
**Verses 8-13**

- 8 *There is none like unto thee among the gods, O Lord; Neither are there any works like unto thy works.*
- 9 *All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; And they shall glorify thy name.*
- 10 *For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: Thou art God alone.*
- 11 *Teach me thy way, O Jehovah; I will walk in thy truth: Unite my heart to fear thy name.*
- 12 *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with my whole heart; And I will glorify thy name for evermore.*
- 13 *For great is thy lovingkindness toward me; And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol.*

**86:8:** In these verses the Psalmist compares his own condition with the condition of those who worshipped false gods. He had a God who could hear; they had none. To him there is a throne of grace which is always accessible; to them there is none.

*“Neither are there any works like unto thy works”* – This is a particularly interesting phrase. When we consider the wonderful works of God, we stand amazed at His great power and wonderful design in the world about us. Phillips zeroed in on this particular feature of the greatness of our God:

Today, in the later half of the twentieth century, we are beginning to find out what an amazing complex world it is in which we live. Take one living human cell, for instance. It functions like a great city. It has dozens of power stations, a transportation system, and a highly complex system of communication. It imports raw materials, manufactures items it needs, and has an efficient system of garbage disposal. It is run by an absolute dictatorship and maintains an efficient police force to keep out anything undesirable. To look at its inner workings takes a super microscope. There are sixty trillion cells in the human body. They come in all sizes and participate in every living function. There are a trillion cells in the human brain alone. These are astronomical figures which transcend our power of comprehension (Phillips, page 711).

**86:9:** *“All nations shall come and worship”* - The Psalm is prophetic of the Messianic age when all nations would flow into the house of the Lord. Notice in this connection Isaiah 2:1-4, 50:3-14, Palms 2:8,

etc.

**86:10:** *“Thou art great, and doest wondrous things”* - The God who could do what the Almighty had done, was without limit. Such are the reasons why we should appeal to our God in times of trouble. The world is filled with the wonders of our God.

**86:11:** *“Teach me thy way”* - In this verse the Psalmist manifests a willingness to be taught. The desire for instruction and guidance in matters spiritual is the first prerequisite to a proper approach to God. The man who has no desire to be taught from God's word will simply blind himself and rob himself of the great blessings that await him. But not only must one have the desire to be instructed, he must have a determination to apply the things learned to his life. Hence, the Psalmist says, *“I will walk in thy truth.”* Such a determination must be unwavering in its commitment.

*“Unite my heart to fear thy name”* - The word translated "unite" (*ya'had*) occurs as a verb only in three places in the Old Testament. It appears in Genesis 49:6 and Isaiah 14:20, and here. It means, literally, “to make one.” Only when men seek the truth above all else, having a determination to apply that truth to their lives, that their hearts will be united with Jehovah.

**86:12:** *“I will praise thee with my whole heart”* - God will not accept divided allegiance. We must serve God with the WHOLE heart! *“Trust in Jehovah with all thy heart”* (Pro. 3:5a). *“But from thence ye shall seek Jehovah thy God, and thou shalt find him, when thou searchest after him with all thy heart and with all thy soul”* (Deut. 4:29). *“And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul”* (Deut. 10:12). *“And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind”* (Matt.22:37). Unless we praise God with our “whole heart,” we might as well not praise Him at all.

**86:13:** *“For great is thy lovingkindness toward me”* - The KJV reads, *“Great is thy mercy toward me.”* God's mercy is founded in His wonderful lovingkindness. Were it not for the love of God, there would be no mercy.

*“delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol”* - There was evidently

some time in the past when God manifested His great power in delivering the Psalmist from trouble. Upon past experience, the writer now expresses his confidence in God's further protection.

### ***Problem*** **Verses 14-15**

- 14 *O God, the proud are risen up against me, And a company of violent men have sought after my soul, And have not set thee before them.*  
15 *But thou, O Lord, art a God merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.*

**86:14:** "*O God, the proud are risen up against me*" – There were some arrogant men who had lifted their hand in rebellion against the Psalmist. It was not just one man, it was a "company of violent men," men who sought to destroy the writer. The significant thing about this verse is the underlying reason for the rebellion against David, namely that these enemies had "not set thee before them." Men seek to persecute the righteous for the simple reason that they do not respect God. It is possible that the reference here is to the rebellious actions of Absalom. "The idea here is that they pursued their object by violence and not by right; they did it in a fierce and savage manner, or in such a way as to inspire terror" (Barnes).

*"Have not set thee before them"* - That is, they did not fear God. They had no regard for His presence, His law, His favor, or His warnings.

**86:15:** "*But thou, O Lord*" – What a contrast! In verse 14 we saw the arrogant, proud enemies of God and David. In this verse we see God, merciful and gracious, and abundant in lovingkindness. God provides compassion for the weak and sorrowful, grace for the sin sick soul, and truth to guide and instruct.

### ***Plea*** **Verses 16-17**

- 16 *Oh turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; Give thy strength unto thy servant, And save the son of thy handmaid.*

17 *Show me a token for good, That they who hate me may see it,  
and be put to shame, Because thou, Jehovah, hast helped me,  
and comforted me.*

**86:16:** *"Oh turn unto me"* – If God would not turn unto him, all would be hopeless. When man sins, God's turns away from him; when man repents, God turns His face toward him in wonderful fellowship.

The next thing the Psalmist asks is that God would *"have mercy"* upon him. Grace is when God gives us what we do not deserve; mercy is when God does not give us what we deserve.

Third, the Psalmist asks that God *"save the son of thy handmaid."* The *"son of thy handmaid"* likely has reference to the Psalmist's mother. If so, then the woman would appear to have been a godly woman, and one that had great favor in the eyes of the Lord.

**86:17:** *"Show me a token"* - There is no reason to suppose that David was asking for a miracle. But he was asking for such a powerful deliverance that it might serve as a "token" to the enemy that the deliverance was from God. His desire was that these enemies might be put to shame when they come to realize that it was Jehovah who helped him in time of need.

### ***Lessons***

1. God is incomparable! "Among the gods there is none like thee, O Lord." But why should God be compared with the "gods" that Scripture declares are really "no gods"? It is because God condescends to the level of those whom He is teaching. In this case the Psalmist to emphasize to his audience that their "gods" could not even begin to compare with Jehovah. God is incomparable as the only *uncaused Being*, as an *infinitely holy Being*, as the *one Being who claims universal homage*, and the *God Who has absolute power over all things*. God demands to be first in our life. And we should submit for the very reason that He is incomparable.
2. Poverty of spirit is a prerequisite to a right relationship with the Father (verse 1). Jesus taught the same truth in Matthew 5:3, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."



3. God is “plenteous in mercy.” It is inexhaustible. Like an ever flowing river, God’s grace is abundant. But God’s grace is also demanding, “instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:11). Thus the Psalmist would praise God for his “plenteous mercy,” and pray that God would “teach me in thy way” (Verse 11).
4. “Secret of strength is concentration upon a supreme aim and singleness of purpose. We cannot work out two plans of life that are in their nature mutually exclusive. When we can set aside all compromises and serve God with a united heart, we shall not longer be constantly baffled and defeated by our temptations” (Pulpit Commentary, page 222).

## *“Oh To Dwell In Zion”*

### ***Introduction***

This is a Psalm "for the sons of Korah." The occasion is not known. Some have suggested an occasion following the victory of Jerusalem over the armies of Sennacherib, but we cannot be certain of that. From its reference to Zion, it would seem that it was written during a time of great prominence when the city was in its heyday. For that reason some have concluded that the Psalm is post-exilic.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm is prophetic of the spiritual Jerusalem, the church. And while some would see nothing more in the Psalm than a reference to some earthly city, exalted by God and adored by the multitudes, their conclusion is pre-conceived and their vision quite limited. Anderson felt that the interpretation of verse 4 "is far from clear" (Anderson, 2:261), but what can one expect from someone who views God's kingdom as earthly, and sees in the Psalm a reference to "a future vision of Zion as the world-centre of Yahweh's worship" (Anderson, 2:269). It is refreshing to know that at least some of the denominational theologians see in the Psalm a prophecy of our Lord's church. Rawlinson wrote, "This marvelous little Psalm is a prophecy of the glorification of the Church universal, when all the nations of the world have come into it" (Rawlinson, 8:222). Brother Coffman noted that the famous hymn, *Glorious Things Of Thee Are Spoken*, was written and composed with this Psalm in mind.

Glorious things of thee are spoken.  
Zion, City of our God!  
He whose word cannot be broken  
Formed thee for his own abode.  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake thy sure repose?  
With salvation's walls surrounded,  
Thou mayest smile at all thy foes (John Newman, quoted by Coffman, 2:119).

Willmington divided the Psalm into only two parts: (1) The Great Honor Bestowed Upon Jerusalem, verses 1-3; and (2) The Great Honor Of Being A Citizen Of Jerusalem, verses 4-7.

For those who enjoy homiletic outlines, Phillips had this division of the Psalm:

- I. The Royal City (87:1-3)
- II. The Roll Call (87:4)
- III. The Regal Claim (87:5-6)
- IV. The Ringing Climax (87:7)

We have divided the Psalm as follows:

- I. The Holy City, 1-3;
- II. The Blessed People, 4-6;
- III. The Abundant Joy, 7.

## ***Commentary***

### ***The Holy City*** **Verses 1-3**

*1 His foundation is in the holy mountains.*

*2 Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion More than all the dwellings of Jacob.*

*3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah*

**87:1:** “*His foundation*” – Isaiah spoke of “the mountain of the Lord’s house” (Isa. 2:2). When one observes the stability of the majestic mountain ranges in our own country, he is impressed with the strength that he sees. When men build a building they seek to set the foundation on solid rock. The Psalmist begins his song of praise with an immediate reference to the strength of God and the refuge of men. This “city” to which he refers is one that is built upon a solid Rock, the Rock of Ages.

“*the holy mountains*” – Coffman’s comment is significant: “God’s foundations are there in the mountains. Their holiness is due to God’s presence there, not the other way around. God is not there because the mountains are holy, but they are holy because God is there” (Coffman, 2:120). If the mountains surrounding the city of

Jerusalem could be considered “holy,” what must be the status of the spiritual Jerusalem, the church? The church was not built upon the shifting sands of human philosophy or the might of political and military power, but upon the truth that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God (Matt. 16:16-18).

**87:2:** *“Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion”* - The “gates” were normally the place where business was conducted. But here the “gates” are put for the city. Perhaps reference was made to the gates in order to point his readers to the multitudes who would pass through those gates in order to enter the city. It is the people who enter thereby that God loves. Barnes picked up on this:

The particular allusion here seems to be to the thronging multitudes pressing into the city for public worship — the numbers that gathered together at the great feasts and festivals of the nation; and the meaning is, that he looked with more pleasure on such multitudes as they thronged the gates, pressing in that they might worship him, than on any other scene in the land (Barnes).

*“more than all the dwellings of Jacob”* – This may be a reference to the various towns scattered throughout Israel. Of all the cities in Canaan, God chose Jerusalem to be His dwelling place. But that physical city is but a figure of the heavenly city, spiritual Israel, the church of the Lord.

**87:3:** *“Glorious things are spoken of thee”* - The history of Jerusalem is glorious indeed. Here kings ruled. Here the Temple of God had been built. God’s chosen people dwelt in this city. It became symbolic of the power and majesty of Jehovah God. But it is quite interesting that the Psalmist speaks of none of these things. The “glorious things” that were of utmost importance were about to be announced in the verses following. Those “glorious things” would serve to define the “city” of which the Psalmist was speaking.

### ***The Blessed People*** **Verses 4-6**

- 4 *I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon as among them that know me: Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: This one was born there.*
- 5 *Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; And the Most High himself will establish her.*

6 *Jehovah will count, when he writeth up the peoples, This one was born there. Selah*

**87:4:** *"I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon...Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia"* – The significant thing about these cities and nations is that they were among the most notable of Israel's enemies. "Rahab" is a reference to Egypt. "Babylon" was the place of Israel's captivity. Now all of a sudden these strongholds of pagan idolatry and infidelity are *"among them that know me."* We know of nothing in the history of physical Israel that would meet the demands of this prophecy. The meaning is that as great as it might be to have been born in any one of those cities, much greater is the joy and honor of having been born into the family of God, into spiritual Zion, the city of God, the church of Jesus Christ. Earthly royalty is nothing compared to the spiritual royalty that is to be found only in Christ Jesus.

*"this one"* is a reference to more than just one. In verse 5 they are referred to as "this one and that one," and then again in verse 6 as "peoples." The Psalmist is speaking of the whole of God's spiritual family. Coffman is correct in pointing out that "what is prophesied here is the world-wide triumph of the Gospel of Christ" (Coffman, 2:121).

**87:5:** Standing this side of the glory of Israel and looking back, we can certainly say that great and noble characters were born in the city of Jerusalem. But her greatness is due solely to God's having established her and blessed her. The emphasis here, however, is not on who was born in physical Jerusalem, but who it is that has been born into spiritual Jerusalem.

*"this one and that one"* – The KJV reads, "This and that man." The word for "man" is not the common Hebrews word "adam." It is, rather, the word *'ish,'* a word that is usually employed to speak of a man who is of noble character; a man who is honorable. This has led some to conclude that the Psalmist was actually speaking of the Christ here. Spurgeon quotes Thomas Scott: "The clause 'this and that man,' is simply, 'a Man and a Man,' which some think is used as a peculiar superlative, and means, *the most eminent of men*, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and they suppose, that He, in his divine nature, is *'the Highest'* who *'shall establish the church'*" (Spurgeon).

*"the Most High himself will establish her"* – We are convinced that this a prophetic statement of our Lord building His church (Matt.

16:16-18). If our assessment is correct, it is also an inspired declaration of our Lord's deity seeing the Psalmist refers to Him as "the Most High."

**87:6:** "*Jehovah will count when he writeth up the peoples*" - The meaning is that when God tallies up the people, and observes their lives and their character, it will be a great honor for God to be able to say to them, "This one was born there." All the acclamations of society that might be heaped upon an individual for whatever reasons men honor one another are nothing compared with the honor that will come from God's honorable recognition of His own.

### ***The Abundant Joy*** **Verse 7**

*7 They that sing as well as they that dance shall say, All my fountains are in thee.*

**87:7:** Barnes suggests that there may be some reference here to heaven. Certainly the everlasting blessings will be showered upon those who are a part of that throng that will enter in heaven. But we are convinced there is some reference here to the great joy that characterizes everyone who is born into the family of God. Rawlinson expressed it like this: "The psalmist intends to represent the converted nations as coming in a grand procession, with songs and dances, to celebrate their admission to Zion, and there one and all exclaiming, 'All my fresh springs, ie. all my sources of life and joy and happiness, are in thee' (Rawlinson, 8:223).

*"all my fountains"* – This may very well be a prophetic announcement of the abundant blessings enjoyed in Christ. When our Lord spoke to the woman at the well of Samaria, He promised her living water: "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (John 4:14). Notice also that the Psalmist believed that *all* of his "fountains" were to be found "in" that holy city. Likewise, the apostle Paul told us that "every spiritual blessing" is located in the "heavenly places, in Christ" (Eph. 1:3).

### ***Lessons***

1. With regard to the church of our Lord:

- A. It is established by “the Most High himself (verse 5);
  - B. It invites all nations to enter into her walls (verse 4);
  - C. It is a place of great joy;
  - D. It is the place where “all fountains” of spiritual blessings are to be found.
2. There is a day coming when God will “count” the righteous. On that day the “books” shall be opened (Rev. 20:12), along with the “book of life.” “And if any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15). The greatest loss will be to face God on the day of Judgment and come to find out that God has not written your name there.
3. It makes little difference what city, or what nation we were born in, physically. What is truly important is whether or not we have been born into God’s kingdom.

## *“A Cry For Help Out Of The Darkness of Despair”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is ascribed to Heman the Ezrahite. The name occurs in 1 Kings 4:31, 1 Chronicles 2:6, 6:33, 15:17 and 19. There are two possibilities as to which Heman wrote this Psalm. The one mentioned in 1 Chronicles was Heman, the son of Joel, the grandson of Samuel, and served as one of those whom David set over the music in the services of the sanctuary. The other Heman was one of four persons known for their wisdom and with whom Solomon is compared in 1 Kings 4:31.

This is a song of sadness, from beginning to end. There is no relief or comfort to be found. The exact occasion for the Psalm is not known. Phillips suggests that the writer may have been suffering from leprosy. The context would indicate that the writer was, indeed, suffering physically, but we cannot be certain whether it was or was not leprosy. We do know, however, that it was an occasion when the author was completely overwhelmed with grief, like great waves crashing over him as if to totally consume him. The last declaration is one of sadness and despair. Both "lover" and "friend" are put away from him, and the final word is "darkness." As to WHY the Psalm is recorded, Barnes has some excellent comments: "It was proper that such a condition of utter despondency, even in a good man, should be described, in order that others might see that such feelings are not necessarily inconsistent with true religion, and do not prove that even such a sufferer is not a child of God" (Barnes). The Pulpit Commentary calls this, "The saddest psalm in the Psalter" (8:232).

### ***Analysis***



The Psalm consists of two parts. The first (verses 1-8) provide a description of the sick man's suffering. He felt as if he were drawing near to death (verse 3). There was no help available (verse 4). He considered himself as being cast among the dead (verse 5) as a result of God's wrath (verse 7). The second section (verses 9-18) contains a prayer for mercy and deliverance. The Psalmist argues that (a) the dead cannot praise God (verses 10-12), (b) the faithfulness and lovingkindness of God could not be shown in the grave (verse 11), and (c) his soul was overwhelmed and in great need of deliverance (verses 13-18).

Willmington outlines the Psalm thus (page 264):

- I. Suffering From Unanswered Prayer (88:1-2, 13)
- II. Suffering From Unending Pain (88:3-5, 9, 15)
  - A. The details (88:3-5, 9)
    - 1. His life is full of trouble (88:3)
    - 2. He is at the point of death (88:3-5)
    - 3. His eyes are blinded by tears (88:9): He begs the Lord for mercy and help.
  - B. The duration (88:15): He has suffered these things from his youth.
- III. Suffering From Undeserved Persecution (88:6-8, 10-12, 14,16-19)
  - A. Persecution from his Creator (88:6-7, 10-12, 14,16-17)
  - B. Persecution from his companions (88:8, 18).

We will follow this simple outline in our study of the Psalm:

- I. A Description of Suffering, 1-8
- II. A Prayer For Mercy and Deliverance, 9-18

### ***Commentary***

#### ***A Description Of Suffering Verses 1-8***

- 1 *O Jehovah, the God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee.*
- 2 *Let my prayer enter into thy presence; Incline thine ear unto my cry.*
- 3 *For my soul is full of troubles, And my life draweth nigh unto Sheol.*

- 4 *I am reckoned with them that go down into the pit; I am as a man that hath no help,*  
 5 *Cast off among the dead, Like the slain that lie in the grave, Whom thou rememberest no more, And they are cut off from thy hand.*  
 6 *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, In dark places, in the deeps.*  
 7 *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah*  
 8 *Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from me; Thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.*

The Psalmist is crying out. It is a *despondent* cry (verse 1), a *despairing* cry (verse 2), and a *desperate* cry (verses 3-7). In the first two verses the Psalmist sets forth his petition. But before he begins, he presents four arguments why he feels that his plea should be admitted. First, his confidence in God: ‘O Lord God of my salvation.’ Second, the earnestness of his plea: “I have cried.” Third, his persistence: “Day and night.” Finally, his sincerity: “I have cried before thee.” Following this he sets forth his plea: “Let my prayer come before thee, incline thine ear unto my cry.”

**88:1:** “*O Jehovah, the God of my salvation*” – In the midst of his despair, the Psalmist cries out to God. God is still his God, and the Almighty is still there to help. Of this he is confident. Four times in the Psalm the writer addresses God as ‘*Jehovah*,’ the God Who keeps faith with His people. Note the personal appeal, “the God of my salvation.”

“*I have cried day and night before thee*” – The Psalmist had learned the lesson of persistent prayer. Literally the words are “by day I cried; by night before thee” (Barnes). The fact that the Psalmist prayed to God is an indication of his great trust and devotion to the Creator.

**88:2:** “*Let my prayer enter into thy presence*” - The Psalmist may have believed that there was something which had hindered his prayers from being heard. Here was a man of marked humility; a man who simply asked God to allow his prayer to come into the presence of the Almighty.

“*Incline thine ear unto my cry*” – The Hebrew word here translated “cry” has the idea of a piercing cry; a fervent cry. Not only was the

Psalmist humble, he was devoted and sincere. The picture is one of a man in deep distress, crying out to God. He is not haughty, nor is he demanding. Instead he is very humble, bowing before the God of his salvation and begging for answer to his prayer. His is, indeed, a *despairing* cry.

**88:3:** These next few verses will give us an indication as to how *desperate* the Psalmist was. Here he sets forth his pitiful condition.

*“My soul is full of troubles”* - The word translated “is full” means “to satiate as with food; that is, when as much had been taken as could be” (Barnes). His trouble was as great as he could bear; the writer felt as if he could take no more.

*“My life draweth nigh to Sheol”* - Were Jehovah not to answer, he would surely go to the grave.

**88:4:** *“I am reckoned with them that go down into the pit”* - So near to death was the Psalmist that he might have been reckoned as already dead. There was no help in man; the Psalmist had no where to turn, but to Jehovah. It were as if his friends had written him off as a dead man.

*“a man that hath no help”* – Driven to the point of despair, he realized that there was no where to turn. He was desperate; and in his desperation he turned to the only source from whence he might find deliverance.

**88:5:** *“Cast off among the dead, Like the slain that lie in the grave”* – This verse may be the saddest in the entire chapter. Here was a man who felt as if he were “as good as dead.” Forgotten by God and man alike, with a heart that is broken and crushed, he continues to pour out his heart to God. Spurgeon had a good summary of this verse:

He felt as if he were as utterly forgotten as those whose carcasses are left to rot on the battle-field. As when a soldier, mortally wounded, bleeds unheeded amid the heaps of slain, and remains to his last expiring groan unpitied and unsuccoured, so did Heman sigh out his soul in loneliest sorrow, feeling as if even God himself had quite forgotten him. How low the spirits of good and brave men will sometimes sink. Under the influence of certain disorders everything will wear a somber aspect, and the heart will dive into the profoundest deeps of misery. It is all very well for those who are in robust health and full of spirits to blame those whose lives are

sicklied o'er with the pale east of melancholy, but the evil is as real as a gaping wound, and all the more hard to bear because it lies so much in the region of the soul that to the inexperienced it appears to be a mere matter of fancy and diseased imagination. Reader, never ridicule the nervous and hypochondriacal, their pain is real; though much of the evil lies in the imagination, it is not imaginary (Spurgeon).

**88:6:** *"Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit"* - Death seemed so certain that the Psalmist speaks as if he had already been laid in the grave. The words "lowest pit" mean "the pit under, or beneath" (Barnes).

**88:7:** *"Thy wrath lieth hard upon me"* - Wrath is hard to endure, but when it is the wrath of God it is particularly difficult to bear. The Psalmist interpreted his sad state as evidence of God's displeasure against him. He felt as if God had "afflicted" him with the "waves" of affliction. It was a common belief in that day that suffering was a sign of some sin in the life of the sufferer. This Psalm may have been written to dispel such a notion.

**88:8:** *"Thou hast put mine acquaintance far from me"* - The same sort of expression occurs elsewhere (Psa. 31:11; 38:11; 69:8; Job 19:13-17). The Psalmist may have been suffering from some physical ailment that caused even his acquaintances to turn away in disgust. Or it may have been the case that his good name had become injured so that his acquaintances avoided any association with him.

*"Thou hast made me an abomination unto them"* - The word "abomination" means properly an object to be detested or abominated, as things unclean (Gen. 43:32), or as idolatry (1 Kings 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3; 23:13).

*"I am shut up, and I cannot come forth"* - Some have interpreted these words to mean that the Psalmist was a leper, cut off from society. If this was the case, it would explain why the Psalm contains no ray of hope whatsoever. A man with a curable disease could look forward to the time when he was cured. Not so with a leper. It was an incurable disease.

***A Prayer For Mercy and Deliverance***  
**Verses 9-18**

- 9 *Mine eye wasteth away by reason of affliction: I have called daily upon thee, O Jehovah; I have spread forth my hands unto thee.*
- 10 *Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? Shall they that are decreased arise and praise thee? Selah*
- 11 *Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or thy faithfulness in Destruction?*
- 12 *Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?*
- 13 *But unto thee, O Jehovah, have I cried; And in the morning shall my prayer come before thee.*
- 14 *Jehovah, why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?*
- 15 *I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.*
- 16 *Thy fierce wrath is gone over me; Thy terrors have cut me off.*
- 17 *They came round about me like water all the day long; They compassed me about together.*
- 18 *Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, And mine acquaintance into darkness.*

**88:9:** The depth of the Psalmist's despair surfaces in these verses. What great sorrow must have overwhelmed him. The cry is equivalent to, "Help! Before it is too late!"

*"Mine eye wasteth away"* - Literally, "Mine eyes pine away" (Barnes).

An evidence that I am troubled and grieved to the heart, that my eye droops and fails; for when the animal and vital spirits suffer a decay, the eye will quickly, by her dimness, deadness, and dullness, discover it (Adam Clarke).

*"I have spread forth my hands unto thee"* – A common practice among men as been to extend the hands for help. Thus the popular phrase, "Lend me your hand."

**88:10:** *"Wilt thou show wonders to the dead"* - The Hebrew word rendered "dead" is 'Rephaim.' It means "relaxed, languid, feeble,

weak" (Barnes). It came to be applied to the "dead dwelling the under-world in Sheol, or Hades, and supposed to be as shades or shadows, weak and feeble" (Barnes).

One should not conclude from this verse that all consciousness ceases at death. The Psalmist was not addressing the resurrection, or even the conscious state of the dead. He was referring to the gloomy state of the dead so far as those presently living view it.

**88:11:** *"Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?"* - Once someone passes into the grave, there is no opportunity to hear or obey the gospel; nor is there any opportunity for a man to declare the glory of God, or teach others the statutes of Jehovah. Indeed, the lovingkindness of God will NOT be preached to those who are dead. The time for obedience is NOW, while the body still has life!

**88:12:** *"Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?"* - All of these verses express essentially the same thought. Once man enters the grave there is no occasion for hearing or obeying, nor is there any example where men who are dead, rose up and praised the Lord while being dead.

**88:13:** *"And in the morning shall my prayer come before thee"* - The Psalmist would beseech God in the early hours of the morning. We like Coffman's comments here:

Although the psalmist's distress has reached critical proportions, his faith in God greets each new day with prayer, in spite of the fact that he is perplexed by God's purposes as seen in his life...It was a mystery to him why he should have been required to pass through such terrible experiences; but he kept on praying every day! That is the glory of this ancient Saint. What a contrast is he with those persons who, signally blessed of God, and passing through life with large measures of success, and with practically no suffering of any kind, but who never worship God and never pray (Coffman, page 127).

**88:14:** *"Why castest thou off my soul? Why hidest thou thy face from me?"* - How often do men ask precisely the same question? It is sometimes difficult, if not impossible, to understand why God lingers with regard to His help. And it is possible that we may never know the answer to this question this side of eternity.

The most sorrowful thing about this psalm is that the psalmist has no sense of feeling that God has answered his prayers, or even heard them...In whatever direction the psalmist looks, he sees only blackness and despair. 'Looking backward at the past he sees nothing but ill health and ill fortune (v. 15). Looking unto God he is terrified (vv. 15b-17). Looking for human comfort, he can see no one at all (v. 18) (Coffman, page 128).

Greiner offers this paraphrase of verses 10-14: "Lord, the dead cannot see your wonders; they do not arise and praise thee; they cannot tell others about your lovingkindness nor your faithfulness. You are not known in the grave, you are totally forgotten. But as for me, I am not yet dead. I am not in that dark grave, therefore, I have cried unto Thee in the past and my prayers will continue to come before Thee every morning - that is, if I remain alive. So, why is it Lord that you do not intervene? Heal me and spare my life rather than hiding your face from me and abandoning me" (Southwest Lectures, 2:111).

**88:15:** *"I am afflicted and ready to die"* - It is as if the Psalmist were saying, "My whole life has been a life of trouble and sorrow, and I have not strength to bear it longer."

"The bed of sickness is not the proper place to examine the evidences of religion; it is not the place to make preparation for death; nor the proper place to BECOME religious" (Barnes).

**88:16:** *"thy fierce wrath...thy terrors"* - Here is another indication that the Psalmist felt as if his suffering was due to God's anger.

**88:17:** *"They came around me like water"* - The Psalmist likened his troubles to the waves of the sea which constantly beat upon the shore. His troubles did not come singly, but in great numbers. In 1966-1968 the author was serving in the United States Coast Guard, and was stationed aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Chitaqua, home based in Honolulu, Hawaii. It was our privilege to man what was commonly called "Ocean Station Zulu," where, from time to time, we would face some pretty severe weather. In early 1968 we rode out a typhoon. For more than 72 hours it seemed as if the waves would never cease crashing down upon us. When the storm had finally passed, we were exhausted both physically and emotionally. The continual presence of the Psalmist's trials and tribulations must have taken their toll mentally, as well as physically.

**88:18:** *"Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, And mine*

*acquaintance into darkness*" - One summarized this verse like this: "Thou hast caused my friends and neighbors, and my kindred, to separate themselves far from me, on account of such misery" (Barnes). There is no loneliness as great as that experienced by that man whose friends and neighbors have turned their back upon him, and left him to his sorrows and trials. "This may mean either that they had so turned away that he could not see them, as if they were in the dark; or, that his familiars now - his companions - were dark and dismal objects - gloomy thoughts - sad forebodings" (Barnes).

When the Psalmist thought of his friends, everything was sadness. They had vanished. There was not one to offer comfort or to console him. Yet in spite of the absence of his friends, the Psalmist continued to pray to God for comfort and deliverance. We like Coffman's assessment of the Psalmist's great faith: "Herein lies the wonder of this psalmist's triumphant faith. That a man should see not light at all and yet go right on supplicating God in fervent, ceaseless prayer - that is an unqualified marvel" (Coffman, page 128).

What a sad picture we have here. Here was a man to whom all things were dark and dismal. There was no conceivable hope beyond the present moment. The Psalm ends abruptly; with not so much as a hint of light or a ray of hope.

### ***Lessons***

1. One important lesson we learn from this Psalm is the truth that the child of God can, and often does, face misfortunes in his sojourn though life.
2. Prayer is the saint's release from the mental anguish that results from trial and tribulation. As God's child, we should never fail to avail ourselves of the wonderful privilege of taking our woes to the Lord in prayer.
3. Coffman noted: "Our lives upon earth are only a moment compared to the ceaseless ages of eternity; and our attitude during the very worst of experiences should be the same as that of Job, who cried, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust him' (Job 13:15)" (Coffman, page 129).
4. Suffering may sharpen our awareness of sin. It can also draw us



closer to God. But the “benefits” of suffering depend upon the attitude of the one suffering.

Life can seem ungrateful ~ and not always kind.  
Life can pull at your heartstrings ~ and play with your mind.  
Life can be blissful ~ and happy and free.  
Life can put beauty ~ in the things that you see.  
Life can place challenges ~ right at your feet.  
Life can make good ~ of the hardships that we meet.  
Life can overwhelm you ~ and make your head spin.  
Life can reward those ~ determined to win.  
Life can be hurtful ~ and not always fair.  
Life can surround you ~ with people who care.  
Life clearly does offer ~ its ups and its downs.  
Life's days can bring you ~ both smiles and frowns.  
Life teaches us to take ~ the good with the bad.  
Life is a mixture ~ of happy and sad.

So.....

Take the life that you have ~ and give it your best.  
Think positive, be happy ~ let God do the rest.  
Take the challenges ~ that life has laid at your feet.  
Take pride and be thankful ~ for each one you meet.  
To yourself give forgiveness ~ if you stumble and fall.  
Take each day that is dealt you ~ and give it your all.  
Take the love that you're given ~ and return it with care.  
Have faith that when needed ~ it will always be there.  
Take time to find the beauty ~ in the things that you see.  
Take life's simple pleasures ~ let them set your heart free.  
The idea here is simply ~ to even the score.  
As you are met and faced with ~ Life's Tug Of War. (Author Unknown)

## *“God’s Covenant With The Seed of David”*

### ***Introduction***

We have come to what has been called “the Covenant Psalm,” which, according to Jewish arrangement, closes the third book of the Psalms. This Psalm is entitled “Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.” It is the twelfth of thirteen *maschil* Psalms (see also Psa. 32, 42, 44, 45, 52-55, 74, 78, 88, and 142). In the margin this is rendered, “A Psalm for Ethan the Ezrahite to give instruction.” Though most of the ‘*maschils*’ are Psalms of lament, some contain thanksgiving and/or celebration. The origin of the term is disputed. Some see a connection between the root of the word and the Hebrew word which means to “understand,” or to “ponder.” Others have suggested that ‘*maschil*’ might be a musical notation, and that these ‘*mischil*’ Psalms might have been used during festivals. It would appear from the context of this Psalm that this is more of a lamentation than one of praise, though there are certainly elements of praise throughout the Psalm.

Both Heman (in the title of Psalms 88) and Ethan are recorded as grandsons of Judah (1 Chronicles 2:6), and if the Psalm was composed by Ethan, then it would be the oldest of the known sacred writings. Barnes points out that there are some things in the Psalm, however, which suggest it was written at a later time, such things which are totally inconsistent with a time prior to David.

The probability, therefore, seems to be that these names were either the names of some persons subsequent to the time referred to in 1 Chronicles, or that these their names were given to classes of the sons of Korah who had charge of the music. As thus composed, they might be spoken of as the psalms of Heman and Ethan” (Barnes).

DeWette (as per Barnes) supposes that it was written about the time of the exile, since the family of David is represented in the Psalm as

having been dethroned and dishonored. Coffman, likewise, is of the opinion that "the occasion for this psalm was the conquest of Jerusalem, the capture of King Jehoichin, his deportation to Babylon along with Daniel and many other able Hebrews, and the enthronement of the puppet king Zedekiah, a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar" (Coffman, 2:131).

If the Psalm was written during the time of the Babylonian captivity, which appears to be the case, the question remains as to exactly who wrote it. Phillips entertained the idea that Daniel may have written it:

Daniel was of royal blood. He was a captive in Babylon and had been there since the time of the first deportation in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. The final breakup of the monarch must have touched Daniel deeply. First the boy king Jehochin arrived in Babylon to be flung unceremoniously into prison. Then Zedekiah came, his eyes blinded, tales of his treachery common knowledge throughout the city. Many a time, especially in his early years in Babylon – before later visions brought things more clearly into focus – he must have prayed just such a prayer as this prayer of "Ethan the Ezrahite." It is quite possible this psalm found its way into our Bible by way of Daniel's very able pen. Who can tell? (Phillips, 2:9).

In the absence of any clear affirmation as to the author, we simply cannot state with any degree of confidence as to who wrote the Psalm.

## **Analysis**

The Psalm is filled with despair and discouragement. The "covenant" God had made with Israel had somehow been made void. The present state of things was not what it should have been, and the promise from God to David appeared to be on the brink of failure. The question in the mind of the Psalmist was simply, "How long was this present state of disarray to continue?" Living this side of the cross, and having the full of Old Testament history to look back upon, we can see what the Psalmist could not see. When Israel rejected their God from being King over them, God gave them a king. But it was never God's intention to fulfill His purpose and plan through an earthly monarchy. Hence, He was constantly moving toward Pentecost and the establishment of the church, the Kingdom of heaven upon the earth. Neither Israel, nor her leaders, ever seemed to grasp this truth. Is it any wonder, then, that the removal of the kingdom in preparation for the coming spiritual kingdom would produce fears and anxiety in the hearts of the people? This

Psalms is a reflection of the fear that existed in the hearts of the people at the desolation of their “earthly kingdom.” But in the midst of this wonderful Psalm is a prophetic glimpse of the spiritual kingdom that would be established by the “seed of David,” i.e. the Christ. We agree with Coffman that, “By far the most important verse in this whole psalm is verse 37 which indicates that the everlasting ‘throne of David’ is not an earthly throne at all” (Coffman, page 132).

The Psalm is an incredible description of the stability and perpetuity of God’s everlasting faithfulness. If the reader will keep in mind that David’s earthly kingdom was but a type of the spiritual kingdom, he should have no problem with this Psalm.

The Psalm consists of five parts. The first (verses 1-2) sets forth God’s faithfulness and lovingkindness. It was important that the Psalmist (and the readers of this Psalm) understand that God is trustworthy; that His covenant with His people had not failed in any way. The despair the Psalmist was experiencing was no indication that God had abandoned His promise. Next the Psalmist reflects upon God’s promise to David. The “covenant” consisted of God’s promise to establish “thy seed...for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations” (verses 3-4). The nature of that promise was spiritual. Even if physical Israel should vanish in the dust of antiquity, God’s promise would not fail. That being the case, the promise regarding the everlasting nature of David’s “throne” must be something more than the physical throne in Jerusalem. No wonder the Psalmist calls for the reader to pause right here (notice the *selah* at the close of the fourth verse). Third, the Psalmist sets forth a beautiful doxology in which God is praised for his wonders, faithfulness, power, providence, justice, judgment, mercy, and truth (verses 5-14). Fourth, the Psalmist turns his attention to the people of God (verses 15-19). They are described as a people who are knowledgeable, who walk in the light of God’s countenance, who glory in God, and who trust in God as their shield. Fifth, we are provided a prophetic glimpse of the reign of our Lord, with particular emphasis upon the relationship that Christ (the Son) sustains to God (the Father) (verses 20-28). With verse 29, the Psalmist turns his attention to the events surrounding Israel, the “physical kingdom,” at the time of the writing. He deplores the ruined state of the nation, and pleads to God for mercy and restoration (verses 29-51). The Psalm then closes with praise to God (verse 52).

We came across a number of excellent outlines on this chapter. Willmington divided the Psalm into three parts (Willmington, 264):

- I. The Praise (89:1-37)
- II. The Problem (89:38-45)
- III. The Plea (89:46-52)

Phillips also had an excellent homiletic outline (Phillips, 2:7), the major points of which are:

- I. The Actual Significance of the Covenant (89:1-4)
- II. The Absolute Security of the Covenant (89:5-18)
- III. The Amazing Splendor of the Covenant (89:19-37)
- IV. The Apparent Suspension of the Covenant (89:38-52)

We will follow this outline for our study:

- I. Praise – for God’s faithfulness and lovingkindness (verses 1-2)
- II. Promise – consisting of God’s covenant with David (verses 3-4)
- III. Praise – for God’s wonderful power and might (verses 5-14)
- IV. People – in which the writer speaks of the blessedness of those who truly follow God (verses 15-18)
- V. Prophecy – a glimpse at the rule of our Lord (verses 19-29)
- VI. Pity – wherein the Psalmist sets forth the deplorable state of affairs in Israel (verses 30-51)
- VII. Praise – in which the Psalmist trusts in God in spite of all he was facing (verse 52).

## ***Commentary***

### ***Praise*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 *I will sing of the lovingkindness of Jehovah for ever: With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.*
- 2 *For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; Thy faithfulness wilt thou establish in the very heavens.*

**89:1:** “*I will sing*” – Throughout history songs have molded the thinking of society. Songs have communicated joy and sorrow; hope and despair. The Psalmist understood the power of songs and singing. The faith of the Psalmist shines in this Psalm, for he would sing, even in the midst of despair.

*“of the lovingkindness of Jehovah...make known thy faithfulness”* – The KJV reads, “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord.” Here is the two-fold subject of the Psalmist’s song. First, he would sing of God’s wonderful mercy. He intended to convey to his readers the fact that God had been merciful in fulfilling His promise to establish the seed of David and set up his throne “to all generations.” The Old Testament is filled with examples of God’s mercy being extended to those of obedient faith. It is somewhat incredible that some would dare suggest that there is no grace under the Old Testament. Second, he would “make known” the “faithfulness” of the Father. The faithfulness of God is heralded throughout the pages of the Bible. ““My word...shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it” (Isa. 55:11). “For what if some were without faith? shall their want of faith make of none effect the faithfulness of God? God forbid: yea, let God be found true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, And mightest prevail when thou comest into judgment” (Rom. 3:3-4). Dear reader, can you not fathom the wonderful encouragement that comes from the realization that God will remain faithful to His word?

God’s faithfulness is no thing of earth, for here nothing is firm, and all things savour of the changes of the moon and the fickleness of the sea: heaven is the birthplace of truth, and there it dwells in eternal rigour. As the blue arch above us remains unimpaired by age, so does the Lord’s truth; as in the firmament he hangs his covenant bow, so in the upper heavens the faithfulness of God is enthroned in immutable glory. This Ethan said, and this we may say; come what will, mercy and faithfulness are built up by “the Eternal Builder,” and his own nature is the guarantee for their perpetuity. This is to be called to mind whenever the church is in trouble, or our own spirits bowed down with grief (Spurgeon).

Here are two fundamental principles of God’s covenant with His people: mercy and faithfulness. All was dark and dreary when the Psalm was written. The author thus pleads for God’s divine mercy. Seven times the Psalmist refers to God’s lovingkindness. But likewise, seven times the Psalmist refers to God’s faithfulness. With God’s mercy, the Psalmist looks *back*; because of God’s faithfulness, the Psalmist can look *forward* with hope.

*“to all generations”* – The Psalmist now declares to whom he would sing. The song would be placed in writing for others to examine and study. The Psalmist recognized his sacred obligation to tell others of

God's wonderful promises. Our obligation is no less. "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

**89:2:** "*For I have said*" – The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render this, "Thou hast said." While this rendering might appear to be more in harmony with the context, "the Hebrew will not admit of this construction" (Barnes).

The true meaning seems to be, that the psalmist had said in his mind; he had firmly believed; he had so received it as a truth that it might be spoken of as firmly settled, or as an indisputable reality. It was in his mind one of the things whose truthfulness did not admit of a doubt (Barnes).

*"I have said...Mercy shall be built up for ever"* – God's mercies are abundant. Built upon the foundation of God's goodness and faithfulness, divine mercy would continue to flow from the throne of God. Of course, the greatest expression of God's mercy is seen in Christ. But the important thing to notice here is the undeniable truth that God's mercy is established upon the trustworthiness of His Word. God's word constitutes a solid foundation upon which men might build their lives (Matt. 7:24 ff). It is upon that same word that God extends His mercy and exercises His lovingkindness. God's mercy cannot go contrary to His word. Those who expect God to exercise mercy towards all men on the judgment by simply ignoring the demands or righteousness fall under this important truth.

### ***Promise*** **Verses 3-4**

- 3 *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,*  
4 *Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.*

**89:3:** "*I have made a covenant with my chosen*" – The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render this in the plural, i.e. "my chosen ones." But the original is in the singular. The words are those of the Lord, and contain the promise regarding the perpetuity of David's throne. The Psalmist wanted to assure his readers that this promise to the fathers, and more specifically the promise to David, would not fail.

**89:4:** "*Thy seed will I establish for ever*" – The promise given to

David, and referred to here, is recorded in 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, **I will set up thy seed after thee**, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and **I will establish his kingdom**. He shall build a house for my name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever**. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but **my lovingkindness shall not depart from him**, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And **thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever** before thee: **thy throne shall be established for ever** (emphasis mine, TW).



The “seed” cannot refer to David, for, as Peter argued, he “both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day” (Acts 2:29b). Nor does the promise refer to the physical lineage of David, for the physical posterity of David ceased to rule on David’s throne more than three millennia ago. By setting for the **principles** of God’s covenant with Israel, and identifying the **person** involved in the covenant, the Psalmist could reassure his audience of the **promise**. No, God was not being untrue to His promise. Instead, it was Israel who had been unfaithful to the Almighty. God’s promise extended far beyond the physical seed of David and the earthly throne. The divine promise was looking to the coming Messiah and the heavenly throne upon which our Lord now rules.

**PRAISE**  
**Verses 5-14**

These verses contain a doxology in which God is praised for his wonders, faithfulness, power, providence, justice, judgment, mercy, and truth. This is a wonderful description of the exalted majesty of God, more especially of His omnipotence and faithfulness, because the value of the promise is measured by the character of the person who promises.

God is to be praised for  
***His greatness in the heavens***  
(89:5-7)

- 5 *And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Jehovah; Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.*  
6 *For who in the skies can be compared unto Jehovah? Who among the sons of the mighty is like unto Jehovah,*  
7 *A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones, And to be feared above all them that are round about him?*

**89:5:** “*And the heavens shall praise thy wonders*” - The “heavens” is likely a figure of speech representing those IN the heavens. Notice the synonymous parallelism in this verse:

“the heavens” = “assembly of the holy ones”  
“thy wonders” = “thy faithfulness”

The heavenly host would find occasion to praise God for His

marvelous scheme of redemption for mankind. Centuries after this Psalm was written, the apostle Paul would tell us that God's great wisdom was manifested in the establishment of the church:

to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 2:10-11).

Paul was not saying that it was the responsibility of the church to make God's wisdom known (though certainly that truth is taught elsewhere). Paul was emphasizing the fact that God's great wisdom was manifested, more than in any other divine activity, by the planning and establishment of the church. If a man wants to see God's wonderful mercy and wisdom, let him consider the church with its beauty, simplicity, and majestic characteristics.

*"the assembly of the holy ones"* – This is speaking of the spirits in the other world, i.e. the angels. Similar language is seen in the following passages:

Job 5:1 – "Call now; is there any that will answer thee? And to which of the holy ones wilt thou turn?"

Job 15:15 – "Behold, he putteth no trust in his holy ones; Yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight"

Deuteronomy 33:2- "And he said, Jehovah came from Sinai, And rose from Seir unto them; He shined forth from mount Paran, And he came from the ten thousands of holy ones: At his right hand was a fiery law for them."

We are also told that the angels in heaven had a deep interest in God's plan for man's salvation. Peter wrote concerning man's salvation, "Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angel desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

It is at this point in the Psalm that the spiritual aspect of God's promise to David starts to come into view. It was not the "physical" kingdom that was under consideration in God's promise to David, but the spiritual kingdom, the church. It was not the literal physical seed of David that would sit on some literal throne in Jerusalem, but the Messiah Who would sit on the spiritual throne, ruling as King of kings, and Lord of lords (1 Tim. 6:15b). Indeed, "If we suppose that this promise embraced the Messiah and his reign, then we shall see what new occasions the angels would find for praise - in the incarnation of the Redeemer, and in all that would be accomplished by him" (Barnes).

**89:6:** *"Who in the skies can be compared unto Jehovah?...Who...is like unto Jehovah?"* - The idea is that none in the regions above - the upper world - can be compared with God. There is no other so-called "god" - there is no one among the angels, great and glorious as they are, that can be likened to him.

*"the sons of the mighty"* - This could refer to (1) men of renown, or (2) the angelic, heavenly host. The Psalmist inquires, "Look among yourselves; see if there are any of your great men that can even begin to compare with our God. Search the heavens, and see if there is any like unto Jehovah our God!" (cf. Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; Isa. 40:25).

**89:7:** *"A God very terrible in the council of the holy ones"* - The word "terrible" is a reference to the awesome power of our God. It is not used in our modern sense of the word, nor does it mean something evil or sinister.

*"and to be feared above all them that are round about him"* - In view of Jehovah's greatness and His incomparable power, it is natural that we would want to fear Him. The KJV renders this, "God is greatly to be feared." "His power is to be feared; his justice is to be feared; his holiness is to be feared; and there is much also in his goodness, his benevolence, his mercy, to fill the mind with solemn emotions" (Barnes).

God is to be praised for  
***His Faithfulness***  
(89:8)

8 O Jehovah God of hosts, Who is a mighty one, like unto thee, O Jehovah? And thy faithfulness is round about thee.

**89:8:** “*Jehovah, God of hosts*” – These “hosts” would include the angelic beings, along with the natural and supernatural forces at God’s disposal.

“*Who is a mighty one, like unto thee*” – This question takes its origin from Exodus 15:11, “Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?” Literally it should read, “Who is as thou?” Barnes points out that the original word here rendered “Lord” (KJV), “Jehovah” (ASV) is ‘Yahh’ or ‘Jah.’ It is an abbreviation of the name ‘Yahweh,’ and has the same signification.

“*thy faithfulness is round about thee*” – God’s faithfulness is with Him at all times. It is a part of His very nature. He never changes, and He may always be trusted to keep His promises. If there is one message that is clearly taught in the pages of Holy Writ, it is that God means what He says. God’s steadfastness is a mark of His absolute holiness and integrity. When God makes a promise, He keeps it! This theme runs like a silver thread through this Psalm, and throughout the Bible.

God is to be praised for  
***His greatness in the earth***  
(89:9-12)

- 9 *Thou rulest the pride of the sea: When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.*
- 10 *Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; Thou hast scattered thine enemies with the arm of thy strength.*
- 11 *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: The world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.*
- 12 *The north and the south, thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon rejoice in thy name.*

God’s greatness in the earth is seen in His power over both nature, and over the kingdoms of men. One clear message here is that “God Rules.”

**89:9:** “*the pride of the sea...the waves thereof arise*” – Whoever has seen the raging sea when its waves are mountain high would acknowledge that nothing but the omnipotent power of God could control its raging. When Jesus stilled the tempest He declared His

deity.

There is, perhaps, no more impressive exhibition of divine power than the control which God has over the raging waves of the ocean: and yet this was the power which Jesus exercised over the raging sea of Galilee — showing that he had the power of God. Mark 4:39-41 (Barnes).

**89:10:** *“Thou hast broken Rahab”* – The marginal reading has “Egypt” instead of Rahab. The Psalmist is referring to the judgment that God brought upon Egypt.

<sup>9</sup>Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of Jehovah; awake, as in the days of old, the generations of ancient times. Is it not thou that didst cut Rahab in pieces, that didst pierce the monster? <sup>10</sup>Is it not thou that driedst up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that madest the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? (Isaiah 51:9).

*“as one that is slain”* – The whole strength of Egypt could not stand against God. The Almighty trampled them down as easily as if they had all been dead carcasses.

*“scattered thine enemies with the arm of thy strength”* - The "arm" is the symbol for strength! “And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm” (Deut. 5:15).

**89:11:** *“The heavens are thine”* – The heavens belong to God by right of creation. It is implied here that all this belongs to God and that He has the right to dispose of them as He pleases. What is true of the heavens is also true of the earth, for the Psalmist declares, *“the earth also is thine.”* God owns everything. Recognition of this one fact would cure the covetous heart. What we "own" is merely on "loan," and that from He Who possesses the universe.

**89:12:** *“The north and the south”* – The Psalmist expands God's domain beyond a single nation to include the whole of the earth. Tabor was on the western side of Palestine, and Hermon was on the eastern side. Clarke concluded,

It is generally supposed that by these four terms all the four quarters of the globe are intended. Tabor, a mountain of Galilee, was on the west of Mount Hermon, which was beyond Jordan, to the east of the source of that river.

As far as the eye can see, and the whole of what the eye can see; all were created by Jehovah, and belong unto Him. How refreshing and comforting to know that God has control of this entire universe - from the north to the south, from the east to the west.

God is to be praised for  
**His rule over mankind**  
(89:13-14)

- 13 *Thou hast a mighty arm; Strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.*  
14 *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne: Lovingkindness and truth go before thy face.*

Reference here is to the power and might that God exercised in delivering His people. But His power goes far beyond the nation of Israel, and is applicable to all nations!

**89:13:** “*Thou hast a mighty arm*” - The Hebrew literally reads, “an arm with might.” The idea is that God has great power, the “arm” being the instrument by which a person accomplished his task.

“*thy hand*” – God is often represented as delivering His people with a strong hand. “And Jehovah said unto Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh: for by a strong hand shall he let them go, and by a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land” (Ex. 6:1). “for with a strong hand hath Jehovah brought thee out of Egypt” (Ex. 13:9b). “O Lord Jehovah, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy strong hand: for what god is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy mighty acts?” (Deut. 3:24).

“*high is thy right hand*” – When the right hand is lifted high it is poised to strike. The Psalmist was confident that God would manifest His power and might in the not too distant future.

**89:14:** “*righteousness...justice...lovingkindness...truth*” - The kingdoms of this world are established by force, with little kindness or mercy toward their victims. Not so with God. His throne rests upon the four-fold foundation of (1) righteousness, (2) justice, (3) lovingkindness, and (4) truth. God knows what is right, and He always does what is right. We like Barnes’ assessment of this verse, particularly with regard to the righteousness and justice of God’s

throne:

The idea here is, that the throne of God is founded on justice and right judgment; it is this which supports it; his administration is maintained because it is right. This supposes that there is such a thing as right or justice in itself considered, or in the nature of things, and independently of the will of God; that the divine administration will be conformed to that, and will be firm because it is thus conformed to it. Even omnipotent power could not maintain permanently a throne founded on injustice and wrong. Such an administration would sooner or later make its own destruction sure (Barnes).

Truth is the foundation of all that God does. God does not, and cannot lie (Heb. 6:17-18). Once a person lies, all remaining promises and/or threats have no force behind them. Those hearing can no longer depend upon the truthfulness of the one making the promise. Were God ever to lie, or in any way mislead, all remaining promises would be of no value whatsoever.

### ***People*** **Verses 15-18**

- 15 *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: They walk, O Jehovah, in the light of thy countenance.*  
16 *In thy name do they rejoice all the day; And in thy righteousness are they exalted.*  
17 *For thou art the glory of their strength; And in thy favor our horn shall be exalted.*  
18 *For our shield belongeth unto Jehovah; And our king to the Holy One of Israel.*

In these verses the Psalmist will turn his attention toward those who truly follow God. Here the Psalmist will set forth some of the characteristics of those people who are blessed by God, and are consequently genuinely happy.

**89:15:** “*Blessed is the people*” – Literally, the Hebrew is “O, the blessedness of the people.” The Psalmist was attempting to communicate to his audience that there is genuine happiness reserved for a certain class of individuals. Those who follow God are the only people in this world who have found genuine peace. They are marked by the following characteristics: (1) They know the joyful sound, (2) they walk in the light of God's countenance, (3) they rejoice in any and every circumstance that may come along, (4) they

submit unto God's righteousness rather than their own, and (5) they are exalted. Let's take a closer look.

*“the people that know the joyful sound”* – The Hebrew word means a loud noise; a tumult; especially sounds of joy or rejoicing (cf. Job 8:21; 1 Sam. 4:5). The word is used to describe the shout when a king is welcomed by the people (Num. 23:21), or the shout of a battle (Jer. 4:19; 49:2). The word also means the sound of trumpets (Lev. 25:9). This joyful sound would accompany the celebration of the great festivals among the Hebrews. If that is the reference here then the Psalmist was describing the joy that God's people have when there is an occasion of worship, or when one is summoned to God's service. The man who finds worship boring, or service to God tedious and cumbersome, will never find genuine happiness in his life.

*“they walk in the light of thy countenance”* – The truly happy man is he who follows God's countenance, rather than heeding the counsel of the ungodly (Psa. 1:1).

**89:16:** *“they rejoice all the day”* - There is no reason why we should not "rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4-6). The Psalmist was not suggesting that there would be no occasion for sorrow. Yea, rather, he was telling us that we rejoice even in spite of our sorrow.

**89:17:** *“For thou art the glory of their strength”* – The child of God derives his strength from God. Paul wrote on this very point:

And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Cor. 12:8-9).

There is a certain beauty that surrounds the strong, mature child of God. Such a one is a bright spot in an otherwise dark and dreadful world. We are the “salt of the earth,” and the “light of the world” (Matt. 5:13-16). We are to remain “blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).



*“And in thy favor our horn shall be exalted”* – The “horn” is a symbol of power (cf. *Psa. 22:21; Dan. 7:8; Job 16:15*). The meaning here is that the strength and power of the saint is derived from God. All that has contributed to the exaltation and honor of the saint originates with God. But in addition, as the child of the God enjoys Divine favor and fellowship, he grows more wise, more holy, more powerful, and consequently, more happy.

**89:18:** *“For our shield belongeth unto Jehovah”* – The KJV reads, “For the Lord is our defense.” There was no one else to whom they could turn. The New Testament equivalent of this verse is found in *John 6:68*. When others had turned away from Jesus, our Lord asked the disciples, “Would you also go away?” To which Simon Peter responded, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” The saint realizes that there is not other defense; no other shield; nothing else upon which they could depend.

### ***Prophecy*** **Verses 19-29**

- 19 *Then thou spakest in vision to thy saints, And saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.*
- 20 *I have found David my servant; With my holy oil have I anointed him:*
- 21 *With whom my hand shall be established; Mine arm also shall strengthen him.*
- 22 *The enemy shall not exact from him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.*
- 23 *And I will beat down his adversaries before him, And smite them that hate him.*
- 24 *But my faithfulness and my lovingkindness shall be with him; And in my name shall his horn be exalted.*
- 25 *I will set his hand also on the sea, And his right hand on the rivers.*
- 26 *He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.*
- 27 *I also will make him my first-born, The highest of the kings of the earth.*
- 28 *My lovingkindness will I keep for him for evermore; And my covenant shall stand fast with him.*
- 29 *His seed also will I make to endure for ever, And his throne as the days of heaven.*

A quick glimpse at these verses suggests that most, if not all of these verses are a reference to the Messiah. Here is what we have:

- (1) The Psalmist speaks of “one that is mighty,” and “one chosen out of the people” (89:19);
- (2) This “one” of whom he speaks has been anointed with “holy oil” (89:20);
- (3) It is through this “one” that God’s hand would be established (89:21);
- (4) The “son of wickedness” would not “afflict him” (89:22);
- (5) His adversaries would be defeated (89:23);
- (6) His “horn” would be exalted in the “name” of Jehovah (89:24);
- (7) His “hand” would be upon the “sea” and “the rivers” (89:25);
- (8) He would cry, “Thou art my Father,” and the “rock of my salvation” (89:26);
- (9) God would make him His “first-born” (89:27);
- (10) God’s covenant would stand fast with him (89:28).

While it may be true that these verses are “given over to a rehearsal of God’s promise to David through Nathan the prophet” (Coffman, 2:135), the question before us is precisely HOW and IN WHOM that promise would find its fulfillment.

**89:19:** *“Thou speakest in vision to thy saints”* – There is no doubt that this is a reference to the incident in 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (see also 1 Chron. 11:2-3; 1 Chron. 17:3, 7-15). The word “vision” translates the Hebrew ‘*chazon*’ and denotes that which is seen or revealed. The word is used in reference to the prophecies of the Old Testament in such passages as Numbers 12:6, 1 Samuel 3:1, Daniel 2:19, 7:2, 8:1, Nahum 1:1, Genesis 15:1, and Isaiah 21:2. The prophets were called “seers” (1 Sam. 9:9), in that they “saw” events which were yet to come.

*“I have laid help upon one that is mighty...exalted one chosen”* – The RSV renders this, “I have set the crown upon one who is mighty.” David was selected out of the people to serve as King of Israel. He was not one that was noble, or one of high rank, but one selected from among his people. While it is true that David was appointed by God to protect the people, David was merely a type of He Who was to come. It is only through the son of David, i.e. the Christ, that protection and exaltation comes.

**89:20:** *“David my servant...I have anointed him”* – Adam Clarke picked up on the prophetic tone of these verses:

Here the psalmist begins to reason with God relative to David, his posterity, and the perpetuity of his kingdom; which promises appear now to have utterly failed, as the throne had been overturned, and all the people carried into captivity. But all these things may have reference to Christ and his kingdom; for we are assured that David was a type of the Messiah (Adam Clarke, QV).

David was anointed by the hand of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:13), but our Lord was “anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” (Heb. 1:9). The physical anointing of oil was emblematic of the pouring out of wisdom and grace from on high to qualify the one being anointed for the office he would fill.

**89:21:** *“Mine arm shall also strengthen him”* - Reference to the "arm" of Jehovah is suggestive of Divine strength and power sufficient to accomplish heaven's purpose.

**89:22:** *“The enemy shall not exact from him”* - Barnes tell us that the "literal meaning is derived from the force sometimes used in extorting or demanding a debt, where no indulgence is shown, but where it is exacted to the last mite, whether a man is able to pay it or not" (Barnes). The Psalmist is suggesting that the enemy shall not be able to oppress God's anointed, or in any way FORCE him from his position.

It is worthy of remark that David was never overthrown; he finally conquered every foe that rose up against him. Saul's persecution, Absalom's revolt, Sheba's conspiracy, and the struggle made by the partisans of the house of Saul after his death, only tended to call forth David's skill, courage, and prowess, and to seat him more firmly on his throne. The Philistines, the Ammonites, the Syrians, etc., united all their forces to crush him, but in vain: “God beat down all his foes before his face,” and variously plagued those who opposed him, verse 23 (Adam Clarke, QV).

Our Lord promised that He would build His church, and even the gates of hell would not be able to prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

*“Nor the son of wickedness afflict him”* – Similar language is found (almost word for word) in 2 Samuel 7:10, a passage that obviously has reference to our Lord and the establishment of His kingdom. The "son of wickedness" is simply the wicked; all the wicked, whoever they may be. God would not allow His chosen one to fall

into the hands of wicked men.

**89:23:** *"I will...smite them that hate him"* – The KJV renders this, "I will beat down his foes...and plague them that hate him." This word "plague" is used to denote those judgments that come directly from the hand of God. Notice in this connection Exodus 12:13; 30:12; Numbers 8:19; 17:11-12. The idea is that God would crush the enemies of David. He would bring upon them the plagues and calamities necessary to drive them back.

**89:24:** *"My faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him"* – As God was with David in his coming and going, so God was with the seed of David, the Christ.

*"in my name shall his horn be exalted"* - The name of Jehovah is inseparably connected with the power and favor of God.

**89:25:** *"I will set his hand also on the sea"* - The sea is a reference to the Mediterranean, and the rivers those of the Euphrates and Tigris. These were the promised boundaries of the land (cf. Gen. 15:8). David secured all of this land in fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham. But there is little doubt that God intended to use the establishment of David's throne as a type of our Lord's victory and exaltation.

**89:26:** *"He shall cry...thou art my Father"* - The prophetic overtones of this verse cannot be missed. Certainly David recognized God as his Father, and the rock of his salvation, but Christ is the only one ever to use the terms "my Father" in an exclusive sense.

**89:27:** *"I will make him my first born"* - The "first-born" had distinct favors in the family. Notice in this connection Genesis 27:19, 29:26, Exodus 4:22, 13:12, Jeremiah 31:9. David, the youngest among his brethren, was exalted to a position of prominence and power. Again, we cannot dismiss this verse as a mere reference to David. Christ was the "first born" (Col. 1:15-18). It is HE WHO IS EXALTED above the kings of the earth, "king of kings, Lord of lords, and Potentate of potentates" (1 Tim. 6:15). As Coffman has noted, "The Spirit of God here passes from what was written of the literal king David to that which is true of no other who ever lived, except the Son of God, that Greater David, called 'the Son of David'" (Coffman, 2:136).

**89:28:** “*My mercy will I keep for him for evermore*” – Barnes picked up on the prophetic overtones in these verses: “In him, and in his Great Descendent, the throne shall be established for ever. This dominion will not be like the changing dynasties of this world, but will be perpetual and eternal” (Barnes). This verse, through 37 is “a poetical paraphrase of 2 Samuel 7:14” (Alexander McLaren, as quoted by Coffman), and a certain reference to the reign of Christ. Indeed, it is the covenant given by Christ, the last covenant, the final dispensation of God with men.

**89:29:** “*His seed will I make to endure forever*’ - How can anyone fail to see that this is not a reference to David’s seed, but rather to the “seed” of Christ, i.e. the spiritual children of Abraham? Adam Clarke was on target here:

This can apply only to the spiritual David. The posterity of David are long since extinct, or so blended with the remaining Jews as to be utterly indiscernible; but Jesus ever liveth, and his seed (Christians) are spread, and are spreading over all nations; and his throne is eternal. As to his manhood, he is of the house and lineage of David; the government is upon his shoulders, and of its increase there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and on his kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth even for ever. Isaiah 9:7 (Adam Clarke, QV).

“*his throne as the days of heaven*” – The throne the Psalmist is speaking of here is not David’s literal throne in Jerusalem, but the throne of God in heaven.

Verses 25-29 thus speak of the **dominion** of the Messiah (“I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers”), the **deity** of the Messiah (“He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father”), and the **durability** of the Messiah (“My mercy will I keep for him for evermore”). Yes, the Davidic covenant finds its fullest and most glorious fulfillment in Christ.

### ***Pity*** **Verses 30-51**

Most commentators read these verses through colored glasses. The Calvinistic error of once-saved-always-saved clouds the true meaning of this passage. Spurgeon is one example:

It was possible, terribly possible, that David’s posterity might wander from the Lord; indeed they did so, but what then? Was the

mercy of God to pass away from David's seed?—far from it. So, too, the seed of the Son of David are apt to start aside, but are they therefore cast away? Not a single word gives liberty for such an idea, but the very reverse. Expositors in their fear of Calvinistic doctrine shake off the fear of adding to the word of God, or else they would not have spent their time in talking about “*the conditions*” of this absolutely unconditional covenant (Spurgeon).

The problem with Spurgeon's comment is that it simply is not true. In fact, a close examination of the passage shows that God will punish those who turn away from His commandments. The Psalmist was seeking to teach his audience that God would remain faithful even if all Israel should fail to remain faithful. In these verses we have:

- A. The “people” (89:30-32)
- B. The “promise” (89:33-37)
- C. The “punishment” (89:38-45)
- D. The “plea” (89:46-51)

Lets take a closer look.

### ***The People*** (89:30-32):

- 30 *If his children forsake my law, And walk not in mine ordinances;*  
31 *If they break my statutes, And keep not my commandments;*  
32 *Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, And their iniquity with stripes.*

**89:30:** “*If his children forsake my law*” – The physical seed of David utterly failed to keep their part of the bargain. Yes, David's seed did fail to obey; they did forsake God's law. While there were pockets of faithfulness, for the most part, the history of Israel after David's death is one of sin, shame, and separation from their God. They refused to walk after the ordinances of God, and chose instead to be like the nations about them.

**89:31:** “*break my statutes...keep not my commandments*” - “Break the statutes” has the marginal reading “profane,” meaning if they “regard them as things of nought, or treat them with disdain as a polluted or defiled thing” (Barnes). There was no fear of God. His

statutes and commandments were treated with disdain and disrespect.

**89:32:** *“I will visit their transgression with the rod”* - Sin will not go unpunished. Had Israel remained faithful to their calling, they would have enjoyed the great privileges as God's chosen people. Instead Israel was now being punished with “the rod.” Their national identity had been destroyed; they had been carried out of the promised land to become slaves and servants in a strange land. The “stripes” were being laid upon their back. Their terrible plight was due solely to their “transgression” and their “iniquity.”

***The Promise*** (89:34-37):

34 *My covenant will I not break, Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*

35 *Once have I sworn by my holiness: I will not lie unto David:*

36 *His seed shall endure for ever, And his throne as the sun before me.*

37 *It shall be established for ever as the moon, And as the faithful witness in the sky. Selah*

**89:33:** *“I will not...suffer my faithfulness to fail”* - In spite of Israel's long history of unfaithfulness, God would remain true to His promise. The New Testament equivalent of the truth taught here is found in Hebrews 13:5b – “he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

**89:34:** *“My covenant will I not break”* – In view of the fact that God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18), the truth expressed here would serve as a wonderful assurance to those Israelites who now found themselves in Babylonian captivity. No doubt they were wondering, “Has God broken His covenant?”

**89:36-37:** The promise of endurance was, of course, tempered with the condition that Israel remain faithful to God. But in the deeper sense, the Kingdom DID endure, and still does to this day. But it was not the physical kingdom that was in view here, but the spiritual kingdom, the church. The stability of that spiritual kingdom is emphasized by the Psalmist. No wonder he tells us to pause and reflect upon this eternal truth. It is an appropriate place to insert the word ‘*selah*.’

***The Punishment*** (89:38-45):

- 38 *But thou hast cast off and rejected, Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.*
- 39 *Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant: Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.*
- 40 *Thou hast broken down all his hedges; Thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.*
- 41 *All that pass by the way rob him: He is become a reproach to his neighbors.*
- 42 *Thou hast exalted the right hand of his adversaries; Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.*
- 43 *Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword, And hast not made him to stand in the battle.*
- 44 *Thou hast made his brightness to cease, And cast his throne down to the ground.*
- 45 *The days of his youth hast thou shortened: Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah*

**89:38:** “*Thou hast cast us off*” - Rejoicing is turned to mourning. It seemed as if God had turned His back on Israel; that He had broken the covenant. The words “cast off” literally have the meaning of being “treated as a foul, offensive thing” (Barnes).

“*Wroth with thine anointed*” - The “anointed” here is the King of Israel. The Psalmist no doubt had the earthly king in mind. While the earthly rulers of Israel proved, for the most part, to be worth recipients of God’s anger, the promised “seed,” i.e. the Christ, was the recipient of God’s wonderful pleasure. On more than one occasion the Father spoke of the Son as one in whom He was “well pleased.”

**89:39:** “*abhorred the covenant...profaned his crown*” - This is mighty strong language leveled at God Almighty. “The appeal to God in these verses comes about as near as any mortal could have dared come toward charging God with unfaithfulness to his covenant with David and lodging an accusation that God had failed to keep his promises” (Coffman, page 140). From all appearances, one might think that God HAD forgotten His covenant. After all, Jerusalem lay in ruins and the king had been carried into captivity with the people. The Psalmist was simply pointing out that God had treated His people AS IF the crown, the kingship, and all that went with it, had become a polluted thing. Had the Psalmist been privileged to see the spiritual aspect of God’s kingdom, rather than fixing his eyes on the



physical, earthly kingdom, his spirits would have been lifted to great heights of joy and faith. As Coffman noted, "David's earthly dynasty was being liquidated. All the prayers for God to intervene were of no avail. God said, 'I have given them a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath,' Hosea 13:11" (Coffman, page 140).

**89:41:** *"He is become a reproach to his neighbors"* - It is interesting that the language used by the Psalmist might very well be applied to the apparent rejection of the Son as He hung upon the cross. In this sense, the sentiments of the Psalmist are prophetic of the shame that Christ would bear upon the cross of Calvary.

There is an important lesson to be learned here. When situations are viewed with the physical eye, one might easily draw the conclusion that God has indeed failed to keep His promises. But the child of God does not look at the circumstances of life with the physical eye, but with the eye of faith. He has learned to look beyond the here and now to the "city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

**89:42:** *"thou hast exalted the right hand"* - The "right hand" is that of victory. The enemies had temporarily overcome, and were rejoicing at what appeared to be the defeat and overthrow of God's plan. That joy, however, would only be temporary. The physical kingdom would be restored. But a far greater victory would be seen when, at the death of our Lord, the enemies rejoiced, only to be overthrown themselves when Jesus was raised from the dead three days later.

**89:43:** *"turned back the edge of his sword"* - The one under consideration had been driven back as one defeated in battle. We cannot help but see in these verses a prophetic reference to the apparent defeat of Jesus upon the cross. That evening, as the body was laid in the tomb, the Devil must have certainly thought himself most successful. He had "bruised the heel" of the Messiah.

**89:44:** *"made his brightness to cease"* - As Barnes noted, "The allusion is to the splendor, the glory, the magnificence connected with his rank as king" (Barnes).

**89:45:** *"the days of his youth hast thou shortened"* - The strength of youth had given way to defeat. No more youthful hope remained! "Everything in his circumstances and in his appearance indicates shame and disgrace, and the Divine displeasure" (Barnes).

***The Plea*** (89:46-51):

- 46 *How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? How long shall thy wrath burn like fire?*  
47 *Oh remember how short my time is: For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!*  
48 *What man is he that shall live and not see death, That shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah*  
49 *Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesss, Which thou swarest unto David in thy faithfulness?*  
50 *Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty peoples,*  
51 *Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Jehovah, Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.*

The Psalmist's plea centers on himself (verses 46-48) and upon the covenant God had made with David (verses 49-51).

**89:46:** "*How long, O Jehovah*" - The suffering and martyred saints of every age have asked this same question. In the midst of trials, when it seems as if God has failed, we cry out, "How long!"

*"wilt thou hide thyself forever?"* - In moments of despair men often look forward to the time when the trouble will cease. The Psalmist was asking, "Is there to be no change? Will this go on forever?" Would God's wrath burn so as to utterly consume them?

**89:47:** "*Oh remember how short my time is*" - Life was brief, at best. The Psalmist was asking that God not make his life bitter as well. If God were going to interpose, it must be done speedily.

The life of all men passes on into death and Hades; why then might not God, within this brief space of time, this handbreadth, manifest Himself to His creatures as the merciful and kind, and not as the always angry God? (Spurgeon).

*"For what vanity hast thou created all the children of men!"* - The ASV does not clearly communicate the original. Young renders it, "Wherefore in vain hast Thou created all the sons of men?" (Young's Literal Translation, QV). Keil points out that the Hebrew is much more concise: "Hast Thou in vain created?" (Keil & Delitzsch, QV).

Spurgeon may have come close to the meaning of the passage:

If the Lord do not shine upon his work we live for nothing - we count it no longer life if his cause does not prosper. We live if the King lives, but not else. Everything is vanity if religion be vanity. If the kingdom of heaven should fail, everything is a failure. Creation is a blot, providence an error, and our own existence a hell, if the faithfulness of God can fail and his covenant of grace can be dissolved (Spurgeon).

In times of distress and discouragement, men tend to loose hope; life becomes vain and futile. One only need to observe the increase in suicides in times of trouble to see that this is true.

Barnes takes a different direction. He writes regarding the masses of humanity:

Nothing, in certain moods of mind, will strike one more forcibly or more painfully than the thought that the mass of people seem to have been made in vain. Nothing is accomplished by them worthy of the powers with which they are endowed; nothing worthy of so long living for; nothing worthy of the efforts which they actually put forth. In a large portion of mankind there is an utter failure in securing even the objects which they seek to secure; in numerous cases, when they have secured the object, it is not worth the effort which it has cost; in all cases, the same effort, or an effort made less strenuous, laborious, costly, and continuous, would have secured an object of real value—worth all their effort—the immortal crown (Barnes).

**89:48:** *“What man is he that shall live and not see death”* - Death is the common lot of all men, for “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27). Death - the grave - Sheol - asserts a universal dominion over mankind, and no one can be rescued from that stern power. The Psalmist was pleading, “Neither by strength, wisdom, nor virtue can any man escape the common doom, for to the dust return we must. Since then we must all die, do not make this life all wretchedness, by smiting us so long, O Lord.”

**89:49:** - *“Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses?”* - Thy mercies; Thy pledges; Thy promises - where are all those promises which Thou made to David? Are they forgotten and disregarded? It appeared to the Psalmist as if God’s past mercies and promises had all been for nought; as if they had not been made. He relied on them; but they are not now fulfilled.

**89:50:** *“Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants”* - The Psalmist entreats the Lord to be compassionate and to avenge the wretchedness brought upon His servants by the taunts of their adversaries, who jested at them on account of their sufferings.

*“I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people”* – The multitude of burdens overwhelmed the Psalmist. He felt that he was not able to bear the reproach of God’s people being heaped upon them by their enemies.

**89:51:** *“they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed”* - Wherever the writer happened to go, the enemy had dogged his “footsteps.” It would appear that they constantly taunted him, reviling and rebuking wherever he went.

They have reproached my footsteps; that is, they have followed me with reproaches - treading along behind me. Wherever I go, wherever I put my foot down in my wanderings, I meet this reproach (Barnes).

### ***Doxology*** **Verse 52**

*52 Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.*

Some commentators view this verse as part of this Psalm. If it originally appeared as a part of Psalm 89, it shows the tremendous faith of the Psalmist. In spite of the destruction of national Israel, the Psalmist would continue to praise God.

The passage here denotes entire acquiescence in God; perfect confidence in him; a belief that he was right and faithful, and true... At the close of all kinds of trouble, and in the midst of all kinds of trouble, true piety will enable us to say, “Blessed by God” (Barnes).

Others consider the verse a concluding doxology to Book III of the Psalter. In either case, it was included as an appropriate statement of trust and confidence on the part of whoever wrote it, and it is applicable in any number of situations in which the writers of the Psalms might have found themselves.

## Lessons

1. Time is a precious commodity that must be used wisely. Every hour, every minute, every second, of every single day, comes our way only once.
2. Regardless of what circumstances may come our way, it is encouraging to know that God is in control, and that He will remain faithful to His promises. Indeed, “he is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23).
3. Sometimes God allows trials and tribulation to come our way. But these are designed to make us stronger and to draw us closer to God. Trials and tribulation are no indication that God has abandoned us.
4. “The Psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the Psalm with songs of praise; for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks. We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining; but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving; and in these verses we find that which will be in matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or public account” - *Matthew Henry*.
5. Regarding “mercy and truth,” Matthew Henry had this note:  
“*Mercy* in promising; *truth* in performing. *Truth*, in being as good as thy word; *mercy*, in being better.”

## *“The Brevity Of Human Life”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle tells us this Psalm is “A Prayer Of Moses The Man of God.” Though some have sought to question the Mosaic authorship, there is nothing in the Psalm itself that might suggest another author. Barnes quotes Prof. Alexander here: “The correctness of the title which ascribes the psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances; its resemblance to the law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation...and finally the proved impossibility of assigning it to any other age or author” (Barnes, QV).

It is not possible to determine the time when the Psalm was composed, nor the exact occasion. It was most likely written near the end of the author’s life somewhere near the close of Israel’s forty years in the wilderness. The timing would certainly have been appropriate. Forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, Israel eventually returned to the place where the sentence had been pronounced. The terror by night, the pestilence, the heat of the desert sands, and the wrath of God (oh, the wrath of God!) had taken its toll upon the nation. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, every man and woman of the older generation had perished, if not within the threescore and ten years, certainly by the passing of the “fourscore” years of the wilderness wanderings. This Psalm was written sometime during that sojourn in the desert, if not at the close of the 40 years, certainly near its end. Now Moses, unable to cross into the Promised Land himself, records this prayer to remind this new generation of the past, in hopes that they will give serious consideration to the future. We like Spurgeon’s assessment of this Psalm:

This was not the only prayer of Moses, indeed it is but a specimen of the manner in which the seer of Horeb was wont to commune with heaven, and intercede for the good of Israel. This is the oldest

of the Psalms, and stands between two books of Psalms as a composition unique in its grandeur, and alone in its sublime antiquity. Many generations of mourners have listened to his Psalm when standing around the open grave, and have been consoled thereby, even when they have not perceived its special application to Israel in the wilderness and have failed to remember the far higher ground upon which believers now stand (Spurgeon, QV).

## ***Analysis***

In this Psalm Moses strikes a contrast between the sovereignty of God and the frailty of man. There are four parts to the Psalm: First, the Psalmist speaks of the sovereignty of God (verses 1-2). He acknowledges that God has always been “our dwelling place,” and that the Almighty is from “everlasting to everlasting.” Though they had been pilgrims and sojourners in the wilderness, God had dwelt among them. Second, the Psalmist turns his attention to the frailty of man (verses 3-6). Though framed after God’s own image, man is destined for “destruction,” at which time the soul will “return” to God. Moses uses four quick, successive illustrations to impress upon his audience the brevity of life: it is like a “watch in the night,” “a rushing flood,” “a sleep” from which one awakes, and “the grass” that flourishes one day and then is cut in the morning. Third, the Psalmist addresses God’s anger and man’s rebellion as the cause of Divine wrath (verses 7-12). Five times in almost as many verses the Psalmist makes reference to God’s anger and wrath. Finally, the author prays that God would return and restore Divine favor and establish the work of His hands (verses 13-17).

The main subject of the Psalm is the brevity of human life. The Psalmist sings of the brevity of life in hopes that it will lead the soul to God Who does not die. “This frailty is the more feeble because man is a sinner and therefore out of harmony with God. Yet this very eternity of God is the hope of man in his frailty and sin, and the heart is lifted to Jehovah in prayer that the mornings, the days, the years of brief life may all be set in true relation to Him. Satisfaction, gladness, success in work must all come from man’s right relation to the eternal Lord” (Morgan, page 255).

Willmington provides a good homiletic approach to this Psalm (Willmington, page 266):

### **I. The Eternality of the Creator (90:1-4)**

A. His identity (90:1-3): From beginning to end God will always be God!

- B. His immortality (90:4) To God 1000 years are as:
  - 1. Yesterday (90:4)
  - 2. A few hours (90:4)
- II. The Mortality of the Creature (90:5-17)
  - A. The problems (90:5-11)
    - 1. The shortness (90:5-6, 10)
      - a. The comparison (90:5-6): Our lives are as grass, fresh at sunrise, withered and dry at sunset.
      - b. The count (90:10): We are given an average of 70 years.
    - 2. The sinfulness (90:7-8): God sees all our iniquities, both secret and open.
    - 3. The sorrow (90:9-11): Our days are filled with pain and trouble.
  - B. The fourfold petition (90:12-17)
    - 1. Teach us (90:12)
    - 2. Satisfy us (90:13-16)
    - 3. Sanctify our children (90:16)
    - 4. Make us successful (90:17)

We will use the following outline for our study:

- I. Sovereign Praise (90:1-6)
- II. Sinful Past (90:7-12)
- III. Sincere Prayer (90:13-17)

## **Commentary**

### **Sovereign Praise Verses 1-6**

- 1 Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place In all generations.*
- 2 Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.*
- 3 Thou turnest man to destruction, And sayest, Return, ye children of men.*
- 4 For a thousand years in thy sight Are but as yesterday when it is past, And as a watch in the night.*
- 5 Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: In the morning they are like grass which groweth up.*
- 6 In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; In the evening it is cut down, and withereth.*

In these verses the Psalmist praises God for: (1) His divine



protection, verse 1; (2) His everlasting nature, verse 2; (3) His rule over man and death, verses 3-6.

**90:1:** “*Lord*” - The word translated “Lord” is ‘*adonai*,’ a term often used to refer to God. It indicates God as ruler or governor. It is fitting that Moses would begin this Psalm with the very “name” that suggests God’s absolute rule over man. Israel had wandered in the wilderness because they rebelled against God’s sovereignty and questioned His power to bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey.

*“thou hast been our dwelling place”* – While the word properly means a “habitation,” or a “dwelling,” such as the temple (Psa. 26:8), or heaven (Psa. 68:5), it also means a “den or lair for wild beasts (Nahum 2:12; Jer. 9:11). Here the idea seems to be a place of refuge; a place to which one might come for rest and protection, such as his home, or a place of rest after a journey; or a place to which one can go after the day’s toil, or to escape from danger. One who is truly close to God has just such a feeling toward God. The Psalmist is expressing the close fellowship he has with God. Implied here is the wonderful providence and care that God gives to his people. Forty years of wandering proved God faithful. Even in the desert sands, and over a lengthy period of time, God cared for Israel.

To the saints of Jehovah, the self-existent God, stands instead of mansion and rooftop; he shelters, comforts, protects, preserves, and cherishes all his own...King’s palaces have vanished beneath the crumbling hand of time - they have been burned with fire and buried beneath mountains of ruins, but the imperial race of heaven has never lost its regal habitation (Spurgeon, QV).

The reference to “*all generations*” is designed to show the unchanging nature of God. As one generation found Him to be faithful, so might all.

**90:2:** “*Before the mountains were brought forth*” - The writer looks back into eternity, before the mountains were formed; even before the earth itself was formed. Unlimited by time, inhabiting eternity, the One Who is from “everlasting to everlasting” is willing to interact with His creation.

*“From everlasting to everlasting”* - “From duration stretching backward without limit to duration stretching forward without limit” (Barnes, QV). The theme of God’s everlasting, and unchanging nature stands in marked contrast to man’s temporal nature. “The

eternal existence of God is here mentioned to set forth, by contrast, the brevity of human life” (Spurgeon, QV). But much more is expressed in these words. It is this limitless existence of our Creator that drives a man to his knees in praise of He Who created the universe about us.

**90:3:** “*turnest man to destruction*” - The Psalmist makes a distinction between God and man. God causes man to return to dust (cf. Gen 3:19). At death the body begins the process of returning to the dust. Man is temporal in nature; he changes. Not so with God. The law declares, “Return, O man, to the dust from whence you have come.” While generations of man pass away, God remains the same!

**90:4:** “*a thousand years...as a watch in the night*” - The words continue in the same vein as that above. Time is nothing to God. While a thousand years may seem extremely long to man, to God it is nothing. This is because God is eternal, not limited by time. An amazing thought that strikes us is this: since man is limited to time, and since God chooses to relate to man, God has restricted Himself to working in a time contingency for the benefit of man. “The longest human life, even if it should be lengthened out to a thousand years, would be in the sight of God, or in comparison with his years, but as a single day” (Barnes, QV).

“*yesterday when it is passed*” – The passing days and years often seem very, very short. No matter how long it may have been, once passed, it seems but a moment. With God time is nothing; the passing years are but a watch in the night, and seem as but “yesterday” when it is gone.

The “*watch in the night*” is merely a portion of time. All is the same to God. The Hebrews had three watches, mentioned in Lamentations 2:19, Judges 7:19, Exodus 14:24 and 1 Samuel 11:11.

**90:5:** “*carriest them away*” - Barnes points out that “the original here is a single verb...meaning to flow, to pour; then to pour upon, to overwhelm” (Barnes, QV). The idea seems to be that God has so designed the nature of man that his time upon this earth is not long, nor in any sense permanent. He is removed from this earth like a flood that washes away all that gets in its way. With the passing of every day there are multitudes which are swept away with the circumstances of life. “As grass is green in the morning and hay at night, so men are changed from health to corruption in a few hours”

(Spurgeon, QV). Whether the loss is tragic, or in the course of nature, the Psalmist stresses that man WILL NOT LIVE FOREVER UPON THIS EARTH. This one lesson, when learned and applied, would go a long way to helping a man keep his priorities in their proper place.

**90:6:** *“in the morning it flourisheth...in the evening it is cut down”* - Like the plant kingdom about us, we rise in the early portion of our life; we die in old age. This is the RULE; but there are exceptions to the rule. When one is swept away in youth, this is the exception to the norm. Such is considered tragic, more so when men live to old age and die a natural death. One thing is certain: life is short, and death is certain! Those who are strong, healthy, vigorous, hopeful, in the morning, are at night pale, cold, and speechless in death. “Here is the story of the grass; sown, grown, blown, mown, gone” (Spurgeon, QV).

**90:7:** *“consumed in thine anger”* - Keeping in mind that the Psalmist is describing the general course of man’s life, we must take the verse to mean that the death of man is the ultimate consequence of the introduction of sin into the human race by our father Adam. See Genesis 3:19 and Romans 5:12. All of the pain of death, the sorrow that accompanies it, and the certainty of it, are the result of sin’s having entered into this world through the transgression of Adam. Because of this “law,” we are indeed “troubled.” The language is most fitting coming from a man who was witnessing the passing of an entire generation in the wilderness.

**90:8:** *“our iniquities...secret sins”* - God knows all; there is no sin which escapes His knowledge. “The fact of death at all; the fact that any one of the race dies...is to be explained on the supposition that God has arrayed before his own mind the reality of human depravity, and has adopted this as an illustration of his sense of the evil of guilt” (Barnes, QV). Israel had been brought out of Egyptian captivity with a powerful hand, fed with a liberal hand, and guided with a tender hand. And yet, they were ungrateful, murmured, and demonstrated repeatedly a total lack of faith in the Almighty. Their “secret sins” were before God, and they were atrocious indeed!

God has placed them [our sins, TW] before him, in the full searching and scorching light of his own purity and holiness. And not only has he done this with the sins which they know of, and whereof their consciences are afraid; but he has set their secret sins also in the light of his countenance (Pulpit Commentary, page 255).

**90:9:** *“we bring our years to an end as a sigh”* - The Hebrew word

‘hegeh’ (translated “sigh”) means a muttering, or growling (Barnes, QV). The significant thought here is the brevity of life. It passes as a “sigh,” or rapidly as a fleeting “thought.” God’s judgment upon Israel shortened their days; every camp sight became a graveyard for those who would die off in the wilderness. They marked their march by the tombs they left behind them.

The KJV reads, “as a tale that is told.” Their years flew by as rapidly as an idle tale that is spoken by a campfire. There is a truth here that we cannot ignore. Our lives are so short, and when the time comes for us to lay our heads down, and close our eyelids with the sleep of death, those things that we have done will be as a “tale that is told” by those who knew us. And what will the tale reveal? Will that tale be such that we could say we lived a life of goodness toward others? Will the tale be one that speaks well of our life? Or one that speaks ill?

**90:10:** *“The days of our years are threescore years and ten”* - The allotted 70 years is about average, even in our day and age. Some are able to lengthen their years with the modern medical conveniences we have at our disposal. Science has done wonders to increase the life expectancy in our generation. The average age for male and female in this century is still somewhere around 70 years of age. Coffman points out that this verse might very well be a PROPHECY of God’s limitation to be placed upon the length of man’s life. As to the 120 years allotted in Genesis 6:3, that was perhaps the outer most limit of life’s expectancy.

*“even by reason of strength”* – Spurgeon wrote: “The unusual strength which overleaps the bound of threescore and ten only lands the aged man in a region where life is a weariness and a woe. The strength of old age, its very prime and pride, are but labor and sorrow; what must its weakness be?” (Spurgeon, QV). Some men may boast of their old age, but they do so with the full realization that the quality of life after age 70 is not nearly as good as it was before age 70. As Solomon wrote, a man is forced to say, “I have no pleasure in them...” (Ecc. 12:1).

*“it is soon gone, and we fly away”* - These words have been read at the graveside of many a departed saint and sinner alike. Our lives are “soon gone,” even if we are blessed to live beyond our allotted 70 years. Every fleeting year gives way to yet another, which passes like a “vapor.” We scarcely turn around before the decades have flown,

and old age has crept in upon us unawares. Yes, it IS soon gone!

**90:11:** *“Who knoweth the power of thine anger”* – The important thing in this verse is the power of God’s anger. Men do not generally give serious enough consideration to this particular characteristic of God. While many dwell on God’s wonderful love, mercy and grace, they seldom contemplate the wrath of God.

**90:12:** *“So teach us to number our days”* - The ability to count is a child’s wish, and earthly teachers may guide us in these certain scientific achievements. But it is God Who supplies wisdom and each of us must learn to count the days that He grants us. None of us has enough time to waste a single moment in things that are trivial and temporal. “The prayer is, that God would instruct us to estimate our days aright; their number; the rapidity with which they pass away; the liability to be cut down; the certainty that they must soon come to an end; their bearing on the future state of being” (Barnes, QV).

If man could somehow know when he would die, it would cause him to make preparation for that time. Our prayer should be that we might have the wisdom to live AS IF each day might be our last; for indeed it may be! We should live with a sense of soberness toward the brevity of life. It is astonishing that, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, wicked people act AS IF they expected to live forever.

**90:13:** *“Return, O Jehovah”* - The long years in the wilderness would have left Israel with the distinct impression that God had abandoned them to die in that barren land. The prayer is very typical of Moses. On numerous occasions he pled in behalf of Israel, lest God should destroy them and start over through Moses. Those who deny the Mosaic authorship of this Psalm must contend with such words as these; words which point to Moses as the author.

**90:14:** *“satisfy us in the morning”* – No doubt the New Testament equivalent of this verse is found in 1 Timothy 6:6 - “But godliness with contentment is great gain.” Good and godly men know how to turn the darkest trials into peaceful contentment. What a great consolation these words must have been to a nation doomed to die in the wilderness.

**90:15:** *“Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us”* - It is as if Moses were asking for at least a few good times in view of the evil they had experienced to that point in time.

What a marvelous prayer we have before us. From a human standpoint, Moses had nothing for which to be glad. Those whom he led were rebellious; forty years wilderness wandering had taken the lives of a complete generation; and now Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Yet still he prayed, “Make us glad.” Yes, God is great in justice; but He is merciful in blessing those who are faithful.

**90:16:** Moses was asking for a divine manifestation of God’s favor. It is possible that the last portion of this verse refers to the time when the next generation would cross over into the Promised Land and enjoy the glory that would be theirs.

**90:17:** “*Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us*” – Oh, how we need the “favor of the Lord our God” if we are ever to attain unto eternal salvation! Coffman quotes Alexander Maclaren: “Fleeting as our days are, they are ennobled by our being permitted to be God’s tools; and although we the workers have to pass, our work may be established. That life will not die which has done the will of God. But we must walk in the favor of God, so that there can flow down from us deeds which breed not shame but shall outlast the perishable earth and follow their doers into the dwelling places of those eternal habitations” (Coffman, page 151).

### ***Lessons***

1. Here is “One Psalm With Four Truths” – (1) The feebleness of man (verses 3-6); (2) The brevity of life (verses 7-10); (3) The certainty of death (verse 4); (4) The Great need for God (17).
2. Our God is a *tremendous* God. He controls the factors of time and space. It is He Who “formed the earth and the world” (verse 1).
3. Our God is a *tender* God. He is our “dwelling place” in all generations.
4. Our God is a *timeless* God. He is “from everlasting to everlasting.” Life is brief; but our God inhabits eternity: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite” (Isa. 57:15).

5. Our God can be *touched* with our infirmities, “For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He is sympathetic toward our fears regarding death and time. Created in the image of God, it has been determined that all men have an appointment with death (Heb. 9:27, Psa 90:3). Though all men will ultimately be raised from the dead (John 5:28-29), for the child of God it is a resurrection unto life and immortality. God is also touched with our fears regarding time. At best, life is short. When the morn of eternity breaks, our life will have been like a short sleep in the night. Seventy short years; beyond that we live on borrowed time. With each passing year, the years pass more quickly. Like the grass of the field that flourishes, we scarce turn around and we are mowed down in the morning harvest. Yes, both time and death are tyrants; beckoning the coming of death and the ushering in of eternity. No wonder the Psalmist admonishes us, “So teach us to number our days, That we may get us a heart of wisdom” (Psa. 90:12).
6. Our God is a *terrible* God toward those who are disobedient and unbelieving. The disobedient are “consumed in thine anger” (verse 7). The “secret sins” might be hid from men, but God sees all. In this Psalm Moses brings God’s justice into focus. A whole generation perished in the wilderness; a generation that witnessed God’s marvelous goodness and deliverance from Egyptian captivity, yet a generation that only complained, doubted, and disobeyed every step of the way. But that generation learned that God’s judgments are *swift, sure, and solemn*.
7. We have the sacred obligation of using every minute, of every hour, of every day with utmost wisdom and discretion. Proper use of time is something that must be learned. “Teach us to number our days,” the Psalmist pleas. The New Testament equivalent of this awesome responsibility was expressed by Paul: “Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).

## *“Those Who Put Their Trust In Jehovah”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is not given, and there is nothing in the Psalm that might help in determining who composed it. Jewish tradition says that when the author's name is not mentioned we may assign the Psalm to the last-named writer; and if so, this is another Psalm of Moses. One interesting suggestion is that Moses wrote both Psalms 90 and 91 and that both are an exposition of Deuteronomy 33:27. “The eternal God is thy refuge” (Deut 33:27a); thus the theme for Psalms 90 wherein Moses contrasts the eternal nature of God with the frail nature of man. “Underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27b); thus the theme of this Psalm.

The Psalm is very general in its nature, and it cannot be determined when it was written. From its contents we can determine that it was written with reference to some individual who was tempted, or who was in some danger from secret enemies. It was composed to give assurance that God will care for us and deliver us in time of need. The subject of this Psalm has to do with the security of the man who thoroughly trusts in God. The New Testament counterpart to the message of this Psalm is 1 Corinthians 10:13, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.” The Psalm was used by Satan when tempting Jesus, but this does not seem to warrant any conclusion that it was written specifically for that occasion in the Lord's life.

### ***Analysis***

Of this Psalm, Spurgeon has written: “In the whole collection there is not a more cheering Psalm, its tone is elevated and sustained throughout, faith is at its best, and speaks nobly” (Spurgeon, QV). Of



peculiar interest is the use of the pronouns in the Psalm. There is a change from first to second person, from third to first at the beginning, and from second to third at the close. Morgan suggests that this is a “key to analysis of the psalm” (Morgan, page 255). Barnes has also divided the Psalm around these uses of the pronouns.

- I. The general statement of the SAFETY OF THOSE WHO PUT THEIR TRUST IN GOD, verse 1;
- II. A responsive DECLARATION that he would make the Lord his refuge and habitation, verse 2;
- III. A statement of the SECURITY AND BENEFIT OF DOING THIS, verses 3-8;
- IV. A responsive DECLARATION (repeated) that God is his refuge, 9a;
- V. A further statement of the BENEFIT of doing this, verses 9b-13;
- VI. A SUMMATION of all that is said in the psalm, containing assurance toward those who put their trust in God, verses 14-16.

A simpler outline is provided by Briggs (as provided by Coffman, page 153): (1) Security of the True Worshipper of God, verses 1-4; (2) Exhortation Not to Fear the Pestilence, verses 5-8; (3) A Messianic Note, verses 9-13; and (4) Deliverance and Longevity Promised, verses 14-16.

Lynn Matheney outlines the Psalm thus (Matheney, *The Lord As Refuge*, Southwest Lectures, Volume II, page 135):

- I. First Speaker: “In him will I trust” (verses 1-2);
- II. Second Speaker: “Surely He shall deliver thee” (verse 3-4);
- III. First Speaker Responding: “Thou shalt not be afraid” (verses 5-8);
- IV. Second Speaker Responds: “There shall no evil befall thee” (verses 9-13);
- V. God Now Speaks (verses 14-16).

We will follow brother Matheney’s outline for our study.

## ***Commentary***

### ***First Speaker: “In him will I trust” Verses 1-2***

- 1 *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

2 *I will say of Jehovah, He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in whom I trust.*

**91:1:** The “*secret place of the Most High*” refers to the presence of God. Those in fellowship with God, and in close communion with Him, might be said to be in the “secret place” of Jehovah. Take note that it is the man that “dwelleth” in this place who enjoys the blessings. The word literally means to “sit,” or “sitting” in the secret place. It suggests taking up a place of abode with God; abiding where God abides. Those who abide in Christ, and Christ in them, become possessors of rare and special benefits, which are missed by those who follow afar off. It is precisely these who shall abide under the His shadow, enjoy His protection, and be blessed. Here is a general statement, and all who abide by its precepts will enjoy the blessings promised. Oh, that God would grant us the joyful repose of dwelling even in the “secret place of the most High.” But even more amazing is that the Almighty would actually ALLOW us entrance into His “secret place.” The very thought is too wonderful to fully contemplate!

**91:2:** “*my refuge...my fortress*” - A refuge is that place where one can go to escape the enemy and there to enjoy solitude and revel in the peace of mind and calmness that is there. Those who have God as a refuge enjoy that sense of peace that only God can provide. The Psalmist is making a resolution based upon the stated fact in the previous verse. And notice the PERSONAL application the Psalmist makes. Here is great wisdom. It is one thing to say the Lord is a refuge, and quite another to say he is MY refuge. And so, let us flee to Him for refuge for in Him alone is protection. He is our FORTRESS! Let the foes threaten; let the enemy mock and sneer; let the hosts of hell come upon us; for God is our bulwark!

With these thoughts before the Psalmist it is only natural that he would conclude this section with an affirmation that he would trust in Jehovah. Men will put their trust in SOMETHING! But the only thing that is sure, that has proven true in every single test, and is unchanging in nature, is God!

In these two verses the Psalmist uses four different names for God: *Elyone*, *Shaddai*, *Jehovah*, and *Elohim*. Let’s take a closer look at each of these. *Elyone* – This word suggests the lofty nature of God. God is the Supreme One. Being elevated above all else, God is the ideal One in Whom to take refuge. *Shaddai* – This word is used to

express the power of God. He is, as our English suggests, Almighty. *Jehovah* – This was the greatest name for God among the Hebrew people. It refers to His eternal nature. *Elohim* – God’s majesty is expressed in this word. Here is the word used in Genesis to describe the power of God in creation. No wonder the Psalmist could joyfully affirm that God is his refuge!

***Second Speaker: “Surely He shall deliver thee”***  
**Verses 3-4**

*3 For he will deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, And from the deadly pestilence.*

*4 He will cover thee with his pinions, And under his wings shalt thou take refuge: His truth is a shield and a buckler.*

**91:3:** In the second verse the first speaker said, “I will take my refuge in God.” The second speaker now takes up the thought and, addressing the first speaker, says, “Yes, most assuredly, God shall deliver you from the dangers that beset you.” He then proceeds to itemize some of those “snares.”

The “*snare of the fowler*” is the trap set for catching birds. God would deliver him from the plans and devices of wicked men who seek to entrap the Psalmist as one might entrap a bird. He would see to it that the most skillful deceiver shall not entrap us. The “*deadly pestilence*” speaks of the ravages and inflictions that commonly accompany certain diseases. God CAN deliver us from such pestilence. Barnes points out that “this promise is not to be understood as absolute, or as meaning that no one who fears God will ever fall by the pestilence, for good men DO die at such times as well as bad men; but the idea is, that God CAN preserve us at such a time; and that, as a great law, he will be thus the protector of those who trust him” (Barnes, QV). A consideration for religion in general and an application to one’s life of those principles which God has set forth will serve to keep one from being affected by much of the pestilence which plagues men. Many of the victims of “pestilence” are the

[I]ntemperate, the sensual, the debased, and that a life of this kind is a predisposing cause of death in such visitations of judgment...Religion, therefore, to a considerable extent, constitutes a ground of security at such times; nor is there any reason to doubt that, in many cases also, there may be a special interposition protecting the friends of God from danger, and sparing them for future usefulness” (Barnes, QV).

Of special interest is the fact that the “snare of the fowler” and the “pestilence” are both UNSEEN, afflicting both the strong and the weak alike. And how devastating is the “pestilence”? The “Black Death,” or “bubonic plague” of the 14th century wiped out one fourth of the population of the civilized world, the deaths in Europe alone exceeding 25 million. In 1918 the Swine Flu wiped out more people in our country than we lost in World War I. It is also possible that this “pestilence” could find much wider application. As Spurgeon notes, “There is a deadly pestilence of error; there is a fatal pestilence of sin; there is also the pestilence of disease” (Spurgeon, QV).

**91:4:** To “*cover thee with the pinions*” is analogous to a parent bird protecting her young under her wings. It is significant that God’s TRUTH will serve as a shield and buckler. The TRUTH will set us free (John 8:32). The “buckler” was a defensive part of the armor, given to the soldier to surround himself and protect him; something like a coat of mail that was worn by the soldiers of that time. Brother Coffman has concluded, “What is meant is that God will protect them even ‘through death’” (Coffman, page 154). The New Testament equivalent is Luke 21:16-18 wherein death was a real possibility, but our Lord promised “not a hair of your head shall perish.”

***First Speaker Responding: “Thou shalt not be afraid”***  
**Verses 5-8**

- 5 *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night, Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;*  
6 *For the pestilence that walketh in darkness, Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.*  
7 *A thousand shall fall at thy side, And ten thousand at thy right hand; But it shall not come nigh thee.*  
8 *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold, And see the reward of the wicked.*

**91:5:** No matter what time of day, or in what form the danger might arise, the one who abides in the presence of God will not fear. The “*terror by night*” refers to those things that are aggravated by night; those crimes and dangers that lurk in dark places. The “*arrows that flieth by day*” would be the battles that we face in our daily lives. The language describes the whole of Satan’s attacks upon us. We must guard against any false notion that we will escape persecution or

hardship if we follow God. It is not that we will escape persecution, but that we will not be afraid of that persecution.

**91:6:** These things shall not disturb those who make God their refuge. The “*pestilence*” is said to creep along in the night. No one can trace its steps, or determine when or where it will strike. The word for “*destruction*” means a cutting off, such as might occur when one is caught in a raging storm. It would apply to anything that sweeps men away in destruction or tragedy. Rawlinson suggested another interpretation: “The rare word translated ‘destruction that wasteth at noonday...by which sunstroke would seem to be meant. The sun shall not smite thee by day’” (Rawlinson, 2:268). Though God’s chosen people face the same tragedies in life as those who rebel against the Almighty, it is said that these things shall not make us afraid. What ever form these calamities may take, the child of God simply will not fear!

Famine may starve, or bloody war devour, earthquake may overturn and tempest may smite, but amid all, the man who has sought the mercy seat and is sheltered beneath the wings which overshadow it, shall abide in perfect peace...His peace is not a thing of times and seasons, it does not rise and set with the sun, nor does it depend upon the healthiness of the atmosphere or the security of the country. (Spurgeon, QV)

**91:7:** “*A thousand shall fall*” - All about us men are falling in the heat of battle. The scenario has been played out on many an occasion. The enemy gets the upper hand, and the opposing army is tempted to drop their weapons and make hasty retreat. Fear often gets the better of men in such situations. Not so with those who abide in God’s secret place.

The “*ten thousand*” is probably better translated “myriads,” as per the original (Barnes, QV). Though these things happen to those about us, God’s protection will sustain those who put their trust in Him. “It” (fear) shall not come upon those who trust in God.

**91:8:** “*With thine eyes shalt thou behold*” – There is some way in which the child of God will see justice exercised upon the wicked. This may refer to the general principle that there is a moral government on earth; that vice is often punished as such; that the general course of the Divine dealings is such as to show that God is favorable to virtue, and is opposed to vice. But our opinion is that there is much deeper sense in which the children of God shall “*behold...the reward of the wicked.*” The wicked shall ultimately

come into judgment before the Almighty, and the righteous will be vindicated. But there is also the sense in which the righteous shall witness the destruction of the wicked even in this life. Israel witnessed divine justice on Egypt; Noah and his family beheld the wrath of God upon the disobedient world; and Lot saw the cities on the plains destroyed by God's justice, to name but a few. And has not our generation "witnessed" the overthrow of godless communism? Yes, "thine eyes shall behold" the enemies of God receive their just reward.

***Second Speaker Responds: "There shall no evil befall thee"***  
**Verses 9-13**

- 9 *For thou, O Jehovah, art my refuge! Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation;*  
10 *There shall no evil befall thee, Neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent.*  
11 *For he will give his angels charge over thee, To keep thee in all thy ways.*  
12 *They shall bear thee up in their hands, Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*  
13 *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: The young lion and the serpent shalt thou trample under foot.*

**91:9:** The Psalmist expresses his personal opinion in hopes that others would follow him in his commitment unto God. Following this declaration, the "second speaker" once again takes up his refrain, continuing through verse 13. Careful notice should be given that the Psalmist had MADE the Most High his habitation. He made a deliberate choice to abide in God.

**91:10-12:** *"There shall no evil befall thee"* - There may be some Messianic significance here, especially since Satan made direct application of this passage to Christ in his temptation of the Son of God (cf. Luke 4:10-11, Matt. 4:4). It seems to me, however, that the passage is a general promise to those who make God their refuge, and Satan merely made the application to Christ, with unholy intentions to say the least.

**91:13:** The "lion" is a metaphor for all of the open and violent foes; the "adder" speaks of the secret and malignant ones. Even the most powerful and the most cunning of enemies shall be "trampled under foot." Notice the dual reference to the complete victory God's people

would enjoy. They would “tread” upon the lion and adder, and “trample under foot” the serpent. The giants have come and gone, and God stands victorious. From Goliath to Voltaire, skeptics, atheists, agnostics, humanists, God-haters, and rebels of every stripe have gone down in defeat. But those who trust in God remained save amidst the most fearful dangers.

### ***God Now Speaks*** **Verses 14-16**

- 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*  
*15 He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honor him.*  
*16 With long life will I satisfy him, And show him my salvation.*

**91:14:** Coffman is correct in pointing out that “God himself is the speaker in these verses; and they convey very rich and precious promises for the faithful servant of God” (Coffman, 158). The faithful had encouraged one another. Now God would encourage them by the mouth of His prophet.

*“Because he has set his love upon me”* - Loving faith is now met with faithful love on God’s part. Blessings come as a consequence of faith and obedience. When we love God, and when we are obedient to His word, the Almighty will shower His blessings upon us. We SET our love on God; God in turn will set us on high.

Among the promises contained here, and which serve as great motivation for serving God, are these:

- 1) Deliverance from trouble: “I will deliver him”;
- 2) Exaltation and honor: “I will set him on high”;
- 3) The blessed privilege of prayer: “he shall call on me and I will answer him” (verse 15);
- 4) Long life: “With long life will I satisfy him” (verse 16)
- 5) Salvation in the hereafter: “and show him my salvation.”

**91:16:** *“With long life will I satisfy him”* – The application of God’s word to one’s life will tend to lengthen our life and make us more healthy in the process. While there are always exceptions to the rule stated in this Psalm, the general rule is that obedience to God broadens our life span. When we combine this Psalm with the

previous, we have this notable lesson: “The man described in this Psalm fills out the measure of his days, and whether he dies young or old he is quite satisfied with life, and is content to leave it. He shall rise from life’s banquet as a man who has had enough, and would not have more even if he could” (Spurgeon, QV).

### ***Lessons***

1. “Blessed Assurance” arises (1) because of God’s provisions, verses 1-4; (2) because of God’s protection, verses 5-10; (3) because of God’s authority, verses 11-13; and (4) because of God’s love, verses 14-16 (John Kakelman; notes passed out at FHU Lectures, 1994).
2. Notice: (1) The **Foundation** of Faith: The very basis of our faith rests upon the person and promises of God. Were either of these marvelous character traits of our Father somehow nullified, faith would not survive. (2) The **Foes** of Faith: No man has ever lived who has not had to face the foes of his generation. The devil never grows weary; neither let us grow weary, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not. (3) The **Fruits** of Faith: The faithful child of God will be blessed for his obedient faith. Among the fruits of faith are protection from God, reassurance in times of terror and danger, and the ultimate punishment of the wicked. (4) The **Friends** of Faith: The very angels of heaven are ministering servants to those who shall inherit salvation (Heb. 1:14). This heavenly host plays some important role in our salvation, though the details are not revealed. (5) The **Fellowship** of Faith: God’s wonderful love, our prayers lifted unto Him, and a “long life” all express the wonderful fellowship we enjoy with the Father.
3. We close this chapter in our study with a poem recently written by the author’s mother, printed here with her permission:

#### ***HEALING WINGS***

by Mary E. Wacaster

A fascinating expression  
Of David the King  
In his Psalms was quoted  
“In the shadow of God’s wing.”  
But when David was afraid



It was then he wanted to hide  
Within the “covert” of God’s wing;  
In God’s depths to abide.  
Christ spread His wing to oreshadow  
All those who would obey  
Where His love and mercy  
Could protect day by day.  
In the shadow of His wing  
We stand beneath His care  
Under His close and watchful eye  
To be protected there.  
And by trust in His promises,  
When in fear we seek to hide  
Within the covert of His wing,  
It is in His depths we abide

## *“Praise The Lord”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript on this Psalm reads, “A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day,” though there is no reference to the Sabbath. Unfortunately the author is not named, and there is nothing that might indicate who wrote it. It is of so general a character that it might have been written at any period of the Jewish history; and, so far as the style and the contents are concerned, it may have been written by any one of those whose names are attached to the other Psalms. That it may have been composed by David is certainly possible, but of that there is no solid evidence, either internally or externally.

### ***Analysis***

There are no certain divisions in the Psalm. This would explain the variety of outlines available to the inquiring student. The first four verses set forth a general proposition: “It is a good thing to give thanks unto Jehovah” (verse 1). This proposition is first explained (verses 2-3), and then it is applied (verse 4). Having mentioned the “work” of God in verse 3, the Psalmist next proceeds to describe God’s wonderful work as the foundation for praise (verses 5-6). This is followed by a reference to the justice of God (verses 7-9). The Psalm closes with a wonderful description of the blessings upon the righteous (verses 10-15).

Barnes divides the Psalm thus:

- I. Blessedness of praise, verses 1-4;
- II. Works of God, verses 5-6;
- III. Justice of God, verses 7-9;
- IV. Prosperity and Security of the Righteous, verses 10-15.

Brother Roy Deaver has the following outline:

- I. FACT, verses 1-3;

- II. EXPLANATION, verses 4-8;
- III. WICKED, verses 9-11;
- IV. RIGHTEOUS, verses 12-14;
- V. CONSEQUENCES, verse 15.

Willmington sees in the Psalm a reference to (1) the Lord's Robes, verse 1; (2) the Lord's Reign, verses 2-4; and (3) the Lord's Righteousness (Willmington, page 268).

We do not recall the source of the following outline, but will use it in our study.

- I. PRAISE (1-4) in which the writer refers to the offering of thanks and singing of praise unto Jehovah;
- II. POWER (5-6) in which he refers to the works of God as a basis for such praise;
- III. PERDITION (7-9) in which the writer refers to the justice and wrath of God;
- IV. PROSPERITY (10-15) in which the writer refers to the security and happiness of the righteous, and the blessings bestowed upon them by the Almighty;

## ***Commentary***

### ***PRAISE*** **Verses 1-4**

- 1 *It is a good thing to give thanks unto Jehovah, And to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High;*
- 2 *To show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, And thy faithfulness every night,*
- 3 *With an instrument of ten strings, and with the psaltery; With a solemn sound upon the harp.*
- 4 *For thou, Jehovah, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.*

**92:1:** *"It is a good thing to give thanks unto Jehovah"* - Thanksgiving is good for the following reasons: (1) It is good in and of itself. It was ingratitude that led the gentile world into apostasy (Rom. 1:21). Any nation, or individual, that ceases to offer thanks unto Him from Whom all blessings flow has begun that long and terrible journey into depravity. There is much for which to be thankful. Our very lives, health, abundance of food, friends, etc. all remind us of how truly blessed we are. (2) It is good to give thanks

because the Father so desires it. The command to “be ye thankful” (Col 3:15) is as important as any other. (3) It is good to give thanks because it provides opportunity to dwell upon our blessings rather than the troubles and afflictions of life. Regarding the giving of thanks, Spurgeon noted, “It is good ethically, for it is the Lord’s right; it is good emotionally, for it is pleasant to the heart; it is good practically, for it leads others to render the same homage” (Spurgeon, QV).

*“And to sing praises”* - In addition to giving thanks, the Psalmist reminds us that it is good to sing praises unto Jehovah. James wrote, “Is any among you cheerful, let him sing praises” (James 5:16-19). Singing allows us to express the deep joys of our heart. The lack of participation in congregational singing on the part of some suggests that their heart is burdened down with bitterness, or they have no joy in their lives.

When thanksgiving and singing are combined, praise is the natural result. (1) It is a good thing to have cause for gratitude; everyone has this; (2) It is a good thing to have the principle of gratitude; this is the gift of God; (3) It is a good thing to give expression of gratitude; this may excite gratitude in others.

**92:2-3:** Of special interest in these two verses is the fact that the Psalmist had set aside two special occasions for the express purpose of praising God: morning and evening. The morning is especially suitable for praising God: (1) We have been preserved through the night, blessed with yet another day; (2) We have been given the gift of greeting a new day; (3) Such sets the tone for our daily activities. Barnes notes, “He who begins a day with a sour, a morose, a murmuring, an irritable spirit (who has been preserved through the night, and sees nothing to be thankful for in the morning) will be a miserable man through the day, and will make all miserable around him” (Barnes, QV). The morning is a time of freshness, the beginning of a new day, and suitable for spending time in praise unto God. None of us knows what each day holds in store. Should we be faced with some great tragedy, perhaps even the loss of life, it would have been good to have started our day with praise and thanksgiving to the Father Who gave us that very day.

As well, it is good to close each evening in contemplation and mediation of what God has done for us through the day. The mind is calm, ready to rest from the toils of the day; there is much for which

to be thankful, and it is sometimes best to contemplate such blessings at evening when all is quite.

This verse has been used in defense of the use of instruments of music in worship to God. Adam Clarke, who was an able opponent of the use of instrumental music, had some most interesting comments on this verse:

Eusebius, in his comment on this Psalm, says: "The Psalter of ten strings is the worship of the Holy Spirit, performed by means of the five senses of the body, and by the five powers of the soul." And, to confirm this interpretation, he quotes the apostle, 1 Corinthians 14:15: "I will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also." "As the mind has its influence by which it moves the body, so the spirit has its own influence by which it moves the soul." Whatever may be thought of this gloss, one thing is pretty evident from it, that instrumental music was not in use in the Church of Christ in the time of Eusebius. Had any such thing then existed in the Christian Church, he would have doubtless alluded to or spiritualized it; or, as he quoted the words of the apostle above, would have shown that carnal usages were substituted for spiritual exercises. I believe the whole verse should be translated thus: Upon the asur, upon the nebel, upon the higgayon, with the kinnor. Thus it stands in the Hebrew (Clarke, QV).

The student must keep in mind that Psalms is Hebrew poetry, and as such, literal terms were often employed to emphasize something deeper than what might appear on the surface. If Clarke is correct here, the admonitions in this verse refer to the inner emotions and affections of the heart. Even if it could be established that the Psalmist was calling for the literal use of an instrument with ten strings, or of a psalter, or a harp, their use in the church is no more authorized than any other Old Testament item of worship.

**92:4:** *"Thou hast made me glad through thy work"* - It is not clear what is meant by the "works" mentioned here. Perhaps the creation; perhaps the ways in which the Lord has used the Psalmist in profitable service unto Jehovah. Whatever might be encompassed by the word, it was such to make the writer glad; grateful for the victories he had enjoyed during the day.

### ***POWER*** **Verses 5-6**

5 *How great are thy works, O Jehovah! Thy thoughts are very deep.*

6 *A brutish man knoweth not; Neither doth a fool understand this.*

**92:5:** “*How great are thy works*” - When one contemplates the works of God, and meditates upon the vast storehouse of God’s power, he stands in awe. No wonder the Psalmist spoke such words. Truly God’s works ARE great; the very universe declares God’s power, and the stars declare His handiwork.

“*Thy thoughts are very deep*” - God’s thoughts are very deep, certainly beyond that of finite man. The righteous can scarcely take it in, and the wicked man does not even begin to contemplate the greatness of God, much less the depth of Divine thoughts. “God’s counsels are too deep for the stupid man” (Coffman, page 164). These verses call to mind such passages as Jeremiah 10:23, and Romans 11:33-36. Indeed, “The Lord’s plans are as marvelous as his acts; his designs are as profound as his doings are vast” (Spurgeon). Again, Coffman offers this quote from Delitzsch:

Man can neither measure the greatness of God’s works nor fathom the depths of divine thought. The enlightened man, however, perceives the immeasurableness of the one and the unfathomableness of the other; but a man of animal nature, ‘homo brutus,’ a blockhead, or one dull in mind, whose carnal nature outweighs his intellectual and spiritual nature cannot discern how unsearchable are God’s judgments and how untrackable are his ways (Coffman, page 164).

**9:6:** “*a brutish man knoweth not*” - Clarke’s comments on this verse strike at the heart of the unholy man: “The human hog—the stupid bear—the boor; the man who is all flesh; in whom spirit or intellect neither seems to work nor exist. The brutish man, who never attempts to see God in his works” (Clarke, QV). Barnes likewise commented on such a person:

A man who is stupid, and who is like the beasts or brutes; that is, a man whose tastes and propensities are like the brutes, or who does not seem to act as if endowed with a rational nature. The idea evidently is, that there are many such people, and that it is not to be wondered at that they have no exalted idea of the greatness of God. As a matter of fact there are many in human form — many made in the image of God — who seem to have no more notion of God, and

who see no more wisdom and goodness in his works, than the horse or the ox (Barnes, QV).

*“neither doth a fool understand”* – This man is a fool in that he has been made foolish and stupid by sin so that he does not worship and honor God. He has no right understanding in regard to the Maker and Governor of the universe. Whereas the “brutish man” has a mind that is steeped in the muck and mire of fleshly desires, the fool has no mind; he is incapable of understanding anything of a spiritual nature.

### ***PERDITION*** **Verses 7-9**

- 7 *When the wicked spring as the grass, And when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; It is that they shall be destroyed for ever.*  
8 *But thou, O Jehovah, art on high for evermore.*  
9 *For, lo, thine enemies, O Jehovah, For, lo, thine enemies shall perish; All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.*

**92:7:** The Psalms abound with a constant reference to the fact that the wicked shall perish. This truth is prevalent in the scriptures as a whole, but especially pronounced in this collection of Psalms. Take a closer look at this verse and you will see the “later end” of the wicked man. Though he may “spring as the grass” and “flourish,” his later end is that he shall be destroyed forever. Adam Clarke’s comments are excellent:

This is a lesson which is frequently inculcated in the sacred writings. The favor of God towards man is not to be known by outward prosperity; nor is his disapprobation to be known by the adverse circumstances in which any person may be found. When, however, we see the wicked flourish, we may take for granted that their abuse of God’s mercies will cause him to cut them off as cumberers of the ground; and, dying in their sins, they are destroyed for ever (Adam Clarke, QV).

**92:8:** *“But thou”* – While the wicked are brought down to destruction, God is exalted.

From these verses it should be observed: (1) There is such a classification of people called the “wicked” - despite the fact that some would deny it; (2) The “wicked” do often “flourish,” and frequently more so than the righteous; (3) There is a day of

reckoning coming, however, at which time the wicked shall be destroyed; (4) While it may appear that the unrighteous prosper for the “moment,” God, and His children, will be victorious because God is “on high” - He cannot be defeated; (5) One who is a “worker of iniquity” is an “enemy of God.” This includes, but is not limited to, those who work iniquity by immoral living, improper worship, or interference with the people of God.

**92:9:** *“lo thine enemies...lo thine enemies”* – The repetition of the “lo” is emphatic. The Psalmist is telling his audience, “Look! Behold!” He was telling us to take a close look and consider the later end of the wicked. *“Thine enemies shall perish.”*

*“All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered”* - More literally, “shall scatter or disperse themselves;” implying eagerness and activity, as if they were in haste to flee away. The allusion is to an army that is discomfited, disorganized, “demoralized,” and scattered; or to chaff that is dispersed by the wind.

### **PROSPERITY** **Verses 10-15**

- 10 *But my horn hast thou exalted like the horn of the wild-ox: I am anointed with fresh oil.*
- 11 *Mine eye also hath seen my desire on mine enemies, Mine ears have heard my desire of the evil-doers that rise up against me.*
- 12 *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*
- 13 *They are planted in the house of Jehovah; They shall flourish in the courts of our God.*
- 14 *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; They shall be full of sap and green:*
- 15 *To show that Jehovah is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*

**92:10:** *“But my horn hast thou exalted”* - The horn is a symbol of strength or power. The idea is that while the wicked would be cut off, the righteous would prosper in the truest sense of the word. It must be kept in mind, however, that prosperity is not measured by worldly possessions. The Psalmist had such confidence that he was the friend of God, and that he believed God would honor him and exalt him. The Psalmist here speaks of himself not so much with



reference to his own particular case, but as the representative of the righteous. The idea is that God will thus exalt “a righteous man.”

*“I am anointed with fresh oil”* – This may be an allusion to such anointing practiced by the Asiatics for the purpose of health. The spiritual application refers to the wonderful blessings that the righteous would enjoy. This is convincing evidence that this Psalm is using colorful and figurative language to describe the wonderful blessings of living a righteous life.

**92:11:** The blessings continue; the Psalmist simply acknowledges that he will see and hear the victory that is granted unto God’s people. “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

*“on mine enemies”* – Barnes has this note:

The word used here occurs nowhere else. It means, properly, a liar-in-wait; one who “watches;” one who is in ambush; and refers to persons who “watched” his conduct; who “watched” for his ruin (Barnes, QV).

The Psalmist’s desire was that his enemies be defeated and brought to ruin. He expresses the fulfillment of this desire, namely that he did, in fact, see his enemies brought to ruin.

**92:12:** *“the palm-tree...a cedar in Lebanon”* - These two trees, the palm-tree and the cedar, are used as metaphors for the righteous. The palm tree has the ability to stand straight during storms. In the same manner, the saint stands “Independent of outward circumstances, is made by divine grace to live and thrive where all things else perish” (Spurgeon, QV). What a contrast between the wicked who might flourish or “spring like the grass” and the righteous who will “flourish like the palm tree.” The figure of the palm-tree gives us the idea of grandeur and usefulness.

Palm trees are great trees. They grow high, live long and bear much fruit for many years. The date palm is to be people of India for shade, food, drink, clothing, fuel and even housing....They ripen in June and again in September. Their wide spreading roots drink in whatever moisture the dry soil offers. The palm likes its feet in water while its head is in the sun... The Hindus said it [the palm tree] had 360 uses. The palm tree produced fruit even in old age. Those who know say the best dates are borne when the tree is from 30 to 100 years old. Three hundred points of dates are annually

yielded (The Palm Tree, by Bobby Key, Four State Gospel News, March 1994, page 2).

*“He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon”* - The cedar gives us the idea of majesty and stability. The nature of this tree is such that it is always green, yielding an odoriferous smell, and an excellent kind of fruit, like unto apples, but of a sweeter taste, and more wholesome. The cedar was used extensively in the construction of Solomon’s Temple. Coffman points out that the cedar was “a very valuable timber, and is the source of rich perfume...and was coveted as a material used in the building of grand residences” (Coffman, page 167).

Barnes quoted from Dr. Thompson:

The palm grows slowly, but steadily, from century to century, uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice overmuch in winter’s copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which people place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind, can sway it aside from perfect uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below, and patiently yielding its large clusters of golden fruit from generation to generation. They ‘bring forth fruit in old age.’ The allusion to being planted in the house of the Lord is probably drawn from the custom of planting beautiful and long-lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all ‘high places’ used for worship (Barnes, QV).

**92:13:** *“They are planted in the house of Jehovah”* - Herein lies the secret to the blessed state of the righteous. They frequent the “house of Jehovah.” They find their roots in spiritual places.

As these trees flourish in their respective soils and climates, so shall the righteous flourish in keeping the ordinances of God. We do not think there is any allusion to either palm-trees or cedars, planted near the tabernacle or temple.

**92:14:** Those who are “planted in the house of Jehovah” shall be renewed with each passing year. The New Testament equivalent of this verse may very well have been written by the apostle Paul:

Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more

exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (1 Cor. 4:16-18).

True “prosperity” is not measured in the here and now; it is measured rather by what awaits a man when this life is over. Those who are wicked may flourish by earthly standards. But let the years pass, and let old age and the grave stare him in the face, and all the material possessions he may have gained in this life will be of no value. But let a man faithfully serve God all the days of his life, and as he approaches the sunset of life he will find a renewed faith and an ever increasing strength to face the uncertain days that lie ahead. Beyond death itself, the righteous will continue to bear fruit, for “their works shall follow them” (Rev. 14:13). We like Spurgeon’s comments:

Aged believers possess a ripe experience, and by their mellow tempers and sweet testimonies they feed many. Even if bedridden, they bear the fruit of patience; if poor and obscure, their lowly and contented spirit becomes the admiration of those who know how to appreciate modest worth (Spurgeon, QV).

**92:15:** *“To show that Jehovah is upright”* – The righteous show the world that God is faithful to His promises; He is true to His word, and kind to those who trust in Him all the days of their life. The happy and flourishing old age of the righteous are a strong indication of God’s faithfulness and truth, showing, as it does, that God keeps his promises, and never forsakes those who put their trust in him.

### ***Lessons***

1. Thanksgiving is a mark of true spiritual interests. Those who have their affections set upon the world have little interest in acknowledging God’s gracious beneficence. They fail to acknowledge that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” (James 1:17).
2. Giving of thanks is more noble and perfect in itself than petition; because in petition often our own good is eyed and regarded, but in giving of thanks only God’s honor. The Lord Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Now, a subordinate end of petition is to receive some good from God, but the sole end of thanks is to give glory unto God.

3. The sensual life can only result in a life that is no better than the brute beast of the field. Our present generation has been taught repeatedly that they are no different from the lower animals except in their molecular design. God has been taken out of their lives, and they have been indoctrinated in the foolishness of humanism. Is it any wonder, then, that men live more like animals today than they do as creatures made in the image of God? Oh, how low God's creation has plummeted!
4. The wicked may flourish in this life, but true prosperity is not measured by dollars and cents or what possessions one may acquire while traveling toward the inevitable dawn of eternity. Genuine prosperity is not measured by the things we can hold in our hand.
5. From verses 14-16 we get the following homiletic outline:
  - I. Regeneration—"planted."
  - II. Growth in grace—"flourish."
  - III. Usefulness—"fruit."
  - IV. Perseverance—"old age."
  - V. The reason of it all—"to shew that the Lord," etc.

## *“The Majesty And Power of God”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is unknown. The time and occasion are likewise unknown. The contents of the Psalm seem to indicate that it was written during a time when the power of God had been manifested. This has led some to date the Psalm during the reign of Hezekiah. Others have suggested that it may have been written when Israel returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian captivity, but there is nothing in the Psalm that demands this conclusion.

### ***Analysis***

Like the preceding Psalm, this is a song of praise. In this Psalm God is showing Himself as King. He is robed in majesty; He reigns openly. The world, as unstable as it may seem to be, is pictured as being under His sway. The overall message is not difficult to ascertain. The Psalmist is writing about the characteristics of God, especially His majesty and power in the face of open rebellion of obstinate and wicked men. The nations are depicted as troubled waters, tossing to and fro, in opposition and open rebellion to Jehovah God. But God is in control and His reign is secure. Morgan summarized the Psalm thusly:

There is a great majesty about this song...The form in which the preliminary statements are made conveys the impression, not so much of the eternal sovereignty of the King, as that He has taken up His position and acted on it. The result is that the stability of all things is assured” (Morgan, 256).

We came across a number of good outlines. Roy Deaver (Vol. 2, page 12) divides the Psalm thus: (1) God’s Function: The Lord reigns; (2) God’s Majesty: He is robed in majesty; (3) God’s Strength: He is girded with strength; (4) God’s World: Established, shall never be moved; (5) God’s Throne: it is established from old; (6) God’s Eternality: He is from

everlasting; (7) God's Opposition: the floods have lifted up their voice; (8) God's Might: He is mightier than the thunders of many waters; mightier than the waves of the sea; (9) God's Word: His decrees are very sure; (10) His Character: Holy.

Rawlinson breaks the Psalm into three parts:

His throne, i.e. his rule, has been established from everlasting (vers. 1,2). Yet there is resistance to his sway. The waters toss themselves; i.e. the powers of the world array themselves in opposition to God (ver. 3). Vainly, however; God in heaven is mightier than they (ver. 4). His might is especially shown in his "house" and in his "testimonies." The latter are "sure," the former is inviolate (Pulpit Commentary, page 294).

We have chosen to expand Willmington's outline and add the third point to give us the following:

- I. The Lord's Robes, verses 1-2;
- II. The Lord's Reign, verses 3-4;
- III. The Lord's Ruler, verse 5a;
- III. The Lord's Righteousness, 5b.

### ***The Lord's Robes*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 Jehovah reigneth; He is clothed with majesty; Jehovah is clothed with strength; he hath girded himself therewith: The world also is established, that it cannot be moved.*
- 2 Thy throne is established of old: Thou art from everlasting.*

**93:1:** "*Jehovah reigneth*" – The Hebrew will support the translation, "is become King." It is as if God had hidden His great majesty and is now coming forward and re-inaugurating the theocracy. This is why some have concluded that the Psalm was written following the Babylonian captivity. The writer would immediately take up the characteristics of God's reign, namely (1) that He reigns, (2) that He is clothed with majesty, and (3) that He is clothed with strength, having girded Himself therewith.

*"he is clothed with majesty"* - Not with garments of majesty, but with majesty itself! Here is language of royalty. But it is more than mere royalty that is being described; it is Divine Royalty that is under

consideration. There was, and is, a deep sense of reverence that permeated the thinking of those who loved and adored their God. The absolute holiness and majesty of God ought to demand respect on the part of every single man and woman. Alas, that is not the case. More often than not men refuse the bow to the majesty and might of God. But because men refuse to recognize God's majesty does not make Him any less majestic and/or holy. The task of the church is to uphold God's holiness, whether men accept it or not.

*"the world also is established that it cannot be moved"* - There is a certain amount of comfort in knowing that God has control of this world. Were He not maintaining watch over His creation, the basest of mankind would run rough shod over humanity. Coffman had this observation:

There is the statement that God reigns majestically in the security of unlimited strength (1a). Then there is the unmovable stability of the planet earth; and although the conclusion is not stated, it is surely implied that the established world with its security and stability derives such qualities from the Creator-God who rules over everything (Coffman, 172).

**93:2:** *"Thy throne is established of old"* - The idea is that God rules; has always ruled; will always rule. Not merely from *"of old,"* but from *"eternity."* Israel may have gotten the impression from the seventy years of Babylonian captivity that God's throne had been destroyed, or at least diminished. But, as Rawlinson has pointed out, "Though God from time to time comes forward, as it were, and asserts his sovereignty, yet it is no new rule that he sets up" (Pulpit Commentary, page 294). It is precisely this point that the Psalmist is making here. Not only has God ruled from *"of old,"* but even from everlasting. There is great joy in knowing that our God's rule is from eternity. "Let the believer rejoice that the government under which he dwells has an immortal ruler at its head, has existed from all eternity and will flourish when all created things shall have for ever passed away" (Spurgeon, QV).

### ***The Lord's Reign*** **Verses 3-4**

- 3 *The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, The floods have lifted up their voice; The floods lift up their waves.*  
4 *Above the voices of many waters, The mighty breakers of the sea, Jehovah on high is mighty.*

**93:3:** *“The floods have lifted up”* - The “floods” refer to the agitation and rebellion of those men and nations opposed to God. Isaiah expressed the same idea: “Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the River, strong and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory: and it shall come up over all its channels, and go over all its banks (Isa. 8:7). “But the wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa. 57:20). The context of this Psalm demands we take the word here to mean the world powers, but especially those powers as they rebel against God. “The sea with its mighty mass of waters, with the constant unrest of its waves, with its ceaseless pressing against the land and foaming against the rocks, is an emblem of the Gentile world alienated from God and at enmity against Him. The rivers (floods) are emblems of worldly kingdoms; the Nile stands for Egypt, the Tigris for Assyria, and the Euphrates for Babylon” (Keil and Delitzsch, QV).

**93:4:** But these *“flood waters”* are no threat to the Almighty, for God is in control. When the storms of life assail, we must remember that God is “on high,” that He is “mighty,” and that He is in control. It is significant that the word “above” appears at the beginning of the verse. “This is a beautiful way of saying that Jehovah reigns supremely above the roaring passions of earth’s wicked nations foaming out their hatred of God and their opposition to his kingdom” (Coffman, page 174). “When men combine to overthrow the kingdom of Jesus, plot secretly, and by-and-by rage openly, the Lord thinks no more of it than of so much noise upon the sea-beach...The ungodly are all foam and fury, noise and bluster, during their little hour, and then the tide turns or the storm is hushed, and we hear no more of them; while the kingdom of the Eternal abides in the grandeur of its power” (Spurgeon, QV).

The meaning of these two verses is that the throne of God has been established and it is futile for men to rise up in rebellion against God’s ordained and holy authority. Though nations have rebelled against God it is to their own hurt and destruction.

### ***The Lord’s Ruler*** **Verse 5a**

*5a Thy testimonies are very sure:*

**93:5:** The 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm will elaborate on the trustworthiness and



dependability of the “testimonies” of God. The idea here is that, in view of the fact that God reigns, and that absolutely nothing can frustrate His plans and purpose, we can depend upon His word to prove true in every instance.

The Psalm has moved from a consideration of the troubled masses that would seek to throw God off and overthrow His throne, to the security we find in keeping His word. The writer is telling us that what God says is “sure.” Or, as one country brother used to say, “You can take that to the bank.” As sure as God can control the waters that might threaten us, He can control the circumstances in life that might overwhelm us. The “testimonies” of God declare this truth, and those testimonies are very “sure,” or reliable. Not just SURE, but VERY SURE!

Given the surety of God’s word, it should serve as a guide to our life. An unknown author paid this tribute to the Bible:

### ***The Bible***

This book contains the mind of God, the state of men, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrine is holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword, and the Christian’s charter. Here Paradise is restored, heaven opened, and the ways of hell disclosed. Christ is the grand object, our good its design, and the redemption of man its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, a river of pleasure. It is given you life, will be opened in the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

### ***The Lord’s Righteousness*** **Verse 5b**

*5b Holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, for evermore.*

The Psalmist may have used the word “holiness” to denote the truthfulness and reliability of God. Such implies, in turn, that God will fulfill His promises. But there is much more here than another affirmation of the trustworthiness of God’s word. When we speak of the “holiness” of God’s house, we are speaking of His purity,

perfection, and promises. Coffman put it this way:

Two tremendous lessons appear in this verse. First, is the absolute trustworthiness and truth of the word of God. No matter what considerations may seem to point in another direction, God's word is always right. (2) Holiness or sanctity is alone appropriate for the house of God (Coffman, 174).

### ***Lessons***

1. Roy Deaver suggests the following "Fundamental Message": "Regardless of the nature of and/or the magnitude of the forces of opposition to God and His will, these forces will not be successful. All such opposition is symbolized by the 'floods,' but Jehovah is mightier than the floods. The forces of opposition will not succeed against God and they will not succeed against His word (Deaver, Vol II, 12).
2. There are definitely prophetic overtones in this Psalm as the writer, by inspiration, looks down the corridor of history to the time of the Messiah's Kingdom, when He shall reign in power and majesty, and His kingdom shall never be destroyed. That Kingdom is the church of Jesus Christ.
3. Every word God ever spoke, every command He ever gave, every promise He ever made is "sure." John Quincy Adams is credited with writing, "The Bible is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue." In a world where society is imperfect, and where people are undependable, it is heartening to know that we have something that is sure and certain. May we, like the Psalmist, declare at the end of life's journey, "I have stuck unto thy testimonies" (Psa. 119:31).
4. The Revised Version renders verse 1, "Jehovah hath proclaimed Himself king; He hath robed Himself with majesty." There is little doubt that God did this ultimately when Jesus came to this earth and walked among men. It was at that time that God visibly stepped down into the arena of human affairs and declared His majesty and rule over men when He established the church, His kingdom upon this earth.
5. John Phillips had an excellent homiletic outline on this Psalm:

The psalm is in three parts:

I. The Times Are Held by Him (93:1-2)

II. The Tempest Is Hushed by Him (93:3-4)

III. The Temple Is Home to Him (93:5).

6. The church, as God's house (1 Tim. 3:15) is a holy institution. In view of the fact that the church is made up of the people, it is certainly true that "holiness becometh thy house."

## *“God Will Render Vengeance”*

### ***Introduction***

There is no subtitle indicating who the author might be. Some have supposed it to have been composed by David, but this is only speculation. This Psalm is another of those songs wherein the author seeks an answer to the question, “Why do the wicked prosper?” “It is another instance of a good man, perplexed by the prosperity of the ungodly, cheering his heart by remembering that there is, after all, a King in heaven, by whom all things are overruled for good” (Spurgeon, QV). As in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, the author looks beyond the immediate circumstance and focuses on God. Morgan points out,

The position of this song immediately after the song which sets forth the fact of the enthronement of Jehovah is remarkable. It creates a contrast while it suggests a continuity of ideas. The contrast is between the celebration in the previous psalm of the victory of Jehovah over all opposition and the appeal to Him out of circumstances in which His enemies seem to triumph in the second psalm. The continuity of ideas is, however, equally apparent. To whom should His own turn in times of such distress save to the One who sits above the force and fury of the flood” (Morgan, page 256).

It was composed during some individual or national calamity (verses 3-5; 14 and 20).

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have the following: First, there is an appeal from the Psalmist that God might render vengeance upon the wicked (verses 1-2). This is followed by a two-fold complaint. “How long” is the question the Psalmist entertains; how long will God delay His judgment (verses 3-4), and how long will the insolence of the wicked be tolerated (verses 4-7). The wicked are quickly reminded that God sees and knows of their wicked ways (8-11). The Psalm closes with consolation for the righteous (12-23).

There are two major movements in the Psalm. In one the Psalmist sees God and His foes; in the other depicts God and His friends (Willmington, page 268). So far as the first is concerned, the Psalmist cries out for their punishment and sets forth their perversions. As for the friends of God, they are loved, protected, and blessed.

Another divides the Psalm into three parts: (1) the *supplication*, verses 1-7; (2) the *sermon*, verses 8-11; and (3) the *soliloquy*, verses 12-23.

We have adapted Willmington's outline to our study of this chapter:

I. God and His Foes:

1. Request for their punishment (94:1-3)
2. Review of their perversion (94:4-6)
3. Rebuke of their pride, (94:7-11)

II. God and His Friends:

1. He disciplines them (94:12-13)
2. He protects them (94:14)
3. He uplifts them (94:15-18)
4. He comforts them (94:19)
5. He separates them from the wicked (94:20-23)

This is not only a beautiful Psalm, but it is one of great comfort to the child of God in any generation. Let's now take a closer look.

## ***Commentary***

### ***God And His Foes*** **Verses 1-11**

All of humanity is divided into one of two classes – the righteous and the wicked; the saved and the lost; the sheep and the goats; the wicked and the godly. Every depiction of those who oppose God presents a sad picture of men who find themselves fighting against God. This section is no different. When the Psalm opens the writer is pleading with God to render vengeance upon those who prate against God. The author then justifies his plea by presenting a vivid description of the perversion of those upon whom he desires that vengeance.

***Request for their punishment***  
**Verses 1-3**

- 1 *O Jehovah, thou God to whom vengeance belongeth, Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth, shine forth.*
- 2 *Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: Render to the proud their desert.*
- 3 *Jehovah, how long shall the wicked, How long shall the wicked triumph?*

**94:1:** “*O Jehovah...shine forth*” - The words would suggest that some calamity had come upon the writer, or upon the nation as a whole, and the Psalmist was seeking the vengeance of God upon those evil doers. The specific request was that God would “shine forth,” or as we might say, “rise up and take action!” It was a request that God might rise up and show that He is a God opposed to wrong. The appeal on the part of the Psalmist for God to “shine forth” was out of sympathy for those who suffered wrongfully.

The appeal here is made to God in view of the crimes committed by the wicked, and which are referred to in the next part of the Psalm. God is viewed as having the right to restrain and punish wicked people, and He is thus asked to interpose and assert that right in a case which clearly demanded it. The twice repeated appeal makes the plea emphatic and to denote earnestness in the petition.

**94:2:** “*Lift up thyself*” - The meaning is substantially the same as that in verse 1; it is a call for God to render vengeance upon the wicked. The terminology likens God to one who is resting, and the Psalmist is asking Him to rise; to lift Himself up from a position of rest and to thus take action.

**94:3:** “*How long shall the wicked triumph?*” - The wicked appeared to have the upper hand. Time had passed so as to make it appear that they were winning the battle. “How long?” is a question that has been asked by many a weary, battle-worn soldier of the cross. “The sound ‘how long?’ is very akin to howling, as if it were one of the saddest of all the utterances in which misery bemoans itself. Many a time has this bitter complaint been heard in the dungeons of the Inquisition, at the whipping posts of slavery, and in the prisons of oppression” (Spurgeon, QV). For some unknown reason God was waiting. To the Psalmist the time had come for action. His plea was essentially that God would wait no longer. The same question has

probably been on the lips of the righteous for hundreds, yea thousands of years. “How entirely are we overwhelmed at the thought that he does not put an end to iniquity in the universe altogether” (Barnes, QV). Such statements reveal how little men realize the value there is in suffering.

### ***Review of their perversion*** **Verses 4-6**

- 4 *They prate, they speak arrogantly: All the workers of iniquity boast themselves.*  
5 *They break in pieces thy people, O Jehovah, And afflict thy heritage.*  
6 *They slay the widow and the sojourner, And murder the fatherless.*

**94:4:** “*They prate, they speak arrogantly*” - We are reminded of the incident where an atheist was lecturing on the non-existence of God, took out his watch, and demanded that God strike him dead within the next minute to prove that there is such a thing as God. As time ran out the infidel would mock and ridicule the idea that there is such a God in heaven. Often those who are steeped in wickedness find great pleasure in mocking spiritual values. They speak “arrogantly,” and “boast” of their own achievements. Such is the product of a proud and boastful heart. Their arrogant and idle speech against the righteous is like an ongoing stream of water that flows from a fountain that simply refuses to dry up. It is this incessant arrogance that manifests itself in their prating that wears upon the child of God in any generation. They may “*boast themselves*” now, but the Psalmist will tell us later that their boasting is truly in vain.

**94:5:** “*They break in pieces...and afflict thy heritage*” - The enemy had evidently brought Israel low, and had defeated them or subdued them. The Psalmist was seeking deliverance from all such people. The word for “brake” is the Hebrew word meaning “to crush under foot.”

**94:6:** “*They slay the widow and sojourner*” - The “wicked” were those fellow Israelites who were arrogant in their prosperity and selfish in their use of the same. Here the Psalmist addresses the complete injustice toward the widow and sojourner. This great injustice toward widows and strangers was common in Israel’s later years, leading some to suggest a time frame just prior to the

Babylonian captivity.

***Rebuke of their pride***  
**Verses 7-11**

- 7 *And they say, Jehovah will not see, Neither will the God of Jacob consider.*  
8 *Consider, ye brutish among the people; And ye fools, when will ye be wise?*  
9 *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*  
10 *He that chastiseth the nations, shall not he correct, Even he that teacheth man knowledge?*  
11 *Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man, That they are vanity.*

**94:7:** “*And they say*” – They reasoned among themselves. They assumed too much, and that falsely. The message they convinced their hardened hearts to believe was that “*Jehovah will not see.*” Are men so blind as to think that they can hide their evil deeds from the Almighty? Here was a nation instructed in the knowledge of an omniscient God who had rejected the truth and evidently likened their God unto the powerless “gods” of the heathen who had no power and who could not see the lives of their subjects. It is this fatal error that causes men to find solace in their own wisdom while dismissing the oft ignored fact that someday men will be called into judgment. Consequently, this error will cause men to plunge headlong into sin, all the while thinking to themselves that the God of heaven either does not see, or He does not care how they live. “When men believe that the eyes of God are dim, there is no reason to wonder that they give full license to their brutal passions” (Spurgeon, QV).

**94:8:** “*Consider, ye brutish among the people*” - It is interesting that the wicked say God did not take notice, that He did not see, nor did He regard their wickedness (verse 7). Now the Psalmist calls on the wicked to ‘take note, and give serious consideration to the truth.

“*when will ye be wise*” - “It is implied that this folly had been manifested for a long period, and that it was time they should arouse from this condition and act like men” (Barnes, QV). The words “*among the people*” suggest that the enemies under consideration here were actually the people of God. We may wonder how anyone



who has even a remote awareness of the God of heaven could reach a point in their apostasy that they think the God of heaven does not see. Such “wisdom” is earthly, not heavenly. The Psalmist’s call is as applicable for our generation as it was then.

**94:9:** *“He that planted the ear”* - Common sense says that the One who created the eye, with all of its marvelous mechanism, can surely see! Or, the One Who created the ear, and the ability to hear, should surely be able Himself to hear! The word “*formed*” has reference to the creative act of God. Barnes tells us that “the word used here is frequently employed in reference to the potter; and the idea is that God has molded or formed the eye as the potter fashions the clay” (Barnes, QV). Rawlinson had this observation:

This argument for a really, personal, intelligent God appears here. ‘Can it be possible that God, who planned and made the curious mechanism of hearing and vision, is himself without those faculties, or something analogous to them? Must he not hear those cries and see those outrages which men, who are his creatures, see and hear? Is it conceivable that he can be an unobservant and apathetic God? (Pulpit Commentary, page 300-301).

**94:10:** *“He that chastiseth the nations”* - The One that chastises nations should surely be able to deal with the individual as well. Hence, the offender will not escape. Each one of us will someday stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of those things we have done in this life (2 Cor. 5:10).

**94:11:** *“Jehovah knoweth the thoughts of man”* - One of the most astonishing traits of our God is the fact that He is aware of our very thoughts. And so far as the wicked were concerned, their thoughts amounted to nothing more than vanity. When men seek to escape their moral and spiritual obligations to God, and then try to sooth their conscience by denying the clear and obvious truth that God is omniscience, they compound their sin with foolishness. “Madness is mingled like smoke with the fog, to make it fouler but not more substantial than it would have been alone” (Spurgeon, QV).

### ***God and His Friends*** **Verses 12-23**

With verse twelve the Psalmist turns his attention to the wonderful blessings enjoyed by those who are in fellowship with God. Each one of these blessings is based upon an eternal truth that finds application in any dispensation.

***He disciplines them***  
**Verses 12-13**

- 12 *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Jehovah, And  
teachest out of thy law;*  
13 *That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, Until  
the pit be digged for the wicked.*

**94:12:** “*Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest*” - The word “chasten” is more than punishment. It carries the idea of discipline, training, nurturing, etc. The same word is used in Proverbs 9:7, Job 4:3 and Psalms 16:7. Note that such a man is actually “blessed.” The truly happy man is that man who submits to God’s chastening hand, for he is all the better for God’s school of discipline than the fool who would have none of it. The New Testament equivalent must certainly be Hebrews 12:6-11

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but he for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness.

“*And teachest out of thy law...*” - The sufficiency of God’s word is implied. If men would listen and bow to God’s law, the process of teaching and chastening would be complete, and the man himself would grow thereby unto maturity. The law of God and His chastening hand go together. Affliction without the word of God may be a furnace for the metal, but in the absence of the law of God, the soul is not purified, only hardened. What we have here is the afflicted believer being taught in God’s school of eternal wisdom. All that happens to him is for his good.

**94:13:** “*That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity*” - In addition to being “blessed,” the man who is chastened also

enjoys rest, even during adversity. All men will face “the days of adversity.” It may come in different forms. To some it will be the loss of property; to another the loss of someone near and dear. Only those who have heeded God’s word and bowed to His chastening will find true rest in the midst of that adversity, regardless of its form or its depth of despair. As for the wicked, they “are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa. 57:20).

*“until the pit be digged for the wicked”* - The day of retribution lies in the hand of God, for vengeance is His. The wicked will eventually fall into the pit he has dug for the righteous. “Wicked men may not yet be ripe for punishment, nor punishment ready for them: hell is a prepared place for a prepared people; as days of grace ripen saints for glory, so days of wantonness help sinners to rot into the corruption of eternal destruction” (Spurgeon, QV).

### ***He protects them*** **Verse 14**

*14 For Jehovah will not cast off his people, Neither will he forsake his inheritance.*

**94:14:** *“Jehovah will not cast off...nor forsake”* - The assurance that God will not forsake us is of great consolation. God is faithful; He cannot lie; He will carry through on His promises. The writer of Hebrews stated this truth to a later generation of Israelites who had embraced Christ but faltered under the passing of time and the increase of persecution: “Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). The fact that God will not fail us suggests His omnipotence; the fact that He will not forsake us suggests His willingness to uphold and protect.

During fierce persecutions the saints have been apt to think that the Lord had left his own sheep, and given them over to the wolf; but it has never been so, nor shall it ever be, for the Lord will not withdraw his love, *“neither will he forsake his inheritance.”* For a time he may leave his own with the design of benefiting them thereby, yet never can he utterly desert them (Spurgeon, QV).

***He uplifts them***  
**Verses 15-18**

- 15 *For judgment shall return unto righteousness; And all the upright in heart shall follow it.*  
16 *Who will rise up for me against the evil-doers? Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?*  
17 *Unless Jehovah had been my help, My soul had soon dwelt in silence.*  
18 *When I said, My foot slippeth; Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, held me up.*

**94:15:** “*judgment shall return to righteousness*” – Just prior to the Babylonian captivity wickedness dominated Israel. It must have appeared as if righteousness had been completely overturned. But God was still in control, and for this reason the Psalmist could confidently affirm that wicked and cruel judgment would be overthrown and righteousness would once again rule. God’s interposition into human affairs was to be such that it would show God is on the side of righteousness.

*“the upright in heart shall follow it”* – Recognizing that the judgment from God was just and equitable, and that it is founded upon righteousness, those who are “upright in heart” would walk in that judgment; they would follow God’s law and be uplifted.

**94:16:** “*Who will rise up for me..?*” - Here is a call that rings clear throughout the Bible. It is the Christian’s call to arms! We are to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph 5:11). We are to suffer the hardship “as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 2:3). Every indication is that the Psalmist could find no one to rise up in his defense; no one to take up arms against the evil doers and the workers of iniquity. We like Spurgeon’s assessment of the Psalmist’s plea:

Notwithstanding the Psalmist’s persuasion that all would be well eventually, he could not at the time perceive any one who would stand side by side with him in opposing evil; no champion of the right was forthcoming, the faithful failed from among men. This also is a bitter trial, and a sore evil under the sun; yet it has its purpose, for it drives the heart still more completely to the Lord, compelling it to rest alone in him. If we could find friends elsewhere, it may be our God would not be so dear to us; but when, after calling upon heaven and earth to help, we meet with no succor

but such as comes from the eternal arm, we are led to prize our God, and rest upon him with undivided trust. Never is the soul safer or more at rest than when, all other helpers failing, she leans upon the Lord alone (Spurgeon, QV).

**94:17:** *“Unless Jehovah had been my help”* – With none to help, the only source of strength was God. Men may provide help, but only God can provide the kind of help considered here.

*“my soul has soon dwelt in silence”* – This is a reference to death; or at least, to severe persecution that would “silence” the Psalmist from his intended course. When we take verses 16-17 together we see that the Psalmist is comparing the limited help that men offer as compared to the help that comes from above. It seems that all had abandoned him; only God was there to lend a helping hand. But the author was grateful that God rendered assistance, for only God can deliver from utter silence that come with persecution unto death.

**94:18:** *“my foot slippeth”* – How often has just such a circumstance arisen wherein we felt like we were going to slip; when our strength is gone; when we feel that we are at rope’s end? And then God rescues us, lifts us up, and provides us with the needed help. The language here is similar to that of Psalms 73:1 ff. The language in both places indicates that God’s help came at just the right moment. Sometimes God allows His child to go through the fire, and at just the right moment the saint is rescued from what might otherwise destroy. God’s aid is marked and timely so as to strengthen rather than destroy.

### ***He comforts them*** **Verse 19**

*19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me Thy comforts delight my soul.*

**94:19:** *“the multitude of my thoughts within me”* – What was he thinking? What were some of his thoughts? No doubt some were perplexing, some burdensome, and some anxious. But there was some thought that gave him comfort. These were no doubt such thoughts as pertained to God, and in those thoughts he found comfort and peace. However much he may have been disturbed by the other thoughts, he found comfort in thinking upon the

*“comforts” of God that “delight my soul.”*

The little world within is, like the great world without, full of confusion and strife; but when Jesus enters it, and whispers *“Peace be unto you,”* there is a calm, yea, a rapture of bliss. Let us turn away from the mournful contemplation of the oppression of man and the present predominance of the wicked, to that sanctuary of pure rest which is found in the God of all comfort (Spurgeon, QV).

***He separates them from the wicked***  
**Verses 20-23**

- 20 *Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee, Which frameth mischief by statute?*  
21 *They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, And condemn the innocent blood.*  
22 *But Jehovah hath been my high tower, And my God the rock of my refuge.*  
23 *And he hath brought upon them their own iniquity, And will cut them off in their own wickedness; Jehovah our God will cut them off.*

**94:20:** *“Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee?”* - The New Testament equivalent of this verse is that call for holiness in 2 Corinthians 6:14 thru 7:1. There is no room for fellowship between the righteous and the wicked. It is precisely at this point that many a child of God has been drawn away from his Creator. God has no fellowship with darkness, and neither is the child of God is to have fellowship with the “unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11).

*“which frameth mischief by statute”* – Many a man looks no further than to the laws of the land for sanction of his business and ethical practices.

**94:21:** *“They gather themselves against the soul of the righteous”* - The word “gather together” means “to press or crowd upon anyone; to rush in crowds or troops” (Barnes, QV). The picture is one of civil authorities, with these unholy laws to sanction their action, rushing down upon the righteous to persecute and destroy. In the process they *“condemn the innocent blood.”* Please consider the practice of abortion on demand in our generation with what the Psalmist has written. The process and plan was calculated, and carried out with utmost of care and cunning. The first step was that of wickedness

ascending to the throne, gaining power, and putting themselves in a position to enact laws to achieve their unholy end. Once the statutes were passed to legalize their “mischief,” those now in authority (Planned Parenthood, NOW, and every radical feminist organization) immediately ran rough-shod over the soul of the righteous. The “innocent blood” of the child in the womb was condemned by court decree, and the slaughter is now being carried out by the very government that is supposed to be a terror to the wicked ones who now rule upon the throne.

In the early 90’s this author wrote the following article for the local newspaper.

### **“When Wickedness Is Established By Law”**

by Tom Wacaster

This interesting verse adequately describes the way a number of people think. The verse reads, “Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by statute?” The context of the Psalm is a consideration of the wicked and their foolish opposition to God. Evidently this certain class of individuals had somehow come to the conclusion that God does not hear, nor does He see, their evil deeds (verse 7). I get the distinct impression that this indictment is being brought against Israel. And this 20th verse supports my conclusion. The “throne” itself had become corrupt. The leadership was corrupt from its head to its toe. Injustice was the order of the day. The widow, sojourner, and the fatherless were imperiled (verse 6). The Psalmist seeks to remind the people that God does not have fellowship with such a corrupt nation. But what is shocking about all of this is the fact that this corrupt nation had actually passed certain statutes which “legalized” their mischief. What a perverse way of thinking. It is the kind of thinking that says human law overrides God’s law; that man is in a better position to determine right and wrong than is the Almighty; that a mere stroke of the pen can turn that which is wicked into that which is right! Israel needed to be reminded that such a “throne of wickedness” stands squarely against God! They will NOT have His blessings! Oh how our beloved nation needs to hear this lesson. In this century we have seen the legalization of drinking, the sale of alcohol, para-mutual betting, abortion on demand, homosexual rights, the lottery, casino halls, houses of ill repute, etc. Now politicians clamor for legalization of drugs, homosexuals in the military and homosexual marriages, and the “Freedom of Choice Act” (making it completely legal to kill children still in the womb).

The philosophy seems to be, “If we can just get it on the books, ratify it by the States, and get it signed by the President, it is right and acceptable.” Have we become so foolish as to think that God does not see or hear? There is one more verse in this Psalm that gives a clear indication of the fruits of this kind of thinking. The 21st verse reads, “They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.” When enough laws are passed “legalizing” the mischief in which men desire to participate, the righteous element in society will actually become the enemy. I fear that we are rapidly approaching just such a state of disarray!

**94:22:** “*But Jehovah hath been my high tower*” - Here is the secret to the Psalmist’s calm disposition even in the face of adversity. Here are those “meditations” upon which the Psalmist thought, and which provided such great comfort. God is his high tower; his embattlement that gives him the advantage over the enemy.

God is the “*rock of my refuge*.” In spite of the fact that the world is crumbling around us, and wickedness appears to have the upper hand, if we will, like the Psalmist, meditate upon God as our high tower, the rock of our refuge, then we too will find peace and rest in knowing that God is truly the One on the throne. The outcome of this one truth is stressed in the next verse.

**94:23:** The Psalm closes with a promise of victory for the righteous and the complete defeat of the enemy.

“*brought upon them their own iniquity*” - These words suggest that the very things they were doing would lead to their destruction. The enemy would eventually be cut off in their wickedness. The “latter end” (Psa. 73:17) is that they will be “*cut off in their own wickedness*.” In many instances the wicked may appear to have the best this life has to offer; it may look as if wickedness is on the throne. But let us never forget that God’s judgment is not limited to this life, and that the harvest may yet be hundreds, or thousands of years removed from our generation. Be assured, the harvest will come, and God will visit upon them the Divine judgment they so fittingly deserve.

We like Spurgeon’s summary of the Psalm: “Here, then, the matter ends; faith reads the present in the light of the future, and ends her song without a trembling note” (Spurgeon, QV).



## ***Lessons***

1. The fundamental lesson in this Psalm is the overwhelming truth that God will hold all men accountable for their actions. He will bless the righteous and punish the wicked. Men may ignore God's impending wrath; they may pervert it; but they cannot make it go away.
2. From verse 9 it is implied that design demands a designer. It is God that made the ear to hear and the eye to see. Yes, Darwin, there IS a God in heaven, and it is He Who made the eyes and the ears – not blind chance.
3. The three simple words that frame the question in verse 8 are words that demand our utmost attention. “When will ye be wise?” It suggests the existence of wisdom, the necessity of wisdom, and the choice on the part of man to be wise. God may provide the time necessary for wisdom. God may provide the means of heavenly wisdom. But it is left up to man to seek such wisdom and apply it to his life.
4. Regarding unholy nations, Spurgeon wrote:

Such thrones there are, and they plead a right divine, but their claim is groundless, a fraud upon mankind and a blasphemy of heaven. God enters into no alliance with unjust authority, he gives no sanction to unrighteous legislation. “*Which frameth mischief by a law?*” They legalise robbery and violence, and then plead that it is the law of the land; and so indeed it may be, but it is a wickedness for all that. With great care men prepare enactments intended to put down all protests, so as to render wrong-doing a permanent institution, but one element is necessary to true conservatism, viz., righteousness; and lacking that, all their arrangements of the holders of power must come to an end, and all their decrees must in process of time be wiped out of the statute-book. Nothing can last for ever but impartial right. No injustice can be permanent, for God will not set his seal upon it, nor have any fellowship with it, and therefore down it must come, and happy shall be the day which sees it fall (Spurgeon, QV).

## *“Harden Not Thy Heart”*

### ***Introduction***

There is no subscript indicating who the author is, but the author of Hebrews attributes it to David (cf. Hebrews 4:7). We will take heaven's declaration of the author as sufficient proof that David wrote the Psalm. There is nothing that would suggest the occasion of the Psalm. Barnes points out that “it is a general song of praise, and contains only such language as might be proper in any period of the Jewish history after the people were established in the Promised Land” (Barnes, QV). The general thrust of the Psalm indicates that the people were in a state of rebellion, much like the generation that provoked God in the wilderness. Spurgeon notes that this Psalm “has about it a ring like that of the church bells, and like the bells it sounds both merrily and solemnly, at first ringing out a lively peal, and then dropping into a funeral knell as if tolling at the funeral of the generation which perished in the wilderness” (Spurgeon, QV).

Psalms 93-100 have generally been regarded by some scholars as belonging to a set, while others see the group consisting of only Psalms 95-100. Psalm 93 sets forth the enthronement and government of Jehovah God, Psalm 94 expresses the hope of God's people even in the midst of trial, and Psalms 95-100 address His Kingship in various ways. The present Psalm declares God's supremacy, and then sets forth a warning against what hindered Israel of Old from realizing that supremacy. Physical Israel failed to submit to their God. As a result they were excluded from entering into their rest. We will entitle this Psalm, “Harden Not Thy Heart.”

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm naturally divides itself into three parts: (1) there is an exhortation to praise and worship God, 95:1-2; (2) this is followed by various reasons as to why we should offer up praise to Him, 95:3-7a; (3) the Psalm closes with an example from the past warning against hardening our hearts, 95:7b-11.

We have combined the major points from Phillips, incorporating some of the sub points from Willmington to get the following outline which we will use for our study:

- I. Praising God, 95:1-7
  - 1. For His redemptive work, 95:1-3
  - 2. For His creative work, 95:4-5
  - 3. For His shepherding work, 95:6-7
- II. Provoking God, 95:8-11
  - 1. The terrible rebellion, 95:8-9
  - 2. The tragic results, 95:10-11

## ***Commentary***

### ***Praising God*** **Verses 1-7**

The Psalmist calls for his audience to “*sing unto Jehovah*” and to “*make a joyful noise*” unto Him. The general admonition leads the Psalmist to set forth three reasons why it is proper to praise God: His redemptive work, His creative work, and His shepherding work.

### ***For His redemptive work*** **Verses 95:1-3**

- 1 *Oh come, let us sing unto Jehovah; Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.*
- 2 *Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; Let us make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.*
- 3 *For Jehovah is a great God, And a great King above all gods.*

**95:1:** “*Oh come*” - The word rendered “come” means “properly ‘go’ but it is here used, as it often is, as a formula of invitation, in calling on others to share in what is done by the speaker” (Barnes, QV). The “joyful noise” is translated from a word that means to “shout” and sometimes has reference to a warlike shout, a shout of triumph, or the sound of a trumpet. It would denote praise of the most animated kind. Singing is the natural outpouring of a joyful heart. The invitation from the Psalmist to engage in praise to God was based on his deep appreciation for God’s marvelous and wonderful blessings (cf. verse 2). God is to be the recipient of our praise and adoration. Many a man may join in singing in some religious setting, but it is

feared that much of it is nothing more than singing to the ear of the congregation. Our adoration and praise is to be directed to Jehovah, not man.

*“rock of our salvation”* – Here is God’s redemptive work. The Psalmist may have just experienced a victory in battle, or it may be that he is considering God’s overall redemptive work. The ultimate redemptive work is seen in God’s wonderful scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ. If Jehovah is deserving of praise for physical redemption of the nation of Israel in time of old, how much more is the Almighty deserving of our praise today!

**95:2:** *“his presence”* – When we come before Jehovah we should with a sense of thanksgiving in our hearts. God is everywhere present, but as Spurgeon noted, “there is a peculiar presence of grace and glory into which men should never come without the profoundest reverence” (Spurgeon, QV). The “joyful noise” is likely a reference to the instrumental music employed in worship. The Psalms often make reference to the instrumental music. Be that as it may, what is lacking is any clear and unmistakable evidence in the New Testament that God wants our praise to be accompanied by instrumental music. The fact is that God wants us to pluck the strings of the heart, for that is the instrument authorized to accompany our singing in the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19-20).

There are two elements that come to the surface in the call to praise, namely enthusiasm and reverence. Some in their enthusiasm forget to reverence the God whom they worship, while others are so concerned with reverence that they rob their worship of any enthusiasm.

**95:3:** *“a great God...a great King above all gods”* - With this verse the Psalmist begins to elaborate upon the reasons why God is worthy to be praised. He is not implying that there are other “gods” who may serve under this Great God; he is simply pointing out that God is great, and the imaginations of man are vain. There are two reasons given in this verse as to why God deserves to be praised. First, because He is GREAT, and second, because He is KING.

***For His creative work***  
**Verses 4-5**

- 4 *In his hand are the deep places of the earth; The heights of the mountains are his also.*  
5 *The sea is his, and he made it; And his hands formed the dry land.*

**95:4:** “*In his hand*” - God’s hand is representative of His power. The “*deep places of the earth*” (*‘mehhkor*’) means “the interior, the inmost depth; that which is searched out, explore” (Barnes, QV). All of those places which lie beyond the natural observance of man; those places deep within the caves, the ocean, etc., all of these are in God’s control. As well, the “*heights of the mountains*” are under His control. The Psalmist is emphasizing God’s absolute control over the whole of creation. “The evidence and unmistakable witness of God’s limitless intelligence and glory are seen alike in the sub-microscopic wonders of the tiny atom and in the measureless light-year distances of the universe, so large and limitless that even the imagination of men cannot reach to the farthest edge of it” (Coffman, page 187). The important truth stressed here is that God is the owner of this world. For one brief moment man is granted the use of those things which he might possesses, but in the final analysis, he does not own those things; he merely exercise stewardship over that unto which God has granted him temporary use.

**95:5:** “*The sea is his*” - Be it the Atlantic, Pacific, Mediterranean, or Arctic, no man has the right to map it out and lay claim to it as if it were his own. The vast oceans have never been claimed by any man, and the Psalmist tells us that God has total and absolute right of possession. By the same token, the cattle on a thousand hills are Jehovah’s, and the earth and all things therein are in His possession. When men come to recognize this simple truth it will forever end the little squabbles over boundary lines, as well as the power struggles between nations to control the lands of their neighbors.

***For His shepherding work***  
**Verses 6-7**

**95:6:** “*come...bow down...kneel*” - The word rendered “come” is not the same as that in verse one. The literal meaning here is to come, or draw near. It is an exhortation to gather for the expressed purpose of worship.

“*Bow down*” is rendered “worship” in the KJV. It properly means to

prostrate oneself; such was a common posture in worship. That no specific posture is demanded is certainly clear, for here “bow down” (prostrate) and “kneel” are used synonymously. Barnes expressed the opinion that “the expressions here denote a posture of profound reverence in worship, and the passage is a standing rebuke of all irreverent postures in prayer; of such habits as often prevail in public worship where no change of posture is made in prayer, and were a congregation irreverently ‘sit’ in the act of professedly worshipping God” (Barnes, QV). But it is NOT the posture of the body, but the posture of the heart that is important.

**95:7:** *“people of his pasture...sheep of his hand”* - A recognition of the Creator/creature relationship would go a long way to humbling men in the sight of God. The present and prevailing notion that man is responsible for his own greatness, and that he is the number one factor in his own destiny, leaves little room for the God of heaven to rule in such a heart. HE is God; WE are the people of His pasture. Like a shepherd who leads his sheep, so our God leads us. It is implied that man is to be submissive and obedient in following the Master.

*“Today, oh that ye would hear his voice”* - The later portion of this Psalm was utilized by the author of Hebrews (3:7-11) to impress upon that later generation of Christians the urgency of listening to the voice of God. The idea is that the only accepted time of salvation is NOW; procrastination will eventually lead to disobedience. The plea is, “Listen to His voice! Do it now! Do not tarry!” The **‘Today’** of which it speaks is this very moment; the **‘ye’** is none other than oneself, and the promised ‘rest’ is not Canaan, but salvation. Scripture teaches us that we have no promise of tomorrow. Every morning’s obituary column testifies to this same truth. If we are to take action, it must be today, for tomorrow is not promised to any of us.

### ***Provoking God*** **Verses 8-11**

While the first half of the Psalm calls for worship to God, the later half focuses upon that rebellious heart that refuses to bow in reverence to God.

## ***The terrible rebellion*** **Verses 8-9**

- 8 Harden not your heart, as at Meribah, As in the day of Massah in the wilderness;*  
*9 When your fathers tempted me, Proved me, and saw my work.*

**95:8:** The word “provocation” (KJV) appears only here and in Exodus 17:7 and Deuteronomy 33:8. Their fathers had tested God to see how much He would bear. Consequently they “provoked” God and “tempted” him, so much so that the whole of their sojourn in the wilderness was referred to as “the provocation.”

“*saw my work*” - Israel witnessed the majestic works of God, and yet they still tested God.

God’s way is perfect, and when we would have him alter it to please us, we are guilty of tempting him; and the fact that we do so in vain, while it magnifies the Lord’s holiness, by no means excuses our guilt. We are in most danger of this sin in times of need, for then it is that we are apt to fall into unbelief, and to demand a change in those arrangements of providence which are the transcript of perfect holiness and infinite wisdom (Spurgeon, QV).

## ***The tragic results*** **Verses 10-11**

- 10 Forty years long was I grieved with that generation, And said, It is a people that do err in their heart, And they have not known my ways:*  
*11 Wherefore I sware in my wrath, That they should not enter into my rest.*

**95:10:** Because they were so stiff-necked and rebellious, it is said they “grieved” God. The word means “to loathe, to nauseate, to be disgusted with” (Barnes, QV). It is translated with the word “loathe” in Ezekiel 6:9. The word expresses the strong abhorrence that God had toward Israel’s behavior.

Alas, the tragic story of the wilderness sojourn of Israel is prophetic of the Church of Christ itself. The current dispensation of God’s grace corresponds in many ways to the probationary journey of Israel from the Red Sea to the Jordan, typical, as they are, of the

Christian's journey from the waters of his baptism to the Jordan of death (Coffman, page 190).

Among the whole of humanity, the majority of souls that are going to be lost corresponds to the multitudes of those Israelites who never made it to Canaan land. Men should study carefully, and contemplate soberly this truth. The way that leads to destruction is wide, and there are many who are presently traveling that road toward eternal ruin (Matt. 7:13-14).

*“do err in their heart”* - Regarding the heart, Spurgeon noted:

The heart is the mainspring of man, and if it be not in order, the entire nature is thrown out of gear. If sin were only skin-deep, it might be a slight matter; but since it has defiled the soul, the case is bad indeed. Taught as they were by Jehovah himself in lessons illustrated by miracles, which came to them daily in the manna from heaven, and the water from the flinty rock, they ought to have learned something, and it was a foul shame that they remained obstinately ignorant, and would not know the ways of God (Spurgeon, QV).

**95:11:** *“they should not enter into my rest”* - The “rest” here is much, much more than the physical Canaan land. This verse was quoted by the author of Hebrews, in which he referred to the Great Salvation that is ours in Christ. “If manna and miracles could not satisfy Israel, neither would they have been content with the land which flowed with milk and honey” (Spurgeon, QV). The poet expressed it well:

They saw his wonders wrought,  
And then his praise they sung;  
But soon his works of pow’r forgot,  
And murmur’s with their tongue.

Now they believe his word,  
While rocks with rivers flow;  
Now with their lusts provoke the Lord  
And he reduc’s them low.

### ***Lessons***

1. This entire Psalm serves as a warning to those dissatisfied souls who would murmur and complain, and in other ways manifest a



mistrust in Jehovah God. If those who disbelieved were not allowed to enter into the rest promised unto them, surely the same fate awaits those who are guilty of just such a besetting sin in this dispensation.

2. God owns the whole of this universe, including the lands, houses, gold, silver, and material possessions that any of us might hold in our hand. We are merely stewards who have been given temporary custody of those things. How we use those things reflects our respect of the Divine Owner.
3. Sin begins in the heart and is reflected in lack of faith in God. It is compounded by lack of knowledge and exacerbated by tempting and testing our Creator. Those who walk in their wicked ways will not “enter into” the promised rest.
4. If one hopes to enter heaven, he must walk in the heavenly way **today**. Corrections should be made immediately, as opportunity avails, lest we find our self drifting from the walks of righteousness. I wrote this article in early 2006:

### ***Course Corrections Along the Pathway of Life***

by Tom Wacaster

February 13th I will board a Northwest/KLM flight bound for Amsterdam, and then on to Bombay, India. Having some experience in flying, I am aware that a pre-planned route is essential to reaching a desired destination. But I am also aware that when flying it is necessary to make small corrections in one's heading all along the route from point A to point B. This is because the plane is affected by wind drift. Once a course has been plotted, a pilot realizes that flying a plane is not like driving a car. An automobile contacts the road and is not affected by wind drift as is an airplane. Consequently, a pilot knows that small adjustments are necessary along the route to his final destination. That Boeing 747 in which I will be flying is equipped with modern computers and technology that will automatically make those small but necessary corrections. But whether made by machines or man, those adjustments and corrections along the path will result in reaching the planned point of arrival. Getting from where to are to where you want to be cannot be achieved by hit-and-miss guess work. But that is the way some folks approach their religion. They rely on

feelings, better-felt-than-told experiences, rather than carefully plotting their course. Such an approach will no sooner get them to heaven than a pilot who relies on his feelings to get him to his destination.

The key word here is “correction.” This is an interesting word in that it describes precisely the role that the word of God plays in our journey through life. Along the trip of life, slight adjustments are made from time to time so as to keep us on course. A good working knowledge of the Bible and the application of its truths to our life, will adjust our course when we start to drift. It keeps affecting the way we think, the way we draw conclusions, and the way we make our daily life decisions. The key is that we are to lay the word of God up in our heart so that those corrections are automatic. This is why the Psalmist acknowledged, “Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11).

If a pilot fails to make the necessary corrections in the early stages of his journey, he will find that the small error will multiply in proportion to the distance he flies. The first few miles he may find that he is not far off course. But let him fly hundreds, or thousands of miles, and he will be so far off course that drastic measures would be needed to reach the destination, if he can reach it at all. Likewise, if we fail to make corrections immediately and concisely along the road of life, we will look up one day and wonder how in the world we got where we are. This is why the Hebrews author warned, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them” (Heb. 2:1). If we wait until we are so far off course to make the necessary correction we may find that getting back on course is difficult at best, and impossible at worst.

Apostasy is seldom something that occurs over night. It is the consequence of one’s failure to make those small corrections along the way. Like the wise pilot, the child of God will make those course corrections along the pathway of life frequently and faithfully.

## *“A Call To Praise Jehovah”*

### ***Introduction***

While the Psalm itself does not aid in determining its author, it is similar in nature and content to a portion of David's Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. Exactly who may have been responsible for extracting a portion of that original Psalm, is not certain. Nor can we determine the occasion on which this Psalm was composed (or should we say, “extracted”) with any degree of certainty.

It is supposed that on the dedication of the temple, when it was rebuilt after the Babylonish captivity, a portion of the psalm composed by David was selected and arranged for that purpose. This seems to me to be a very probable account of the origin of the psalm, and of the reason why it has its present form. In the original psalm there were things which would not be particularly appropriate to the dedication of the temple, while the portion which is extracted is eminently fitted for such a service (Barnes, QV).

Spurgeon concluded that “the former part of that sacred song was probably omitted in this place because it referred to Israel, and the design of the Holy Ghost in this Psalm was to give forth a song for the Gentiles” (Spurgeon, QV). There is no doubt that the Psalm calls upon all nations to offer praise to God (verse 1).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm is entirely devoted to praise. It sets forth Jehovah as He who “made the heavens” (verse 5) and is thus deserving of majesty and glory. The audience is called upon to “bring an offering” (verse 8), and to “worship Jehovah in holy array” (verse 9). In view of the great majesty of Jehovah, the Psalmist calls for songs of praise. Spurgeon refused to divide the Psalm: “We will make none, for the song is one and indivisible, a garment of praise without seam, woven from the top throughout” (Spurgeon, QV). Rawlinson sees three divisions in the Psalm: “The psalm sets forth Jehovah, first, as Creator and Wonder worker of old (vers. 1-6); secondly, as the present Ruler of the earth and its inhabitants (vers. 7-10); and,

thirdly, as the coming Judge of all men (vers. 10-13)” (Rawlinson, 2:319). We will follow his outline and study the Psalm under these three headings:

- I. The Lord As Powerful Creator And Wonder-Worker Of The Past (vs. 1-6)
- II. The Lord As Sovereign Ruler Of The Present (vs. 7-10)
- III. The Lord As Righteous Judge Of The Future (vs. 11-13).

## ***Commentary***

### ***The Lord As Powerful Creator And Wonder-Worker Of The Past Verses 1-6***

- 1 Oh sing unto Jehovah a new song: Sing unto Jehovah, all the earth.*
- 2 Sing unto Jehovah, bless his name; Show forth his salvation from day to day.*
- 3 Declare his glory among the nations, His marvellous works among all the peoples.*
- 4 For great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised: He is to be feared above all gods.*
- 5 For all the gods of the peoples are idols; But Jehovah made the heavens.*
- 6 Honor and majesty are before him: Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.*

**96:1:** “*Oh sing unto Jehovah a new song*” - This first and last verse of the Psalm seem to be the only substantial changes of the original found in 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. Whatever the occasion of this Psalm it was such that the words from the Chronicler were sufficient to express the purpose of the author. Barnes noted the evangelistic thrust in this Psalm, beginning with the very first verse: “Possibly this was designed to suggest the idea that while the temple stood, a dispensation would commence, under which the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles would be broken down, and all mankind would unite in the praise of God” (Barnes, QV). It is expressly stated that the “*new song*” would involve “*all the earth.*” Coffman concluded, “It would be difficult to find a paragraph with any greater stress of the truth that God’s salvation was never intended for Jews only, but for ‘all the earth.’ The call of the Gentiles into God’s service

is absolutely declared here as a commandment of God” (Coffman, page 195).

*“Oh sing unto Jehovah a new song”* - Oh the joy of singing! Angels sang at the dawn of the new dispensation! We pick up the refrain under the rule of our King. But ours is a “new song” because it is the song of salvation. It is truly one that is “holy, heavenly, pure, and pleasant” (Spurgeon, QV).

**96:2:** *“show forth his salvation from day to day”* - While the writer may have had in mind some physical salvation from which Israel had just been delivered, “the language is such also as to express salvation in a higher sense - salvation from sin and death” (Barnes, QV). Notice particularly the number of times “sing” appears in these verses. Three times in the first two verses alone. Worship unto God has always abounded with singing of praises. Note also that in these first two verses there is a thrice-repeated reference to the Lord, suggesting possibly the triune nature of the Godhead.

*“show forth his salvation”* - Can any doubt the prophetic nature of this Psalm as it looks beyond the horizon of that time in which the Psalmist lived, into the dispensation and reign of the Messiah? Here is the Old Testament equivalent of the Great Commission from our Lord.

**96:3:** *“Declare his glory among the nations”* – God’s design, even in the Old Testament, was that Israel be a light to the world, to hold forth the majesty and glory of Jehovah. In this, however, they miserably failed. Rather than speak of the marvelous works of God, Israel held these blessings to themselves. Even worse, Israel allowed the nations about them to drag them down to the level of sinful man rather than lift the nations about them to a higher plain of spirituality.

*“his marvelous works”* – Oh how our world needs to hear of the marvelous works of our Lord! Some years ago I was visiting with one of our deacons who had a study with a family whose daughter had never heard of Moses, or Abraham. Her spiritual malnourishment is typical of the teeming millions who have never heard of the great works of our God. Oh how men need to hear of the works of our God! Alas, impressionable minds are filled with theories of evolution and humanism while God is expelled from the schools and courts. Our religious institutions no longer speak of the resurrection, virgin birth and creative power of the Almighty because many of the main

stream denominations no longer believe in the supernatural power of God. They have robbed Him of the glory due His holy name.

**96:4:** *“to be feared above all gods”* - The Psalmist was not acknowledging other “gods,” but simply showing the greatness of God above the imaginations of men. Because of God’s greatness, He is to be feared, or revered among all men. Our God is no petty deity; He is so far above the false gods, and He should be praised for His greatness. “Praise should be proportionate to its object, therefore let it be infinite when rendered unto the Lord. We cannot praise him too much, too often, too zealously, too carefully, too joyfully” (Spurgeon, QV).

*“He is to be feared”* - God is a jealous God, and He will not tolerate divided allegiance on the part of His worshippers. The problem with modern man is that he has no fear of God. This is especially the case in America. One needs but walk down the isle of Blockbuster, Hastings, or a hundred other such stores to realize that America is filled with pride and haughtiness. Where is the fear of God when the subject matter of what men feed upon is anti-God, anti-Bible, and anti-holiness? We need to listen again to the warning from the Proverb writer: “The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction” (Pro. 1:7). Indeed, “Fear of God is the blush upon the face of holiness enhancing its beauty” (Spurgeon, QV).

**96:5:** *“for the gods of the peoples are idols”* - The Septuagint translated the Hebrew word for idols with the Greek *‘daimonia’* - or “demons.” The Hebrew literally means “of nothing, nought, empty, vain” (Barnes, QV). The idols were mere nothings! There is no power or might within them; they cannot see, hear, think, decide, teach, lead, guide, or any other countless actions which indicate life. On the other hand, the Psalmist affirms, “Jehovah made the heavens.” What a contrast; and what a reason for praising God as per this Psalm! Here is a

matchless piece of architecture which casts its arch over every man’s head, whose lamps are the light of all mankind, whose rains and dew fall upon the fields of every people, and whence the Lord in voice of thunder is heard speaking to every creature...The idol gods have no existence, but our God is the author of all existences...He is not only heavenly, but made the heavens (Spurgeon, QV).

**96:6:** *“Honor and majesty are before him”* - The scene before the

throne of God is one of great pageantry, with the characteristics of honor, majesty, strength, and beauty gracing the very throne of Jehovah. "These are the splendours of Jehovah's courts, these the jewels and the gold, the regalia, and the pomp of the courts of heaven" (Spurgeon, QV). Let men gather their greatest architects to design the throne room of any of a thousand great leaders of our world; let them bedeck the room with its greatest ornamentation, with elaborate furniture and carvings of all kinds; let them travel the world to gather those things that would give honor to the one who might sit on their earthly throne, and it would be nothing compared to the honor and majesty that surrounds the throne of Jehovah God. In 2005 this writer had the opportunity to visit the majestic palace of the past rulers of Mexico. Perched high on a hill in Mexico City, the palace is decked with the most gorgeous of marble stone, elaborate jewels and beautiful furniture. Past kings and rulers lived in splendor as they entertained guests from around the world. But such palaces are nothing compared to the scene now before us.

*"strength and beauty are in his sanctuary"* - There are some variations between this Psalm and its original structure in 1 Chronicles 16. But Barnes points out "these variations are such to show that the psalm is not a mere extract, but that it was altered of design, and adapted to the occasion on which it was to be employed" (Barnes, QV). The strength within the sanctuary suggests the great power that emanates from the dwelling place of God, while "beauty" points to the loveliness and charm that surrounds the Almighty. Often we witness brute strength without beauty, and sometimes beauty void of strength. But both beauty and strength grace the throne of our God. No wonder God is to be feared! Earthly thrones crumble with the passing of time; but the throne of Jehovah is characterized by eternal strength and beauty.

***The Lord As Sovereign  
Ruler Of The Present  
Verses 7-10***

- 7 *Ascribe unto Jehovah, ye kindreds of the peoples, Ascribe unto Jehovah glory and strength.*
- 8 *Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name: Bring an offering, and come into his courts.*
- 9 *Oh worship Jehovah in holy array: Tremble before him, all the earth.*

10 *Say among the nations, Jehovah reigneth: The world also is established that it cannot be moved: He will judge the peoples with equity.*

**96:7:** “*Ascribe unto Jehovah*” is repeated three times in verses 7 and 8. It is not inconceivable that the Trinity is under consideration here. No doubt the author did not completely understand the significance of his words, but neither did the prophets of old with regard to their writings.

To “*ascribe unto Jehovah*” is to “give” Him that of which He is worthy. Since it is not possible for the worshipper to GIVE unto God strength, it is reasonable to conclude that the Psalmist is telling his audience that we give to God the proper glory due Him when we worship Him according to His precepts. When men acknowledge His great glory, and submit to His strength, they thereby “ascribe” to Him that which He rightly deserves.

**96:8:** “*the glory due his name*” - This is a call to honor God by bringing to Him His due. The Psalmist is telling his audience, “Acknowledge Him as God, and acknowledge Him to be such a God as He truly is.” The word here translated “offering” is one that denotes a “bloodless” offering, such as a thank offering. When the “new song” is sung, the “offerings” will be unlike those of the Old Testament dispensation. Notice in this connection New Testament passages such as 1 Peter 2:5, and Hebrews 13:15, which speak of our sacrifices unto God.

“*Ascribe...the glory due*” – While we are to render to our God that which is due Him, there is the realization that naught of what we give could ever measure up to what He deserves. The true worshipper shows his devotion and commitment when he worships in “spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). On occasions we may come short of excellence in our worship, but let it never be said of us that we did not at least attempt to give Him our best.

**96:9:** “*worship Jehovah in holy array*” - The KJV expresses this with the words, “O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” There is something of great beauty about worship offered unto the Almighty. That is, of course, when it is according to HIS design, not man’s. Man has corrupted the simple worship set forth in God’s word, and what men offer as worship is anything BUT beautiful!

“*holy array*” – Why is it that men will appear at a funeral to honor



some deceased individual dressed in array that befits the occasion, and then turn right around and come into God's presence with array that is so disrespectful, common and profane? No, we are not suggesting some sort of "dress code" before one can come into the presence of Jehovah. We are aware of God's admonition,

6 Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old?

7 will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

8 He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God? (Micah 6:6-8).

But why is it that men seem to think that just because the emphasis in New Testament worship is upon the heart that this somehow gives the worshipper freedom to dress as he pleases, even to the point of wearing the kind of attire that identifies him with the world? We have witnessed in the last number of years men serving on the Lord's table in sloppy jeans, sweat shirts emblazoned with worldly and sometimes ungodly logos, shorts, tank tops, and various other types of "array" that is anything BUT holy. It has been acknowledged by many that a man's dress is a reflection of what is inside. That being the case, then the kind of "array" that is characteristic of what we are witnessing in worship services today says a lot more than some dare to admit.

*"Holiness"* is an essential part of our relationship to God. Notice in this connection Hebrews 12:14, where it is said in regard to holiness (sanctification) that without it, no man shall see God. While the basic meaning of the word "holy" is that of separation, morally speaking it identifies those whose lives are pure. It is worth repeating, "Purity is the white linen of the Lord's choristers, righteousness is the comely garment of his priests, holiness is the royal apparel of his servitors" (Spurgeon, QV).

*"tremble"*- There is far too little "trembling" among so-called worshippers today. The word in the original expresses the profoundest awe. If men recognized the power and majesty of God, we have no doubt that they would "tremble" in His presence. In this new century we are witnessing a complete disrespect for the majesty and glory of God. After more than 35 years of preaching this student has seen much that suggests a complete absence of trembling on the

part of so-called worshippers. In many cases those sitting in the pews demonstrate a complete lack of reverence due to God. Oh that men would tremble in the presence of God! This verse is especially relative in view of the lax attitude that men have regarding worship of Jehovah God. Most have substituted God's pattern for man's pleasure. There is little difference between some worship services and a Saturday evening at the local dance hall. Spiritual songs have been replaced with music that appeals to the flesh. Pulpits no longer sound forth the word of God. You are as likely to hear a "sermonette" on world poverty, ecology, or the homeless as you are a "thus saith the Lord." The clothes the worshippers wear reflect a "laid back" attitude. As one southern gentleman put it, "There's too little of that d'ere trembl'in going on down d'ere." If men want to know why liberalism has plagued the Lord's church in the past twenty years, let him focus on this verse right here. Liberalism is the very essence of the absence of godly fear and trembling in the presence of God. Or, as one brother put it, too many have the attitude toward worship summed up in three words: "No big deal."

**96:10:** "*Jehovah reigneth...the world cannot be moved*" - So long as God decrees the earth shall stand, it shall be so. He is on the throne; He speaks and it comes to pass; He upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3-4). No wonder His throne is one of strength and glory. What great joy fills the soul to know that God reigns!

*"He will judge the peoples with equity"* – The last few words in this verse serve as a transition to the last section in this Psalm. God's reign is equitable; He is no respecter of persons. That same equity of judgment will find its ultimate fulfillment on that Great Day when all "peoples" will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10). The Psalmist picks up the refrain of that coming judgment in the last three verses of the Psalm.

***The Lord As Righteous  
Judge Of The Future  
Verses 11-13***

- 11 *Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof;*
- 12 *Let the field exult, and all that is therein; Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy*
- 13 *Before Jehovah; For he cometh, For he cometh to judge the earth: He will judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with his truth.*

**96:11:** The verse, to the end of the Psalm, is an exhortation to bow before God. There is an abrupt change to inanimate objects as that which should give praise unto our God. This is not unusual in the Psalms (notice Psalms 148). It is interesting that this verse is located at the very center of our English Bible. There is something fitting in that. At the very center of the Bible is a verse that calls for the earth and the heavens to lift up their voice in joyful praise.

**96:12:** *“field...trees of wood sing for joy”* – If the inanimate creation of God could lift up their voice, they would willfully bow in adoration to the God Who made them. The man who refuses to bow before God and praise Him for His great works does not even measure up to the intelligence of the common tree or field (if they had intelligence). He who refuses to bow before God marks himself a fool and demonstrates that he is no better than the grass of the field that is gathered and burned in the furnace.

**96:13:** *“He cometh to judge the earth”* - What a sobering thought to know that “he cometh...to judge the earth.” When that Great Day is ushered in “with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16), it will be a glorious day. On that day those who bowed before Him in humble submission in this life will be exalted, and those who refused to give Him honor and glory will confess the name of Jesus, “For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, And every tongue shall confess to God” (Rom. 14:11). The former will be granted entrance into the eternal home prepared for them; the later will have confessed too late, to their eternal shame and condemnation.

## ***Lessons***

1. Regarding verses 7-10, there are four words of utmost importance in this Psalm insofar as our responsibility toward God is concerned. The first of these is the word ***“ascribe,”*** or “give” (KJV). Man is to GIVE (vs 8-9) to God, which is in stark contrast to modern man’s endless quest to ‘get something out of’ worship. The Psalmist suggests that we will get what we need when we give! The second word of importance is ***“bring.”*** At no time should men attempt to go before the Sovereign God empty handed. The third word for our consideration is ***“bow,”*** or “worship.” Here is the act of adoration, the reverence displayed of the humble and contrite heart. Finally there is the word ***“say.”*** We must tell others of the great love that God has for us,

and for them.

2. God is to be feared; it is the absence of fear and trembling that has led to the wholesale rebellion against God that we are witnessing in our society today. When men come to fear Jehovah, then, and only then, will this nation return to the God Who blessed her with a wonderful beginning. The only other alternative is too horrible to contemplate.
3. There is a judgment day coming. All men will be accountable for their actions. The God Who has revealed Himself in the Old Testament, and Who speaks to us through His Son today (Heb. 1:1-3), has promised that He will send His Son to judge us someday. Will you be ready for that day?

## *“God Reigns Supreme”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is unknown. The Septuagint attributes the Psalm to David when the “land was restored to peace.” We are not certain what is meant by that phrase, but if the Psalm is Davidic in its origin, it likely was written on the occasion of David’s subduing his enemies and regaining the throne that was rightfully his. The exact occasion of the Psalm is not known though the message of this Psalm is clear enough, namely that God Reigns Supreme, and there is great occasion for rejoicing in that truth. Burton Coffman provided this interesting bit of information: “Some of the opening words of this psalm were quoted by James A. Garfield on that night when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, as Garfield sought to quiet a restless mob on Wall Street, New York City. He concluded his remarks by saying, ‘God reigns, and the government in Washington still stands’” (Coffman, page 201).

### ***Analysis***

The general subject of the Psalm is the sovereignty of God, and the manifestation of that sovereignty or supremacy in vindicating His people, and in bringing to pass events which gave them ground of confidence and rejoicing in Him. A number of commentators have pointed out that Psalms 95-100 are regarded as one entire prophetic poem with the following points:

- 95th - Asserts Jehovah’s Godhead and power over all nature;
- 96th - All nations are exhorted to join in his service;
- 97th - Jehovah reigns over all the world;
- 98th - Jehovah hath done wonders and wrought deliverance;
- 99th - Jehovah, seated between the cherubim in Zion;
- 100th - All the world is called upon to praise Jehovah.

It is certainly clear that these six Psalms are similar in design and content. Brother Deaver has divided this Psalm thus: (1) Reign, verses 1-5; (2) Recognition, verses 6-9; (3) Righteous, verses 10-11;

and (4) Response, verse 12. Still another sees in the Psalm (1) The Nature of God's Rule, verses 1-6, and (2) The Necessity of a Proper Response, verses 7-12 (Sztanyo, page 160-161).

In this Psalm we have (1) a description of the majesty and glory of God as Sovereign, 1-6; (2) in view of this, all idols are confounded and shown to be nothing, 7-9; and (3) the prosperity and happiness of the righteous under the reign of God, 10-12. We will use this outline in our study.

- I. The majesty and glory of God, verses 1-6;
- II. Idols are confounded, verses 7-9;
- III. The prosperity and happiness of the righteous under the reign of God, verses 10-12;

## **Commentary**

### ***The Majesty and Glory of God* Verses 1-6**

- 1 *Jehovah reigneth; Let the earth rejoice; Let the multitude of isles be glad.*
- 2 *Clouds and darkness are round about him: Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.*
- 3 *A fire goeth before him, And burneth up his adversaries round about.*
- 4 *His lightnings lightened the world: The earth saw, and trembled.*
- 5 *The mountains melted like wax at the presence of Jehovah, At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.*
- 6 *The heavens declare his righteousness, And all the peoples have seen his glory.*

**97:1:** "*Jehovah reigneth...let the multitude of isles be glad*" - The main idea in the Psalm is the sovereignty of God. The first two words of this verse set the tone for this Psalm and the two Psalms which follow. IF God reigns (and He does), then the reaction prescribed by the writer is only natural. Since God reigns, we CAN be glad. It is of great comfort to know that God is in control of this world about us; that He indeed reigns! This universe is not one of anarchy; it is not the product of chance; it is not under control of evil forces. But rather it is under the control of a wise, all-powerful, intelligent God, who rules well and presides over its affairs. In view of this one fact, the Psalmist cried out, "*let the earth rejoice.*" Dread and consternation have no place in the heart of God's people who, more

than anyone, should find refuge in the truth presented in this Psalm.

**97:2:** *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne”* – This is precisely WHY our God is Sovereign. Kingdoms come and go. For the most part, nations of the earth seldom exercise the righteous principles set forth in God’s word. If they do it is only for a brief period of time. Even the nation of Israel plunged into apostasy over the course of their existence. When nations live by God’s rule, recognizing Him as their King, they are blessed. But the tragedy of history is that few nations have lasted more than two centuries, and still fewer can lay claim to a Christian heritage.

The *“clouds and darkness”* is a description of the majesty of God, the language likely coming from the manner in which Jehovah manifested Himself at Sinai. There are some things about our God that remain hidden, shrouded in mystery and not to be revealed until that last day when all things shall be made clear. “He conceals His blazing glory, but He has revealed the principles of **righteousness** and the decisions and acts of **justice** on which society, government and the church rests” (Sztanyo, page 161).

**97:3:** *“A fire goeth before him”* - This is poetic language describing the wrath of God. Like a fire that burns with intense heat, so the wrath of God consumes His enemies. The language is designed to impress upon us the power of God and the utter uselessness of defying His rule. Coffman sees in this a “prophecy of the Second Advent of Christ in the Judgment of the whole earth” (Coffman, page 203) as per 2 Peter 3:7. But the application, in our opinion, is must wider. In every age the wrath of God consumes His enemies like a fire that burns the chaff. The enemies of the cross have fallen by the wayside over almost two centuries of spiritual warfare. The philosophies and philosophers have come and gone, but the truth of God’s word still stands.

### ***The Indestructibility of the Bible***

by Tom Wacaster

The Bible is, without doubt, the greatest book ever written. Consisting of 66 books, it stands as a monumental representation of heaven’s love for mankind. From the moment that God’s word has gone forth to man, Satan has scrutinized, criticized, de-emphasized and sought to minimize the Holy word. Critics have assailed its “contradictions” and “inconsistencies.” But the honest seeker knows that all such attempts to find fault with Scripture are mere

subterfuge, and a whistling in the wind. The Bible has survived the onslaught of critics, and the more scrutiny and examination the Bible receives, the more it shines. A few years ago brother Curtis Cates wrote the following: "No book has ever been scrutinized so closely or vigorously, and, I might say, viciously. The microscope and the telescope of man have been applied to 'the Book of books,' but the more close the investigation and the more detailed the study, the more beautiful its fabric. The productions of men undergo but a mere fraction of a fraction of such investigation; they are examined, riffled through, and somewhat rigorously tested at the mercy of mankind; and such results in their complete exhaustion and abandonment. Man moves on to other thoughts, other pursuits, and other works. Now, why does the Bible multiply in its beauty and complexity [as a snowflake or a butterfly wing under a microscope] as its innermost thoughts, precepts and principles are dissected and scrutinized? That, my friend, is the difference between the meager and fallible works of finite man and the inexhaustible and vibrant revelation of the infinite Creator! 'The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul' (Psa. 19:7)." Beloved, we hold within our hands the map that can help us to successfully chart the troubled seas of life. It is the compass that will ultimately lead us across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Have faith, weary pilgrim! The Book is true, the Author trustworthy, and the hope sure and steadfast. For this we give thanks, and to this end we have committed our very souls.

### ***The Hammer And The Anvil***

by John Clifford

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
When looking in, I saw upon the floor,  
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,  
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"  
"Just one," said he; then said with twinkling eye,  
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

And so, I thought, the anvil of God's word  
For ages skeptics' blows have beat upon;  
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The anvil is unharmed - the hammers gone!

**97:4:** *"His lightnings...The earth saw, and trembled"* - When the great majesty of God is witnessed, even the earth trembles. The language is hyperbolic, exaggerated language to impress upon the



mind of the reader the reverence due to the Almighty.

**97:5:** *“the mountains melted like wax”* - This too, is hyperbolic language used to describe the great majestic nature of our God, including His wrath and anger toward in impenitent world. There may be some “reference to both the First and Second Advents of Jesus Christ...when every mountain and every island shall be moved out of its place” (Coffman, page 202), but it is not limited to that occasion that awaits the whole of this creation.

**97:6:** *“the heavens declare his righteousness”* - The orderliness of this universe declares the existence of our God. These things are most evident, though some may not appreciate it.

### ***Idols Are Confounded*** **Verses 7-9**

7 *Let all them be put to shame that serve graven images, That boast themselves of idols: Worship him, all ye gods.*

8 *Zion heard and was glad, And the daughters of Judah rejoiced, Because of thy judgments, O Jehovah.*

9 *For thou, Jehovah, art most high above all the earth: Thou art exalted far above all gods.*

**97:7:** *“Let all them be put to shame that serve graven images”* - The Psalmist desires that men would come to realize the futility of idols and their absolute inability to protect and guide men. The word rendered “gods” is the Hebrew “Eloheim.” The Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, “All his angels.” We agree with Coffman that the reference here is to civil and judicial magistrates. Any other explanation is wrought with difficulties.

All idols are mere inferior masters, having no power, nor possessing any ability to grant the desires of their subjects, or answer the prayers of the petitioners. All who thus render service to such empty and vain objects ought to be ashamed. We are grateful for Coffman’s following comments and reference:

William Jennings Bryan stated it, ‘Men are worshipping Money, Power, Fame, Travel, Sex, Liquor, Fashion, Pleasure, Popularity, Entertainment, Food and Success, to name only a few of the modern ‘gods’ that have replaced the ancient idols (Coffman, page 204).

All who bow before such ‘gods’ ought, like their predecessors, to be

ashamed.

**97:8:** The “*daughters of Judah*” is poetic language for the cities surrounding Jerusalem.

***The Prosperity And Happiness of the  
Righteous Under the Reign of God  
Verses 10-12***

- 10 *O ye that love Jehovah, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of his saints; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.*  
11 *Light is sown for the righteous, And gladness for the upright in heart.*  
12 *Be glad in Jehovah, ye righteous; And give thanks to his holy memorial name.*

Coffman’s summation of these three verses is as good as we came across:

The big thought in this paragraph is the joy and happiness of those who follow the Lord...Why is it true that ONLY the righteous are happy? There is actually no mystery about this. ‘God destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will. This simply means that all men were destined by God to be Christians; to live otherwise is to live contrary to one’s destiny; and that cannot ever achieve happiness for any creature God ever made, not even man. The tiger leaving bloody tracks on the stone floor of his prison in the zoo, the bird in the cage, the fish out of water - are such creatures happy? No indeed! Why? They were destined for another kind of existence. Sinful men find themselves in the same predicament. Men can live contrary to their destiny, all right, but the wretchedness of their lives is the price they pay for it. Man was so made by the Creator that his highest happiness, both in the present existence, and in the world to come are achieved by faithfulness to the will of God. Let the intelligent ponder a simple question: ‘If YOU were Almighty God, would you create an intelligent being such as man in such a manner that he would be HAPPIER in the service of the devil, than in serving you?’ To meditate upon that question is to know the answer (Coffman, pages 205-207).

**97:10:** “*Love Jehovah...hate evil*” - Concerning the instructions to “hate evil,” it is imperative that God’s children have the same attitude toward evil as does their God. The problem with modern man is that he perceives God as some “namby-pamby, easy-going old grandpa

who is so good that he couldn't ever really hate anybody no matter how scandalously wicked" (Coffman, page 207). The very reason why men have been swept into the depths of sin is because there is no hatred for those things of the world.

**97:11:** *"Light is sown for righteousness"* - These words are not to be taken literally, for who can actually plant light within the ground? The "righteous" and the "upright in heart" are speaking of those who follow God and submit to His Kingship. That being the case, the "light sown" and the "gladness" have something in common. If we allow for poetic language to describe the cause and effect, then gladness is the effect, and "light sown" is the cause. The way of God is often depicted as the way of "light" (1 John 1:6-7). When we walk in the light, peace and happiness are ours. Happiness and joy are the fruit of a life that is lived in harmony with God's word. That word is likened to a "seed" (Luke 8:1-11) sown in the good and honest heart, the end result of which is abundant fruit. It is not uncommon for a man to come to his senses long periods after the "light" has been sown in his heart by some godly teacher. If we bow before the great "I Am," light will be sown in our heart. Peace and happiness will be the end result.

**97:12:** With this verse we have come full circle, from a call for all men to praise God, to the exhortation for the individual to "give thanks to his holy memorial name." Though all the earth rise up in rebellion, God's saint ought worship and praise his God. In so doing he will be genuinely "glad."

### ***Lessons***

1. Note the four-fold obligation of every faithful child of God. He must "love the Lord," "hate evil," "rejoice," and "give thanks."
2. Men will always reap what they sow. In like manner, that which is sown in the heart of a man will determine what he will become. Sow light, and you reap gladness; sow darkness, and you reap shame and sorrow.
3. My first visit to India in September 2004 provided me with first hand experience on the foolishness of idolatry. I wrote the following while in India:

***"An Empty Wagon Going Nowhere"***

by Tom Wacaster

This past week has been a week of festivity in honor of the Hindu God. Worship services to that idol occur daily, extending into the late hours of the night during this week long festivity. It is sad to see such devotion to a false god. In contrast it is rewarding to see those who hear the truth and turn away from that false system of worship to serve the true and living God. There is one interesting feature of this week long festivity that caught my interest. During the week gifts are given to this false Hindu god, and at the end of the week's festivity, the idol is placed on a wagon, and taken to the river and thrown in the river, along with the treasures and gifts that were given by the devotees of the idol. Many people die attempting to recover some of the treasures that are cast into the river with the idol. Every town has a number of these idols, and so when these false gods are put on the wagons, the procession can be quite lengthy. We were returning from a late night preaching appointment and passed one of those wagons that had evidently made its way to the river and was now returning to town. The decorations still draped the wagon, but the idol was gone. Gone too were the merrymaking, singing and dancing, and loud musical procession that accompanied the wagon on its way to the river. And I thought to myself, "An empty wagon going nowhere." That adequately describes the essence of the Hindu religion. While it may carry a colorful idol, and be draped with ribbons, and surrounded with singing and dancing, it is really an empty wagon going nowhere. It is empty, vain, and futile, whether it is going to or coming from the river. Many a life can be described with the same words. All of us are on the road to eternity. Some travel the narrow way; while others march with the multitudes down that broad path that leads to eternal ruin. Some, like the Hindu idol, are surrounded with wealth, merriment, and pleasure. Some are devotees to false religion; others to no religion at all. Multitudes are marching in the long dark night of spiritual darkness to eternal separation from God. With no awareness of their lost condition, they march on. Like that idolatrous procession going to the river, the masses of humanity are marching toward the river that will forever separate them from the God Who created them and loves them. And so many of them could easily have the epitaph engraved upon their tombstone: "An empty wagon going nowhere." How sad!



## *“A Psalm of Praise”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript simply calls this “A Psalm.” The author is not known, nor can we determine the occasion for the Psalm. Barnes points out that “it is a psalm which would have been appropriate at the dedication of the temple after the Babylonian captivity, and may have been composed for that occasion” (Barnes, QV). There is a far greater application, however, in that it speaks typically of the deliverance and redemption that is ours in Christ Jesus. Coffman has quoted Kidner regarding this Psalm: “In this psalm, there are no comparisons with the heathen, no instructions for correct worship, all is joy and exhilaration” (Coffman, page 211). This Psalm is, in fact, one of the more joyful of the whole collection of the Psalms.

We found the following observation rather interesting. Adam Clarke compares this Psalm to the song of praise that Mary sang in Luke 1:46 ff.

This Psalm is an evident prophecy of Christ’s coming to save the world; and what is here foretold by David is, in the Blessed Virgin’s Song, chanted forth as being *accomplished*. David is the *Voice*, and Mary is the *Echo*.

1. DAVID. “O sing unto the Lord a new song.” (The *Voice*.)  
MARY. “My soul doth magnify the Lord.” (The *Echo*.)
2. DAVID. “*He* hath done marvellous things.” (The *Voice*.)  
MARY. “He that is mighty hath done great things.” (The *Echo*.)
3. DAVID. “With his own right hand and holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory.” (The *Voice*.) MARY. “He hath showed strength with his arm, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.” (The *Echo*.)
4. DAVID. “*The* Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly showed,” &c. (The *Voice*.)  
MARY. “*His* mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation.” (The *Echo*.)
5. DAVID. “*He* hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel.” (The *Voice*.)

MARY. “*He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.*” (The *Echo*.)

These parallels are very striking; and it seems as if Mary had this Psalm in her eye when she composed her song of triumph. And this is a farther argument that the whole Psalm, whether it record the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, is yet to be ultimately understood of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of his gospel through all the nations of the earth: and taken in this view, no language can be too strong, nor poetic imagery too high, to point out the unsearchable riches of Christ (Adam Clarke, QV).

### ***Analysis***

Of this Psalm, G.Campbell Morgan notes: “Sometimes it seems as though all singing were out of place, save as faith keeps its eye fixed on the occupied throne of Jehovah. The days are dark and mysterious as ever, and the outlook as full of gloom. Yet ‘He hath done marvelous things,’ and ‘He cometh to judge.’ This vision of God in the past, and the future creates the song of the present” (Morgan, page 258). The Psalm is a call for praise, beginning with Israel (1-3), widening to include the whole earth (verses 4-6), and, finally, encompassing all nature (verses 7-8).

Spurgeon sees in this Psalm three stanzas of three verses each. “In the first, 1-3, the subject of praise is announced; in the second, 4-6, the manner of that praise is prescribed; and in the third, 7-9, the universal extent of it is proclaimed” (Spurgeon, QV).

Roy Deaver followed Morgan and divided the Psalm under the headings of (1) Israel, 1-3, (2) Earth, 4-6, and (3) Nature, 7-9. We will likewise use Morgan’s three-fold division of the Psalm.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Israel Verses 1-3***

- 1 *Oh sing unto Jehovah a new song; For he hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and his holy arm, hath wrought salvation for him.*
- 2 *Jehovah hath made known his salvation: His righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the nations.*

3 *He hath remembered his lovingkindness and his faithfulness toward the house of Israel: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.*

**98:1:** “Sing unto Jehovah a new song” - The “new song” is the song of salvation, offered only in the New Testament dispensation in the ultimate sense. It would seem, therefore, that the Israel spoken of here is not physical Israel, but the spiritual Israel, consisting of the faithful remnant. If the Psalm was written after the Babylonian captivity, then the “new song” is one of salvation and deliverance. “We had a new song before (Ps. xcvi.) because the Lord was coming, but now we have another new song because he has come, and has conquered” (Spurgeon, QV).

*“marvelous things”* - And why should we sing unto Jehovah? Because He has done marvelous things. The “right hand” and “holy arm” are symbols of the strength of our God. “If all men really understood what a marvel the salvation of God actually is, perhaps there would be a more general song of thanksgiving arising from the hearts of mankind” (Coffman, page 209). Homer Hailey has suggested that this “new song” may very well be one of those songs which we will sing in heaven. How marvelous, indeed, is the mighty arm of Jehovah. “The victories of Jesus among men are all the more wonderful because they are accomplished by means to all appearances most inadequate; they are due not to physical but to moral power; the energy of goodness, justice, truth; in a word, to the power of his HOLY arm” (Spurgeon, page 210). Such amazing strength and holiness, without doubt, is deserving of a “new song.”

**98:2:** “His salvation...his righteousness hath he shown to the nations” – The reference to the “nations” is a clear indication that the salvation spoken of here is universal in its nature. Our conclusion is that the Psalm is a prophetic glimpse of the salvation that would be brought to all the nations through Jesus Christ, a salvation God has “openly showed” in the sight of the nations.” Or, as Paul put it, “these things have not been done in a corner” (Acts 26:26). The primary and immediate application of the Psalm may very well have been to the salvation of Israel from Babylonian captivity. No doubt the nations round about observed the hand of the Almighty in restoring Israel to her Promised Land. The full manifestation of God’s great power in giving salvation is seen in Christ and the cross. If Israel’s deliverance was “openly showed in the sight of all the nations,” what can we then say with regard to the work of our Lord?



*“hath made known”* - There is an obvious reference here to the work of the Messiah. Prior to the coming of our Lord, the “mystery” was not made known (Eph. 3:3-5). In addition, that “mystery” cannot be discerned with human wisdom, or through natural means, as per Paul’s argument in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. Consequently, were it not for God making His salvation KNOWN to mankind through revelation, man would remain in ignorance, without hope, and lost. Having made known the mystery, it is inherent that men today read and study that mystery so as to come to a knowledge of God’s plan for man’s redemption (Eph. 3:3-5, 2 Tim. 2:15, etc).

**98:3:** *“He hath remembered”* – It is not that God somehow forgets and then His memory is “jogged.” This is poetic language used to impress upon our minds that God is always mindful of His promises to man, although He works things according to His own schedule. Man, due to his finite limitations, might think that God has forgotten, due especially to His delay in carrying out those promises. Let it never be forgotten that God’s ways are not man’s ways, and His timetable is quite different than ours.

It is noted once again that all the “ends of the earth” have seen the power of God manifested in the deliverance of Israel. There is a definite promise here to include the Gentiles in God’s marvelous scheme of redemption.

### ***Earth*** **Verses 4-6**

- 4 *Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all the earth: break forth and sing for joy, yea, sing praises*
- 5 *Sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp; With the harp and the voice of melody.*
- 6 *With trumpets and sound of cornet Make a joyful noise before the King, Jehovah.*

**98:4:** - Here the tone changes. Rather than concentrating on encouraging Israel to sing unto God, the Psalmist now admonishes the EARTH to sing praises unto Jehovah God. Much of the language is figurative, exaggerated, and hyperbolic in its nature. The earth cannot rejoice, but the inhabitants of the earth CAN rejoice, and it is to the PEOPLE of the nations that the admonition applies.

The ASV’s rendering of *“break forth”* is preferred over the KJV,

“make a loud noise.” Barnes has pointed out that the Hebrew word (*‘patzahh’*) means “to break in pieces; then, to break forth, as a shout of triumph or joy, as if the joy could be no longer confined or repressed” (Barnes, QV). It is, as Barnes notes, “expressive of irrepressible joy” (Barnes, QV).

**98:5-6:** “*sing praises with the harp*” - David originated the use of instrumental music in worship to God. There is absolutely nothing in the OT which suggests that the use of such instruments originated with God. And though tolerated under the OT dispensation, any use today in worship will render worship vain and unacceptable. Adam Clarke has this interesting note on this verse:

**With—the voice of a Psalm**—I think ‘*zimrah*’ which we translate Psalm, means either a musical instrument, or a species of ode modulated by different voices (Clarke, QV).

The verse is emphatic, expressing intense involvement on the part of the worshipper. “Man’s voice is at its best when it sings the best words in the best spirit to the best of Beings” (Spurgeon, QV). Spurgeon also includes this most beautiful poem (Spurgeon, QV):

“Say, if your hearts are tuned to sing,  
Is there a subject greater?  
Harmony all its strains may bring,  
But Jesus’ name is sweeter.

Who of his love doth once partake,  
He evermore rejoices;  
Melody in our hearts we make,  
Melody with our voices”

### ***Nature*** **Verses 7-9**

7 *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein;*  
8 *Let the floods clap their hands; Let the hills sing for joy together*  
9 *Before Jehovah; For he cometh to judge the earth: He will judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with equity.*

**98:7-8:** “*Let the sea roar*” - While the Old Testament often uses the word “sea” to refer to the wicked in rebellion to God, our opinion is

that the Psalmist is using hyperbolic language to emphasize his call to praise God. Delitzsch informs us that the reference to “the floods clap their hands” is peculiar to this Psalm. What we have here is metaphoric language in which all of nature is called to offer praise and to rejoice together.

**98:9:** “*Before Jehovah*” – These words likely were intended to go with the previous verse. The praise and song is to be before the Almighty for He alone is worthy of our worship.

“*cometh to judge the earth*” – Here the Psalm has overtones of the final Judgment. Certainly our God judges on other occasion in a limited sense, but there is time coming when the whole of this earth will be judged in righteousness. It is the very contemplation of the return of our Lord that presents an occasion for joyous singing as this Psalm might suggest.

### ***Lessons***

1. Verse 1: Consider some of the “marvelous things” that our God has accomplished: He hath created a marvelous universe; He has established a marvelous government; He hath bestowed a marvelous gift in His Son; He hath provided a marvelous redemption through Jesus Christ our Lord; He hath inspired a marvelous book showing us the way to heaven; He hath effected a marvelous transformation in the lives of those who love and obey Him.
2. Verse 2 speaks of God’s salvation for man. When we consider this great salvation we can see (1) The contents of which it is composed, i.e. the death of Jesus on the cross, the blood shed in our behalf, the grace of God that provided it for us, etc. (2) The reasons for which it has been provided include the love of God and the value of man created in the image of God. (3) The price at which it has been procured, namely the death of Jesus upon the cross and the shedding of His blood. (4) The terms on which it shall be imparted include faith, repentance, confession and baptism. (5) The way in which it must be propagated is through the foolishness of preaching. (6) Finally the manner in which its neglect will be punished is stressed throughout the New Testament (Heb. 2:1-4).
3. Verse 9. What are we “before the Lord”? It makes little difference what we are “before men.” What others may think of us is of

little consequence in comparison to what God thinks of us. It is a sobering thought that someday each one of us shall stand “before the Lord” to receive judgment. Would it not be better to be concerned about how we stand “before the Lord” now; “before” we must stand “before the Lord” then?

## *“Jehovah Our God Is Holy”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is not known, and there is nothing in the Psalm itself that would help determine the author. Many of the ancient versions ascribe the Psalm to David on the basis of its similarity to, and grouping with, chapters 95-100. The exact occasion of this Psalm does not seem discernable. It is, however, of the same nature as those immediately preceding it, and of such a nature as suited for praise to God.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we get a glimpse of the absolute Theocratic rule of Jehovah God. We agree with Morgan that “this is a song of the Kingdom of Jehovah as founded on, and administered in, holiness” (Morgan, page 258). The Psalm naturally divides itself into three sections, each ending with a reference to the holiness of God, leading Spurgeon to call the Psalm “The Sanctus, or, The Holy, Holy, Holy Psalm” (Spurgeon, QV). The first division acclaims the King as enthroned (verses 1-3), giving us a glimpse of the holiness of our God. The second division (verses 4-5) affirms the absolute integrity of the King’s administration. His Kingdom is built upon “justice,” “equity” and “righteousness.” The final division (verses 6-9) declares the constant and faithful guidance of God’s representatives. We are informed that God communicates with the faithful, and forgives them when they sin (conditioned upon repentance). Each of the three sections calls for a response to the affirmation. We were particularly impressed with Phillips’ homiletic outline on this chapter (Phillips, page 90):

“The Lamb Upon His Throne”

I. The Ideal Prince (99:1-4)

II. The Ideal Priest (99:5-6)

III. The Ideal Prophet (99:7-9)

Brother Roy Deaver divided the Psalm into three parts: King (1-3), Judge (4-5), and Guide (6-9). We will follow his outline for our

study of the Psalm.

## **Commentary**

### **King Verses 1-3**

*1 Jehovah reigneth; let the peoples tremble: He sitteth above the cherubim; let the earth be moved.*

*2 Jehovah is great in Zion; And he is high above all the peoples.*

*3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name: Holy is he.*

**99:1** – “*Let the peoples tremble*” - The trembling of the people referred to here is the reverence or awe which one has in the conscious presence of God. One opinion is that the Psalmist’s thoughts are upon the enemies of God and this is a call for them to “tremble.” The Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate render this, “Let the people rage,” or be angry: as if the idea were that God reigned, although the people were enraged, and were opposed to him.

“*He sitteth above the cherubim*” – The cherub in the theology of the Hebrews was a figurative representation of power and majesty, under the image of a being of a high and celestial nature, whose form is represented as composed from the figures of a man, ox, lion, and eagle (cf. Ezek. 1). Cherubs are first mentioned as guarding the gates of Paradise (Gen. 3:24), then as bearing the throne of God upon their wings through the clouds (Ezek. 1; 10), and also as statues or images made of wood and overlaid with gold, over the cover of the ark, in the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle, and of the temple (Exo. 25:18 ff; 1 Kings 6:23-28). Between the two cherubim in the temple, the Shechinah, or visible symbol of the presence of God, rested; and hence, God is represented as “dwelling between the cherubim” (cf. Exo. 25:22; Num. 7:89; Ps. 80:1). The idea is that God’s presence is even before His enemies and is manifested in the wonderful things He has done for His people.

“*let the earth be moved*” – If this is a general call for praise, then the Psalmist may have been using hyperbolic language to emphasize the absolute reign of God over the whole earth. Interestingly, “the word [“moved,” TW] occurs nowhere else” (Barnes, QV). The cry to “let the earth be moved” has been interpreted by some to be a glimpse of that time when “the entirety of Adam’s race will suddenly behold, ‘Him that sitteth upon the throne’” (Barnes, QV). But the idea here seems to be that the Psalmist is reminding his readers that though

the earth might be moved against God, He still reigns supreme and His rule will remain established.

**99:2:** *“Jehovah is great...high above all the peoples”* - The idea is that God is great as evidenced toward His people. “He has evinced power in their behalf; he has interposed for them in times of danger; he has so discomfited their enemies as to show that he is a great God - a God worthy to be adored” (Barnes, QV). The exalted nature of God is being emphasized. Zion is a type of the church. It is in the church that our God “unveils his attributes and commands the lowliest homage; the ignorant forget him, the wicked despise him, the atheistical oppose him, but among his own chosen he is great beyond comparison” (Spurgeon, QV).

**99:3:** *“thy great and terrible name”* - Our English word “terrible” does not adequately translate the meaning of the original. The word means to be “feared, or revered.” There is much lacking in our present world with regard to the fear of God. It would appear that the concept of a weak, namby-pamby, all-grace-and-no-wrath-god dominates the thinking of our sin-mad world. Until men come to fear God as they ought, further departure from His word will be evident.

There is also great consolation in the Psalmist’s reference to the name of God. As Clarke expressed it, “His enemies have every thing to fear, while his friends have every thing to hope” (Adam Clarke, QV).

*“holy is he”* – This is a fitting conclusion to this portion of the Psalm. The very fact that God is holy is a just foundation for the praise called for in this Psalm. After all, who could worship or honor a God who was **not** pure and holy?

### ***Judge*** **Verses 4-5**

- 4 *The king’s strength also loveth justice; Thou dost establish equity;  
Thou executest justice and righteousness in Jacob.*  
5 *Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at his footstool: Holy is he.*

**99:4:** *“the king’s strength”* - If this Psalm were written by David, he must mean by this that he was God’s vicegerent or deputy, and that, even as king, God was his strength, and the pattern according to

which equity, judgment, and righteousness should be executed in Jacob. With this verse the writer turns his attention to the administration of God's reign, establishing the basic characteristics of Jehovah's rule: (1) He loves justice; (2) He establishes equity; (3) He executes justice and righteous. We learn from this that God has a strong love for justice. Too many human governments are void of this love for justice, and the taking of a bribe is common practice. We learn as well that Jehovah has "established" equity; He has set it forth in His laws and commandments for Israel. A careful examination of the Decalogue will reveal that the Mosaic system insofar as social equity is concerned, is unsurpassed in the annals of history. We learn, finally, that God carries out His will; He "executes" His plans and designs. Morality is the very basis of God's rule and government. While men may speak of "relative morality," the Lord knows nothing of such nonsense. The passages teaches that God **ENTERTAINS** justice - He has a strong affinity toward it; our God **ESTABLISHES** justice and equity - He provides the means by which it is to be carried out; and our God **EXECUTES** that justice. Spurgeon had this most excellent observation:

The palace of Jehovah is no robber's fortress nor despot's castle, built on dungeons, with stones carved by slaves, and cemented with the blood of toiling serfs. The annals of most human governments have been written in the tears of the downtrodden, and the curses of the oppressed: the chronicles of the Lord's kingdom are of another sort, truth shines in each line, goodness in every syllable, and justice in every letter (Spurgeon, QV).

"*Jacob*" is a reference to Israel, the name of the man standing for the whole of the nation.

**99:5:** "*Exalt ye Jehovah our God*" - In light of the previous verse, it seems only natural that one would want to exalt Jehovah. It would seem that all would want to bow at His feet and offer praise unto Him. But such is not the case. So many have turned their back upon Him Whose system is absolutely just, and absolutely equitable. True freedom can only be found in maintaining a proper relationship with Jehovah. This our forefathers understood, and of which our present government leaders must be reminded.

"*worship at his footstool*" - The footstool is that on which the feet of the king rests when he is sitting upon the throne. To "worship at his footstool" denotes the deepest humility and the profoundest prostration and reverence (cf. 1 Chr. 28:2; Ps. 132:7). Sometimes the earth is called God's footstool (Matt. 5:35; Isaiah 66:1); sometimes



Jerusalem and sometimes the temple are referred to as God's footstool (Lam. 2:1); sometimes the tabernacle (Psa. 32:7); and sometimes the ark of the covenant (1 Chron. 28:2).

*"Holy is he"* – Again the Psalmist reminds his readers that God is holy and therefore deserving of the praise and adoration due Him.

### ***Guide*** **Verses 6-9**

**99:6:** *"Moses...Aaron...Samuel"* - Of particular interest here is the mention of the PRIESTS and the PROPHETS, but no mention is made of any of the KINGS. This is only natural in view of the fact that the Psalm emphasizes the reign of Jehovah. He is the only King ever intended for Israel. When Israel asked for a king, it was in opposition to God's plan for the nation. Consequently their demand for a king led to their ultimate downfall. They had, in fact, rejected God from being their King. When sin had run its course in Israel, the prophet reminded them that God "have given thee a king in mine anger, and have taken him away in my wrath" (Hosea 13:11).

*"Moses...Aaron...Samuel...they called upon Jehovah"* – These three men are among the most eminent of Old Testament characters. If such great men bowed in adoration to God, it is fitting that all men submit to the reign of Jehovah.

**99:7:** *"he spake to them in the pillar of cloud"* - There is no record of God speaking to Samuel in "the cloud and pillar." The language is likely poetic designed to emphasize God's historical dealings with those who were faithful, of whom Moses, Aaron, and Samuel were certainly representative. The reference may be to the fact that as God directed Israel through the wilderness, so He guided them even to that point and time (Ex. 33:9).

*"they kept his testimonies"* – Moses, Aaron and Samuel were examples of obedience. From verses 6 and 7 we learn that calling upon Jehovah is more than some verbal plea; it is keeping the testimonies and statutes.

**99:8:** *"Thou answerest"* – The fact that God "answers" prayer is an indication that He is a personal Being. He answered prayer in the past; He answers prayer today. The God that "we" worship is the same God "they" worshipped. How grateful we should be that our God is a God Who answers prayer.

*“thou wast a God that forgavest them”* – Moses and Aaron were not without their faults. Moses failed to glorify God when he struck the rock; Aaron compromised and built a golden calf at the demand of the people. The inspired writers did not hide the shortcomings of some the most notable characters of sacred history. David’s sin with Bathsheba, Moses’ failure to glorify God, and Aaron’s compromise in the wilderness are but a few examples. And though God “took vengeance of their doings” and punished them appropriately, He was gracious to forgive and pardon.

We must not impose upon God’s wonderful mercy and assume that we can “continue in sin that grace may abound” (Rom. 6:1). Repentance and obedience are prerequisites to divine mercy. David was considered a “man after God’s heart” because of his humility; Moses was meek; Samuel faithful in his office. It was their faith that saved them in spite of their weaknesses.

Spurgeon had an interesting take on these last few verses:

Some apply this verse to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and remind us that each of these fell into a fault and received chastisement. Of Samuel they assert that, for having set up his sons as his successors, he was compelled to submit to the anointing of Saul as king, which was a great grief to him; this is to our mind a very doubtful statement, and leads us to abandon the interpretation altogether. We believe that the passage refers to the nation which was spared through the intercession of these three holy men, but yet was severely chastened for its transgressions. In answer to the cry of Moses the tribes lived on, but the then existing generation could not enter Canaan: Aaron’s golden calf was broken, though the fire of the Lord did not consume the people; and Israel smarted under the harsh government of Saul, though at Samuel’s request its murmurings against the theocratic rule of their fathers’ God was not visited with pestilence or famine. So to forgive sin as at the same time to express abhorrence of it, is the peculiar glory of God, and is best seen in the atonement of our Lord Jesus (Spurgeon, QV).

**99:9:** The practical admonition is two-fold. We are to “exalt” and “worship” Jehovah. Such is to be done “at his holy hill.” And the REASON for this is that “Jehovah...is holy.”

### ***Lessons***

1. Though the nations may rage, God still reigns. He maintains

control over the nations; He rules from heaven, “high above all the peoples.”

2. We can learn much about the nature of our God from this Psalm:  
(1) He sits above the cherubim; (2) He is “high above the peoples”; (3) His very name is great and terrible; (4) He is holy; (5) He is a forgiving God; (6) He speaks to His people; (6) He is worthy of praise and adoration.
3. Though God has promised to avenge evildoers, He stands ready to forgive. But His lovingkindness should not be interpreted as being tolerant of sin without due punishment.
4. In verses 7-9 we get a glimpse of the “ideal prophet” (Phillips, page 97):
  - A. The prophet’s **message** (verse 7), “He spake to them”
  - B. The prophet’s **mercy** (verse 8), “Thou answerest them, O Lord our God”
  - C. The prophet’s **ministry** (verse 9), to “exalt the Lord our God”

## *“Serve The Lord With Gladness”*

### ***Introduction***

This brief but sublime Psalm claims no author. Nor is it possible to determine the occasion of the Psalm. It is the last in a group of Psalms having to do with praise unto God due to His majesty and power. We like Barnes' introduction to this Psalm:

This psalm — so beautiful — so grand — so often sung in all lands and languages — completes this “group” of psalms respecting the reign of God, or the reasons for praise as derived from the fact that he reigns. In the previous psalms in this group Ps. 95–99 the call to praise had been in some respects local and particular; in this, it is universal. All lands are called on to praise him; all people to worship him as God. The “ground” of this, as stated in the psalm, is that he is their “Maker;” that he is the Creator of all. As all have derived their being from him, they are called on to praise him as their common Creator and Father. So far as the reason here referred to is a ground for praise and worship, it applies to all people now. The nations — the people of the earth — are one. However much they may differ in complexion, in language, in customs, in religion, they have all been formed by the same God; they are all of one family; they are all entitled to the same privileges; they may all have the same access to his throne. The races of people are one; and all should gather around the throne of their common Creator, and render him united praise. This psalm has been sung by million and hundreds of million; it will continue to be sung to the end of time (Barnes).

The Psalm has been used as a basis for a number of songs. William Kethe wrote the following metric version of this beautiful Psalm:

All people that on earth do dwell  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
Him serve with fear, His praise foretell,  
Come ye before Him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed,  
Without our aid He did us make;

We are His folk, He doth us feed  
And for His sheep he doth us take (as quoted by Phillips, 2:100).

The Psalm is prophetic. The Psalmist is looking down the corridor of time to the coronation of Christ the King. The Psalm speaks of “singing” (verse 2), “all ye lands” (verse 1), the “sheep of his pasture” (verse 3), and His wonderful “lovingkindness unto all generations” (verse 5). Each of these terms are certainly descriptive of the Christian dispensation when Christ would rule as King of kings.

## ***Analysis***

The Psalm can be divided into two sections, each one presenting an admonition, followed by an explanation. We have (1) God the Creator, verses 1-3, followed by (2) God the Merciful, verses 4-5. We will use this outline in our study of the Psalm, and entitle this chapter, “Serve The Lord With Gladness.”

Phillips sees a three-fold division in the Psalm (Phillips, 2:99):

- I. Approaching God (100:1-2)
- II. Apprehending God (100:3)
- III. Appreciating God (100:4-5)

Willmington had a five point outline:

- I. God Is The Song (100:1-2): We are his singers.
- II. God Is The Creator (100:3): We are his creation.
- III. God Is The Shepherd (100:3): We are his sheep.
- IV. God Is The Blessed One (100:4): We are his blessed ones.
- V. God Is Love (100:5): We are his loved ones (Willmington, page 272).

## ***Commentary***

### ***God the Creator Verses 1-3***

- 1 Make a joyful noise unto Jehovah, all ye lands.*
- 2 Serve Jehovah with gladness: Come before his presence with singing.*
- 3 Know ye that Jehovah, he is God: It is he that hath made us, and we are his; We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

These verses contain an exhortation to praise God based upon the fact that He is One who made us; He is the Creator, we the created. For this reason alone He is deserving of our praise and adoration. Note in these three verses that this praise is to be (1) universal, (2) enthusiastic, (3) sincere, (4) intelligent, (5) public, and (6) with thanksgiving.

**100:1:** “*make a joyful noise unto Jehovah*” – Some sincere but ignorant individuals have concluded that the Psalmist’s admonition to “make a joyful noise” is a general command and it is thus left up to man to determine the kind of noise he will make. A careful examination of verses 1 and 2 shows that the Psalmist was using synonymous parallelism; the “noise” of verse 1 is identified and clarified as “singing” in verse 2.

“*all ye lands*” – The call to praise is universal. Whereas the previous Psalms in this group were more isolated, here the Psalmist calls for “all...lands” to offer up praise to Jehovah.

**100:2:** “*Serve Jehovah with gladness*” – Praise and service go hand in hand, though they are two separate acts of devotion and consecration. Our service to God is to be with gladness. God will not bless a man who grudgingly serves. We are, therefore, to come into the presence of Jehovah with “singing,” such being indicative of a happy hearted individual (cf. James 5:14 ff). The words of song by Isaac Watts are most appropriate:

Let those refuse to sing,  
Who never knew our God;  
But favourites of the heavenly king,  
Must speak his praise abroad.

**100:3:** “*Know ye*” suggests intelligent worship. Concerning the word “know,” Anderson correctly noted:

This is more than merely an intellectual exercise; in this context it implies the acknowledgement that Yahweh is God, and a self-involvement in all the demands and responsibilities which the Lordship of Yahweh implies (Anderson, 2:698).

We should know WHO we are worshipping, and WHY!

“*It is he that hath made us*” - God is deserving of our worship because He made us. Men are not the product of evolutionary arrangement of molecules but that of Divine creation. Only the

intellectual pigmy could possibly conclude that we have been so wonderfully arranged by mere chance! Why in the world some Christians would want to believe such a thing as “theistic evolution” is without reasonable explanation. Spurgeon wrote many years ago,

If this theory [evolution, TW] shall ever find believers, there will certainly remain no reason for accusing the superstitious of credulity, for the amount of credence necessary to accept this dogma of skepticism is a thousand-fold greater than that which is required by an absurd belief in winking Madonnas, and smiling Bambinos. 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 (Spurgeon).

The reference by the Psalmist to our being the “sheep of his pasture” is most significant. We agree with brother Coffman that “When Christ said, ‘I am the good shepherd,’ it was a claim of divinity as surely as anything he ever said” (Coffman, page 2:222).

### ***God the Merciful*** **Verses 4-5**

- 4 *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: Give thanks unto him, and bless his name.*  
5 *For Jehovah is good; His lovingkindness endureth for ever, And his faithfulness unto all generations.*

**100:4:** “*Enter into his gates*” - We are invited to enter through the gates into the very presence of our God. The only requirement is that our entrance be accompanied with “thanksgiving” and “praise.” These are two keys that open the gates to the courts of Jehovah. And while the physical blessings are much for which to be thankful, the spiritual blessings are of exceeding greatness. Once we have entered into His courts, we are to bless His name. In all things we are to bless Him.

Before leaving this verse it should be pointed out that a number of elements involved in worship are included, namely thanksgiving, prayer, and reverence toward God.

**100:5:** “*good...lovingkindness...faithfulness*” - In this verse the Psalmist sets forth some reasons why our God is worthy of the praise and admonition we are instructed to render. For one thing, He is GOOD! All about Him is good. There is nothing evil about Jehovah.

Not only is He good, He is KIND. His kindness is here coupled with His great love, thus making our English word “lovingkindness.” Next, our God is reliable, and trustworthy under all circumstances. God is not a fair-weathered friend. He will love us to the end. Third, He is faithful unto all generations. God will keep His promises. Though men may fail, our God will remain faithful. He will not forsake us, nor in any wise fail us.

### ***Lessons***

1. The soul that is joyful is the soul that sings (James 5:13). That being the case, when a person simply refuses to sing praises to God it speaks volumes concerning the man’s heart. Yet in any given assembly we find those who sit in complete silence while others lift their voices in praise. Such is truly sad.
2. Service should be rendered with gladness. God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:7). But God also loves those who enter into His courts with genuine thanksgiving in their heart, and a joy and gladness for the opportunity to be in the presence of God.
3. Knowledge is indispensable to acceptable praise and service. The only way a man can know HOW to worship God is to study the instructions the Almighty has given concerning our approach to Him.
4. We have been invited to enter into the very courts of Jehovah. What a great blessing to know that such a One as God has chosen to condescend to man and allow such lowly creatures to come into His presence.
5. Our God will never fail, nor in any wise forsake us. Not only is He ABLE, but He is WILLING to provide assistance to those who seek His strength and guidance. Our God is faithful! He will keep His promises. On that we can depend.



## *“The King’s Resolve”*

### ***Introduction***

This beautiful Psalm of David serves as a fitting sequel to the coronation and theocratic Psalms which precede it. The language in the Psalm is such that it might have been used as a profession of loyalty to the divine covenant upon the coronation of the king. Or, as Anderson pointed out, “it can be viewed as an affirmation of the rule which he [the king, TW] is wont to exercise” (Anderson, 2:700). There is nothing in the Psalm that might suggest the occasion.

Coffman provides a bit of interesting background information: “The horde of evil traffickers usually found in Oriental capitals seeking access to the king included all kinds of arrogant self seekers, deceivers, liars, slanderers and opportunists interested in one thing alone, namely, their own advantage” (Coffman, page 225). The Psalm was written with the intention of encouraging public leaders to take the lead in ridding society of the corrupt element of just this sort of unholy and immoral activity. Morgan’s assessment of the Psalm is noteworthy:

Following immediately the songs of the enthronement of Jehovah, in which there has been perpetually recurrent the recognition of the holiness of His reign, it describes the true attitude of the earthly ruler who recognizes the sovereignty of God, and how that ought to affect his own life and rule. It is a clear testimony, moreover, to the fact that private life and public life are very closely allied” (Morgan, page 259).

In an age where liberal public leaders seek to divorce a man’s religion from his political agenda, this Psalm should be a “must read” by every man or woman seeking public office.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains principles of upright judgment in virtually all walks of life, both private and public. The first four verses contain the King’s resolutions concerning his own personal conduct. This if

followed by some guidelines for administering the exercise of government for those who might succeed his kingship. G.Campbell Morgan analyzed the Psalm thus:

It has two movements. The keynote of the first is “within my house” (verse 2), of the second it is “the city of God.” Between these there is the closest relation. No man is able to make the city in which he dwells anything like the city of God who does not know how to behave in his own house. This is the true order also. The first thing for every public man to do who would serve his city for God is to order his private life aright before God. The private life which answers the enthroned Jehovah is described first (verses 1-4). It is a life cautious and watchful, refusing to countenance anything contrary to the holiness of Jehovah. The public life is one which respects the same holiness in all matters of administration. Evil workers are to be destroyed, and the counselors of the ruler are to be sought among the faithful of the land (Morgan, page 259).

Another divides the Psalm thus: (1) The King’s Resolutions For His Own Conduct, vss 1-4, and (2) Guidelines For Administering the Government, vss 5-8. We will use the following outline for our study:

I. The King’s Personal Purity, verses 1-4

II. The King’s Perfect Policy, verses 5-8

## ***Commentary***

### ***The King’s Personal Purity*** **Verses 1-4**

- 1 I will sing of lovingkindness and justice: Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I sing praises*
- 2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way: Oh when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*
- 3 I will set no base thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; It shall not cleave unto me.*
- 4 A perverse heart shall depart from me: I will know no evil thing.*

**101:1:** “*I will sing*” – David’s personal life was a reflection of the divine characteristics of which he was no doubt familiar. Two of those divine characteristics come into focus here, namely “lovingkindness” and “justice.” David was in close fellowship with God. The natural response would be that of joyful song. Singing

makes the heart merry, and helps the soul in its resolve and determination to do what is right.

*“Unto thee, O Jehovah”* – David’s focus was on his God. Praises would be unto his God, not himself. If any a man could boast of his achievements, certain David could. But there is not the slightest hint in all the pages of the Old Testament that David ever boasted or sought glory for himself. His praise would be unto Jehovah; not men; not himself.

**101:2:** *“I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way”* - The Psalmist’s intention was to “behave wisely.” When we look at the inspired record of David’s life, it is often said that he behaved himself wisely” (1 Sam. 18:5; 18:14-15; 18:30). Now on the throne, David resolved to continue that pattern of behavior. Behavior IS important, and especially so for those in positions of leadership.

The words *“Oh when wilt thou come unto me”* are expressive of the writer’s absolute dependence upon Jehovah God for strength to follow through with his intentions of walking *“in a perfect way.”* Adam Clarke paraphrased: “I can neither walk in this perfect way, nor grow wise unto salvation unless thou come unto me by the grace of thy Spirit; for without thee I can do nothing” (Clarke).

*“I will walk within my house with a perfect heart”* - The proper “walk” will only occur when there is a “perfect heart” within the individual. Of importance is the fact the Psalmist begins a description of how he would conduct his family affairs, i.e. *“within my house.”* While the principles that follow certainly have reference to the everyday walk of the child of God, there is a special application of these things to one’s family life. And this is where the Psalmist begins. If one cannot walk properly in his private life, how can he ever hope to live uprightly in his public life? As Coffman noted, “This is the truly revealing test of human character. An interview with any personal counselor will confirm the fact that many men whose public behavior is above reproach exhibit the qualities of a wasp or a tiger in the presence of their own families” (Coffman, page 2:226).

**101:3:** *“I will set no base thing before my eyes”* - The word “base” is rendered “wicked” in the KJV. The meaning is that the Psalmist had determined not to purposefully allow any base thing to be placed before him for consideration. It is important to note here the connection between those things that we think upon and the fruit

that is borne thereof. The eyes become the channel by which temptations enter the heart. If we guard our eyes, exercising caution concerning what we allow our eyes to look upon, we will have taken an important step in guarding what is allowed entrance into our heart.

The *“work of them that turn aside”* seems to have some connection with the “base thing” mentioned earlier. Likely the “base thing” is a further elaboration of the “work” of those who “turn aside.” The alternate rendering is, “I hate the doing of unfaithfulness.” All such things, the Psalmist vows, would not be a part of his private life. And not only would these things not be allowed in his heart, HE WOULD NOT EVEN SET THEM BEFORE HIS EYES!

*“it shall not cleave to me”* – If perchance some sin should beset David, he was resolved to “shake it off.”

**101:4:** *“A perverse heart shall depart from me”* - The heart is the seat of all thought and actions. It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34). The heart is the fountain of all evil actions. The Psalmist goes directly to the source of evil and vows that such a heart would “depart” from him. Individual responsibility is certainly a part of the writer’s noble intentions.

Again, an alternate rendering is, “I will know no evil person.” His resolution is that no evil person, or evil thing, would be tolerated in his private life, or in the administration of his government. Such a one would not hold a place of close friendship, or intimate fellowship.

### ***The King’s Perfect Policy*** **Verses 5-8**

- 5 *Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I destroy: Him that hath a high look and a proud heart will I not suffer.*
- 6 *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall minister unto me.*
- 7 *He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: He that speaketh falsehood shall not be established before mine eyes.*
- 8 *Morning by morning will I destroy all the wicked of the land; To cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of Jehovah.*

**101:5:** The last four verses of describe David’s resolve in the

administration of his kingly office. This verse has appropriately been designated as “guidelines for administering the government.” If all government leaders would apply the principles of judgment listed here, how blessed would be that nation!

*“whoso privily slandereth his neighbor”* – Slander means to speak ill of another; it suggests the idea of intent to destroy. Character assassination would not be tolerated in David’s administration.

*“him that hath a high look and a proud heart”* – “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to Jehovah: Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished” (Pro. 16:5). Among the six things that the Lord hates, “haughty eyes” tops the list (Pro. 6:16-17).

*“him will I destroy”* is rendered “cut off” in the KJV. The idea is that the Psalmist would not give ear to the slanderer. He who would give ear to the slanderer will likely be overcome in a practice of the same. No such person would have part or parcel in administering the affairs of the kingdom for the simple reason that such a one cannot be trusted. CHARACTER DOES COUNT in our leaders, and would that the people of this country would learn the lesson. A proper understanding of this truth on the part of the public electorate would (1) shorten the terms of a large number of our representatives presently in Congress, and (2) make for greater integrity on the part of those desirous of entering into public service. “To give one’s neighbor a stab in the dark is one of the most atrocious of crimes, and cannot be too heartily reprobated, yet such as are guilty of it often find patronage in high places, and are considered to be men of penetration, trusty ones who have a keen eye, and take care to keep their lords well posted. King David would lop the goodly tree of his state of all such superfluous boughs” (Spurgeon, QV).

**101:6:** *“Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful”* - Barnes suggests that the word “faithful” has reference to “those who are worthy of belief or confidence” and not necessarily to those who are religious or pious. David was determined to surround himself with men of integrity.

*“he that walketh in a perfect way”* has a marginal rendering in some translations as “perfect in the way.” Of significance in this verse is the continued emphasis upon the KIND of life that should characterize those in public leadership. “Scheming, underhanded scoundrels shall be excluded from public office; and only men of known honor and integrity shall have responsible places in the king’s

court” (Coffman, page 228).

**101:7:** *“he that worketh deceit”* - The dishonest man would not be allowed to dwell in his house. The New Testament equivalent can be found in 2 John 10 – “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.” Such a one would find no place in David’s administration of government. This verse is an example of the parallelism of Hebrew poetry in which the first phrase helps to define and identify the latter. The man who “speaketh falsehood” actually practices deceit, and he who dwells within our house is “established” before our eyes, i.e. has approval. No such person would be allowed a position in this King’s house; nor shall any such person be extended fellowship in our Lord’s house, the church.

**101:8:** *“Morning by morning I will destroy all the wicked of the land”* - Evidently the Psalmist held a position of authority in so far as justice was concerned. If the Psalm was written by David (which we believe to be the case), then he was simply suggesting that his effort to safe guard his HOME against evil and wicked influences would be carried into his PUBLIC LIFE as well. The single truth that shines in this verse is the influence of one’s private religious beliefs upon his public life as well. Quite contrary to the modern thinking that politicians and public leaders should NOT allow their religion to play a part in their life as a public servant.

There is an additional lesson in this verse that is important of notice. To favor sin and wrongdoing is actually to discourage virtue. When our public leaders are lenient with the criminal element in society they rob society of justice and equity that is deservedly theirs. Spurgeon noted, “Honourable offices involve serious responsibilities; to trifle with them will bring our own souls into guilt, and injure beyond calculation the souls of others” (Spurgeon).

## ***Lessons***

Some years ago, while Bill Clinton was serving as President, I wrote the following article which aptly reflects the lesson taught in this Psalm.

### ***“It Has To Do With Character”***

by Tom Wacaster

Your greatest opportunity and responsibility is not so much the making of a living has it is the making of a life. Whatever else one may accomplish in life, you have failed if you do not make yours an honorable, useful, trustworthy life. Horace Greely is reported to have said, "Fame is a vapor, popularity an accident, riches take wings, those who cheer today will curse tomorrow. Only one thing endures - Character." In commenting on Mr. Greely's statement, the late Dr. Newell Dwight Hillis wrote, "These weighty words bid us all remember that Life's one task is the making of manhood. Our world is a College, events are teachers, happiness is the graduating point, and character is the diploma which God gives man."

It would be grand to live in a world in which all men recognize the importance of character and then make an honest pursuit of the same, beginning with our leaders and flowing down to the common man on the street. Unfortunately this honorable trait called "character" has fallen upon hard times. Apathy with respect to such things as integrity, honesty, and character has infected a rather large percentage of the nation. When we add to this the abysmal ignorance with regard to its essential contribution to a stable society, we begin to understand why the call for honesty and integrity on the part of those who would lead us into the next century falls largely on deaf ears. If polls come anywhere near reflecting this nation's attitude toward the importance of character in her leaders, then it is much later than we think. A CNN poll some years ago revealed that 70% of Americans do not think that character should be an issue in political elections.

I submit to you that character IS important. It is important for our very existence, yea our survival. If history teaches us anything it is this: absence of character among any people spells disaster and ruin. When a people throw off moral character and integrity there is nothing left to hold them together. Try to imagine a society in which lies were accepted, where promises meant nothing, and where dishonest and unethical business dealings were the norm. No man, not even the liar and the thief, would want to live in such a place. The problem of crime and violence in our society are not economic. It is a problem of an absence of character and moral integrity. Washington continues to crank out anti-crime bills, each one tougher than the previous, and yet our crime rate (with the exception of an occasional drop) continues to escalate.

A number of years ago producer Norman Lear made this observation: "At no time in my life has our culture been so estranged

from spiritual values. Our problems lie beyond the reach of politics alone.” Perhaps it is time for every single American to pay closer attention to the words of the Psalmist: “Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah, The people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance” (Psalms 33:12). Let us dust off our Bibles and read again the words of Solomon: “Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). It has been said that no institution can rise any higher than its leaders. The same is true with regard to nations. If our leaders are not willing to exercise moral restraint, how can we expect any less from the citizens? It would seem, as per the poll previously mentioned, that we no longer expect our leaders to demonstrate genuine character, and worse yet, we don’t care.

Perhaps the most frightening aspect about our present lack of concern with regard to character on the part of our leaders is the fact that such is actually a reflection of what we expect of ourselves. Charles Colson, close associate of President Richard Nixon, pinpointed the problem a number of years ago when he wrote that the most terrifying thing that can happen to a society is the death of conscience in its young people. The new century lies just around the corner. The future depends largely upon the present. Where we want to be in the year 2000 (or beyond) will be determined by the choices we make today. And, yes, much more than we think, or perhaps care to admit, “it has to do with character.”



## *“Faith Triumphant Over Affliction”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is not known. The context would suggest this Psalm was written either shortly before or following the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity. Barnes was of the opinion that “it was in the time of the captivity, and was in view of the troubles of that long and weary exile, and that the Psalmist speaks not of individual and personal troubles, but speaks as one of the people - as one in exile with others who had been long held in captivity, and who sighed for deliverance, and for a restoration for their native land” (Barnes). Verses 13-20 lends credibility to the view that this particular time frame is most likely.

The subtitle note in the American Standard Version contains this descriptive note regarding this Psalm: “A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before God.” This Psalm, as are a great number of the Psalms, is a *lament*. Of particular interest is that the Psalmist’s prayer coincides with the *time* of the event itself. Anderson concluded that “the troubles of the afflicted man are related to, and set against the background of, the destruction of Jerusalem and its hoped-for restoration” (Anderson, 2:704). Laments generally follow this format: (1) address to God; (2) complaint; (3) statement of trust in God; (4) plea or petition; (5) assurance; (6) resolution or resolve.

A word needs to be said here regarding those instances when the author of one of the Psalms appears to present his “complaint” before God (as used in the sub-note on this Psalm). The Hebrew word rendered “complaint” means “meditation; then moaning; then, the expression of sorrow” (Barnes). The word does not mean “finding fault,” as we sometimes use the word. Nor does it express dissatisfaction. It “denotes that deep sorrow which finds utterance in low and plaintive sounds; not in boisterous and loud outcry, but in subdued notes — in sounds uttered not because one wishes to

complain, but because the sorrow is such that it will find vent” (Barnes).

This is a song of “faith triumphing over affliction.” Of this Psalm, Morgan has the following:

While there are great beauties in the details of the song, it is this general atmosphere which creates its greatest value for us. Nothing is more calculated to strengthen the heart in suffering, nor inspire the spirit with courage in days of danger and difficulty, than the sense of the eternity of God. In it is found the certainty that the purpose defeated today will yet be completed (Morgan, page 259).

Spurgeon has suggested that “the whole composition may be compared to a day which, opening with wind and rain, clears up at noon and is warm with the sun, continues fine, with intervening showers, and finally closes with a brilliant sunset” (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm naturally divides itself into three sections. It begins with a description of the sorrows of the author as he represents of the people in exile (verses 1-11). This section is predominantly a lament and complaint. This is followed by an expression of hope that the set time for deliverance had finally arrived and favor was about to be shown to Zion (verses 12-22). The Psalm closes with an expression of confidence that God, because of His unchanging nature and because He keeps His promises, is about to bring Israel home (verses 23-28). Wayne Jackson divided the Psalm somewhat differently: (1) God Is Addressed, 1-2; (2) Here’s What I’m Going Through, 3-11; (3) Here’s What Gives Me Hope, 12-28. Phillips had an excellent homiletic outline:

- I. A Really Gloomy Situation (102:1-11)
- II. A Remarkably Golden Sunbeam (102:12-22)
- III. A Returning Gray Sky (102:23-28).

Some years ago I scribbled the following outline in the margin of my Bible:

- I. A DESCRIPTION of the affliction, 1-11;
- II. The HOPE of deliverance, 12-22;
- III. CONFIDENCE based upon God’s unchanging nature, 23-28.

We will use this outline for our study, and entitle the Psalm, “Faith Triumphant Over Affliction.”

### **Description Of The Affliction** **Verses 1-11**

- 1 Hear my prayer, O Jehovah, And let my cry come unto thee.*
- 2 Hide not thy face from me in the day of my distress: Incline thine ear unto me; In the day when I call answer me speedily.*
- 3 For my days consume away like smoke, And my bones are burned as a firebrand.*
- 4 My heart is smitten like grass, and withered; For I forget to eat my bread.*
- 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning My bones cleave to my flesh.*
- 6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness; I am become as an owl of the waste places.*
- 7 I watch, and am become like a sparrow That is alone upon the house-top.*
- 8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; They that are mad against me do curse by me.*
- 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, And mingled my drink with weeping,*
- 10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: For thou hast taken me up, and cast me away.*
- 11 My days are like a shadow that declineth; And I am withered like grass.*

Spurgeon’s summation of these first eleven verses is noteworthy:

This is a patriot’s lament over his country’s distress. He arrays himself in the griefs of his nation as in a garment of sackcloth, and casts her dust and ashes upon his head as the ensigns and causes of his sorrow. He has his own private woes and personal enemies, he is moreover sore afflicted in body by sickness, but the miseries of his people cause him afar more bitter anguish, and this he pours out in an earnest, pathetic lamentation (Spurgeon).

**102:1:** “*Hear my plea*” - Our writer was no deist. He believed that God would hear his plea. The deep sincerity of the writer can be seen in the words of the Psalm. The author was pleading, “Please listen to me; please, let my pleas come before you!” Our God DOES hear our prayers. Were this not true, life would be most dreary; how empty our hopes!

*“let my cry come unto thee”* – The earnestness of the Psalmist sets the stage for what will follow. When men listen to our grief we find solace; how much greater when the God of heaven offers to hear our prayer and come to us in time of need.

**102:2:** *“the day of distress”* – The Psalmist’s “day of distress” is not identified for us. We are left to ponder. Like the Psalmist, each one of us will face our “day of distress” in the varying circumstances of life.

The Psalmist evidently believed that the answer to prayer would come quick, asking for Jehovah to answer him “in the day of my distress,” as opposed to some later date. There are a number of occasions throughout the Psalms wherein the writer expected an immediate answer to his plea. When such occurred, great comfort and peace were then expressed. We learn from this verse that we are to seek God’s help at the very moment of need. We may request a speedy answer, but must, with patience, wait on the Lord. Meanwhile, we can rest assured that God is aware of our difficulties and will, in His own time, provide the needed and desired relief.

Please observe ***the Psalmist’s Cry*** in these first two verses. His cry is our cry! As is often the case, we turn to the Psalms in times of distress. This is precisely what the Psalmist has done here.

**102:3:** Beginning with this verse the Psalmist describes his affliction. Here we find ***the Psalmist’s Condition***. It is as if the author was saying, “Here’s what I’m going through.” The Psalmist is so overwhelmed that he suffers mentally, physically and spiritually. The trials and tribulations which the Psalmist suffered had produced doubt in his mind. Evidently the writer was questioning whether his life had produced any worthwhile accomplishments. He likened his life unto smoke that vanished, or the grass that withered (verse 4), or as a “firebrand” - literally, “burned as a burning.” Such language was a common means of referring to the absolute loss of something as that which has “gone up in smoke.” Spurgeon’s paraphrase is as good as any we have found: “His soul was ready to be blown away as smoke, and his body seemed likely to remain as the bare hearth when the last comforting ember is quenched” (Spurgeon).

**102:4:** *“my heart is smitten like grass”* - The depth of the writer’s despair can be seen. He felt withered, like grass that has been cut, or scorched by the sun.

*“I forget to eat my bread”* - The trials he presently faced had so consumed him that his attention was drawn away from even those things that were necessary to life. Most of us have known someone who, in their time of grief or sorrow, completely lost their appetite; eating was the furthest thing from their minds! “As the smitten flower no longer drinks in the dew, or draws up nutriment from the soil, so a heart parched with intense grief often refuses consolation for itself and nourishment for the bodily frame, and descends at a doubly rapid rate into weakness, despondency, and dismay” (Spurgeon).

**102:5:** His groaning was so intense that he cried out, *“my bones cleave to my skin.”* “The effect described is that of a wasting away or an emaciation of flesh from deep distress, so that the bones became prominent, and had nothing to hide them from view; so that they seemed to adhere to the flesh itself” (Barnes). His concern for national Israel led the Psalmist to groan within. Who has not known such experience when they have lost the dearest on earth to them?

**102:6:** *“pelican...owl”* - The writer continues to heap up expressions of his complete despair. Verses 6 and 7 describe the social loss due to his affliction. Here the Psalmist likens himself to two birds which are commonly used as emblems of gloom and wretchedness. Spurgeon noted, “It is ill for men to be playing the peacock with worldly pride when the ills of the times should make them as mournful as the pelican; and it is a terrible thing to see men flocking like vultures to devour the prey of a decaying church, when they ought rather to be lamenting among her ruins like the owl” (Spurgeon). The Psalmist provides a picturesque description of loneliness and depression.

The Psalmist’s reference to the pelican, owl, and sparrow may be his way of expressing his displacement in a foreign land. The pelican is not a bird of the wilderness; it is rather a specialized water bird and its natural habitats are in areas of great lakes. The owl finds its natural habitat in the forest, but here he is said to be “of the desert.” The sparrow “alone” is unusual because these tiny birds are usually found with others. Hence, each of these birds is “out of its environment.” If the Psalm was written during the time of the captivity, then the reference to these birds out of their normal habitat is expressive of Israel in a land of captivity; a strange land other than their own. There is a great lesson for us. This world is not our home; we are “strangers and pilgrims” in a land not our own. Hour

citizenship is in heaven, and it is for THAT home we long.

**102:7:** *“like a sparrow...alone upon the housetop”* - Little concern is given by those on the streets below to the plight of the sparrow. In an effort to escape the enemy, the bird seeks high ground. But in seeking safety, he likewise felt isolated from the masses. Adversity causes us to withdraw. “Christians of an earnest, watchful kind often find themselves among those who have no sympathy with them; even in the church they look in vain for kindred spirits; but feel themselves to be as lonely as the poor bird which looks from the ridge of the roof, and meets with no friendly greeting from any of its kind” (Spurgeon).

**102:8:** *“Mine enemies reproach me”* - Suffering often brings false accusations from others as to the cause of suffering. When Job suffered his great loss, his “friends” came to comfort him. But they did not provide that comfort; instead they accused him of sinning, and called for his repentance. It is likely that the taunts of the enemies of God mounted as Zion suffered. The longer the exile dragged on, the more vociferous and cruel the taunts of those who hated God and His people. “Where is your God NOW? Why does He not deliver you?” The “curse” here is a word for contempt and abhorrence for someone, or for that which he represents.

**102:10:** *“Because of thine indignation and wrath”* - The feelings of God’s complete abandonment had led the Psalmist to utter sorrow and grief. If our background on this Psalm is correct, and if it is indeed written by one in Babylonian captivity, this may be a reflection on the part of the Psalmist on the reason why Israel was in captivity in the first place.

*“thou hast taken me up, and cast me away”* - The picture here is of one who has raised a vessel upwards in an attempt to destroy it by casting it to the earth.

**102:11:** *“like a shadow that declineth”* – Time was slipping away. The moment was rapidly approaching when the Psalmist felt he would be in complete darkness with no ray of sunshine to give him hope.

*“withered like grass”* - This section closes with an expression of complete helplessness. Like grass that had been blasted by the wind and heat, he felt abandoned to dry up and vanish without so much as a hope of deliverance.

## The Hope Of Deliverance Verses 12-22

- 12 *But thou, O Jehovah, wilt abide for ever; And thy memorial name unto all generations.*
- 13 *Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion; For it is time to have pity upon her, Yea, the set time is come.*
- 14 *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, And have pity upon her dust.*
- 15 *So the nations shall fear the name of Jehovah, And all the kings of the earth thy glory.*
- 16 *For Jehovah hath built up Zion; He hath appeared in his glory.*
- 17 *He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute, And hath not despised their prayer.*
- 18 *This shall be written for the generation to come; And a people which shall be created shall praise Jehovah.*
- 19 *For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; From heaven did Jehovah behold the earth;*
- 20 *To hear the sighing of the prisoner; To loose those that are appointed to death;*
- 21 *That men may declare the name of Jehovah in Zion, And his praise in Jerusalem;*
- 22 *When the peoples are gathered together, And the kingdoms, to serve Jehovah.*

The hope of the Psalmist is set forth in these verses. Among other things the Psalmist has hope because (1) God is eternal, and endures throughout the ages, verse 1; (2) God is merciful; (3) God is steadfast and dependable, verses 14-17; (4) God hears the prayers of the destitute and the groaning of the “prisoner,” verses 17 and 20. In this section the Psalmist speaks of:

- The ever abiding nature of God;
- The “memorial name” of God unto all the generations yet to come;
- God’s marvelous mercy upon “Zion”;
- The need of the moment, the “set time”;
- Pleasure in the “stones” and pity in the “dust” of Zion (14);
- Reverence for God among the nations (15);
- The glory of God manifested in building up Zion (16);
- God’s hearing the prayers of the needy (17);
- The “people which shall be created” (18);

- God's concern for His creation (19-20);
- Praise offered to Jehovah by the "kingdoms" (21-22).

There is a marked change in the tone of the Psalm beginning with verse 15. Of special interest is the number of phrases suggesting that the subject of at least the latter portion of this section has to do with the Kingdom of the Messiah. We will note some words and phrases that find their complete fulfillment in the Christian dispensation.

**102:12:** *"But thou wilt abide forever"* – "But thou" is emphatic and expresses a contrast with what precedes. The Psalmist felt that his days were as a "shadow that declineth," or grass that withers in the hot sun (verse 11). In stark contrast God abides forever. "All generations" would hear of His memorial name. The Psalmist wrote of the God Who inhabits eternity (Isa. 57:15), the God Who changes not, and Who is dependable (Mal. 3:6), the God Who has no beginning and no end (Ex. 3:14). Such a God could, and would, render assistance to His people.

Nothing is more calculated to strengthen the heart in suffering, nor inspire the spirit with courage in days of danger and difficulty, than the sense of the eternity of God. In it is found the certainty that the purpose defeated today will yet be complete. In the vision of the eternity of God is revealed the continuity of humanity, and a great sense of the solidarity of the race is created (Morgan, page 259).

*"Thy memorial name"* – Our English word "name" has been inserted, and if this were left out, the Psalmist merely speaks of a "memorial unto all generations." The only memorial ever instituted by God which applied to "all generations" and to all "nations" is the Lord's Supper. The leading verse of this section, therefore, points to the time of the Kingdom of our Lord. There is a marvelous reference here to the abiding faithfulness of our God. Though men may betray us, and destroy us, our God "wilt abide for ever." "All things else are vanishing like smoke, and withering like grass, but over all the one eternal, immutable light shines on, and will shine on when all these shadows have declined into nothingness" (Spurgeon).

**102:13:** *"Thou wilt arise and have mercy on Zion"* – The plea of the Psalmist may have been for the restoration of physical Israel, but the Holy Spirit, in our estimation, was pointing to the Christian dispensation when God's wonderful mercy would be made available to all men in Christ and in the church. The Psalmist is providing us with a prophetic glimpse of the Kingdom of our Lord many



“generations” removed from his time. In that age, God’s mercy would be granted to “Zion.”

*“It is time...the set time”* - That wonderful mercy would be extended at the “set time,” or as Paul wrote, “in the fulness of time” (Gal 4:4). There is a wonderful reference to the eternal truth that God operates on His own time schedule. He did so in delivering Israel from Egypt, and in the sending of His Son. “When God’s own time is come, neither Rome, nor the devil, nor persecutors, nor atheists, can prevent the kingdom of Christ from extending its bounds” (Spurgeon).

**102:14:** *“Thy servants take pleasure in her stones”* – Though Jerusalem and the temple at that time were in ruins, and the “stones” mere rubbish, the writer and his fellow companions considered the city sacred and the temple holy. There must have been a longing desire to return and to rebuild. The “stones” in the Kingdom are the “living stones” of which Peter speaks in 1 Peter 2. Jesus spoke of the love that brethren would have one for another (John 13:35). Do we take pleasure in the “stones” of God’s temple, the church? Do we, like the Psalmist, long to see the church built up, encouraged, and exalted?

*“And have pity on her dust”* – Albert Barnes seems to come as close as any in explaining the meaning:

The practical truth taught here is, that an indication of a coming revival of religion is often manifested by the increased attention to the subject among its professed friends; by the desire in their hearts that it may be so; by tenderness, pity, compassion among them in view of abounding desolations, the coldness of the church, and the prevalence of iniquity; by their looking with interest on that which had before been neglected, like shapeless ruins (the prayer meeting, the communion, the sanctuary); by a conscious returning love in their hearts for all that pertains to religion, however unimportant it may be in the eyes of the world, or however it may be despised (Barnes).

Every single Christian should ache within when he or she sees the church brought to ruin by false teachers. And as the faithful remnant pitied destroyed Jerusalem and longed for her restoration, so should every child of God long to see the church restored to her glory and honor among men.

**102:15:** *“So the nations shall fear the name of Jehovah”* - The only

time that the “nations” came to fear the name of Jehovah was when the doors to the Kingdom were opened to Jew and Gentile alike. This is another indication that the Psalmist was speaking of more than the simple physical restoration of Jerusalem and the temple.

**102:16:** *“For Jehovah hath built up Zion”* – Barnes picked up on the prophetic feature of this verse:

The Septuagint, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther, vnder this, “Because the Lord hath built up Zion.” This also is the most natural and correct translation of the Hebrew. The reference, however, may be to the future. The psalmist may throw himself into the future, and—standing there—he may describe things as they will appear then—as already done (Barnes).

*“he hath appeared in his glory”* - While the restoration of Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity was certainly a manifestation of God’s great power and glory, it is in the church that God’s great wisdom and glory is truly manifested (Eph. 3:8-12). It is when our God “built up Zion” (the church) that He “appeared in his glory.” Here is an undeniable prophetic reference to the first advent of our Lord and the establishment of the true temple.

**102:17:** *“He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute”* - The “destitute” here are the “poor in spirit” and “they that mourn” referred to by our Lord in Matthew 5:1-5.

**102:18:** *“This shall be written for the generation to come”* - Those things “written for the generation to come” were the promises given to Israel and which found fulfillment in the Gospel dispensation. Peter said those things written by the prophets were for our benefit (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

*“the people which shall be created”* – This simple but profound phrase sets the context for this later half of the Psalm. The Psalmist may have had in his mind the restoration of Israel, but God was looking down the corridor of time to a more glorious moment in history, and the creation of a group of “people” more inclusive than mere physical Israel. “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17). More literally, Paul’s words should be translated “a new creation.” The church is God’s creation for the “generation to come.” It is this “new creation” of which the Psalmist wrote.

**102:19:** *“He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary”* –

*“He hath looked own”* - One of the most amazing characteristics of our God is His concern for lowly man. To say that God condescends to man is an understatement. In order to impress his audience with the majesty of God, the Psalmist refers the *“height of his sanctuary.”* When we consider man the creature and God the Creator, we are reminded that it is God Who is exalted above man and not the other way around. The multitude of religious titles worn by men astounds us, especially those titles that deserve to be used only in reference to God. Titles such as “Reverend,” or “Holy Father” should **never** be worn by men.

**102:20:** The *“sighing of the prisoner,”* and *“those that are appointed to death”* include the total of the Adamic race. Sin has imprisoned every man ever born, and the only appointment that he has deserved is “death.” Oh the wonderful love of God that would motivate Him to look down upon man and provide him with the only means of escape from the bonds of the prison of sin and the death associated with it. Coffman is right on target in noting that these verses “describe God ‘looking upon the earth’ in compassion, hearing the sighs of those dying in sin, and earnestly desiring that men may sing God’s praises in Jerusalem (that is, the New Jerusalem which is above)” (Coffman, page 235).

Here is Spurgeon’s assessment of verses 19-20:

Now the groans of those in prison so far from being musical are very horrible to hear, yet God bends to hear them: those who are bound for death are usually ill company, yet Jehovah deigns to stoop from his greatness to relieve their extreme distress and break their chains. This he does by providential rescues, by restoring health to the dying, and by finding food for the famishing; and spiritually this need of grace is accomplished by sovereign grace, which delivers us by pardon from the sentence of sin, and by the sweetness of the promise from the deadly despair which a sense of sin had created within us (Spurgeon).

**102:21:** Zion and Jerusalem were synonymous terms which came to stand for the “remnant,” or Spiritual Israel. This is precisely the location where praise is offered to God. In fact, the only place where men can worship God acceptably is in the church for which Jesus shed His blood.

**102:22:** *“When the peoples...kingdoms”* - The gathering of kingdoms and people takes place in the church, God’s ordained

“assembly.” And it is in this “assembly” that men come to “serve Jehovah.” There we do His bidding; there we accomplish His purpose for us.

### **Confidence Based Upon God’s Unchanging Nature Verses 23-28**

- 23 He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days.  
24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days:  
Thy years are throughout all generations.  
25 Of old didst thou lay the foundation of the earth; And the  
heavens are the work of thy hands.  
26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; Yea, all of them shall  
wax old like a garment; As a vesture shalt thou change them,  
and they shall be changed:  
27 But thou art the same, And thy years shall have no end.  
28 The children of thy servants shall continue, And their seed shall  
be established before thee.*

Here the Psalmist writes of....

- 1) His loss of strength, 23;
- 2) The mighty works of God, 24-25;
- 3) The temporal nature of the universe, 26;
- 4) The everlasting and unchanging nature of God, 27;
- 5) The Divine protection of God’s children, 28;

**102:23:** The Psalmist recognized his own temporal nature in comparison to the unchanging nature of God. This caused him to reflect upon his weakness and shortness of days. Coffman has this most interesting note:

In the LXX, we have the following: ‘He (God) answered him in the way of his strength: tell me the fewness of my days. Take me not away in the midst of my days.’ The significance of this rendition is that it makes God the speaker of this whole passage, indicating that the Messiah is the only person to whom such language from God could be applied (Coffman, page 236).

**102:24:** It is possible that the writer recognized that, with God’s blessings, he had yet many years in which to serve. The Psalmist’s belief in the ability of God to ANSWER this prayer is seen in the character of God to which the writer now alludes. The first of these is the fact that God is not limited by time. His “years” are throughout generations. He has no beginning, no end. He is eternal.

**102:25:** The second trait of God mentioned is His omnipotence. He is all powerful. It is God Who laid the very foundation of this earth. What majestic power our God possesses; power that could, in fact, stretch out the heavens.

**102:26:** *“they shall perish...they shall be changed”* - As strong and stable as the heavens appear to the human eye, they are only temporary.

**102:27:** While the universe changes, God remains stable. The Psalmist was, without doubt, looking down the corridor of time to that moment when the destruction of this world spoken of by Peter shall occur (2 Peter 3:10-12). The Psalmist contrasts the eternal nature of God with the temporal nature of this world and the universe. “Men’s days are often suddenly cut short, and at the longest they are but few, but the years of the right hand of the Most High cannot be counted, for they have neither first nor last, beginning nor end” (Spurgeon).

**102:28:** *“Their seed shall be established before thee”* - The New Testament equivalent of this verse can be seen in such verses as Matthew 28:18-20, 16:18, where our Lord promises that His church would be established, and “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “This represents the confident expectation of the Psalmist that, as God was unchangable, all his promises toward his people would be fulfilled, even though the heavens and the earth should pass away” (Barnes).

*“their seed shall be established”* - The Hebrew means “to stand erect; then to set up, to place, to found, to make firm as a city. It means that they would be firmly established...that the church of God would be permanent in the earth” (Barnes).

## ***Lessons***

1. Note the expectation the Psalmist had that his prayer would be answered. The author prays from a contrite heart, a spirit broken and humbled. But in all his anguish and despair, the Psalmist was confident that God would answer his prayer and grant his request. When we pray we must pray in faith, “nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in

all his ways (James 1:6-8).

2. We must never forget the transient nature of time and the brevity of life. A brother in Christ, having passed his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, once remarked that he was living on borrowed time. But in the final analysis, we are all living on borrowed time, for none of us have the assurance of tomorrow. Like “grass that is withered” and “smoke” that soon is blown by the wind, our lives fly by and we find ourselves facing the reality of eternity. Indeed, let us number our days that we might obtain a wise and discerning heart.
3. Oh the wonderful love of God! He looked down from heaven, observed our pitiful condition, and took all necessary steps to lift us up from the pits of sin. He looked down, and then He came down in the form of His Son, so that He might lift us up unto fellowship with Him.

## *“Bless The Lord, O My Soul”*

### ***Introduction***

According to the subtitle, this is a ‘Psalm of David.’ The style is certainly Davidic, and since there is nothing in the Psalm that suggests otherwise, we will stay with the more ancient authorities when it comes to who wrote the Psalm.

The exact occasion of the Psalm cannot be determined. The language in the Psalm is some of the most beautiful of the entire collection of the Psalms. The mercy of God, the promise of forgiveness, the majesty and justice of God, as well as other eternal truths are developed in this chapter. Of the Psalm Barnes says it “is exceedingly regular in its structure and composition; beautiful in its language and conceptions; adapted to all times and ages; fitted to express the feelings of gratitude to God for deliverance from trouble, and for the manifestation of his mercy; fitted to elevate the soul, and to fill it with cheerful views” (Barnes). It is, indeed, “one of the most priceless jewels of the whole Psalter” (Coffman, page 244). G. Campbell Morgan wrote: “It is perhaps the most perfect song of pure praise in the Bible. It has become the common inheritance of all who through suffering and deliverance have learned the goodness of Jehovah” (Morgan, page 259-260). Finally, Spurgeon has written regarding this Psalm:

As in the lofty Alps some peaks rise above all others, so among even the inspired Psalms there are heights of song which overtop the rest. This one...has ever seemed to us to be the Monte Rosa of the divine chain of mountains of praise, glowing with a ruddier light than any of the rest. It is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and its golden fruit has a flavour such as no fruit ever bears unless it has been ripened in the full sunshine of mercy (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm begins and ends with the same words, “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” In the original text all the verses in the Psalm are of uniform length, containing two lines each. It is a wonderful Psalm of praise. Phillips noted, “Any time we have trouble praising the Lord

we should turn to this psalm, get down before the Lord, and recite it back to Him. It is a paeon [sic] of perfect praise” (Phillips, 2:123).

The Psalm has a three-fold division. The Psalmist first soliloquizes and exhorts himself to “bless the Lord” (verses 1-2). This is followed by a lengthy narrative in which the author lists the benefits conferred upon him and others, and the causes of those benefits (verses 3-19). The last portion of the Psalm serves as a conclusion in which the author calls upon the angelic host to offer praise to the Lord (verses 20-22). We found the following outlines helpful. Phillips calls the Psalm, “*The Song Of A Soul Set Free*” (page 124), and provides the following outline:

- I. God’s Man (103:1-7)
- II. God’s Mercy (103:8-18)
- III. God’s Might (103:19-22)

Anderson divides the Psalm into four divisions (page 712):

- I. Hymnic Call To Bless Yahweh (1-2)
- II. The Forgiving And Redeeming God (3-5)
- III. Yahweh’s Covenant Loyalty (6-18)
- IV. All The Works Of God Praise Him (19-22)

Finally, G. Campbell Morgan presented the following division:

The extensive mercy of Jehovah as evident in the same system is seen in other psalms, but perhaps never so majestically as here. It begins with individual consciousness (verses 1-5), proceeds in recognition of national blessings (verses 6-18), and ends with the inclusion of all the angels, and hosts, and works in the vast dominion of Jehovah. The “my” of personal experience merges into the “our” of social fellowship, and thus culminates in the “all” of universal consciousness. Yet all ends with the personal word, and the perfect music of the psalm is revealed in the fact that open and closes on the same note (Morgan, page 260).

We will follow an outline scribbled into the margin of my old American Standard Bible more than three decades ago:

- I. An EXHORTATION to bless the Lord, 1-5;
- II. An EXPLANATION as to exactly why the Lord is to be so blessed, 6-18;
- III. An EXALTATION of God by all His creation, 19-22;

### ***Commentary***



## Exhortation Verses 1-5

- 1 *Bless Jehovah, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless his holy name.*
- 2 *Bless Jehovah, O my soul, And forget not all his benefits:*
- 3 *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases;*
- 4 *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;*
- 5 *Who satisfieth thy desire with good things, So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle.*

In these five verses the Psalmist....

- 1) Pronounces his intention to “bless Jehovah” (verse 1);
- 2) Remembers the marvelous benefits that God had rendered to him (verse 2);
- 3) Speaks of God’s forgiveness and healing power (verse 3);
- 4) Speaks of God’s protection and deliverance (verse 4);
- 5) Refers to the strength that is granted to the youth (verse 5).

103:1: *“Bless Jehovah, Oh my soul”* - Here is the outcry of a heart that is thankful for the abundant blessings bestowed upon him by Jehovah. The language is emphatic; praise is offered from the depth of the soul, with every ounce of energy the Psalmist could muster, from “all that is within.” Those who would worship in “spirit and truth” can do no less. Superficial worship has never characterized the true saint. It should also be noted that God is the object our devotion and praise. Others may seek to please themselves, and offer praise that is to their liking, but the child of God will bless the Lord and seek to please Him.

But how is it that David could bless Jehovah? Do not blessings come from God? Is it not **God** who blesses man and not the other way around? When the Lord blesses men, He gives unto them those things they need. When men bless God they do not give unto God something He needs, but rather what He deserves, namely honor, reverence, and glory.

**103:2:** *“Forget not all his benefits”* - From the well springs of gratitude the Psalmist expresses thanksgiving for the benefits granted from Heaven’s Holy Occupant. Reason is heaped upon reason; blessings are enumerated.

*“Forget not his benefits”* implies the ever present temptation to forget God and His marvelous care for us. The absence of thanksgiving is the beginning of the journey into apostasy (cf. Romans 1:19 ff). Indeed, how we need to be reminded! And being reminded, we must bow in grateful appreciation for blessings bestowed, whether in the aggregate or in particular.

**103:4** - *“who forgiveth all thine iniquities”* - One of the blessings which we often fail to appreciate is that of forgiveness. Pardon is one of the choicest of heavenly blessings. It is, in fact, one of the very first of spiritual blessings bestowed upon those who submit to their heavenly Father. The thing that makes this blessing so wonderful is the very offer of pardon itself. When I studied for and obtained my private pilot’s license, my instructors often reminded me, “The sky is unforgiving.” The false gods of the heathens are generally known for their wrath and anger. But our God is known for his willingness to forgive. He “delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18-19). The extent of His forgiveness is seen in that He forgives “all” our iniquities. John reminds us that if we are but willing to “confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jno. 1:9).

*“Who healeth all thy diseases”* - In addition to forgiveness, our God heals our diseases. There are differing opinions among commentators as to whether the “diseases” here refers to physical or spiritual ailments. Some have argued in favor of a spiritual healing based upon one of the key features of Hebrew poetry. The principles of interpretation are closely related to the characteristics of each type of literature. There are several characteristics of Hebrew poetry, some of which are readily seen in the Psalms, the most distinctive of which is **parallelism**, or **thought rhyme**. Hebrew poetry contains little, if any, word rhyme. It is not like our poetry in the Western world. Parallelism appears in several forms, and here it is **synonymous parallelism**, in which the thought of the first line is repeated in the second, expressed in different words. “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities” = “Who healeth all thy diseases.”

Forgiveth = Healeth  
Iniquities = Diseases

Those who argue for a physical healing make a compelling argument based upon word study. The Hebrew word rendered “diseases” occurs only three times in the Old Testament, and that in the plural

form. It is translated “sicknesses” in Deuteronomy 29:22, and “diseases” in 2 Chronicles 21:19 (and here). And while it is true that we ought to praise God for the blessing of physical healing, the health of the body pales in significance to the health of the spiritual man. One important principle that is certainly illustrated in the life of our Lord is the undeniable truth that what God can do for the physical body, He can do for the spiritual man as well. He gives sight to the blind (physically and spiritually), strengthens the lame and the weak (physically and spiritually), gives life to the dead (physically and spiritually), and provides hope (physically and spiritually). We cannot deny that God heals the spiritual man, for He is the Provider of all that is good for both body and soul. He gives us our daily bread, and sustains our souls with the milk and meat of the word (1 Pet. 2:1-2; Heb. 5:11-13). But in our opinion the Psalmist is speaking of the greater healing, that of the soul.

**103:4:** “*Who redeemeth thy life from destruction*” – The key word here is “redeemeth,” which translates the Hebrew *‘goel,’* and refers to the near kinsman who would, upon occasion, purchase one in his family from the wreck and ruin of slavery or life-threatening situation. But there may be more here than a simple reference to saving one from physical calamity. There is little doubt in our mind that the Psalmist was looking forward, in the spirit of prophecy, to Him Who would partake of “flesh and blood,” so that He might redeem us from sin. Our Lord purchased us (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9; 14:3-4) thereby redeeming us unto Himself.

“*Who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies*” – Not only is God the source of these blessings, but there is something of beauty, dignity, and honor the way our God blesses us. There is a connotation of royalty in these words. God, in bestowing upon us His lovingkindness and tender mercies,” has lifted us out of spiritual poverty and crowned us with the riches of heaven. He has honored us with sweet fellowship with Him. We have been made a royal priesthood to serve in His presence (1 Pet. 2:9).

**103:5:** “*Who satisfieth thy desire with good things*” - The word translated “mouth” in the KJV, and “desire” in the ASV is rendered in the Chaldee, “*thy age.*” The Hebrew word is rendered “ornaments” in Exodus 33:4-6, 2 Samuel 1:24, Isaiah 49:18, Jeremiah 2:32. And the word “age” may very well express the thought here. The only people who find genuine satisfaction are those who obey and serve their God, whether in youth or in old age or any time in between. Keep in mind that there is a marked difference between being

“satiated” and being “satisfied.”

We shall find, when we reach the end of life, that all which God has done, however dark and mysterious it may have appeared at the time, was so connected with our good as to make it a proper subject of praise and thanksgiving (Barnes).

*“So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle”* - The last portion of verse 5 is especially encouraging. The New Testament equivalent is seen in the words of Paul to the Corinthians: “Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). As the body decays more and more with each passing year we find that our “youth is renewed” by the inner strength that is provided by serving our God. Yes, “they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). How refreshing to see that the very one who “sat moping with owl in the last Psalm, here flies on high with the eagle” (Spurgeon).

## EXPLANATION

### Verses 6-18

- 6 *Jehovah executeth righteous acts, And judgments for all that are oppressed.*
- 7 *He made known his ways unto Moses, His doings unto the children of Israel.*
- 8 *Jehovah is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abundant in lovingkindness.*
- 9 *He will not always chide; Neither will he keep his anger for ever.*
- 10 *He hath not dealt with us after our sins, Nor rewarded us after our iniquities.*
- 11 *For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is his lovingkindness toward them that fear him.*
- 12 *As far as the east is from the west, So far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*
- 13 *Like as a father pitieth his children, So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him.*
- 14 *For he knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust.*
- 15 *As for man, his days are as grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*
- 16 *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; And the place thereof shall know it no more.*

- 17 *But the lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, And his righteousness unto children's children;*  
18 *To such as keep his covenant, And to those that remember his precepts to do them.*

The section now before us provides one of the most amazing descriptions of God's mercy contained anywhere in the Bible. In this section we see....

- 1) God's righteous justice and judgments (verse 6);
- 2) God's revelation to those of old (verse 7);
- 3) God's marvelous lovingkindness and mercy (verses 8-9);
- 4) God's longsuffering in dealing with His creation (verse 10);
- 5) The extent and subjects of God's lovingkindness (verses 11-12);
- 6) The fatherly love of God (verse 13);
- 7) God's complete awareness of our weaknesses (verse 14);
- 8) The brevity of life (verses 15-16);
- 9) The everlasting and enduring lovingkindness of God (verse 17);
- 10) The conditional nature of God's blessings (verse 18).

Let's take a closer look.

**103:6:** "*Jehovah executeth righteous acts*" - Men may fail in their judgment toward men, but our God executes RIGHTEOUS acts. None of His decisions are in any way inequitable. Consequently, our God has a special regard for the oppressed, and the needy. It may be asked, "If God executes righteousness and equity, why then do the wicked seem to prosper more than the righteous?" The 37<sup>th</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalms answer that question. Men may measure justice by the present; the here and now. But God's justice must be seen through the glasses of eternity and not time. When life is over, those godly saints who have received scorn and persecution shall be justified when their God "executeth righteous acts."

**103:7:** "*He made known his ways unto Moses*" - God's dealing with Moses and with the children of Israel serve as two examples of God's administration of righteous judgment unto men. Moses was privileged to see many things mortal men had never witnessed. Israel would have seen much more had they not hardened their hearts. The important thing in this verse is the fact that God made Himself known to man. It is God Who took the initiative. Man, by his own might and intellect, would never have come to know God separate and apart from revelation. This is the very argument that

Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 1 and 2. Men ought to be grateful that God condescended to man, and “made known his ways” to those who love Him.

**103:8:** *“Jehovah is merciful and gracious”* - The mercy of God is manifest in His longsuffering and abundant lovingkindness. The KJV reads “plenteous in mercy.” God does not dole out His mercy by bits and pieces. He pours it forth abundantly, even to the point of overflowing. He is not stingy, nor does He withhold His lovingkindness toward us. The prophet has recorded this truth which such elegant words: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:18-19). God’s mercy is multifaceted. It is manifest in so many ways, to all men. The disobedient and rebellious receive His “sparing mercy.” Toward them God is longsuffering, “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Those who hear His gospel and respond thereto receive His “inviting mercy.” Those who are troubled receive His “consoling mercy.” And those who are faithful to Him will eventually receive His “saving mercy.”

Before we leave this verse it should be pointed out that there is a “progression” of thought in these verses. The Psalmist begins by referring to his individual experience (verses 3-5). He next refers to the dealings of God with the Hebrew people (verses 6-7). Here the author contemplates God’s character as it relates to all mankind.

**103:9:** *“He will not always chide”* - “Chide” means to “contend” or “strive” with another. There are two important truths that emerge from this verse. First, once God extends His mercy to man, the “contention” or “striving” between God and man ceases; reconciliation takes place and fellowship is restored. Second, mercy disposes anger. When men repent and obey, God’s anger is satisfied through Jesus Christ, and He ceases to chide with man.

*“Neither will he keep his anger for ever”* – God’s anger is not motivated by emotional disruption such as often characterizes men. His wrath is always executed in His justice. “When God’s wrath falls, it is not a sign that he cannot emotionally stand a situation any more, but rather a sign that in His wisdom He knows that it is time for a penalty to be given” (Roy Deaver, page 186). Barnes also noted, “It is

not his character to retain anger for its own sake, or for any personal gratification” (Barnes).

We never cease to marvel at God’s great love for man. How miserable we would be, and how tragic the outcome, were our God unwilling to forgive us of our trespasses. When we come to grasp the significance of “forgiveness” we, like the Psalmist, will cry out in praise.

**103:10:** *“He doth not deal with us after our sins”* - Mercy overrules the strict application of law upon the violator. When men are offended, they often seek JUSTICE. But when a man is guilty of crimes or wrongs against another, he seeks MERCY. We are grateful here for Coffman’s quote from Wilson Jones:

Just take a look at what the holy and righteous God did to the fallen angels, the antediluvian world, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the lost generation of Israel in the wilderness, and marvel at how leniently God has dealt with you; and this will surely deepen your gratitude and appreciation for the Divine mercy toward you” (Coffman, page 241-242).

It is awesome to think what God MIGHT have done to all of us because of our sin, whether individually or collectively.

*“Nor rewarded us after our iniquities”* – The idea is, God has never apportioned our punishment to our sins, nor has He regulated the exercise of His mercy by our merits.

We ought to praise the Lord for what he has not done as well as for what he has wrought for us; even the negative side deserves our adoring gratitude. Up to this moment, at our very worst estate, we have never suffered as we deserved to suffer; our daily lot has not been apportioned upon the rule of what we merited, but on the far different measure of undeserved kindness (Spurgeon).

**103:11:** *“As the heavens are high above the earth”* – This is the *vertical* measure of God’s wonderful mercy. God’s lovingkindness is far above the abilities of mortal man to comprehend. How far are the heavens above the earth? Can we even begin to measure? So it is when it comes to God’s lovingkindness toward mankind. Unfortunately, the vast majority of men fail to appreciate this truth.

*“them that fear him”* - The “fear” spoken of here is respect for and reverence toward God that leads men to submit in obedience to His divine will. Heavenly blessings have always been conditional.

**103:12:** “*As far as the east is from the west*” - The literal meaning is, “Like the distance of the east from the west,” or “like its being far” (Barnes). Here is the *horizontal measure* of God’s mercy. Take a point on this planet and draw a line *horizontally*, not from north to south, but from east to west. A line drawn from north to south will have a termination point. The north and south measure is finite; but not so with a line drawn from east to west. Take a point on this earth and go north and you will eventually reach the north pole, a point of termination. But pick a point on this globe, and move toward the east or west, and there will be no termination point. We like Phillips’ wonderful assessment of these two verses (11-12):

So we take a point on earth and draw a line vertically into infinity. We also draw a line horizontally into infinity – “so far hath He removed our sins from us.” There is a point on this planet where those two infinite lines intersect: the vertical line and the horizontal line. The point is Calvary! We draw all our lines from the cross. The up-right of the cross, driven like a stake into the ground, is where we begin our vertical line. We extend it into infinity. The crossbar of the tree, flung wide as though to embrace the world, is where we begin our horizontal line into infinity. That is how the Lord measures His mercy – in terms of the cross (Phillips, page 128).

Here, then, is the extent of God’s forgiveness. The idea is that God effectively removes the consequences of our sins. We are safe from condemnation (Rom. 8:1). We are treated as if we had never sinned.

**103:13:** “*Like as a father pitieth his children*” - A father’s love for his children is manifested in pity and care for his offspring. In like manner, Jehovah has pity upon us and He has provided a means for eternal life and fellowship with Him.

That which is referred to here, is the natural affection of the parent for the child; the tender love which is borne by the parent for his offspring; the disposition to care for its needs; the readiness to forgive when an offence has been committed. Compare Luke 15:22-24. Such, in an infinitely higher degree, is the compassion — the kindness — which God has for those that love him (Barnes).

There is something about this word “pity” that touches the heart. Like a father who looks upon the hopeless and helpless plight of his children, so our God looks upon our plight, the frailties that we face in this life, with our fears and anxieties, and it is said that He “*pitieth his children.*”



Thus, in these three verses we are given a marvelous glimpse into the wonderful mercy of our God. Israel was truly blessed in that (1) they received mercy from an inexhaustible storehouse, (2) their sins had been far removed from them, and (3) the Lord dealt with them as a father with his children whom He pities.

**103:14:** *“He knoweth our frame”* - There is no justification for saying to our Creator, “You do not know how I feel!” Deity came to this earth to be tempted in all points like us, and thereby came to know our very feelings and experience our temptations. Perhaps it is God’s knowledge of our “frame” that has produced His pity for us. “He tempers his dealings to the weakness and frailty of our nature, and his compassion interposes when the weight of sorrows would crush us” (Barnes).

*“He remembereth that we are dust”* – We may sometimes forget that we are “of the dust,” and we may, on occasions, try our minds and bodies unduly by excessive exertion. But God knows our very make up, and interposes with His compassion.

**103:15:** *“As for man, his days are as grass”* - The word for “man” refers to man in the aggregate. Literally, “Man; like the grass are his days.” His days are limited; at best his years are short. Should he live to surpass 100 years, at life’s end he is ultimately cut down as the withering grass of the field. Give him the full of life’s expectancy, and like the grass, he will fall beneath the blade of the grim reaper.

**103:16:** *“the wind passeth over it”* - The brevity of life is referred to here. Life is much like the wind that blows across the surface of the earth, and is quickly gone. Realizing the brevity of life, it would seem that men would seek with great earnestness to appropriate God’s mercy and lovingkindness while there is still time. “How easily is man swept off! How little force, apparently, does it require to remove the most beautiful and blooming youth of either sex from the earth. How speedily does beauty vanish; how soon, like a fading flower, does such a one pass away” (Barnes).

*“The place shall know it no more”* -- This means either (1) those left behind do not know where they have gone, or (2) those who are deceased are soon forgotten by the surviving generation. Barnes wrote: “We shall be GONE...No one that survives can tell...But to us now, how momentous the inquiry, *Where shall we be, when we are gone from among the living?*” (Barnes).

When man dies, he is gone – gone from his earthly home, his daily labors, and his trials and tribulations experienced during his earthly sojourn. As far as the world is concerned, it is as though he had never been. The sun will continue to rise, the seasons will come and go, and all things will continue as they were before that man ever came into the world. With but few exceptions, men are soon forgotten. Walk through your local cemetery and observe the stones with names of men and women who have long ago passed into eternity. Let the generation in which any man lived pass, and few will remember who it is that is now buried beneath the sod.

**103:17:** *“Lovingkindness of Jehovah is from everlasting to everlasting”* – The KJV translates the Hebrew word ‘chesed’ with the English “mercy.” Clarke points out that the Hebrew “signifies more particularly the exuberant goodness of God” (Clarke). That goodness is exhibited in His wonderful mercy toward man. While man, like the flower of the field, will fade from earth and from memory of the living, our God is from everlasting to everlasting. And to whom is this lovingkindness extended?

*“to them that fear him”* – The fear of Jehovah is manifested in obedience, as noted in the next verse. The grip of Calvinism on most of the theological world is seen in Albert Barnes’ comment here: “It would be difficult to think of a statement which would at the same time, in so few words, confirm at once the doctrine of Divine decrees, and the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. If either of these doctrines be denied, then what is stated here is not true” (Barnes). Our examination of the scripture reveals nothing in this passage that teaches what the Calvinist’s so-called “scholars” actually “read into” it. Quite the contrary! The passage plainly says that God’s mercy and lovingkindness is extended to those who fear Him. At such a point and time when men cease to fear God, the Almighty will cease to extend His grace to them. The next verse plainly tells us that God’s mercy is “to such as keep his covenant, and those that remember his commandments to do them” (verse 18).

**103:18:** *“keep his covenant...remember his precepts”* - The parallel construction in Hebrew poetry helps us understand what is involved in keeping the covenant that God has given to men. It is nothing less than remembering “his precepts to keep them.” Men who might ridicule the idea of “mere commandment keeping” need to restudy passages like this and then make proper application to their lives. It is precisely those who DO “remember his precepts to keep them”

unto whom the lovingkindness of the previous verse is extended. While God's mercy is available to all, not all will enjoy its blessing. Barnes almost reverses himself here: "The promise is ample, and the fidelity of God is certain, but still it is true that in those promises, and in that fidelity, it is implied that his people on their part must be faithful also, or the blessings will not be bestowed" (Barnes). If Calvin was correct, then it makes little difference HOW one lives; he cannot change his eternal destiny, and human choice is rendered null and void. But John Calvin was wrong, and human choice makes all the difference in the world, as well as in eternity!

### ***Exaltation*** **Verses 19-22**

- 19 *Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; And his kingdom ruleth over all.*  
20 *Bless Jehovah, ye his angels, That are mighty in strength, that fulfil his word, Harkening unto the voice of his word.*  
21 *Bless Jehovah, all ye his hosts, Ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.*  
22 *Bless Jehovah, all ye his works, In all places of his dominion: Bless Jehovah, O my soul.*

The absolute sovereignty of our God shines in the closing verses of this Psalm. The Psalmist envisions the throne of God, established in the heavens. He sees God ruling in strength, exercising His divine will. The angelic hosts minister to His needs. His dominion extends to the far reaches of His creation, whether things upon the earth, above the earth, or beneath the earth. No wonder the Psalmist would close this chapter as he began it: "Bless Jehovah, O my soul."

**103:19:** "*Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens*" - The wonderful mercy of our God serves as the basis for exalting Him above all that is upon the earth, and in heaven. The throne of our God is not subject to the frailties of this world. All earthly kingdoms are capable of being overthrown by someone that just might come along with greater military might than he who presently rules. Earthly thrones are at the mercy of the despot that might reign at the moment. But God's throne is established "in the heavens," where righteousness and absolute justice reign.

The extent of God's reign is "over all." The prophet Daniel reminds us that "The Most High rules in the kingdom of men and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Daniel 4:25).

**103:20:** *“Bless Jehovah, ye his angels”* - If “angels” are to be taken literally, it points out that obedience is expected of that heavenly host. Notice also that angels are “mighty in strength,” and that their power is designed for no other purpose than fulfilling God’s word. Such heavenly hosts are “ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14).

**103:21:** *“all ye hosts”* - Not only are the angels called to “bless Jehovah,” but the entirety of God’s hosts, those that “do his pleasure.” Coffman quotes Briggs: “In the expression ‘hosts,’ the angels are conceived as an organized army; and as ‘ministers’ they are conceived of as faithful ministerial servants doing the Father’s will” (Coffman, page 244).

**103:22:** The Psalm closes just as it began. The writer was not content to call upon others to bless God if he were not willing himself to so act.

### ***Lessons***

1. Regarding gratitude, Mac Deaver has these thought provoking comments:

We must take time on occasion to reflect on the good that we have received from the hand of God, and an honest reflection will cause gratitude to ascend in the heart and thanksgiving to flow from the lips. We must be thankful (Col. 3:15-17; Phil. 4:6). Gratitude is the result of adequate reasoning about blessings given by God. If a person is not grateful to God, he has failed to reason about the blessings he has received in an adequate way. And one shouldn’t have to think very long without realizing a blessing, for everything of any value at all is from God (James 1:17). But now please observe that it is one thing to recognize a blessing, it is another to think about it adequately so that gratitude for it is cultivated within one’s heart, and it is yet another to express thanks for it. We are to be thankful and express our thanks. To express thanks without really being grateful is a form of hypocrisy. To be grateful without expressing that gratefulness would indicate that either the blessed person is unaware of the source of his blessing and/or he is not as grateful as yet he ought to be. Counting our blessings will encourage our gratitude and our gratitude will encourage our praise of God” (Mac Deaver, page 184).

2. The soul of man was ‘made’ to praise and bless God. Our Father desires that we delight in His great favor, and that we take

advantage of the wonderful invitation He extends to us. Our love of God, and appreciation for Him is never more appropriate than when we obey Him and when we engage in worship and praise.

3. The mercy of our Lord is far beyond human comprehension. We cease not to marvel at the love which prompted our Father to extend His mercy to us “while we were yet sinners.” Can we even begin to grasp such love? No wonder Paul would close his marvelous doctrinal section in Romans with these words: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him *be* the glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. 11:33-36). God is worthy to be praised if for only this reason – in that He loved us, redeemed us, purchased us, and will someday take us home to be with Him for all eternity.

4. Spurgeon quotes John Stevenson:

*“All that is within me,”* etc. - Let your *conscience* bless the Lord by unvarying fidelity. Let your *judgment* bless him, by decisions in accordance with his word. Let your *imagination* bless him, by pure and holy musings. Let your *affections* praise him, by loving whatsoever he loves. Let your *desires* bless him, by seeking only his glory. Let your *memory* bless him, by not forgetting any of his benefits. Let your *thoughts* bless him, by meditating on his excellencies. Let your *hope* praise him, by longing and looking for the glory that is to be revealed. Let your every *sense* bless him by its fealty, your every *word* by its truth, and your every *act* by its integrity.—*John Stevenson.*”

5. We should never forget that our God is the source of all blessings, both temporal and spiritual:

***“The Lord Sent It”***

by Tom Wacaster

I recently read the story of an older lady who had no money to buy food. She prayed, “Dear Lord, please send me a side of bacon and a sack of corn meal.” Over and over she would pray the same prayer aloud. One of the town’s scrupulous citizens decided to play a trick on her. He dropped side of

bacon and a sack of corn meal down her chimney. It landed in front of her as she knelt to pray. Jumping to her feet, she exclaimed, "Oh Lord! You have answered my prayers." She was so excited that she went all over town telling everyone the good news, and how the Lord answered her prayer. This was too much for the scoundrel who had dropped the food down her chimney. He ridiculed her, and revealed that it was not God who had answered her prayer, but he. The old lady then replied, "Well, the devil may have brought it, but it was the Lord who sent it!" The atheist who sees only HIS hand in supplying the food which he eats fails to understand that were it not for God's laws of sowing a reaping, and the Divine providence of sending the necessary rain and sunshine, there would be no food. Our blessings may come by what we consider "natural" means, but it is still God who supplies all those blessings. James wrote, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). Our strong economic boom, coupled with immorality in high places, has led many to falsely conclude that material prosperity is the result of individual determination, moral convictions notwithstanding. Failure to give thanks unto God for His providential care is the first step into apostasy. How grateful we ought to be that when it comes to our material prosperity, "The Lord sent it."

## *“Oh, The Majesty of Our God”*

### ***Introduction***

As with the previous Psalm, this song of praise begins and ends with the words, “Bless Jehovah, O my soul.” The difference is that in the former the mercy of God is emphasized, while in this Psalm the author concentrates on the majesty of Jehovah. “The former is the song of love to Love. This is the song of loyalty to Royalty” (Morgan, page 260). This Psalm is a true companion to Psalm 103.

Psalm 103 celebrates God as the God of circumstance; Psalm 104 celebrates Him as the God of creation. Psalm 103 magnifies God’s grace; Psalm 104 magnifies God’s glory. Psalm 103 deals with God’s mercy; Psalm 104 deals with God’s might” (Phillips, page 2:131).

The author of this Psalm is not known. If David wrote the previous Psalm (as per the subtitle), it is very probable that he wrote this one, since the language is similar. The occasion and time of composition cannot be determined. It follows closely the order of creation in Genesis 1, and may have been composed at a time when the Psalmist was reflecting upon that passage as it fitly illustrates the majesty and power of Jehovah God.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalmist begins with a declaration of dutiful praise to Jehovah God (verse 1). He draws our attention to the marvelous creation recorded in Genesis chapter one. That chapter, perhaps more than any single chapter in the Old Testament, is a fitting representation of God’s great power and majesty. What more aptly demonstrates the majestic omnipotence of our God, and His marvelous glory, than the very first chapter in the Bible?

An overview of this Psalm reveals the following: Verses 1-4 seems to focus on days one and two of the creation; verses 5-9 concentrate on part of day three; verses 10-18 focus on the second half of day three; verses 19-30 give consideration to days four, five and six. While the Psalm has no specific reference to day seven, the last five verses

appear to be a refrain in which the Psalmist contemplates the whole of creation, and declares that “the Lord shall rejoice in his works” (verse 31).

Interestingly, man, God’s crowing creation, is not discussed in the Psalm. This may be accounted for from the fact that man is the singer. It may be concluded that “the purpose of the psalmist seems to have been to celebrate the praises of God in the varied scene - the panorama passing before the eye in the works of nature. The purpose did not seem to be to contemplate man - his creation, his history - but nature, as seen around us” (Barnes). It has been more than three decades since I scribbled the following outline in the margin of my American Standard Old Testament:

- I. A PERSONAL EXHORTATION to praise God, 1;
- II. An ELABORATION upon the creation of God, with an allusion to...
  - 1. The first day of creation, 2-5;
  - 2. The second day of creation, 6-9;
  - 3. The third day of creation, 10-18;
  - 4. The fourth day of creation, 19-23;
  - 5. The fifth day of creation, 24-30;

### III. An EXHORTATION to praise God, 31-35

Most of the sources we consulted recognized a three-fold division in this Psalm touching on God’s majesty, His power, and the provisions He bestows upon even the lowliest of His wonderful creation. Willmington (page 274) sees in the Psalm a reference to Praise to God, Power of God, and Provisions from God. We were particularly impressed with Phillips’ outline on this chapter (Phillips, page 2:130):

- I. The Glory of God’s Person (104:1)
- II. The Glory of God’s Power (104:2-31)
- III. The Glory of God’s Purpose (104:32-35).

When we consider each of these character traits of God (His person, His power, and His purpose), we, like the Psalmist, will begin and end our song of praise with his words: “Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

We will study the Psalms under the following divisions:



- I. A **Declaration** by the Psalmist, verse 1;
- II. A **Description** of God's majesty as illustrated in the creation, verses 2-32;
- III. The **Determination** on the part of the Psalmist to praise Jehovah for His great works.

## **Commentary**

### **DECLARATION**

#### **Verse 1**

*1 Bless Jehovah, O my soul. O Jehovah my God, thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honor and majesty:*

**104:1:** The Psalmist begins this Psalm with a burst of praise as he contemplates the creation. There are two things he declares: his personal praise ("*Bless Jehovah, O my soul*"), and God's marvelous power ("*thou art very great*"). The God that made this universe is "clothed with honor and majesty." Thus our author begins with an affirmation of the greatness of God, followed closely by the association he enjoyed in fellowship with Jehovah.

This ascription has in it a remarkable blending of the boldness of faith, and the awe of holy fear: for the Psalmist calls the infinite Jehovah "*my God*," and at the same time, prostrate in amazement at the divine greatness, he cries out in utter astonishment, "*Thou art very great*" (Spurgeon).

Truly the majesty of God shines in His wonderful creation. But just assuredly is our God's majesty seen in that He sees fit to walk with men who respect and obey Him.

It should be noted that the wonder expressed by the Psalmist is concentrated on the majesty of God, not the creation. He does not say the "universe" is very great, but "**Thou**" art very great.

### **DESCRIPTION**

#### **Verses 2-30**

The Psalmist now turns our attention to the creation as it manifests the character of a God worthy to be praised and honored. Spurgeon's comments address this point very well:

The Lord is seen in his works as worthy of *honour* for his skill, his goodness, and his power, and as claiming *majesty*, for he has fashioned all things in sovereignty, doing as he wills, and asking no man's permit. He must be blind indeed who does not see that nature is the work of a king. These are solemn strokes of God's severer mind, terrible touches of his sterner attributes, broad lines of inscrutable mystery, and deep shadings of overwhelming power, and these make creation's picture a problem never to be solved, except by admitting that he who drew it giveth no account of his matters, but ruleth all things according to the good pleasure of his will (Spurgeon).

The Psalmist's "description" parallels the different days of creation recorded in Genesis chapter one.

### ***The first day of creation, 2-5***

- 2 *Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment; Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain;*
- 3 *Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; Who maketh the clouds his chariot; Who walketh upon the wings of the wind;*
- 4 *Who maketh winds his messengers; Flames of fire his ministers;*
- 5 *Who laid the foundations of the earth, That it should not be moved for ever.*

From Genesis 1:1-5 we learn that two major events took place on the very first day of creation. (1) The heavens and the earth were brought forth, and (2) light was spoken into existence. The language in these verses is poetic. Any attempt to place a literal interpretation upon the passage would difficult, if not absurd.

*"Who coverest thyself with light as a garment"* – Not only did God create the light, He also clothes Himself with that light as a man might draw a cloak about himself. This is not some literal "garment," but a figurative way of drawing our attention to the majesty of God.

*"Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain"* – It has been noted by a number of scientists and theologians alike that the atmosphere serves as a type of curtain shielding the earth from the harmful rays of the sun and the forces of outer space. Here the Psalmist bespeaks the power of a God Who can, with the simple flip of a wrist, or motion of a hand, draw the heavens out as a man moves a curtain across a window. Certainly a God Who can create the universe with the sound of His voice, control the light and use it to array Himself in

majestic splendor, and then lay out the vast universe as one might simply spread a curtain, such a One is worthy of praise and honor. “If light itself is but his garment and veil, what must be the blazing splendour of his own essential being?” (Spurgeon).

**104:3:** “*Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters*” - The word rendered ‘layeth’ means “to meet.” It is a word that might be used in making reference to the construction of a house, where the beams and joists come together. The “beams” might refer to the upper chamber, or a loft. The “waters” refer to the waters of creation. “The allusion here is to the waters above the firmament; and the meaning is that God had constructed the place of his own abode in those waters; that is, in the most exalted place in the universe” (Barnes).

“*Who maketh the clouds his chariot; Who walketh upon the wings of the wind*” – Men have longed to control the clouds; to harness the water contained therein and control the wind produced by thunder storms. In poetic language the Psalmist envisions the absolute control that Jehovah has over the clouds and the wind. We are given a poetic glimpse of the King riding in a chariot whose colors even Solomon himself could not rival. Even the winds are at Jehovah’s beckon call, to perform His will and fulfill His purpose. Men are at the mercy of the forces of nature; but Jehovah controls them all.

**104:4:** “*Who maketh winds his messengers*” - All of this language is a poetic description of God’s great power and might, here used by the Psalmist to emphasize God’s control over the forces of His creation so as to accomplish His ends. God sends out the winds as one might send a messenger. The “*flames of fire*” may refer to the lightning. The author of Hebrews used this verse to describe the superiority of the Messiah over the elements of nature (Heb. 1:7). If Jehovah controls the winds and the flames of fire (as noted in the Psalm), and if the Messiah has the same superiority and control over the elements of nature (as noted in Hebrews), then the Messiah and Jehovah are equal in authority and power.

**104:5:** “*who laid the foundations of the earth*” - The Psalmist is still contemplating that first day of creation when the heavens and the earth were created. In an attempt to get Job to consider the wonderful power and majesty of God, the question was asked, “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding...Whereupon were the foundations thereof fastened? Or who laid the corner-stone thereof?” (Job 38:4,

6).

The language is again poetic, but how else could the Psalmist describe the stability of this earth and the control that God has over this universe. The marginal reading is, “He hath founded the earth upon her bases” (ASV, footnote). The idea is that something was placed under the earth to support it. That something is the “word of his power” (Heb. 1:3). How great is our God, in that He can simply SPEAK the word, and the earth is created, set upon a solid foundation, immovable; and it has remained in tact for more than sixty centuries. The earth is secure so long as God determines it remains. See in this connection Psalms 102:26, Matthew 24:35, and 2 Peter 3:10-12. Indeed, “The several motions of our planet are carried on so noiselessly and evenly that, as far as we are concerned, all things are as permanent and peaceful as if the old notion of its resting upon pillars were literally true...What engineer can save every part of his machinery from occasional jar, jerk, or friction? yet to our great world in its complicated motions no such thing has ever occurred” (Spurgeon).

### ***The second day of creation, 6***

*6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a vesture; The waters stood above the mountains.*

**104:6:** “*Thou coverest it with the deep*” – The meaning is that God covered the earth with the waters, as if a garment had been spread over it. From Genesis 1:7-8, it would appear that the original “state” of the earth on the third day was such that the earth was covered with water so much so that the Psalmist could say “*as with a vesture.*” The fact that so much water existed during the week of creation should not surprise us. Coffman noted that vast amounts of water still exist upon the earth:

If all of the multiplied trillions of tons of water in its vaporous or gaseous state were suddenly released upon the earth, and if all the millions of cubic miles of frozen waters of the polar ice-caps were suddenly melted, the entire world would again be completely submerged in the sea (Coffman, 247).

“*The waters stood above the mountains*” – The earth was one vast “sea world,” covering even the mountains. This incredible amount of water covered the earth until the third day of creation when God “gathered together unto one place” the vast amount of water, thereby making the seas and the dry land.

### ***The third day of creation, 7-18***

- 7 *At thy rebuke they fled; At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away*  
8 *(The mountains rose, the valleys sank down) Unto the place which thou hadst founded for them.*  
9 *Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; That they turn not again to cover the earth.*  
10 *He sendeth forth springs into the valleys; They run among the mountains;*  
11 *They give drink to every beast of the field; The wild asses quench their thirst.*  
12 *By them the birds of the heavens have their habitation; They sing among the branches.*  
13 *He watereth the mountains from his chambers: The earth is filled with the fruit of thy works.*  
14 *He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, And herb for the service of man; That he may bring forth food out of the earth,*  
15 *And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, And oil to make his face to shine, And bread that strengtheneth man's heart.*  
16 *The trees of Jehovah are filled with moisture, The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;*  
17 *Where the birds make their nests: As for the stork, the fir-trees are her house.*  
18 *The high mountains are for the wild goats; The rocks are a refuge for the conies.*

**104:7:** “*At thy rebuke they fled*” – All it took was the voice of God to move the massive amounts of water, to lift up the mountains and create the valleys, and to make the seas and the dry land to appear. No wonder the Psalmist declared at the beginning of this song, “Thou art very great” (verse 1). Even as we write these lines (September 23, 2005), the waters in and around New Orleans flow uncontrolled into that city in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In 1994, Houston, Texas area received record breaking rains in late October, inundating the San Jacinto River beyond its banks and flooding Northeast Harris county even beyond the century flood mark. Before that river began to recede it crested at some 16 feet above flood level. No, man cannot hold back the waters! Only God can speak the word so that the waters “hasted away.”

*“At the voice of thy thunder they hasted away”* - According to Barnes,

The Hebrew word contains the idea of haste, trepidation, consternation, alarm, 'as if they were frightened. God spake in tones of thunder, and they fled. It is impossible to conceive anything more sublime than this (Barnes).

Jesus demonstrated the same Divine characteristics when He calmed the sea (Matt. 8:26).

**104:8:** *"The mountains rose, the valleys sank down"* – In order to restrict the motion and expanse of the waters God created the mountains and the valleys so as to disperse the immense waters that surrounded the globe.

**104:9:** *"Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over"* - God sets the bounds of the seas. Without His staying hand, the massive amount of water that fills the oceans would breach the banks of our coasts and inundate the world with its destructive forces. This undeniable truth was impressed upon Job when God asked him:

Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, When it brake forth, as *if* it had issued out of the womb; When I made clouds the garment thereof, And thick darkness a swaddling-band for it, And marked out for it my bound, And set bars and doors, And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; And here shall thy proud waves be stayed? (Job 38:8-11).

*"that they turn not again to cover the earth"* – There was only one occasion in the history of this earth where the waters were allowed to "cover the earth," that being the great deluge that destroyed disobedient man in the days of Noah (Gen. 6-9).

**104:10:** *"He sendeth forth springs into the valleys"* - Although God has set a limit to the massive amounts of water in the seas and oceans, He has provided the means by which the earth would continue to be watered. God does this by the process of evaporation, thereby conducting the waters from the great reservoirs of the lakes and seas and then to the "springs in the valleys." These waters are said to "run among the hills." That is, they flow along the natural valleys which were made for them. The very mention of how God sends forth the springs and waters leads quite naturally to a discussion of exactly why He does this – namely to provide the necessary water for the living creatures, both great and small; both important and seemingly unimportant.

**104:11-12:** *“they give drink to every beast of the field”* - The providential care of the animal kingdom serves as a reminder that our God will take care of man. Arguing from the lesser to the greater, if God so cares for the beasts of the field, how great must be His concern for mankind. Our Lord made a similar argument in Matthew 6:24ff when He pointed out God’s care for the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field, implying that if He cares for the lower animals He would certainly care for us.

**104:13:** *“He watereth the mountains”* - This verse contains a wonderful, though implied, reference to the cycle of earth’s waters as they arise from the oceans and lakes, and then fall upon the earth, eventually making their way back to the sea. This is actually the means by which the mountains are watered, and by which the water finds its way to the animals.

**104:14:** *“He causeth the grass to grow”* - Man observes the waters as they fall upon the earth thereby providing the nourishment for the grass to grow. The earth brings forth the food necessary for our existence. The important point in these verses is the undeniable truth that God is the source of our material blessings. “How great is that God who from among the sepulchers finds the support of life, and out of the ground which was cursed brings forth the blessings of corn and wine and oil” (Spurgeon).

**104:15:** *“wine that maketh glad the heart”* – The showers produce not only the necessities of life, but the finer luxuries of life. There is nothing in the passage that suggests the wine is intoxicating beverage. “O that man were wise enough to know how to use this gladdening product of the vine; but, alas, he full often turns it to ill account, and debases himself therewith. Of this he must himself bear the blame; he deserves to be miserable who turns even blessings into curses” (Spurgeon). Adam Clarke added this thought:

Ardent spirits exhilarate, but they exhaust the strength; and every dose leaves man the worse. Unadulterated wine, on the contrary, exhilarates and invigorates: it makes him cheerful, and provides for the continuance of that cheerfulness by strengthening the muscles, and bracing the nerves (Clarke).

*“and oil to make his face shine”* – Those living in Old Testament times were more accustomed to using oil than we are today, particularly for the purpose of anointing the body. Perfumed oils were particularly popular. The Psalmist continues to remind us that God is the source of these blessings.

We must exercise caution when interpreting passages that make reference to “wine,” lest we draw the improper conclusion that God approves of that which He condemns in other passages. It is the height of mis-intrepretation to suggest that the “intoxicating wine” man may produce is approved and sanctioned by God. “Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise” (Pro. 20:1). Drunkenness is a process of intoxication, not simply the end result. Paul wrote, “Be not drunken with wine” (Eph. 5:18). The verb tense is literally, “Do not begin becoming drunk with wine.” One does not need to be stone drunk, staggering in the gutter, and flat on his face, in order to find himself “becoming drunk with wine.” In fact, the process of “becoming drunk” begins with the first drink. Barnes’ comments are also noteworthy:

Literally, “And wine (it) gladdens the heart of man to make his face to shine more than oil.” Margin, “to make his face shine with oil, or more than oil.” The latter expresses the idea most accurately. So DeWette renders it. The meaning is, that the earth is made to produce wine (or grapes which produce wine), and this exhilarates the heart, so that the effect is seen on the countenance, making it more bright and cheerful than it is when anointed with oil. The reference here, in the original, is not to wine and oil as produced by the earth, as would seem to be implied in our translation, but to wine that makes the heart glad, and the face brighter than if anointed with oil. **The psalmist here states a fact about the use of wine—a well-known fact that it exhilarates the heart, and brightens the countenance; and he states it merely as a fact. He says nothing on the question whether the use of wine as a beverage is, or is not, proper and safe** (Barnes – Emphasis mine, TW).

**104:16-17:** *“The trees...the cedars...where the birds make their nests”* – God’s care for the animal kingdom come into view in verses 16-18. The birds, the storks, the goats and the conies are provided the necessities for life. If God so provides for the lower animal kingdom, will He not care for man, who is created in His image? Indeed! Of particular interest in these verses is the subtle reference to God’s ecological system, so interwoven as to ultimately provide a marvelous balance in nature and providing man with the necessities of life.

**104:18:** *“The high mountains are for the wild goats”* – The Psalmist continues to give us a glimpse of God’s marvelous providential care for His creation. Those places where man cannot dwell provide a shelter for the wild animals. When we consider the marvelous



balance in nature, we cannot help but agree with the Psalmist, “Oh Jehovah my God, thou art very great” (104:1).

### ***The fourth day of creation, 19-23***

- 19 *He appointed the moon for seasons: The sun knoweth his going down.*  
20 *Thou makest darkness, and it is night, Wherein all the beasts of the forest creep forth.*  
21 *The young lions roar after their prey, And seek their food from God.*  
22 *The sun ariseth, they get them away, And lay them down in their dens.*  
23 *Man goeth forth unto his work And to his labor until the evening.*

The Psalmist now turns his attention to the heavenly bodies. The fourth day of creation makes up the subject of these verses.

**104:19:** “*He appointed the moon for seasons*” – The moon is mentioned first because in Jewish reckoning of time the night precedes the day. The “seasons” here likely refers to the various Jewish religious festivals and holy days. It was the movement of the moon in its various positions which determined the months, and consequently these religious “seasons.”

“*the sun knoweth his going down*” – It is not that the sun is capable of “knowing” certain things. The Psalmist is again using poetic and exaggerated language to express his point. The orderliness of God’s creation comes into focus. The sun knows the exact time of his setting, never varying, but always obeying the “laws” that determine its course. The sun and moon are more than just our luminaries. Together, the “sun” and “moon” serve as our great chronometers, the completely accurate and flawless time pieces that God has set in the heavens to serve man.

**104:20:** “*Thou makest darkness, and it is night*” – Divine wisdom has seen fit to set aside a certain portion of each day for man’s repose and rest. Man has made artificial light to extend his activities beyond the setting of the sun. But for the most part, society uses the day for work, and the night for rest.

“*all the beasts of the forest creep forth*” – Adam Clarke observed, “as it would not be convenient for man and the wild beasts of the forest

to collect their food at the same time, he has given the night to them as the proper time to procure their prey, and the day to rest in. When man labors, they rest; when man rests, they labor” (Adam Clarke). There may also be a reference here to the sanitation and clean up work that is performed by these “beasts” during the night hours. At night, these creatures “creep forth,” hunting their prey, both living and dead. In the shadow of darkness, while man sleeps, the work of removing the impurities about us takes place.

**104:21:** *“the young lions roar after their prey”* – The important lesson in this verse is the fact that the lions recognize that they are dependent upon God for their food. Even the brute creatures act “as if” they call upon God for their sustenance. Spurgeon’s comments on this are interesting:

This is the poetic interpretation of a roar. To whom do the lions roar? Certainly not to their prey, for the terrible sound tends to alarm their victims, and drive them away. They after their own fashion express their desires for food, and the expression of desire is a kind of prayer. Out of this fact comes the devout thought of the wild beast’s appealing to its Maker for food. But neither with lions nor men will the seeking of prayer suffice, there must be practical seeking too, and the lions are well aware of it. What they have in their own language asked for they go forth to seek; being in this thing far wiser than many men who offer formal prayers not half so earnest as those of the young lions, and then neglect the means in the use of which the object of their petitions might be gained. The lions roar and seek; too many are liars before God, and roar but never seek (Spurgeon).

Unfortunately many a man demonstrates less wisdom than the common brute beast - they either refuse or fail to acknowledge that it is God Who provides them with their daily sustenance. Man’s failure to give thanks to God for material blessings is a fatal blunder for it was precisely the absence of thanksgiving that opened the door for man to plummet to the depths of depravity (cf. Rom. 1:21 ff).

**104:22:** *“The sun ariseth...and lay them down”* – When man arises, the beasts lay down. While the beasts of the field hunt their prey during the night hours, man sleeps. And their situation is reversed in the daylight hours.

**104:23:** *“Man goeth forth unto his work...his labour”* – The Psalmist is simply stating the general practice among men. Of course when the Psalm was written, the inability to light the night

with all sorts of electrical lights and artificial lamps prohibited men working into the dark hours of the night.

### ***The fifth day of creation, 24-30***

**104:24:** *“O Jehovah, how manifold are thy works!”* – This verse may very well be the key verse in the Psalm. What does the skeptic, agnostic, and atheist see when they look upon this creation? Random chance! Evolutionary processes! Chaos! Such a “fool” fails to see the hand of a Creator, and views our universe as nothing more than some meaningless arrangement of molecules. Not so with the wise and discerning mind! When all the evidence is carefully weighed we are driven to the conclusion that *“in wisdom hast thou made them all.”*

Out of this marvelous system of checks and balances comes the *“riches”* of God’s bounty. The Psalmist tells us that the earth is *“full of thy riches.”*

The Creator has not set his creatures down in a dwelling place where the table is bare, and the buttery empty, he has filled the earth with food; and not with bare necessities only, but with the riches - dainties, luxuries, beauties, treasures. In the bowels of the earth are hidden mines of wealth, and on her surface are teeming harvests of plenty... If his house below is so full of riches what must his house above be, where “The very streets are paved with gold exceeding clear and fine” (Spurgeon).

**104:25:** *“all things creeping innumerable...small and great”* – God’s creation consists of small and great creatures. The sheer number of species of animals, from the smallest of microscopic creatures, to the creeping animals, and beyond to the great beasts of ocean and land, remind us that God’s ecological system is a masterpiece of divine wisdom in and of itself. Coffman has this most interesting comment:

The uncounted millions of species in the animate creation include not merely the larger units of the creation, but innumerable being that are almost infinitely small, not merely insects, and the tiniest creatures of the sea, as mentioned in this paragraph, but the sub-microscopic beings. All of this great host of creatures both great and small that God made are fitted into an ecological system so great and so complicated that no man has ever understood all of it (Coffman, page 251).

**104:26:** If the “leviathan” refers to the whale (and we believe it

does), this verse suggests that such a creature was “made to play in the sea, which is exactly what that creature does throughout his whole life” (Coffman, page 251).

**104:27:** God’s creatures gather around their Creator like birds gathering around a feeder. Brother Gibson had this interesting quip: “In farm terms, ‘we all wait like chickens on God’s back porch’” (Gibson, Southwest Lectures, *Psalms – Volume II*, page 194). The reference here to “*due season*” suggests a divine time table even in the order of things here below. If the lowly creatures trust in God to provide their daily sustenance, why is it that man cannot do the same? Yet so often the human race, saint and sinner alike, demonstrate a weak faith when it comes to God’s wonderful promise contained in Matthew 6:33. Interestingly, our Lord instructed us to pray for our “daily bread,” and not to worry about the morrow, for the morrow has enough worries for itself. May God give us the strength to live one day at a time and depend upon Him to fulfill His promise for our preservation and safe keeping.

**104:28:** “*Thou openest thy hand*” - Here is a glimpse at Divine liberality. Not only does God provide the basic sustenance of life, He opens the windows of heaven and pours forth abundant blessings.

**104:29:** “*thou takest away their breath*” – We find this phrase quite intriguing. The Psalmist may be referring to the cycle of life wherein all living things, including mankind, eventually return to the dust from which he came. Spurgeon concludes that death is “caused by an act of God” (Spurgeon). Whether directly, or indirectly, who can doubt that God actually brings about the death of His creatures, man included, by taking “away their breath.” How often have we seriously considered the simple blessing of breath? We breathe in and out hundreds of times in a single day, scarcely giving any thought to its importance, not to mention the process that occurs each time we take oxygen into our lungs. Yet, without the breath of life death will come upon the living. We learn from this verse that our God owns life. He gives it; He takes it away. His breath is the breath of life.

**104:30:** “*Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created*” – Some commentators see in this verse a veiled reference to the resurrection. But it seems more likely that the Psalmist is suggesting the cycle of life that will continue throughout this world’s existence. As one generation gives way to another, and as man dies and returns to the dust from which he came, our God continues present in every generation, replenishing life upon the earth and renewing the face of

the ground.

### **DETERMINATION** **Verses 31-35**

- 31 *Let the glory of Jehovah endure for ever; Let Jehovah rejoice in his works:*  
32 *Who looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke.*  
33 *I will sing unto Jehovah as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have any being.*  
34 *Let thy meditation be sweet unto him: I will rejoice in Jehovah.*  
35 *Let sinners be consumed out of the earth. And let the wicked be no more. Bless Jehovah, O my soul. Praise ye Jehovah.*

**104:31:** The Psalmist expresses his joy with an exhortation unto others to praise the Lord for His marvelous works upon which the writer had just meditated. One cannot help but see the Psalmist's determination to offer up his praise to the God Who made the things discussed to this point.

*"Let Jehovah rejoice in his works"* – This may be a reference to the fact that when the Almighty observed His creation it is said, "God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

**104:32:** *"it trembleth...they smoke"* – Here is a reference to the power of God, so much so that the earth is said to tremble, and the mountains smoke. Had God desired, He could have overwhelmed us with His awesome power. Yes, even the mere "look" of God terrifies and amazes.

**104:33:** *"I will sing...as long as I live"* – Literally, "in my lives." The Psalmist would praise God in THIS life, and in the life HEREAFTER! We have here an unmistakable reference to the Psalmist's belief in life after death.

*"while I have any being"* – Literally, "in my eternity" (Adam Clarke).

**104:34:** We prefer the KJV here, *"My meditation of him shall be sweet."* We are reminded of Psalms 1:2 where we learned that the "blessed man" has a great delight in the "law of the Lord; and on his law doth he meditate day and night." There is within the heart of every faithful child of God a "disposition" to think about God; to be drawn to the subject of spiritual matters. There is pleasure in such

meditations and one is made happy in thinking of God. The sinner, on the other hand, has no such pleasure in spiritual things. He is content to wallow in the lower things of life. In addition he actually turns away from those things that are higher and nobler. The Psalmist considered his meditation upon God as something that was sweet; we can do no less.

**104:35:** *“Let sinners be consumed out of the earth”* – Brother Coffman’s comments capture the thought here:

Christians should accept into their theology the principle that God totally abhors evil, and that upon the occasion appointed by his own eternal will, he will cast evil out of this universe; and that is exactly what the psalmist prayed for in these lines (Coffman, page 253).

What a glorious day that will be when our God removes us from this dark world of sin and takes us to the “new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:13).

### ***Lessons***

1. Brother Deaver sets forth no less than two dozen characteristics of our God that are expressed in this Psalm. He notes that God is (a) great, (b) clothed with honor and majesty, (c) stretched out the heavens like a tent, (d) uses clouds for His chariots, (e) uses fire and flame and His servants, (f) covered the earth with the deep, (g) brought forth the mountains and the valleys, (h) has set a boundary for the waters, (i) provides water for every beast, (j) provides grass for the cattle, (k) meets the physical needs of man, (l) created and controls the sun and the moon, (m) and that His works are manifold and wonderful (Deaver, page 50).
2. One cannot read this Psalm without being impressed with the providential care that God gives to the whole of His creation, both great and small. There is also an undeniable, repeated, and apparent reference to the power of our God. His omnipotence as well as His beneficent nature shine in this Psalm.
3. Spurgeon quotes George Gilfillan’s summation of this Psalm, a concise summary we thought worth sharing with our readers:

Its touches are indeed few, rapid—but how comprehensive and sublime! Is it God?—“He is clothed with light as with a garment,” and when he walks abroad, it is on “the wings of the wind.” The

winds or lightnings?—They are his messengers or angels: “*Stop us not,*” they seem to say; “*the King’s business requireth haste.*” The waters?—The poet shows them in flood, covering the face of the earth, and then as they now lie, enclosed within their embankments, to break forth no more for ever. The springs?—He traces them, by one inspired glance, as they run among the hills, as they give drink to the wild and lonely creatures of the wilderness, as they nourish the boughs, on which sing the birds, the grass, on which feed the cattle, the herb, the corn, the olive-tree, the vine, which fill man’s mouth, cheer his heart, and make his face to shine. Then he skims with bold wing all lofty objects—the trees of the Lord on Lebanon, “*full of sap,*”—the fir-trees, and the storks which are upon them—the high hills, with their wild goats—and the rocks with their conies. Then he soars up to the heavenly bodies—the sun and the moon. Then he spreads abroad his wings in the darkness of the night, which “*hideth not from him,*” and hears the beasts of the forest creeping abroad to seek their prey, and the roar of the lions to God for meat, coming up upon the winds of midnight. Then as he sees the shades and the wild beasts fleeing together, in emulous haste, from the presence of the morning sun, and man, strong and calm in its light as in the smile of God, hieing to his labour, he exclaims, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works I in wisdom hast thou made them all!” He casts, next, one look at the ocean—a look glancing at the ships which go there, at the leviathan which plays there; and then piercing down to the innumerable creatures, small and great, which are found below its unlifted veil of waters. He sees, then, all the beings, peopling alike earth and sea, waiting for life and food around the table of their Divine Master—nor waiting in vain—till, lo! he hides his face, and they are troubled, die, and disappear in chaos and night. A gleam, next, of the great resurrection of nature and of man comes across his eye. “*Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.*” But a greater truth still succeeds, and forms the climax of the Psalm—(a truth Humboldt, with all his admiration of it, notices not, and which gives a Christian tone to the whole)—“*The Lord shall rejoice in his works.*” He contemplates a yet more perfect Cosmos. He is “*to consume sinners*” and sin “*out of*” this fair universe: and then, when man is wholly worthy of his dwelling, shall God say of both it and him, with a yet deeper emphasis than when he said it at first, and smiling at the same time a yet warmer and softer smile, “*It is very good.*” And with an ascription of blessing to the Lord does the poet close this almost angelic descant upon the works of nature, the glory of God, and the prospects of man. It is not merely the unity of the Cosmos that he had displayed in it, but its progression, as connected with the parallel progress of man—its thorough dependence on one Infinite Mind—the “*increasing purpose*” which runs along it—and its final purification, when it shall blossom into “the bright consummate flower” of the new heavens and the new earth, “*wherein dwelleth*

righteousness;”—this is the real burden and the peculiar glory of the 104<sup>th</sup> Psalm (George Gilfillan, in “*The Bards of the Bible*,” as quoted by Charles Spurgeon).

The following poem (in reference to verse 35) was written by John Keble (as quoted by Steve Gibson):

*All true, all faultless, all in tune,  
Creation's wondrous choir,  
Opened in mystic unison,  
To last till time expire.*

*And still it lasts: by day and night,  
With one consenting voice,  
All hymn thy glory, Lord, aright,  
All worship and rejoice.*

*Man only mars the sweet accord,  
O'er powering with harsh din  
The music of thy works and word,  
I'll matched with grief and sin.*



## ***“God’s Providence And Protection”***

### ***Introduction***

This chapter deals primarily with a recounting of the mercies of God in the history of Israel. The first sixteen verses are very similar to David’s Psalm in 1 Chronicles 16:8-22. The author of this Psalm felt that the language in that Old Testament passage was suitable to express his thoughts, and thus adapted the language without any significant change. Morgan noted, “This and the following psalm are companion pieces. They reveal the two sides of the relation between God and His people during a long period. This one sings the song of His faithfulness and power; while the next tells the sad story of His people’s repeated failure and rebellion” (G.Campbell Morgan, page 260). The occasion of the Psalm is not known. Nor do we have any information as to the author. If David is the author, it may have been written at some monumental moment in Israel’s history, such as the return of the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. If the Psalm was written after the Babylonian captivity, the author may have taken certain selections from previous Psalms so as to express praise unto God for their deliverance. In this case the Psalm may have been written by Ezra the scribe.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm is essentially a recounting of Israel’s history from Abraham to the Wilderness Wanderings. Morgan provides the following summary of the Psalm:

The psalmist opens with an appeal which recognizes the responsibility of those who have received of God’s blessing...He calls on men to ‘remember’ and proceeds to trace the divine hand in their history. First, he goes back to the ancient Covenant and sings of how God cared for them while they were few in the land, rebuking kings for their sake. Then follows a recognition of the government of God as overruling even what appeared so disastrous a matter as the famine. Through that, Joseph received his opportunity, and the people were brought into Egypt, which for the

time being was a place of quietness and increase (G.Campbell Morgan, page 260).

While there is no specific reference to the crossing of the Red Sea, the Psalmist does mention life of Israel following that crossing. It is interesting that there is no hint of the rebellion of the nation in the wilderness; that would appear in the next Psalm. Other Psalms which contain historical accounts of Israel are 78, 106, and 136.

Here are some of the better outlines we found on this Psalm. We were particularly impressed with Phillips' homiletic outline on this chapter (Phillips, Volume II, page 139):

- I. Israel's Exhortation (105:1-6)
- II. Israel's Expectation (105:7-15)
- III. Israel's Exile (105:16-25)
- IV. Israel's Exodus (105:26-38)
- V. Israel's Experiences (105:39-41)
- VI. Israel's Exaltation (105:42-45).

Adam Clarke has a two point outline: Exhortation to praise God (verses 1-7), and Enumeration of the favors of God bestowed to persuade to it (verses 8-45). Willmington likewise divides the Psalm into two parts, with slightly different verse divisions: God's Majesty (verses 1-4), God's Miracles (verses 5-45).

We will use the following outline for our study:

- Call to Praise, 1-6;
- Covenant with Israel, 7-15;
- Commission of Joseph, 16-22;
- Captivity of the People, 23-36;
- Crossing of the Sea, 37-42;
- Compliance to the Laws, 43-45.

Morgan has a closing note on this Psalm:

The master word in the psalm is the pronoun "He." In constant repetition it shows one thought uppermost in the mind of the singer. It is the thought of the perpetual activity of God in all those experiences through which His people have passed. It was through the oppression of the Egyptians that Israel passed through a baptism of suffering which toughened the fiber of the national life and prepared them for all that lay ahead (G.Campbell Morgan, page 261).

The Psalm is a history of God's dealings with Abraham and his posterity, till their settlement in the Promised Land. Thus, we have entitled the Psalm "God's Providence and Protection."

## ***Commentary***

### ***Call to Praise*** **Verses 1-6**

- 1 *Oh give thanks unto Jehovah, call upon his name; Make known among the peoples his doings.*
- 2 *Sing unto him, sing praises unto him; Talk ye of all his marvelous works.*
- 3 *Glory ye in his holy name: Let the heart of them rejoice that seek Jehovah.*
- 4 *Seek ye Jehovah and his strength; Seek his face evermore.*
- 5 *Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth*
- 6 *O ye seed of Abraham his servant, Ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones.*

**105:1:** "*Oh give thanks*" - The Psalmist calls on his audience to offer thanks unto God for what the Almighty has done for Israel. Particularly does he encourage praise through song. Songs have, through the years, effectively conveyed a message. The admonition here to "*call upon his name*," has been rendered by Barnes as, "Call him by his name" (Barnes). He then adds, "Address him by his proper title; ascribe to him the attributes which properly belong to him; or address him in a proper manner" (Barnes). To call on God by His name, or in His name, is to do acknowledge His divine authority in our life. The New Testament equivalent of such admonitions is, no doubt, found in Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

*"Make known among the peoples his doings"* - We agree with Coffman that "this is a commandment for the people of Israel to tell among the Gentiles the wonderful deeds of the Lord" (Coffman, page 256). One of Israel's mammoth failures was their neglect in telling the nations the marvelous works of their God. Spiritual Israel, the church, must take note of the responsibility to do the same and the consequences should she fail in this respect.

**105:2:** “*Sing praises*” - The type of song under consideration would be those addressed specifically UNTO God, such as a song of prayer, or thanksgiving. It is right for the redeemed to sing praises unto God. He delights in us lifting up our voices in adoration and song. The repeated call for Israel to speak of all “*his marvelous works*” is for emphasis. It had always been God’s intention for Israel to be a shining light among the nations, and to tell of Jehovah’s great works. This they failed to do, with the exception of isolated instances and periods in their history.

**105:3:** “*glory ye in his holy name*” – Not only was Israel to “call upon his name,” they were to “glory in his holy name.” To “*glory*” in the “*name*” is the same as glorying in God. The student should note that the very name of Jehovah is holy. His name is to be “hallowed” (Matt. 6:9). The flippant and vain use of God’s name is an indication of a heart that has little respect for God.

“*Let the heart of them rejoice*” – Singing praises unto God is to come from the heart. Outward acts of worship void of heart felt devotion is mere ritual. Rejoicing comes from within and is manifested in outward acts of praise.

“*that seek Jehovah*” - Seeking is a diligent attempt to obtain a desired object. Seeking, in the Biblical sense of the word, is never casual or flippant. The admonition to “seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33) includes not only a diligent effort, but the full expectation that in seeking we shall find.

It should be pointed out just here that there is an essential connection between rejoicing and seeking. Only those who truly “seek Jehovah” will find occasion for rejoicing. The half-hearted “seeker” will find religion dull and uninteresting, and with it little occasion for true rejoicing. Before leaving the verse, it might be good to pause right here and meditate upon the wonderful privilege we have being permitted to seek our God. God desires that we seek after Him (Acts 17:26-28).

**105:4:** “*seek ye Jehovah and his strength*” – The Septuagint and Vulgate render this, “Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened.” It is not enough to simply know God; it is important that we seek His strength for our daily lives. We are to put ourselves under His protection.

*“seek his face evermore”* - Three times in two verses the word “seek” appears. We are to seek God, seek His strength, and seek His face. But in addition, we are to seek His favor.

Note the progression in verses three and four: First, we seek Him – His person, His divine traits, His character. Next, we seek His strength. Recognizing that He is the Almighty, the divine Creator, we determine to draw our strength from Him and not ourselves. Finally, we determine that we will seek to please Him in all that we do. Herein is submission; a contrite heart that determines to do His will in all things.

**105:5:** *“Remember his marvelous works”* – As the body ages, the memory slips. But here Israel is called upon not to forget those things in her past that well remind them of the God Whom they serve.

Memory is never better employed than upon such topics. Alas, we are far more ready to recollect foolish and evil things than to retain in our minds the glorious deeds of Jehovah. If we would keep these in remembrance our faith would be stronger, our gratitude warmer, our devotion more fervent, and our love more intense. Shame upon us that we should let slip what it would seem impossible to forget (Spurgeon).

*“and the judgments of his mouth”* - Note here the two-fold admonition to remember what God has DONE, and what He has SPOKEN! The judgments of God’s mouth are as memorable as the marvelous works of His hand. The Psalmist had in mind the mighty judgments upon the enemies of Israel; God had only to speak the word, and they were destroyed.

**105:6:** *“O ye seed of Abraham...ye children of Jacob”* – Two prominent characters of Israel’s past are brought to their attention. To Abraham was the promise given, and through Jacob that promise was brought to fruition. Abraham was mentioned because he was the great ancestor of the Hebrew people; Jacob because the events referred to in the following verses were closely associated with him.

### ***Covenant with Israel*** **Verses 7-15**

7 *He is Jehovah our God: His judgments are in all the earth.*  
8 *He hath remembered his covenant for ever, The word which he commanded to a thousand generations,*

- 9 *The covenant which he made with Abraham, And his oath unto Isaac,*  
10 *And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a statute, To Israel for an everlasting covenant,*  
11 *Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, The lot of your inheritance;*  
12 *When they were but a few men in number, Yea, very few, and sojourners in it.*  
13 *And they went about from nation to nation, From one kingdom to another people.*  
14 *He suffered no man to do them wrong; Yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes,*  
15 *Saying, Touch not mine anointed ones, And do my prophets no harm.*

**105:7:** “*He is Jehovah our God*” – He is the self existent and eternal God. He rules over the earth, and His judgments are “in all the earth.” There is no place man can go to escape their responsibility to Him.

**105:8:** “*He hath remembered his covenant for ever*” – Never, in any instance, has God failed to keep His covenant. His promises are sure; their fulfillment certain. So far as that physical nation of Israel, God cared for, protected, and preserved His chosen people until such a time as His purpose was fulfilled. Spiritual Israel can look back on that ancient history and learn from that sacred record. God will care for spiritual Israel.

“*the word which he commanded to a thousand generations*” – This is an amplification of the first part of this verse and serves to set before us the wonderful fidelity of our God in contrast to the changing generations of men.

**105:9:** “*The covenant which he made with Abraham*” – The literal reading is, “which he cut with Abraham,” and probably has reference to Genesis 15. On that occasion Abraham took a “heifer...and a she goat...a ram...a turtle dove and a young pigeon” and “divided them in the midst,” laying each part side by side. It was a common practice to sacrifice an animal, and then divide the carcass so as to make exactly two equal parts. These were then placed opposite each other, and the contracting parties passed between them, or entering at opposite ends, met in the center and took the covenant oath. This may be what Jeremiah referred to in Jeremiah 34:18-20. The point that the Psalmist makes in this chapter is that God was faithful to

keep the covenant made with Abraham.

*“and his oath unto Isaac”* – That covenant promise was passed down to Abraham’s seed in accord with God’s promise to the patriarch that through his seed all the families would be blessed.

**105:10:** *“and confirmed the same unto Jacob”* - From a human standpoint, a covenant is an agreement between two parties. A covenant between the human and the Divine, however, is more than just an agreement. It is LAW, from heaven earthward. The covenant which God made with Abraham, He confirmed with Jacob. Coffman has this interesting note: “This promise to the patriarchs was indeed a marvel. They were at the time of the promise merely a handful of men; and there were seven mighty nations in Canaan. That God actually made this promise is proved by the fact of the Patriarchs’ believing it and purchasing the cave of Machpelah in Canaan as the family burial place” (Coffman, page 258-259).

**105:11:** *“Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan”* – Those early Patriarchs never lived to see the fulfillment of that promise. But they acted upon that promise just as surely as if they had enjoyed the fulfillment of it in their lifetime, thus reserving for themselves a place in the inspired record’s list of faithful heroes (Hebrews 11).

*“The lot of your inheritance”* - The word translated “lot” means “a cord, a rope; and then a measuring line. Hence it means a portion measured out and assigned to any one as land” (Barnes).

**105:12:** - *“When they were but few in number”* – In our estimation the reason for making mention of this fact was to impress upon our minds that the promise was not fulfilled by human ingenuity or power, but by the power and providence of God. Those patriarchs were not only few, but “very few”; not well known, but merely “strangers.” From a human standpoint there was little, if any, possibility that the land through which they sojourned would someday belong to their descendants, “lock, stock, and barrel.”

**105:13:** The following references provide adequate proof of the accuracy of this verse. Abraham spent time in Egypt, Isaac in Gerar, Jacob at Manahaim, Shechem, Bethel, Ephrath, and Egypt. See in this connection such passages as Genesis 12, 20, 26, 32, 33, 35, 45, and 46.

**105:14:** *“He suffered no man to do them wrong”* - This is one of the

most astonishing statements with regard to God's providential care over that "infant" nation. It is particularly amazing in light of the very nature of the Gentile nations about them. Those Gentile nations were known for their hostile treatment one toward another.

The history of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob attest to God's watch-care over Israel. Precisely HOW God "*reproved kings for their sakes*" is not stated. Spurgeon has pointed out, "Men cannot wrong us unless he suffers them to do so; the greatest of them must wait his permission before they can place a finger upon us. The wicked would devour us if they could, but they cannot even cheat us of a farthing without divine sufferance" (Spurgeon).

**105:15:** "*Saying, touch not my anointed*" - We have no record of these exact words, but who would deny that God protected His embryo nation through some of the most difficult of circumstances? From the promise to Abraham, to that moment when Jesus came into this world, God's "anointed" nation was protected and preserved so as to allow God's purpose to be fulfilled.

### ***Commission of Joseph*** **Verses 16-22**

- 16 *And he called for a famine upon the land; He brake the whole staff of bread.*  
17 *He sent a man before them; Joseph was sold for a servant:*  
18 *His feet they hurt with fetters: He was laid in chains of iron,*  
19 *Until the time that his word came to pass, The word of Jehovah tried him.*  
20 *The king sent and loosed him; Even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free.*  
21 *He made him lord of his house, And ruler of all his substance;*  
22 *To bind his princes at his pleasure, And teach his elders wisdom.*

This section provides some remarkable details concerning Joseph that are not provided in the Genesis record. The purpose is to show God's providential care in protecting that infant nation from the famine that came upon the land, and to provide Israel a place to grow and develop numerically.

**105:16:** "*And he called for a famine upon the land*" – Those things that men often perceive as "natural disasters" are servants at the disposal of our God to the fulfilling of His purpose, which in that instance was to move Israel to Egypt, where there was corn, and



opportunity for development into a mighty nation.

**105:17:** *“He sent a man before them”* - His brethren may have **sold** Joseph, but God **sent** him. While we may observe outwardly the wickedness of man, by faith we see God’s marvelous providential hand working to overrule their malice. Spurgeon’s comments are noteworthy;

Joseph’s journey into Egypt was not so costly as Jonah’s voyage when he paid his own fare...His way to a position in which he could feed his family lay through the pit, the slaver’s caravan, the slave market and the prison, and who shall deny but what it was the right way, the surest way, the wisest way, and perhaps the shortest way. Yet assuredly it seemed not so. Were we to send a man on such an errand we should furnish him with money - Joseph goes as a pauper; we should clothe him with authority - Joseph goes as a slave; we should leave him at full liberty - Joseph is a bondman; yet money would have been of little use when corn was so dear, authority would have been irritating rather than influential with Pharaoh, and freedom might not have thrown Joseph into connection with Pharaoh’s captain and his other servants, and so the knowledge of his skill in interpretation might not have reached the monarch’s ear. God’s way is THE way. Our Lord’s path to his mediatorial throne ran by the cross of Calvary; our road to glory runs by the rivers of grief” (Spurgeon).

Men may be free in their wicked intentions, but God is equally free to frustrate their plans and bring good out of evil. History is replete with examples of God’s intervention to the fulfilling of His purpose.

**105:8:** *“His feet they hurt with fetters”* – This particular detail of Joseph’s imprisonment is not recorded in Genesis. What a reversal of Joseph’s situation when from the prison he was made to sit upon the throne of Egypt. We like Spurgeon’s comments: “The iron fetters were preparing him to wear chains of gold, and making his feet ready to stand on high places” (Spurgeon). Even so it is with the faithful of all ages who shall pass shame into glory, from corruption to incorruption, from bondage to freedom, and the temporal to the eternal.

**105:19:** *“Until the time”* – God’s timetable is not regulated by man’s plans and schemes. All things run according to our Father’s schedule, and it is in His own due time that His purpose will come to pass. It has always been the case that God’s delay serves to prove the man and strengthen his metal.

**105:20:** *“The king sent and loosed him”* - This verse refers to Joseph’s removal from the prison where he had been unjustly cast by Potiphar. “He had interpreted the dreams of captives, himself a captive; he must now interpret for a ruler and become a ruler himself. When God means to enlarge his prisoners, kings become his turnkeys” (Spurgeon).

**105:21:** *“He made him lord of his house”* - The servant has now become a ruler; he who had been “servitor of slaves becomes lord over nobles” (Spurgeon). Joseph now ruled over the very “substance” of Pharaoh. He was in the most advantageous position to provide for that hungry nation that had before turned their back on him, and he on them. With Joseph on the throne, all would be well with Israel. So it is with our King. With Jesus on the throne, ruling over the universe and His church, we can rest assured that all is well.

**105:22:** The reference here to Joseph’s authority to *“bind his princes at his pleasure”* cannot be found in Genesis. We do not doubt that Joseph received such authority, especially in view of the enormous task that was his to prepare for the famine. No doubt he would have received opposition from his contemporaries, and judicial authority would have been necessary to carry out Pharaoh’s decree. This is one example of how this Psalm compliments the Genesis record.

*“and teach his elders wisdom”* - One can only imagine the things that Joseph would teach the elders of the land. Heaven’s messengers can provide a lost world with true wisdom far beyond the intellect of mere men and the educational acclaim of the world.

### ***Captivity of the People*** **Verses 23-36**

- 23 *Israel also came into Egypt; And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.*
- 24 *And he increased his people greatly, And made them stronger than their adversaries.*
- 25 *He turned their heart to hate his people, To deal subtly with his servants.*
- 26 *He sent Moses his servant, And Aaron whom he had chosen.*
- 27 *They set among them his signs, And wonders in the land of Ham.*
- 28 *He sent darkness, and made it dark; And they rebelled not against his words.*

- 29 *He turned their waters into blood, And slew their fish.*  
30 *Their land swarmed with frogs In the chambers of their kings.*  
31 *He spake, and there came swarms of flies, And lice in all their borders.*  
32 *He gave them hail for rain, And flaming fire in their land.*  
33 *He smote their vines also and their fig-trees, And brake the trees of their borders.*  
34 *He spake, and the locust came, And the grasshopper, and that without number,*  
35 *And did eat up every herb in their land, And did eat up the fruit of their ground.*  
36 *He smote also all the first-born in their land, The chief of all their strength.*

These verses provide an overview of Exodus 7-12. Repeated judgments upon Egypt and Pharaoh produced only stubborn rebellion in the heart of that monarch. The brief summary in these verses of what occurred over a period of more than 400 years is evidence of inspiration. Mere men would have elaborated upon the details of that marvelous period in the history of Israel. Heavenly restraint produced some of the most remarkable “thumb-nail” sketches in all of literature. This is one such thumb-nail sketch of one of the most dramatic events in the history of this world.

But why is Egypt here called the “land of Ham”? In Genesis 10 Egypt is listed as one of the sons of Ham in that table of nations. It is ironic that Shem the blessed came to lodge awhile with Ham the accursed.

**105:24:** “*increased his people...made them stronger*” - Notice in connection with the strength of Israel, the record in Exodus 1:7 where the king of Egypt admitted that “the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we.” Every effort on the part of Pharaoh to limit the growth and power of Israel had a reverse effect. How foolish to fight against God and His purposes.

**105:25:** “*He turned their heart to hate his people*” - God did not arbitrarily cause Egypt to hate Israel. Likely it was the blessings that Israel received in developing into a mighty nation that caused Egypt to become jealous and envious. Sometimes God is said to DO that which He permits. That may be the case here.

**105:26:** Exodus 2-7 contains the inspired record of God’s selection of Moses and Aaron, in spite of the objections of Moses himself. Once again we have the words “*He sent.*”

**105:27:** Beginning with this verse we have eight of the ten plagues listed. The sequence here does not agree with the record in Exodus, but that should not produce any problem. This is a POETIC account, the other historical. Notice Exodus 7 thru 12 for the detailed and chronological account of these judgments upon Egypt.

It is said that these plagues were “signs.” “Never were discourses more plain, pointed, personal, or powerful, and yet it took ten of them to accomplish the end designed” (Spurgeon).

**105:28:** “*He sent...and made it dark*” - And what darkness it was! Darkness that was so thick, so complete that it was felt.

“*And they rebelled not against his word*” - This cannot apply to the Egyptians, for they DID rebel, even to their own destruction. Nor can it refer to Moses, for he sought to be excused from the Divine commission. Some commentators point out that the LXX omits the word “not.” The better explanation is that this refers to Moses and Aaron faithfully carrying out the judgments against Egypt, thereby fulfilling their mission before Pharaoh.

**105:29:** “*turned their waters into blood*” - The water was not merely colored by mud, but actually turned into that which was loathsome, and destructive, so much so that it is said he “slew their fish.” A mere muddying of the waters does not fit the description here.

**105:31:** “*He spake...there came...flies...lice*” – The Psalmist gives emphasis to the power of God’s word to affect His purposes. With the mere command of His voice, our God can take the lowliest of weapons and use them for His mighty purpose. “What armies the Lord can send forth when once his right arm is bared for war! And what scorn he pours on proud nations when he fights them, not with angels, but with lice” (Spurgeon).

**105:33:** “*smote their vines also and their fig tree*” - By destroying their vines and fig-trees, all hope of gathering any fruit was destroyed. These two products are mentioned because they were the more prominent crops in Egypt.

**105:34-35:** There is no exaggeration here when it is said that the locusts did “*eat up every herb and...the fruit of their land.*” A more destructive insect cannot be imagined than the locust. Nothing can escape these ravenous creatures. They will even climb trees to reach

the smallest remnant of foliage that might exist.

**105:36:** *“He smote also all the firstborn”* - The death of the first born was the culminating and convincing plague upon unbelieving Egypt. This plague struck the very heart of Egypt, reaching into every single family and bringing sorrow and consternation to the whole of Egypt.

### ***Crossing of the Sea*** **Verses 37-42**

37 *And he brought them forth with silver and gold; And there was not one feeble person among his tribes.*

38 *Egypt was glad when they departed; For the fear of them had fallen upon them.*

39 *He spread a cloud for a covering, And fire to give light in the night.*

40 *They asked, and he brought quails, And satisfied them with the bread of heaven.*

41 *He opened the rock, and waters gushed out; They ran in the dry places like a river.*

42 *For he remembered his holy word, And Abraham his servant.*

These verses do not mention the crossing of the Red Sea, but rather what occurred AFTER they crossed over into the wilderness.

**105:37:** The fact that Israel would come forth with the wealth of Egypt was prophesied in Genesis 15:14 – “and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.” It is just such foreknowledge as this that builds our confidence in the Divine origin of the Bible.

*“there was not one feeble person among his tribes”* – What a contrast between Egypt and Israel. In Egypt there was one dead in every house, while in Israel there was not one feeble person among the tribes.

**105:38:** *“Egypt was glad when they departed”* - Had Israel merely “borrowed” from the Egyptians, there would have been no joy in seeing them leave Egypt. The fact is the Egyptians were eager to see them depart from their borders, and gladly provided the silver and gold to speed them on their way.

**105:39:** *“He spread a cloud for a covering”* - God’s provisions for Israel during their long sojourn in the wilderness is the subject of verses 39-42. The care provided Israel during that time serves as an example of God’s care for His people in every dispensation. In the scorching desert our God provided a shade for Israel’s protection from the sun. God spread a canopy over the people, keeping the desert’s hot sun from hurting His people. In addition, He provided “fire to give light in the night.”

**105:40:** *“They asked, and he brought quails”* - Though the children of Israel asked amiss, our God still provided their daily sustenance. The quail and manna continued until the time came for Israel to cross the Jordan and conquer the land.

**105:41:** *“He opened the rock, and waters gushed out”* - Every indication is that the water that flowed from the rock actually produced a mighty river from which Israel could drink. A mere “trickle” would not have been sufficient for such a large population of people. In fact the Psalmist tells us that the water “gushed out.” This was not some mere trickle, but a raging river!

**105:42:** *“For he remembered his word”* - Here is the underlying reason for God’s gracious blessings to Israel. Although they repeatedly rebelled, God maintained His promise, moving ever so slowly but surely toward the cross and the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham.

### ***Compliance to the Laws*** **Verses 43-45**

*43 And he brought forth his people with joy, And his chosen with singing.*

*44 And he gave them the lands of the nations; And they took the labor of the peoples in possession:*

*45 That they might keep his statutes, And observe his laws. Praise ye Jehovah.*

Verses 39-41 provided a summary of the forty years of wilderness wanderings. Verses 42-44 condense the whole of the history of the conquest and settlement of Canaan into just a few lines. In fact, the entire book of Joshua is devoted to what is here compressed into a few words. While the purpose of these verses is to show that what God had promised, He had thus fulfilled, we must not miss the

closing verse where Israel's obligation to obey God's law comes into focus. Were it not for their compliance to the laws that God gave them, Israel would never have been given the possession of the land.

**105:43:** *"And he brought forth his people with joy"* – The joy they experienced was the joy of coming out of bondage into freedom.

*"His chosen with singing"* – James wrote, "Is any cheerful, let him sing praise" (James 5:14b). Singing is the outpouring of a merry heart. Certainly Israel had a lot for which to be joyful; no wonder they came forth with singing.

**105:44:** *"And he gave them the lands of the nations"* - Israel did not conquer a barren land, uninhabited and unsettled. They were given a land that had been settled, houses that had already been built, and fields already plowed and producing fruit. Israel literally *"took the labor of the peoples in possession."*

**105:45:** *"That they might keep his statutes"* - Israel was to be an example, a light to the heathen world. This could only be done by keeping the commands of God. It is rather ironic, and certainly tragic, that a nation so blessed either ignored, or willfully forgot the God Who provided them such blessings. The very purpose for their deliverance from Egypt, and their conquest of the land by the hand of Almighty God was "that they might keep his statutes." With but a few exception in their long history, they simply failed in their duty to obey.

*"Praise ye Jehovah"* - A more fitting conclusion cannot be imagined. In view of all that God is, and all that He can do, it is only proper and right that men praise Him.

### ***Lessons***

1. The fundamental lesson from this Psalm is the responsibility we have to praise God for His goodness toward His people. He has ever been faithful, in spite of the unfaithfulness of His people.
2. Another lesson is the providential care of Jehovah that is extended to his creation. He is ever mindful of our needs, and sees to it that we are provided abundantly. He is truly good to Israel.
3. We learn also that God keeps His promises. From Adam to Abraham, and from the earliest times in history to our present

age, God has never failed His people.

4. God's people have the sacred obligation to "make known among the peoples his doings" (verse 1). The great commission was not intended only for the first century church. Each generation has the responsibility to teach faithful men who shall, in turn, be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2).
5. Sacred history of the Old Testament teaches us about God's goodness, faithfulness, power, and providence. If we fail to learn from that history we will be in danger of repeating the same mistakes of ancient Israel.



## *“Israel’s Rebelliousness And Jehovah’s Deliverance”*

### ***Introduction***

The astonishing thing about this Psalm is the contrast between Israel’s rebellion and God’s gracious deliverance. In spite of all that Israel did, God still determined to fulfill His purpose and promise through the chosen people. Barnes summarized the Psalm thus:

The 105th Psalm referred to that history particularly as showing the mercy and favor of God to that people, and hence, their obligation to love and serve him; this psalm is occupied mainly with a confession, drawn from a review of that history, that the nation had not been mindful of those mercies, but that they had rebelled against God, and incurred his displeasure (Barnes).

Adam Clarke had a similar summary:

The intention of the prophet in this Psalm is to express God’s long-suffering in bearing with rebellious sinners, and yet in pardoning them upon the confession of their sins, and turning to him; both which he exemplifies by a long narration of Israel’s rebellions, repentance, and turning to God, and God’s dealing with them, which gave him just occasion to praise God (Adam Clarke).

This Psalm is a companion to Psalm 105. The former tells us how God treated Israel; the later how Israel treated God; one deals with the faithfulness of God, the other the faithlessness of Israel. The exact occasion cannot be determined with any certainty. From verse 47 it would appear that the Psalm was written during or shortly after the Babylonian captivity. A comparison of verse 6 with Daniel 9:5-6 lends considerable support to this position. The first and last two verses appear in 1 Chronicles 16:34-36, leading some to believe that David is the author. It is more likely that the Psalmist here took those verses from David’s Psalm and used them to compose this one.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm has two movements. The first section (verses 1-31) deals with the history of Israel after the Egyptian captivity, and their sojourn in the wilderness. The 12<sup>th</sup> verse is a vivid description of Israel's history: "Then believed they his words; They sang his praise. They soon forgot his works; They waited not for his counsel." That pretty well sums up the story of Israel, from Dathan and Abiram, to Baal Peor. The second movement (verses 32-48) continues the same sad story. Morgan captured the contrast between Israel's disobedience and God's tender mercy for His people: "While their persistent and terrible sin made His wrath burn and His judgment inevitable, yet the love of His heart never ceased toward the people of His choice" (Morgan, page 261). We found a number of good outlines for a study of the Psalm. Willmington divides the Psalm into two parts: I. A Request for the Present (106:1-5, 47-48); II. A Remembrance of the Past (106:6-46). Adam Clarke had a five point division:

- I. An exhortation to praise God, with the reasons in general, [verse 1](#); and who are fit to perform this duty, [verses 2, 3](#).
- II. A petition and prayer directed to God in his own person for the whole Church, and the end of it, [verses 4, 5](#).
- III. A confession of sin, particularly of the Israelites', together with God's patience with them, and their repentance, [verses 6-46](#).
- IV. His prayer that God would collect his Church out of all nations, that they might meet and praise him, [verses 47, 48](#).

We particularly liked Phillips' homiletic outline:

- I. A Sound Heart (106:1-6)
- II. A Sad History (106:7-46)
- III. A Sure Hope (106:47-48).

We will divide the Psalm into three parts for the purpose of study:

- I. Call to Praise God (106:1-5)
- II. Consideration of the Past (106:6-46)
- III. Cry for Preservation (106:47-48)

## Commentary

### ***Call To Praise God*** **Verses 1-5**

- 1 *Praise ye Jehovah. Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; For his lovingkindness endureth forever.*
- 2 *Who can utter the mighty acts of Jehovah, Or show forth all his praise?*
- 3 *Blessed are they that keep justice, And he that doeth righteousness at all times.*
- 4 *Remember me, O Jehovah, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people; Oh visit me with thy salvation,*
- 5 *That I may see the prosperity of thy chosen, That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, That I may glory with thine inheritance.*

In these verses the Psalmist...

- 1) Calls for his audience to praise God and give thanks to Him;
- 2) States a fundamental reason for this, namely that “he is good” and “his lovingkindness endureth forever”;
- 3) Asks who can “utter the mighty acts of Jehovah, or show forth his praise”;
- 4) Pronounces a blessing on those who “keep justice” and “doeth righteousness”;
- 5) Asks God to remember him, and visit him with salvation;
- 6) Desires to glory in God’s inheritance for His chosen people.

**106:1** - “*Praise ye the Lord*” - Our English word “praise” comes from two Hebrew words, ‘Hallelu’ and ‘jah.’ Praise is not only a privilege, but a duty, and those who slight that opportunity fail in their responsibility toward God.

“*give thanks*” – This is another occasion where the Psalmist calls for his audience to “give thanks.” The reminder is oft repeated due to the tendency on the part of men to fall short in this area.

**106:2**: “*Who can utter the mighty acts of Jehovah?*” - The idea is that the “mighty acts” of Jehovah are so great that human tongue cannot express the majesty and power of such a God. Human language cannot find words that would adequately express the greatness of God’s works. Though we may make reference to the actual work, how can we even begin to describe the great things God

has done?

**106:3** – *“Blessed are they that keep justice”* - The Bible often extends a blessing unto a certain class of people. The Beatitudes delivered by our Lord in His sermon on the mount are an example of such. Here the man who is “blessed” is the man who (1) keeps justice, and (2) practices righteousness at all times. The man who keeps justice is considerate of his fellow man, and demonstrates equity among his peers. The Hebrew is literally, “the keepers of judgment.” Here is a man who observes the principles of justice in his conduct, and is governed by the principles of integrity. The man who practices righteousness is that man who keeps the commandments of God. Thus, the blessed man is that man that maintains a right relationship between God and his fellow man.

**106:4:** *“Remember me”* – Clarke points out that some MSS use the plural here: “Remember US...that WE may rejoice,” etc. Of course the only way God will “remember” anyone, at least in the sense of extending blessings to them, is if they are obedient to His word.

*“the favor that thou bearest unto thy people”* - There was evidently some situation which had arisen where it would appear that God had withdrawn His blessings from the Psalmist, or the people of Israel. The Psalmist was appealing for a restoration of that Divine favor. In verse six the writer would begin an enumeration of Israel’s sins in an effort to make confession and gain reconciliation. If the Psalm was written during the Babylonian captivity, the language would certainly be applicable.

**106:5:** *“That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation”* – Of all the nations of the world, Israel was especially blessed by God. When they were obedient to God’s word they enjoyed a certain sense of gladness that no other people upon the earth enjoyed. The Psalmist wanted to be a part of that special blessing.

There is a connection between this and the previous verse. In verse 4 the Psalmist asks that God would visit him with salvation, suggesting the restoration of a proper relationship to Jehovah. The consequence of that restoration is expressed in our present verse. It is three fold: (1) that he might “see the prosperity of the chosen”; (2) that he might “rejoice in the gladness of the nation”; and (3) that he might “glory with thine inheritance.” It is interesting that the Psalmist did not desire glory that comes with wealth or fame, but that which comes with a proper relationship with God. Barnes picked

up on this close association of genuine joy and a submissive heart:

True religion not only confers happiness on the individual who possesses it, but on the nation or people where it prevails. It is just as much fitted to produce happiness there, and is just as necessary for happiness there, as in the case of the individual (Barnes).

### ***Consideration of the Past*** **Verses 6-46**

There is a remarkable contrast between Israel's rebellion and God's graciousness within these verses. Of God it is said, "He saved," "he led," "he gave," "he abhorred," and "he delivered." Of Israel it is said they "sinned," "forgot," "lusted," "envied," "made a calf," "despised," "murmured," "provoked," "served idols," "shed innocent blood," "went a whoring," etc. The history of that disobedient nation is summed up in the verses now before us. Without doubt there were occasions when Israel would shine with righteous brilliance, but overall, the verbs describing their rebellious hearts in this chapter are a good description of their unfaithfulness to their God throughout their sad history. The Psalmist looks at Israel's behavior in Egypt (verses 6-12), in the wilderness (verses 13-33), and in the Promised Land (verses 34-46).

*Israel in Egypt, verses 6-12:*

- 6 *We have sinned with our fathers, We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.*
- 7 *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; They remembered not the multitude of thy lovingkindnesss, But were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea.*
- 8 *Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, That he might make his mighty power to be known.*
- 9 *He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: So he led them through the depths, as through a wilderness.*
- 10 *And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.*
- 11 *And the waters covered their adversaries; There was not one of them left.*
- 12 *Then believed they his words; They sang his praise.*

**106:6** – The contrite heart of the Psalmist is evident here. He would reflect upon Israel's long history of disobedience, and acknowledge that they had failed to live up to their responsibility as God's chosen people. There are three words that describe their disobedience:

**sinned, iniquity, and wickedly.** “**Sinned**” describes their relationship to the Law of God, in that they had broken that law. “**Iniquity**” describes those actions as being crooked, or perverted. To do “**wickedly**” is to participate in all that is the opposite of righteousness. It is interesting that the Psalmist identifies his generation with that of Israel when they came out of Egypt: “we have sinned...we have committed iniquity...we have done wickedly.”

**106:7** – “*Our fathers understood not they wonders in Egypt*” – Israel failed to comprehend the full implications of the miracles of judgment against Egypt. Nor did they understand that Moses had been sent by God for the purpose of bringing them out of bondage. That failure to understand would follow them into the wilderness, and to some extent even into the Promised Land. When delivered from Egyptian captivity, it was not long before they forgot the power of God, and turned to murmuring and complaining. Even before crossing the Red Sea, our Psalmist tells us that they were “rebellious at the sea.” The reason for their constant rebellion is summed up in this verse – it was a problem of forgetfulness! They forgot God’s power, His goodness, and His promises. When men forget God they begin that trek into apostasy where many tread and from which few return. Woe be to the man who, upon escaping the defilements of the world, will so soon forget the mercy of his God, and the redemption that is his to enjoy, and provoke God by returning to the world (cf. 2 Peter 2:20-22).

**106:8** – “*Nevertheless he saved them*” - The reference here is to that occasion when God determined that He would destroy Israel (Num. 14:13-16):

I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they. And Moses said unto Jehovah, Then the Egyptians will hear it; for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them; and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that thou Jehovah art in the midst of this people; for thou Jehovah art seen face to face, and thy cloud standeth over them, and thou goest before them, in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night.

“*that he might make his mighty power to be known*” - Here is the reason why God saves people; why He forgives sin; why He redeems the soul; why He delivers from danger and from death (cf. Ezek. 36:22, 32; Isa. 37:35, 43:25; 48:9; Jer. 14:7; Ps. 6:4; 23:3; 25:11; 31:16; 44:26). Spurgeon addressed this point:

When he could find no other reason for his mercy he found it in his own glory, and seized the opportunity to display his power. If Israel does not deserve to be saved, yet Pharaoh's pride needs to be crushed, and therefore Israel shall be delivered. The Lord very jealously guards his own name and honour. It shall never be said of him that he cannot or will not save his people, or that he cannot abate the haughtiness of his defiant foes. This respect unto his own honour ever leads him to deeds of mercy, and hence we may well rejoice that he is a jealous God (Spurgeon).

**106:9** – “*He rebuked the Red Sea also*” - The reference to the crossing of the Red Sea is in retrospect. The notion that Israel crossed on some shallow bank of reeds is here refuted. He led them “*through the depths*” of that sea, while the water remained in heaps on either side. A humorous story was once told of a young boy who told of the miracle of the crossing of the Red Sea to a friend who scoffed at the notion of such a miracle and said that there was only six inches of water. To this the young man replied, “Such a miracle that the whole of the Egyptian army could be destroyed in six inches of water.”

**106:10** – Here is the cause for Pharaoh's stubborn rebellion against God. He hated Israel, and he hated God as well. He mocked God, stating that he did not know God, and neither would he let Israel go. The arrogance of Pharaoh caused him to harden his heart and stiffen his neck with each successive miracle, until his hatred for God led to the death of the first born in his house. Only then did he bow to God's demand, and then only temporarily. His heart stiffened once more, and his hatred pushed him to pursue Israel to his own destruction. Oh, the destructive power of hatred, especially hatred toward God.

**106:11** – When Pharaoh attempted to follow Israel into the “depths” of the Red Sea, God destroyed him and his army. There was not a single one of them left.

While verse 7 speaks of Israel's *grumbling*, verses 8-11 tell us of God's *grace*. In spite of all Israel did to provoke God, the Almighty “saved them.”

God overlooked their faults (106:8), overcame their fears (106:9), and overthrew their foes (106:10-11). He parted the sea before them, then summoned it back to sweep into oblivion the renowned chariot divisions of Egypt (Phillips, page 155-156).

**106:12** – *“They believed his words...sang his praise”*. On the heels of such a miracle as the crossing of the Red Sea, Israel is said to believe God’s words. It would not be long, however, ere they would provoke the Almighty to anger. Their *gladness* would be short-lived before giving way to their *grumbling*.

*Israel in the wilderness, verses 13-33*

- 13 *They soon forgot his works; They waited not for his counsel,*  
14 *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, And tempted God in the desert.*  
15 *And he gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul.*  
16 *They envied Moses also in the camp, And Aaron the saint of Jehovah.*  
17 *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, And covered the company of Abiram.*  
18 *And a fire was kindled in their company; The flame burned up the wicked.*  
19 *They made a calf in Horeb, And worshipped a molten image.*  
20 *Thus they changed their glory For the likeness of an ox that eateth grass.*  
21 *They forgot God their Saviour, Who had done great things in Egypt,*  
22 *Wondrous works in the land of Ham, And terrible things by the Red Sea.*  
23 *Therefore he said that he would destroy them, Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, To turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.*  
24 *Yea, they despised the pleasant land, They believed not his word,*  
25 *But murmured in their tents, And hearkened not unto the voice of Jehovah.*  
26 *Therefore he sware unto them, That he would overthrow them in the wilderness,*  
27 *And that he would overthrow their seed among the nations, And scatter them in the lands.*  
28 *They joined themselves also unto Baal-peor, And ate the sacrifices of the dead.*  
29 *Thus they provoked him to anger with their doings; And the plague brake in upon them.*  
30 *Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment; And so the plague was stayed.*  
31 *And that was reckoned unto him for righteousness, Unto all generations for evermore.*



32 *They angered him also at the waters of Meribah, So that it went ill with Moses for their sakes;*

33 *Because they were rebellious against his spirit, And he spake unadvisedly with his lips.*

**106:13-14:** “*they soon forgot his works*” – The marvel is how quickly they forgot the victory at the Red Sea. Only three days journey into the wilderness and they murmured at Rephidim. Shortly thereafter they complained for lack of food, and even criticized the manna given them by God. The pre-requisite to a rebellious life is forgetfulness of prior blessings. Not only did Israel forget the mighty works which they had witnessed, they cast off His counsel as well. The result? They “lusted,” and that “exceedingly.” When men cast off the restraints that God has set for them, the only direction is down, down, down. Note in this connection Romans 1:22-32. Once men exchange the glory of God for the image of corruptible beasts, they turn to all sorts of immoralities and ungodly practices.

**106:15** – Their “lust” was for physical food other than that which God had provided. Their actions are said to have “tempted God.” And how did God respond? He sent quails till it came out their “nostrils.” Yes, they were filled physically, but their souls were starving. Our affluent society has produced plenty, but the soul of the citizenry of the beloved home land is lean, wanting at every hand.

**106:16-17** – The reference here is to the rebellion of Dathan, Korah, and Abiram. The name of Korah may have been omitted in deference to the Korahites who ministered in the things of the tabernacle. Rebellion against God’s ordained authority is rebellion against God Himself. Those two men suffered punishment, along with all those who joined in their rebellion.

**106:18** – The reference is to the fire that devoured the 250 who had aligned with Dathan and Korah (Num. 16:35). We get the distinct impression from reading that account in Numbers that these 250 attempted to offer up some sort of a religious ceremony in support of Dathan and Korah.

**106:19-22** – Here the Psalmist refers to the incident of the golden calf. “He underlines their *iniquity*, their *ingratitude*, and their *intercessor*. Indeed, had it not been for Moses, God would have made an end of them all then and there” (Phillips, page 157).

The words here are interesting. It is said “they changed **their** glory for the likeness of an ox.” Israel was to be a reflection of the Almighty to the nations round about, but they failed miserably. When they changed the glory of the **Almighty** for the image of a beast, they destroyed their glory as well. When God’s people fail to live up to the expectations of their Father, not only do they fail to reflect **His** glory, but they destroy the brilliance that is theirs in following their God.

**106:23** – The reference here is to Exodus 10:32 where God had determined to destroy Israel and begin anew through Moses. When Moses “stood before him in the breach,” he appealed to three things he knew God highly valued: (1) God’s relationship with Israel, (2) God’s reputation before the nations of the world (v. 12), and (3) the Lord’s covenant promises to the patriarchs (v. 13).

**106:24-25** – Reference may be to the murmuring of the children of Israel recorded in Numbers 14:2 – “And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would that we had died in this wilderness!” Rather than trust in God that He would bring them to the Promised Land, they actually “despised” their present situation and sought to return to Egypt.

**106:26-27** – The reference here is likely to Numbers 14:28-29: “Say unto them, As I live, saith Jehovah, surely as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your dead bodies shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, that have murmured against me.”

**106:28-31** – “*Baal of Peor*” designates the pagan deity of Peor, in the land of Moab. When the Israelites gave themselves to this immoral worship, God judged them through a plague, which was only checked when Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, slew the ringleader of the idolatrous group (cf. Num. 25:3-9).

**106:32-33** – The record of Moses’ sin is contained in Numbers 20:3-13. The reference to Moses speaking “unadvisedly with his lips” is recorded in Numbers 20:10 – “And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; shall we bring you forth water out of this rock?” The sin lay in Moses’ self credit for providing the water rather than giving the glory to God. It was this attitude of pride which led to his

disobedience unto God on this occasion.

*Israel in the Promised Land, verses 34-46*

- 34 *They did not destroy the peoples, As Jehovah commanded them,*  
35 *But mingled themselves with the nations, And learned their works,*  
36 *And served their idols, Which became a snare unto them.*  
37 *Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons,*  
38 *And shed innocent blood, Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, Whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan; And the land was polluted with blood.*  
39 *Thus were they defiled with their works, And played the harlot in their doings.*  
40 *Therefore was the wrath of Jehovah kindled against his people, And he abhorred his inheritance.*  
41 *And he gave them into the hand of the nations; And they that hated them ruled over them.*  
42 *Their enemies also oppressed them, And they were brought into subjection under their hand.*  
43 *Many times did he deliver them; But they were rebellious in their counsel, And were brought low in their iniquity.*  
44 *Nevertheless he regarded their distress, When he heard their cry:*  
45 *And he remembered for them his covenant, And repented according to the multitude of his lovingkindness.*  
46 *He made them also to be pitied Of all those that carried them captive.*

**106:34:** This verse, through 43, speaks of the sins of Israel after they had entered the land of Canaan. One of the major shortcomings of Israel was their failure to drive out the inhabitants of the land as they had been commanded. Notice Deuteronomy 7:2, and 16: “and when Jehovah thy God shall deliver them up before thee, and thou shalt smite them; then thou shalt utterly destroy them: thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them; ...And thou shalt consume all the peoples that Jehovah thy God shall deliver unto thee; thine eye shall not pity them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee” (cf. Ex. 34:11-16; Num. 33:50-56; Deut. 20:10 ff). God’s command was designed to remove any influence these nations might have had in leading Israel into apostasy. Unfortunately, they did not obey. And the result?

**106:35:** “*But mingled themselves with the nations*” – They did this

by intermarriage, and by settling among the foreign peoples (cf. Judges 3:5 ff; Ezra 9:1 ff).

*“and learned their works”* – Israel learned to do as the gentiles, and adopted some of their religious practices. Rather than learn from God, they learned from the devil.

The same dangers that faced Israel regarding mingling with the ungodly now face the church in every generation. Paul wrote that “evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor 15:33), precisely the principle that is under consideration here. The extent of Israel’s apostasy appears in the next two verses.

**106:36:** *“And served their idols”* – They did this by the various rituals performed, and the way of life they adapted. The same kind of language is used to refer to serving Jehovah God (cf. Ex. 3:12; Psal. 22:30). Anderson noted that “the emphasis is not so much on the worshipper’s servile status as on his function to carry out the will of his lord” (Anderson, page 746).

*“which became a snare unto them”* – It is not certain whether the Psalmist is referring to the Canaanites or the idols which they served. If the author was referring to the people, then the very ones they refused to drive out of the land became a hindrance to Israel’s attempt to settle the land.

**106:37:** *“they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons”* – One can hardly imagine a God-led people going so far into apostasy. We are reminded of the degree of depravity to which men will go when once the leaven of sin has entered their lives. One of the evils of the gentile world was that of human sacrifice (cf. Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:31; 2 Kings 16:3, 21:6, 23:10; Jer. 7:31). Israel had lowered themselves to the same moral level as those nations who had no respect for life.

*“demons”* – The Hebrew word (*sedim*) is found only here and in Deuteronomy 32:17. The exact meaning is uncertain. Anderson noted that the ‘*sedim*’ “are often connected with the Akkadian *sedu*, which is the name of certain subordinate spirits invested with power or good and evil, usually represented as winged bulls” (Anderson, page 746).

**106:38:** *“and shed innocent blood”* – The heathen practice of sacrificing one’s own children to the idolatrous gods as a human

sacrifice was wickedness run amuck. If we find such unsettling, perhaps we should take a close look at our nation that allows a mother to have her child ripped from her womb for the sake of “convenience.” There is no difference between those heathens who would place their children on the red-hot lap of the idol Moloch and those who would rip a child to pieces, scald it with chemicals, or crush its skull, all in the name of “birth control.”

**106:39:** *“thus were they defiled...and played the harlot”* - The sin of idolatry is often likened unto harlotry, and the relation between God and his people is often compared with the relation between a husband and wife (cf. Isa. 62:5; Jer. 3:14; 7:9; 13:27; Ezek. 16:20, 22, 25, 33-34; 23:17). Besides being false to the true God, to whom they are represented as betrothed and married, (and their acts of idolatry were breaches of this solemn engagement), the worship of idols was frequently accompanied with various acts of impurity.

**106:40:** *“the wrath of Jehovah kindled against his people”* - When once men have corrupted that which God has given to them, God abandons them to their own works. What He once claimed as His people, He now abhorred. Barnes’ comments were pointed:

He treated them “as if” they were an abomination to him. He punished them; he cast them off; he left them to the just results of their own conduct. Were ever any writers more candid and honest than the sacred penmen? There is no effort to vindicate the nation; there is no apology offered for them; there is no concealment of their guilt; there is no attempt to soften the statement in regard to the feelings of God toward them. Their conduct was abominable; they deserved the divine displeasure; they were ungrateful, evil, and rebellious; and the sacred writers do not hesitate to admit the truth of this to the fullest extent (Barnes).

**106:41:** *“he gave them into the hand of the nations”* - Like the prodigal son who ended up in the pig pen, so Israel came to be in bondage to those very nations which they should have driven out of the land. The book of Judges contains the various cycles of oppressions by those enemies about them.

**106:42-43:** *“their enemies oppressed them”* – Fifteen cycles of oppression and deliverance are recorded in Judges.

*“they were rebellious in their counsel”* -This does not mean that they gave counsel or advice to God; but it refers to the counsel which they

took among themselves; the plans which they formed. These were such as to offend God.

**106:44-46** – “*Nevertheless he regarded their distress*” - God’s determination to save His people resulted in the Judges being sent to deliver them from their oppression. What an amazing expression of God’s longsuffering and mercy. Don’t let anyone ever tell you that there is no grace in the Old Testament. There is an abundance of material that reminds the student of ancient Bible history that God is indeed, a God of mercy and lovingkindness.

### ***Cry for Preservation*** **Verses 47-48**

- 47 *Save us, O Jehovah our God, And gather us from among the nations, To give thanks unto thy holy name, And to triumph in thy praise.*
- 48 *Blessed be Jehovah, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye Jehovah.*

**106:47:** - “*Save us...gather us from among the nations*” – This verse gives strength to the argument that this Psalm was written during the Babylonian captivity. “The prayer is, that as God had, in former periods, recovered his people when they were in exile, or were scattered abroad, he would again graciously interpose and bring them to the land of their fathers, where they had been accustomed to worship God” (Barnes). As to the historical background, Adam Clarke noted:

These words, says Calmet, are found in the hymn that was sung at the ceremony of bringing the ark to Jerusalem, [1 Chronicles 16](#); but it is supposed they were added by Ezra or some other prophet: here they are in their natural place. The author of the Psalm begs the Lord to gather the Israelites who were dispersed through different countries; for at the dedication of the second temple, under Nehemiah, (where it is probable this Psalm, with the 105th and the 107th, was sung), there were very few Jews who had as yet returned from their captivity (Adam Clarke).

**106:48:** “*From everlasting to everlasting*” – The Psalmist’s request was this: as God had been revered and respected in the past, even from the beginning of creation, so let Him be respected and praised in all periods of time, even unto everlasting.

*“And let all the people say, Amen”* – This is a call for the people to express their approval of the statement, as if to affirm that what has been said is certain and true.

## ***Lessons***

1. We must exercise extreme caution lest we provoke God by our lack of faith, mistrust, and open rebellion. Israel witnessed some of the most amazing manifestations of God’s power and might. Yet that nation still sinned, thus provoking God. We must learn from history, lest we be guilty of the same sin of provoking our Lord.
2. Verse 3: Holy living produces genuine happiness. But genuine godliness calls for a consistent effort at serving God “at all times.” The “hit-and-miss,” “on again, off again” efforts at piety will only serve to make a man miserable in what little service he may attempt to offer. As one brother once remarked, “Some folks have just enough religion to make themselves miserable.”
3. Children often imitate their fathers, and one generation of rebellion can influence successive generations to commit the same sins as their forefathers (verse 6). A wicked generation may not pass their guilt to their children (Ezek. 18:20), but it is often the case that they influence their offspring to follow in their wicked ways.
4. A failure to remember God’s mighty works will lead a man into the way of sin. He will first fail to heed God’s counsel (verse 13). This is soon followed by ingratitude, selfish indulgence, and open rebellion, as in the case of Dathan and Abiram (verses 14-17). Let us never forget that sin is progressive.
5. Verse 15 – “And he gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul.” Phillips observed: “How often that happens to us. Finally God gives us what we demand in our carnality and then lets us pay the penalty in resulting spiritual malnutrition” (Phillips, page 156).
6. The child of God cannot “mingle” with the world and expect to remain holy (verses 35-38). “Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33), often leading to some of the most horrible sins imaginable. Once Israel “learned their ways” (verse 35), it was a short step to participating in the practices of the heathen

in sacrificing their sons and daughters unto demons. When congregations of the Lord's people seek to "learn the works" of the denominations about them, it is not long ere they find themselves participating in their unholy sacrifices to the gods of false worship.



## *“A Song of Redemption”*

### ***Introduction***

With this Psalm we begin the fifth and last book of the Psalter. Psalms 105, 106 and 107 should be studied together as they comprise a triad of Psalms regarding Israel's history. Psalm 105 tells of God's compassion towards Israel from the time of Abraham down to their redemption from Egypt. The theme of Psalm 106 is the sinful conduct of Israel from Egypt, through the journey in the wilderness, and into the Land of Promise. The theme of Psalm 107 is the thanksgiving due to Him Who redeemed them from the exile in Babylon, and their safe passage across the desert to their home land. The similarity of the beginning verses in 106 and 107 ties the two chapters together. In addition, the desired occasion for expression of thanks in 106:47 finds its fulfillment in 107:3. The student must not lose sight of the fact that in this Psalm the author is looking back at the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. The journey was difficult; but it was now completed.

In this triad of Psalms the author takes us from the covenant God made with Abraham (105:9) to Israel's return from Babylonian captivity (107:3). We have learned of Israel's disobedience and rebellion (Psa. 106), and God's providential care of His people (Psa. 105). In this Psalm the author will provide a poetic description of Israel's return from Babylon to Jerusalem and the joy of redemption associated with it. Thus at the beginning of this fifth book of the Psalter we see Israel restored to her fatherland.

The author is not known. But if the Psalm was written upon the return from Babylon, it could easily have been penned by Ezra the scribe. The purpose of the Psalm is to remind Israel of God's wonderful mercy as it is demonstrated in Israel's return to Jerusalem.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm begins with an exhortation: “O give thanks unto Jehovah; For he is good” (verses 1-3). The underlying reason for giving thanks

is Israel's redemption from captivity. Beginning with verse 4 the Psalmist looks back at the journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, a journey fraught with difficulties. Like a weary traveler, Israel crossed the wilderness and desert, experiencing hunger and thirst, having no city to dwell in, and calling upon the Lord in their hour of need. Having received safe passage, the Psalmist once again exhorts the people to "praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness" (verses 4-8). Seventy years in captivity were years of darkness and despair. Israel no doubt longed for freedom; they "hungered" for a return to their home land. They needed to be reminded of why they were in captivity in order to impress upon their minds the depth of God's mercy. The previous generation "rebelled against the words of God," and despised the counsel of the Almighty. But a new generation has arisen, and they have "cried unto Jehovah in their trouble, and he saved them in their distress." It was time to go home; the bonds of captivity are now broken, and Israel has been set free. As this section closes, the Psalmist calls for Israel to "praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness" (verses 9-15). The Psalmist turns our attention to the pitiful conditions of Israel's imprisonment in Babylon. The dark and damp dungeons characteristic of ancient times produced no little amount of sickness. Undernourished and burdened down with sickness, many a soul found death a release to the misery of imprisonment. Had that generation finally learned the lesson that sin has its price? "Fools because of their transgression" (verse 17), they find themselves longing for a better life and a restoration to health and happiness. The "gates of death" threatened their very existence. Again, they "cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distress." This section, like the previous two, closes with the exhortation for men to "praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness" (verses 16-21). One more illustration is needed to complete the picture. The journey home would not be easy. The "storms" they would face during their journey, and even upon their arrival home, would test their fortitude. Those who "go down to the sea in ships" know what it means to encounter difficulty. Like one who reels "to and fro and staggers," Israel would be tossed to and fro; they would come to their "wits end" (verse 27). But in times of distress, they once again "cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distress." The storms are made quiet; they are brought unto their haven of rest. This section, as the previous, closes with the admonition that men would "praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness" (verses 22-31). Each of these four illustrations is designed to tell us that Israel's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem was most difficult. But behind the difficulty lay the hand of God, watching, caring and delivering His people, and eventually bringing

them home. These illustrations are followed by a reference to the ever changing circumstances of life and God's control over the universe. Israel needed to be reminded of this truth. It was not Nebuchadnezzar, or Cyrus, or Ahasuerus who was in control; it was God! God is seen as preparing a place for men to dwell, turning rivers into wildernesses, water springs to dry ground, the wilderness into standing water, and the dry ground into water springs (verses 32-41). The Psalm closes with some practical application as to what we are to make of the points presented (verses 42-43).

Finding a workable outline for this chapter was somewhat difficult. Here are some of the better outlines we came across in our study:

John Bowles (Southwest Lectures, pages 227-228):

- I. God's goodness provides (verses 1-21)
- II. God's goodness demands (verses 22-43)

Albert Barnes:

- I. Introduction (verses 1-3)
- II. A reference to the redeemed as having wandered in the wilderness (verses 4-9)
- III. A reference to God as displaying goodness (verses 10-16)
- IV. A reference to deliverance for the people of God (verses 17-22)
- V. A reference to the goodness of God toward those who go down to the sea (verses 23-32)
- VI. A reference to the goodness of God in preparing a place for men to dwell (verses 33-43).

Roy Deaver (pages 68-75):

- I. Exhortations (verses 1-3)
  - 1. Give thanks to the Lord;
  - 2. Let the *redeemed* of the Lord say so;
- II. Illustrations:
  - 1. From desert wanderings to city dwelling (verses 4-9);
  - 2. From bondage to freedom (verses 10-16);
  - 3. From sickness to health (verses 17-22);
  - 4. From storm to calm (verses 23-32)
- III. Principles of Divine Government
  - 1. Method (verses 33-38);
  - 2. Application (verses 39-42);
  - 3. Exhortation (verse 43).

We will use the following outline for our study:

- I. Redemption (verses 1-3)
- II. Return (verses 4-32)
- III. Resources (verses 33-41)
- IV. Rejoicing (verses 42-43)

We have titled this chapter, “A Song of Redemption.”

## ***Commentary***

### ***Redemption Verses 1-3***

- 1 *O give thanks unto Jehovah; For he is good; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.*
- 2 *Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the adversary,*
- 3 *And gathered out of the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.*

**107:1:** “*O give thanks unto Jehovah*” – The journey from Babylon to Jerusalem was fraught with dangers. Several hundred miles of desert, and weeks and months of pilgrimage lay ahead. Looking back over their journey, the Psalmist would now encourage Israel to give thanks for their safe arrival home. God’s lovingkindness saw them through; His mercy guided them home.

*“For he is good; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever” –*

The word *endureth* has been properly supplied by the translators. The literal rendering is, “*for his mercy for ever.*” God’s mercy had no beginning; it shall know no end. There may be many things in this world that do not endure, but we can be grateful that God’s mercy never fails, falters or fades.

**107:2:** “*Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so*” - And why would the redeemed not want to speak of their redemption? Why would anyone remain silent when so great a blessing as redemption is bestowed upon them? And if the redeemed do not speak of God’s lovingkindness, who will? The word redeemed means “delivered, rescued,” without reference to any price paid for the deliverance. It refers here not to a ransom from “sin,” but to deliverance from “danger.” The redemption to which the author refers is Israel’s deliverance from captivity.

*“Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the adversary”* – After 70 years in captivity, God delivered Israel from their adversary. Many a nation has been defeated and carried into captivity, eventually slipping into complete obscurity. Not so with Israel. God did not allow that nation to be destroyed by her “adversary.”

**107:3:** *“And gathered out of the lands”* – The reference to east, west, north and south is a poetic expression of a complete and full restoration. God is not limited by time or distance.

### ***Return*** **Verses 4-32**

In this section the Psalmist will set forth four illustrations of Israel’s return to her homeland. Each of these is designed to help the people understand and appreciate the wonderful mercy and lovingkindness of God. We have borrowed these sub-titles from Roy Deaver’s outline, with slight verse alterations.

*From desert wanderings to city dwelling (107:4-8)*

4 *They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way; They found no city of habitation.*

5 *Hungry and thirsty, Their soul fainted in them.*

6 *Then they cried unto Jehovah in their trouble, And he delivered them out of their distresses,*

7 *He led them also by a straight way, That they might go to a city of habitation.*

8 *Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness, And for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

**107:4:** *“They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way”* – Crossing the immense desert that stretched from Babylon to Canaan would be a formidable task. They would have to bypass the Arabian desert, traveling north-west along the Euphrates River, turning south around Damascus and descending into their home land. They would suffer from hunger and thirst, as well as the fatigues of the long journey.

*“They found no city of habitation.”* – Babylon was not to be their home; they were not to make their habitation among the ungodly. Neither were they to settle in any city along the route home.

How could they? There was none. Israel in the wilderness abode under canvas, and enjoyed none of the comforts of settled life; wanderers in the Sahara find no town or village. Men when under distress of soul find nothing to rest upon, no comfort and no peace; their efforts after salvation are many, weary, and disappointing, and the dread solitude of their hearts fills them with dire distress (Spurgeon).

**107:5:** *“Hungry and thirsty, Their soul fainted in them”* – To what extent Israel suffered from these things is not known. But to whatever degree they lacked these things, it reminded them that they must depend on God and put their trust in His providence. Looking back at what they endured, they would be motivated to give thanks to God for His wonderful mercy in delivering them safely back to their homeland.

**107:6:** *“Then they cried unto Jehovah in their trouble”* – Israel never ceased to pray, even while in captivity, and along the path home. The hunger and thirst referred to in the previous verse was used by God to humble Israel and drive them to their closet in prayer. In times of disaster and danger the first thing men do is lift their voices in prayer. All along the wearisome journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, Israel cried unto Jehovah for deliverance from their trouble.

*“And he delivered them out of their distresses”* – Hunger and thirst were not the only distresses – there was, no doubt, the distress of enemies along the way, wild animals to contend with, and that every present temptation to grumble and complain of their lot. The Hebrew has the idea of being “straitened, compressed” (Barnes), as if one were pressed down, or confined to a narrow space. In all of their distresses, God delivered them safely to their destination.

If hunger brings us to our knees it is more useful to us than feasting; if thirst drives us to the fountain it is better than the deepest draughts of worldly joy; and if fainting leads to crying it is better than the strength of the mighty (Spurgeon).

**107:7:** *“He led them also by a straight way”* – A more literal translation would be, “He wayed them in a straight way.” The way home was conducted in the most direct path home. Unlike the wilderness wandering after coming out of Egyptian captivity, this generation would be directed home by a straight course.

There are many wrong ways, but only one right one, and into this none can lead us but God himself. When the Lord is leader the way is sure to be right; we never need question that. Forth from the pathless mazes of the desert he conducted the lost ones; he found the way, made the way, and enabled them to walk along it, faint and hungry as they were (Spurgeon).

*“That they might go to a city of habitation”* – The city of habitation was Jerusalem. The word “city” has the sense of an “abode,” and the idea is that God led them to a land where they might cease to be wanderers.

**107:8:** *“Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness”* – It was God’s mercy that lay behind Israel’s deliverance. It was Divine grace and lovingkindness that saw them across that wilderness to their city of habitation. After careful consideration of blessings bestowed upon them, what else could they do but praise Jehovah? To do any less would be a manifestation of a thankless heart, unworthy of the blessings received. Barnes made this most significant observation:

More literally, “Let such—or, let these—praise the Lord for his goodness,” the word “men” having been supplied by our translators. Yet it is not improper to suppose that a wider range is intended than would be denoted if it were confined to those who had then been delivered. It was evidently designed to impress the minds of those who might use this psalm in their devotions; and the idea is, that the deliverance then vouchsafed to the people of God in their troubles should lead all to praise and adore him. Such a surprising interposition suggested an important lesson in regard to God, applicable to all people; and should lead all to praise him in view of the trait of character thus manifested, as that of a God who hears prayer when his people are in trouble, and who can make a straight path before them when they are in danger of being lost, and who can conduct them through the wilderness—the waste places—of this world, as he did his people across the pathless sands of the desert. The true use of all history is to teach us lessons about God (Barnes).

*From bondage to freedom (107:9-15)*

- 9 *For he satisfieth the longing soul, And the hungry soul he filleth with good.*  
10 *Such as sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, Being bound in affliction and iron,*  
11 *Because they rebelled against the words of God, And contemned the counsel of the Most High:*

- 12 *Therefore he brought down their heart with labor; They fell down, and there was none to help.*  
13 *Then they cried unto Jehovah in their trouble, And he saved them out of their distresses.*  
14 *He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, And brake their bonds in sunder.*  
15 *Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness, And for his wonderful works to the children of men!*

With verse nine the Psalmist begins the second illustration of Israel's captivity and release. Captives in a foreign land, they suffered all the ill effects of a prisoner in a dark, damp dungeon.

**107:9:** *"For he satisfieth the longing soul"* – After nearly seven decades of captivity, the "longing" for home increased. There was an emptiness in the soul of those who anxiously awaited the vouchsafed promise of God to return them to their homeland. They were "hungry," not for physical bread, but for spiritual reunion with God.

**107:10:** *"Such as sat in darkness"* – Here are a people who sit in darkness; they have not light, no peace, and no prosperity.

*"and in the shadow of death"* – Many a person has died in the disease infested dungeons of ancient times. Israel may not have been in a literal dungeon, but the psychological effects, and in some cases the physical effects of their captivity brought them to the "shadow of death."

*"Being bound in affliction and iron"* – Israel suffered affliction at the hand of their enemy; they were bound in iron shackles, held captive.

**107:11:** *"Because they rebelled against the words of God"* – The Psalmist reminds them why they had been brought into such a captivity. They had no one to blame but themselves for the 70 years of captivity. Like the heathen nations about them, they "imagined a vain thing" and "rebelled against the words of God."

*"And contemned the counsel of the Most High"* - Here is why they sat in darkness; they contemned the counsel of God. They abhorred and despised the commands of God. They considered them of no value. God's *counsel* was rejected. His law they abhorred.

The law of God, at the same time that it "is" law, is of the nature of "counsel," since it is indicative of what God regards as wise and



good, and since it is the best “advice” that God can give to people. A just and righteous law, while it involves “obligation” to obey it, is also the best counsel that can be given, and implies that the highest “wisdom” would be shown in being obedient to it. God will “command” nothing which he would not “advise,” and which it would not be “wisdom” to obey (Barnes).

**107:12:** *“Therefore he brought down their heart with labor”* – God humbled them, taking them from the Promised Land, and sending them into Babylon where they became slaves and servants to their enemy.

*“They fell down”* – They stumbled; were crushed.

*“and there was none to help”* – The nations about them could not deliver them or give them assistance. Their idols were powerless to deliver them. God was the only One Who could provide deliverance. It would take Israel 70 years to learn that lesson.

**107:13:** *“Then they cried unto Jehovah in their trouble, And he saved them out of their distresses”*

As in the previous illustration, so it is said here that they “cried unto Jehovah in their trouble.” And, as before, He delivered them. “We pray best when we are fallen on our faces in painful helplessness” (Spurgeon).

**107:14:** *“He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, And brake their bonds in sunder”* – This is poetic language describing their deliverance from Babylon. Their bonds broken asunder, they could now go home. The darkness had been turned to light, and death gave way to life.

**107:15:** *“Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness”* – As the Psalmist closes this section he repeats the refrain of verse eight.

When dungeon doors fly open, and chains are snapped, who can refuse to adore the glorious goodness of the Lord? It makes the heart sick to think of such gracious mercies remaining unsung; we cannot but plead with men to remember their obligations and extol the Lord their God (Spurgeon).

*From Sickness to Health (107:16-22)*

- 16 *For he hath broken the gates of brass, And cut the bars of iron in sunder.*  
17 *Fools because of their transgression, And because of their iniquities, are afflicted.*  
18 *Their soul abhorreth all manner of food; And they draw near unto the gates of death.*  
19 *Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, And he saveth them out of their distresses.*  
20 *He sendeth his word, and healeth them, And delivereth them from their destructions.*  
21 *Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness, And for his wonderful works to the children of men!*  
22 *And let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, And declare his works with singing.*

**107:16:** “*For he hath broken the gates of brass, And cut the bars of iron in sunder*” – Isaiah foretold this moment when Cyrus would release Israel (Isa. 45:1-2). Herodotus says Babylon had a hundred massive gates, twenty-five on each of the four sides of the city, all, as well as their posts, of brass. But the gates of brass would not hold Israel in Babylon.

**107:17:** “*Fools because of their transgression, And because of their iniquities, are afflicted*” – The Psalmist is quick to remind Israel why they were in Babylon in the first place. They played the part of the fool. Their iniquities separated them from their God (Isa. 59:1-2), and Jehovah cast them out of the land of promise. But why remind them of their sin since they had now been returned to the homeland? It was to remind them that their release was due to God’s wonderful mercy and lovingkindness.

**107:18:** “*Their soul abhorreth all manner of food; And they draw near unto the gates of death*” – The Psalmist continues his description of Israel’s pitiful state in captivity. Keil and Delitzsch noted:

It is one who insanely lives only for the passing hour, and ruins health, calling, family, and in short himself and everything belonging to him. Those who were thus minded, the poet begins by saying, were obliged to suffer by reason of (in consequence of) their wicked course of life. The cause of their days of pain and sorrow is placed first by way of emphasis; and because it has a meaning that

is related to the past thereby comes all the more easily to express that which took place simultaneously in the past (Keil & Delitzsch).

Those afflicted with sickness would have special reason to rejoice for their redemption. Not only were they allowed to go home, but they were granted healing for the journey as well.

**107:19:** *“Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, And he saveth them out of their distresses”* – Once again our author notes the plea of Israel, and the blessing from God.

**107:20:** *“He sendeth his word, and healeth them, And delivereth them from their destructions”* – The very word of God gave the healing and release for those in bondage.

**107:21-22:** *“Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness”* – While the previous two illustrations closed with this same refrain, the Psalmist adds one note here (verse 22). In addition to the praise offered to Jehovah for his lovingkindness, those who had been healed were instructed to “offer the sacrifices with thanksgiving.”

*From Storm to Calm (107:23-32)*

- 23 *They that go down to the sea in ships, That do business in great waters;*  
24 *These see the works of Jehovah, And his wonders in the deep.*  
25 *For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, Which lifteth up the waves thereof.*  
26 *They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: Their soul melteth away because of trouble.*  
27 *They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end.*  
28 *Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble, And he bringeth them out of their distresses.*  
29 *He maketh the storm a calm, So that the waves thereof are still.*  
30 *Then are they glad because they are quiet; So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.*  
31 *Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness, And for his wonderful works to the children of men!*  
32 *Let them exalt him also in the assembly of the people, And praise him in the seat of the elders.*

**107:23:** *“They that go down to the sea in ships”* – The scene here changes from those that wander in the desert, from those who are in

prison, and from those who are sick, to those who encounter the perils of the ocean. The context demands that we consider the illustration here in some connection with the return of Israel to Jerusalem.

*“That do business in great waters”* – The Psalmist is referring to those who make their living upon the seas. We are immediately struck with the difficult and toilsome labor of sailors and/or fishermen. But in addition those who labor upon the sea have occasion to witness some of the most beautiful aspects of God’s power, and the beauty of His creation.

**107:24:** *“These see the works of Jehovah, And his wonders in the deep”* – This author had the opportunity to “do business in great waters” during his military service in the U.S. Coast Guard. He witnessed first hand the mighty “wonders in the deep,” including the fish, whales, and other creatures that make their home in sea. He experienced first hand the beauty of a calm ocean, as well as the terror of a storm tossed sea.

**107:25:** *“For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, Which lifteth up the waves thereof”* – It is the mighty power of God that captures the Psalmist’s attention, as demonstrated in the “stormy wind” and the “waves.” He may have recalled an occasion when he was upon the seas, and saw first hand the powers of nature. In poetic language the author points us to He Who has control of even those awesome powers of nature. Herein lies the lesson for Israel, and for us. God’s people, released from Babylon captivity, would face a most difficult journey from the land of her captivity to the land of promise. The Psalmist reminds them that their journey was under the protective hand of the Almighty.

**107:26-27:** *“They mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths: Their soul melteth away because of trouble”* – The challenges that Israel faced in their trek across that waste and barren land must have caused their soul to “melt” because of the “trouble” they would face. They would *“reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man”* as they fought the elements, hardships, and foes that came their way.

**107:28:** *“Then they cry unto Jehovah in their trouble”* – Driven to their knees, facing insurmountable odds, Israel cried unto Jehovah “in their trouble,” and once again, God brought “them out of their distresses.”

**107:29:** *“He maketh the storm a calm, So that the waves thereof are still”* – Yes, God can bring peace and calm out of the storm that rages in our lives.

**107:30:** *“Then are they glad because they are quiet; So he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”*

The “haven” was their homeland. The stormy seas calmed, the journey now complete, Israel could rejoice and enjoy the peace of being home.

**107:31-32:** *“Oh that men would praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness, And for his wonderful works to the children of men!”* – For the fourth and final time the Psalmist calls for men to “praise Jehovah for his lovingkindness.” Truly, God had been good to Israel in delivering them safely home. Once more the Psalmist adds a sacred obligation to those who would thus praise him. In verse 32 they are admonished now to *“exalt him also in the assembly of the people, and praise him in the seat of the elders.”*

### **Resources** **Verses 33-41**

- 33 *He turneth rivers into a wilderness, And watersprings into a thirsty ground;*
- 34 *A fruitful land into a salt desert, For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.*
- 35 *He turneth a wilderness into a pool of water, And a dry land into watersprings.*
- 36 *And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, That they may prepare a city of habitation,*
- 37 *And sow fields, and plant vineyards, And get them fruits of increase.*
- 38 *He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; And he suffereth not their cattle to decrease.*
- 39 *Again, they are diminished and bowed down Through oppression, trouble, and sorrow.*
- 40 *He poureth contempt upon princes, And causeth them to wander in the waste, where there is no way.*
- 41 *Yet setteth he the needy on high from affliction, And maketh him families like a flock.*

In this section the Psalmist gives us a picture of life's fortunes and reverses. One moment Israel found themselves in a desert; the next enjoying the watersprings provided by God's providential care. One moment they were hungry; the next they are filled. From poverty to riches, from hunger to being filled – Israel had learned during their captivity, as well as their journey home, that God is in control of all things.

**107:33:** *“He turneth rivers into a wilderness”* – The idea here is that God has such control over nature that He can make the bed of a river dry and barren as the rocky or sandy desert; He can effectually dry up the stream, and make it so dry and parched that nothing would grow but the most stunted shrubs, such as were found in the wasteland and sandy desert.

*“and the watersprings into a thirsty ground”* – Whereas the previous reference was to the rivers, here the author speaks of the very source from whence those rivers come. God is in absolute control.

**107:34:** *“A fruitful land into a salt desert, For the wickedness of them that dwell therein.”*

*“A fruitful land into a salt desert”* – The “salt desert” is a land that is barren, for where salt abounds there is no fruit or vegetation. The same language is used in Job 39:6 and Jeremiah 17:6.

*“For the wickedness of them that dwell therein”* – We understand this phrase to imply that God does not arbitrarily or capriciously dry up the land; there is a reason behind the cursing of the land, namely the “wickedness” of those who “dwell therein.” The land around ancient Babylon was once the heartland of the human race. That ancient land is now only barren wasteland with its dust and deserts.

**107:35:** *“He turneth a wilderness into a pool of water”* – God can take the wilderness and provide water where there are no watersprings. Forty years of wilderness wanderings should have taught Israel the lesson that God CAN and DOES provide for His people. Israel's history serves as a stark reminder that God is in control of all things.

**107:36:** *“And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, That they may prepare a city of habitation”* – If there was any concern about what the returning captives might find in Jerusalem upon their return, the

Psalmist reminds them that God can make a place of habitation even out of a dry, fruitless wasteland.

**107:37:** *“And sow fields, and plant vineyards, And get them fruits of increase”* – Upon their return, Israel found the land rested and ready for planting. God did His part; now man must do his by sowing the fields and planting the vineyards.

**107:38:** *“He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; And he suffereth not their cattle to decrease.”*

The key words here are, “He blesseth them also.” Their families will multiply, their sustenance not decrease, so long as they are blessed by God. But that blessing only comes through submission and obedience to God’s will. The long history of Israel’s failures and successes should have taught them that lesson.

Plagues and pests are warded off from the flock and the herd when the Lord means well towards a people; but when chastisement is intended, the flocks and herds rot from off the face of the earth. O that nations in the day of their prosperity would but own the gracious hand of God, for it is to his blessing that they owe their all (Spurgeon).

**107:39:** *“Again, they are diminished and bowed down Through oppression, trouble, and sorrow”* – When men disobey, they are bowed down by the chastising hand of the Almighty. When they submit and obey, they are blessed. That lesson is taught throughout the Bible, and proven true by history itself.

We like Barnes’ comments on this verse:

That is - all is in the hand of God. He rules and directs all things. If there is prosperity, it comes from him; if there are reverses, they occur under his hand. People are not always prosperous. There are changes, misfortunes, disappointments, sorrows. God so deals with the race as in the bests manner to secure the recognition of himself: not always sending prosperity, lest people should regard it as a thing of course, and forget that it comes from him; and not making the course of life uniformly that of disappointment and sorrow, lest they should feel that there is no God presiding over human affairs. He visits now with prosperity, and now with adversity; now with success, and now with reverses, showing that his agency is constant, and that people are wholly dependent on him. In existing circumstances - since man is what he is - it is better that there

should be alternations, reverses, and changes, than that there should be a uniform course (Barnes).

**107:40:** *“He poureth contempt upon princes”* – There is no respect of persons with God. He treats those of high rank no different than those who suffer from life’s reverses. This is a vivid reminder that it is God, not man, Who is in control. Adam Clarke provides a vivid illustration of the principle taught in this verse:

Who can consider the fate of the late emperor of the French, Napoleon, without seeing the hand of God in his downfall! All the powers of Europe were leagued against him in vain, they were as stubble to his bow. “He came, He saw, and He conquered” almost every where, till God, by a Russian Frost, destroyed his tens of thousands of veteran troops. And afterwards his armies of raw conscripts would have over-matched the world had not a particular providence intervened at Waterloo, when all the skill and valor of his opponents had been nearly reduced to nothing. How terrible art thou, O Lord, in thy judgments! Thou art fearful in praises, doing wonders (Adam Clarke).

*“And causeth them to wander in the waste, where there is no way”* – The kings of the earth can be made to wander in the waste, brought so low as to dwell with the brute beast. Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson. God (through Daniel the prophet) foretold of the King’s fate: “This is the interpretation, O king, and it is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that thou shalt be driven from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and thou shalt be made to eat grass as oxen, and shalt be wet with the dew of heaven” (Dan. 4:24-25). All of this happened to Nebuchadnezzar to teach him that it is God Who is in control. It is the Almighty Who sets men upon the throne, and removes them from power. Israel needed to be reminded of this truth as they returned to their homeland.

**107:41:** *“Yet setteth he the needy on high from affliction”* – While God humbles the kings and princes, bringing them down from their lofty position, He has respect unto the poor and needy. He raises them up, and sets them on high. God continues to show that He orders the circumstances of people; He is sovereign in all things.

*“And maketh him families like a flock”* – Large families were considered a blessing in Israel. Here is God’s promise that He will care for them. Implied in all of this is the condition that Israel be submissive and obedient to God’s will.



## ***Rejoicing*** **Verses 42-43**

- 42 *“The upright shall see it, and be glad; And all iniquity shall stop her mouth”*  
43 *“Whoso is wise will give heed to these things; And they will consider the lovingkindness of Jehovah.”*

**107:42:** *“The upright shall see it, and be glad”* – If there was any question as to who would be the recipients of God’s blessings noted above, that doubt is removed here. It is the righteous who would see the changes for good and who would experience the blessings from God. These are the ones who would have occasion to rejoice.

*“and all iniquity shall stop her mouth”* – This truth was demonstrated to Israel upon her return to the Promised Land. When Nehemiah sought to lead Israel in the rebuilding of the city, Sanballat and Tobiah ridiculed their efforts: “What are these feeble Jews doing? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burned?...Even that which they are building, if a fox go up, he shall break down their stone wall” (Neh. 4:2-3). But when the work was completed, the mouths of the enemies were silenced: “And it came to pass, when all our enemies heard thereof, that all the nations that were about us feared, and were much cast down in their own eyes; for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God” (Neh. 6:15).

Barnes’s summation of this phrase is on target:

The wicked shall be silenced; they shall be dumb. The righteous shall find, in these varied scenes, occasion for praise and joy; the wicked shall be able to find no occasion for complaining or murmuring. The divine dealings shall be manifestly so just, and so worthy of universal approval, that, even though the wicked are disposed to complain against God, they will be able to find nothing which will justify them in such complaints (Barnes).

**107:43:** *“Whoso is wise will give heed to these things”* – Little comment is needed on this closing verse. It is an admonition that runs like a fine thread throughout the scripture. True wisdom is demonstrated by application of Biblical truth to one’s life.

*“they will consider the lovingkindness of Jehovah”* – The Psalm

closes with the main lesson of the chapter. This Psalm was written to draw our attention to God's wonderful mercy. He was not obligated to bring Israel out of captivity. He would have been perfectly just in destroying that nation. But the preservation of that nation, and its return to Israel, is a wonderful demonstration of the mercy of our God.

### ***Lessons***

1. Albert Barnes has this concluding remark on this Psalm:

No one can study the works of God, or mark the events of his providence, without perceiving that there are "innumerable" arrangements which have no other end than to produce happiness; which can be explained only on the supposition that God is a benevolent Being; which would not exist under the government of a malevolent being. And, although there are things which seem to be arrangements to cause suffering, and although sin and misery have been allowed to come into the world, yet we are not in circumstances to enable us to show that, in some way, these may not be consistent with a desire to promote the happiness of the universe, or that there may not be some explanation, at present too high for us, which will show that the principle of benevolence is applicable to all the works of God. Meantime, where we can - as we can in numberless cases - see the proofs of benevolence, let us praise God; where we cannot, let us silently trust him, and believe that there will yet be some way in which we may see this as the angels now see it, and, like them, praise him for what now seems to us to be dark and incomprehensible. There is an "eternity" before us in which to study the works of God, and it would not be strange if in that eternity we may learn things about God which we cannot understand now, or if in that eternity things now to us as dark as midnight may be made clear as noonday. How many things incomprehensible to us in childhood, become clear in riper years! (Barnes).

2. This Psalm teaches us the undeniable truth that God is in control of all things. We need not fear for the future, for God's lovingkindness will be toward His people. He has promised us that He will not fail us, nor in any wise forsake us (Heb. 13:5). Let us, therefore, seek "the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33).
3. From verse 7 we learn the important lesson that our "habitation" is promised by God. This world is not our home, for we are but strangers and pilgrims. Let us, like Abraham, look "for the city

which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb 11:10).

4. The quadruple refrain, “Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness” should capture our attention. This should be the desire of every saint in every generation. Implied is the obligation we have to tell others of God’s goodness. No wonder the Psalmist wrote, “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so” (107:2).

5. Roy Deaver captured the Fundamental Lesson of this Psalm:

God’s dealings with men are based upon His steadfast love. God is love, and all that He does grows out of His love. God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. God’s love does not preclude God’s justice. Whether we are blessed or punished depends upon our own attitude and conduct – at least as a general principle this is the case. However, as is stressed in the book of Job, we must not conclude that personal affliction is always the consequence of one’s sin. Let us ponder well the principles of divine government (Deaver, Volume II, page 74).

## *“God Will Be Exalted”*

### ***Introduction***

The ancient heading tells us that this is a Psalm of David. It is composed of lengthy quotes from Psalms 57 and 60. Verses 1-5 correspond to Psalm 57:7-11, and verses 6-12 correspond to Psalm 60:5-12. The occasion of this Psalm is not known, but it would appear that God’s glory is the primary subject of the Psalm. Many of the commentaries we consulted were content to simply make a few brief comments on this Psalm due to the fact that much of what appears in this Psalm appears in Psalms 57:7-11 and 60:5-12. We like Spurgeon’s comments on the tendency of commentators to either pass over this Psalm entirely or to minimize the comments on it:

We cannot find it in our heart to dismiss this Psalm by merely referring the reader first to Psa 57:7-11 and then to Psa 60:5-12, though it will be at once seen that those two portions of Scripture are almost identical which the verses before us. It is true that most of the commentators have done so, and we are not so presumptuous as to dispute their wisdom; but we hold for ourselves that the words would not have been repeated if there had not been an object for so doing, and that this object could not have been answered if every hearer of it had said, “Ah, we had that before, and therefore we need not meditate upon it again” (Spurgeon).

Exactly when the Psalm was written is impossible to discern. It is obvious that it was of later origin than either Psalms 57 or 60. It is not improbable that the author who compiled this Psalm borrowed from the two previous so as to provide a suitable song for the occasion at hand. If it was compiled by David, he simply borrowed from two of his previous Psalms, and the time frame would be sometime during his life and reign. If, on the other hand, some author compiled the two previous Psalms so as to provide a suitable song for some unknown occasion, we would still have a Psalm of which David is its author. In either case the Psalmist wrote by inspiration and the lessons are no less important for us as readers.

## ***Analysis***

This Psalm begins with praise and ends with a prayer. With his “heart fixed,” the Psalmist declares that he will “sing praises,” and then encourages himself to “awake right early” and “give thanks” unto God. This is followed by a fervent prayer (verses 6-13) containing two petitions, (1) that God might rescue them (verse 6), and (2) that God might give them success over their enemies (verses 11-13). Spurgeon’s analysis of the Psalm is typical:

First we have an utterance dictated by the spirit of praise, Psa 108:1-5; then a second deliverance evoked by the spirit of believing prayer, Psa 108:6-12; and then a final word of resolve, Psa 108:13, as the warrior hears the war-trumpet summoning him to join battle immediately, and therefore marches with his fellow soldiers at once to the fray (Spurgeon).

We will use the following outline for our study:

- I. The Music of David, verses 1-3;
- II. The Majesty and Might of Jehovah, verses 4-10;
  - A. Praise, verses 4-5;
  - B. Prayer, verse 6;
  - C. Power, verses 7-10;
- III. The Mercy Requested, verses 11-13.

We have selected to entitle the Psalm, “God Will Be Exalted.”

## ***Commentary***

### ***The Music of David Verses 1-3***

- 1 My heart is fixed, O God; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises, even with my glory.*
- 2 Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake right early.*
- 3 I will give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah, among the peoples; And I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.*

**108:1:** *“My heart is fixed”* - Herein is the secret of true devotion to God. David’s heart was “fixed” - it was settled, determined, and committed to the purpose at hand. In order to praise God acceptably all straggling thoughts must be gathered in. It is as if David were saying,

Though I have many wars to disturb me, and many cares to toss me to and fro, yet I am settled in one mind and cannot be driven from it. My heart has taken hold and abides in one resolve. Thy grace has overcome the fickleness of nature, and I am now in a resolute and determined frame of mind (Spurgeon).

**108:2:** *“Awake, psaltery and harp”* - The Psalmist is using personification. It is not that the “psaltery and harp” were literally asleep, but that those offering praise would pick up the instruments and offer up their praise.

*“I myself will awake early”* - The early morning hours provided the best opportunity for the Psalmist to sing praise to his God. David must have been an early riser. Living outdoors lends itself to rising with the sun. David’s plight often found him sleeping under the stars, or in some cave. The meaning seems to be that David would “awaken the dawn” rather than waiting for the dawn to wake him. Perhaps no time of the day is more appropriate for worship and devotion than in the early morning when the body is refreshed and the mind alert.

**108:3:** *“I will give thanks”* - Proper praise begins with thanksgiving. We have seen references to thanksgiving repeatedly throughout the Psalm. This one is no different. Praise begins in a heart that is filled with genuine thanksgiving.

*“among the people”* - It has always been God’s intention to include the gentiles in His divine purpose. The “*nations*” would hear the Psalmist sing praises. It should be noted that David’s heart of thanksgiving was not disposed to bigotry. He was just as apt to make mention of his God in the presence of the gentiles as he would at home in his kingly court.

## ***The Majesty and Might of Jehovah*** **Verses 4-11**

- 4 *For thy lovingkindness is great above the heavens; And thy truth reacheth unto the skies.*
- 5 *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, And thy glory above all the earth.*
- 6 *That thy beloved may be delivered, Save with thy right hand, and answer us.*
- 7 *God hath spoken in his holiness: I will exult; I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.*
- 8 *Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the defence of my head; Judah is my sceptre.*
- 9 *Moab is my washpot; Upon Edom will I cast my shoe; Over Philistia will I shout.*
- 10 *Who will bring me into the fortified city? Who hath led me unto Edom?*
- 11 *Hast not thou cast us off, O God? And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.*

Verses 4-5 are similar to Psalms 57:10-11, and verses 6-10 are similar to Psalms 60:5-9. Morgan observed:

The circumstances of the writer would seem to be very similar to those obtaining in the earlier psalms...Here in this book of perfected praise it is the opening declaration in a song of triumph over difficulty and danger. The later part of this psalm was also the close of Psalm 60, where it was preceded by a detailed description of the affliction. The point of interest in this song, then, is the attitude of mind indicated by this selection (Morgan, page 262).

This section can be further divided as follows: (1) Praise, verses 4-5; (2) Prayer, verse 6; (3) Power, verses 7-11.

*Praise, verses 4-5*

**108:4:** *“Thy mercy is great above the heavens”* - The Psalmist was simply expressing the unfathomable and inexhaustible mercy of our God. Here is a truth that provides great comfort to unworthy sinners.

*“And thy truth... unto the clouds”* – The word of God is above the earth, far removed from the impurities and uncertainties of this world. When the Psalm was written men were still restricted to the surface of the earth. This is poetic language and teaches us that the

word of God is far above the thoughts and imaginations of men. Though simple, His word is profound.

**108:5:** In the previous verse the Psalmist spoke of God's wonderful mercy even "unto the heavens." Now he exalts God, and acknowledges that the Divine glory is "above all the earth."

*Prayer, verse 6*

**108:6:** The words rendered "beloved," and "may be delivered" are in the plural number, showing that it is not an individual referred to, but the people of God as a whole. The same words appear in Psalms 60:5. In that Psalm the prayer for deliverance was based on the afflictions of the people. In this Psalm, the prayer for deliverance is the same, but the reason for the prayer is different: it is because God is exalted, His mercy is above the heavens, and His glory is above the earth. Because of His wonderful glory, the Psalmist asks that He interpose and save His people.

*Power, verses 7-11*

**108:7:** "*God hath spoken*" - It is not so much that God WILL speak, or that He IS speaking, but that He "*HATH spoken*," and that in His holiness. According to His promise unto Abraham, the conquest of the land and the inheritance on the part of the people of Israel WOULD be granted. The enemies of God would be subdued. God's cause would go forth victorious.

"*in his holiness*" - "Holy" or "holiness" has the idea of separateness, distinctiveness, set apart for a purpose or service. What is it that makes God "holy" or "separate"? It is His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence - all those traits that make Him the true and living God. It is everything and anything that makes Him different from the so-called "gods" of the pagans. And it is precisely because of His eternal qualities that His word is true, reliable, and sure. Hence, when God speaks "*in his holiness*" it is an affirmation that what He has said will, indeed, come to pass. Perhaps the New Testament equivalent of this affirmation is seen in the Book of Hebrews: "Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:17-18).



*"I will divide Shechem"* - This city is in central Palestine, in the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, approximately 34 miles north of Jerusalem, and 7 miles southeast of Samaria. The allusions to Shechem are numerous, and show the importance of the city in Biblical history. Abraham, on his first migration to the land of Canaan, pitched his tent and built an altar under the oak of Moreh at Shechem. During Abraham's time the city was in the possession of the aboriginal race of that area (Gen. 12:6). When Jacob arrived here following his sojourn in Mesopotamia (Gen. 33:18, 34), the city was in possession of the Hivites, of which Hamor, the father of Shechem, was the headman. It was in the area of Shechem that Jacob built a well so as to not be dependent upon his neighbors for water. After the settlement of the land under Joshua, Shechem fell to the lot of Ephraim (Josh. 20:7) but was assigned to the Levites, and became a city of refuge (Josh 21:20-21). After the death of Gideon, Abimelech induced the Shechemites to revolt from the Hebrew commonwealth (Judges 9:1). From the time of the origin of the Samaritans, the history of Shechem blends itself with that of the Samaritan people and their sacred mount Gerizim. In spite of the fact that this city passed from people to people, God declares that it is HE Who divides Shechem, suggesting His control over that city, as well as all cities of all nations.

*"valley of Succoth"* - We first hear of Succoth on the homeward journey of Jacob from Padanaram (Gen. 35:17). The name is derived from the fact that Jacob put up "booths" (*succoth*) for his cattle and himself and his family. In an effort to emphasize God's complete control over the nations, the Psalmist declares that it is God Who metes out the lands, not men.

There are some important truths to learn from this passage. **First**, God rules over all nations, and He will use them to the fulfilling of His purpose. Nebuchadnezzar had to learn this the hard way. His kingdom was taken from him and he was made to dwell with the beasts of the field so that he might "know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will" (Dan. 4:31-32). Those nations that fight against Him will be brought low. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov.14:34). Communist Russia sought to overthrow God and His truth, but after seven decades that nation went the way of others that fought against God. **Second**, when God speaks in His holiness, we can rest assured that what He says will come to pass. Shechem was divided. Judah became God's scepter. Moab became God's wash pot

to boil the idolatry out of Judah. Four thousand years of Old Testament history have demonstrated the truth that what God says, will most assuredly come to pass. God does not vacillate. He does not renege on His promises. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (Jam. 1: 17). **Third**, God WILL WIN THE VICTORY! The heathen may rage and the nations imagine a vain thing (Psalms 2). Though they "set themselves against Jehovah and his anointed," God shall "have them in derision" (Psalms 2:1, 4). **Fourth**, God WILL perform His vows, oaths, threats, and promises! "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11).

**108:8:** "*Gilead is mine*" - The meaning of Gilead is 'rocky region,' and this mountainous region lies just east of the Jordan, on is bounded by Bashan on the north, on the east by the Arabian plateau, and on the south by Moab and Ammon. It is sometimes referred to as "Mount Gilead" (Gen 31:25), and sometimes the "land of Gilead" (Num. 32:1). Gilead was especially known for its balm from the "balm of Gilead" trees, and was of considerable value. Once again the Psalmist emphasizes God's control over cities, nations and even entire regions.

"*Manasseh is mine*" - Manasseh was the eldest son of Joseph (Gen. 41:51; Gen. 46:20). Both he and Ephraim were born prior to the commencement of the famine that would eventually lead to Israel's move to Egypt. In the settlement of the Promised Land, half the tribe of Manasseh settled east of the Jordan, half to the west. They eventually assimilated themselves with the old inhabitants of the land they settled, and were subsequently punished. Manasseh never learned the lesson expressed by the Psalmist - that they belonged to God and should have done His bidding by obedience to His will.

"*Ephraim...is the defense of my head*" - Ephraim was the second son of Joseph, but was given a position of ascendancy over his elder brother Manasseh. Ephraim was one of the largest tribes, and its land inheritance was situated in the very center of the Promised Land. For this reason Ephraim would be considered the "defense" of the "head," likely a reference to the tribe of Judah.

*“Judah is my sceptre”* - Judah was given prominence over the other tribes as prophesied in Genesis 49:8-12. It was Judah that served as God’s scepter, and from which tribe the law went forth.

**108:9:** *“Moab is my washpot”* - Moab was the son of Lot’s daughter. The Moabites first inhabited the rich highlands, which lay on the eastern side of the chasm of the Dead Sea. When Israel entered the Promised Land they did not pass through the land of the Moabites (Judges 11:18), but instead passed around the East of both Moab and Edom. After Israel conquered the land the relations between Israel and Moab were of a mixed character, sometimes warlike, sometimes peaceful. Judges 3:12-30 tells of a severe battle between the Moabites and the tribe of Benjamin. The story of Ruth, however, presents a favorable existence between Israel and Moab. Later, during the time of David, Moab was made a tributary of Israel (2 Sam. 8:2). In later history when Moab refused to pay tribute, Israel, Judah, and Edom united in an attack on Moab, resulting in the complete overthrow of the Moabites. Their complete destruction made that once mighty nation nothing more than a “washpot” in the hands of God to cleanse Israel of her idolatry.

*“Upon Edom will I cast my shoe”* - The name “Edom” was given to Esau, the first born son of Isaac and twin brother of Jacob. The land that God gave to Esau was called “the country of Edom” (Gen. 32:3), and his descendents were called Edomites. Edom, sometimes called “Mount Seir,” or “Idumea,” was a mountainous country. Esau’s bitter hatred for his brother Jacob was passed along to his posterity. Consequently when Israel asked permission to pass through the land the rulers of Edom refused to permit them that passage (Num. 20:18-21). For approximately 400 years we hear little of the Edomites. During the rule of King Saul, they were attacked and defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 14:47), and some 40 years later by David (2 Sam. 8:13-14). During the reign of Jehoshaphat the Edomites attempted to invade Israel but failed (2 Chron. 20:22). They joined Nebuchadnezzar when that king besieged Jerusalem, and for their cruelty and failure to assist their brethren, they were fully denounced by the prophets (Isa. 34:5-8; Isa. 63:1-4; Jer. 49:17). Edom became nothing more than a place where God would “cast” His shoe. Like the floor upon which a man might throw his sandals, this nation would lie beneath the feet of Jehovah God, subject to the will of God by divine edict.

*“Over Philistia will I shout”* - Philistia was the plain that lay to the southwest of Palestine. Approximately 40 miles long, it lay on the

coast of the Mediterranean between Gerar and Joppa. The Philistines were an uncircumcised people whose name means “migrants.” They are mentioned some 286 times in the Old Testament. They were a Semitic people and worshipped Babylonian gods, Dagon (1 Sam. 5:2) and Ashtaroath (1 Sam. 31:10). David had conquered the giant from Philistia, and was confident that he would be victorious again. The “shout” was the cry of victory over one’s enemies.

All of these cities represent the various enemies of Israel at one time or another. The point the Psalmist is making is the complete control God has over these nations. No wonder the Psalmist was anxious to lift up his voice in praise unto God.

**108:10:** The “*strong city*” was probably the capital of Idumea. Barnes tells us that “this was the celebrated city *Petra*, situated in the rocks, and so difficult to be taken by an enemy” (Barnes). God is asking who would do His bidding, asking who would take His glory and honor into those cities to be conquered. What a challenge! God gave the same challenge to Isaiah: “And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me” (Isa. 6:8). In David’s situation, there was great CONCERN as to exactly WHO would lead the armies into the cities of the great enemy Edom? In Isaiah’s situation, God was looking for someone to go speak to Israel regarding their sins! Herein is the challenge in every generation! Who will take up the challenge and respond to God’s call for helpers? There are cities, towns, and hamlets where God is not known. Most of the cities, and especially the larger ones, are citadels of Satan’s armies. Who is going to take the message of God to those people? There are whole cities in our own country that have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Closer to home, there are families that you know who are without God, without Christ and without hope! God asks, “Who will bring me to that city? Who will bring me to that family?” What a challenge!

### ***Mercy Requested*** **Verses 11-13**

- 12 Give us help against the adversary; For vain is the help of man.*  
*13 Through God we shall do valiantly; For he it is that will tread down our adversaries.*

The Psalmist closes his song with (1) a plea for help, and (2) a statement of assurance.

**108:11:** *“Hast not thou cast us off, O God?”* - There may have been some situation facing that Psalmist that might lead one to believe that God had abandoned them. Rather than lose faith in God, the Psalmist beseeches divine help. Had God cast them off? Even if it were the case that God had abandoned them, the Psalmist would not cease to offer up the praise and devotion contained in this Psalm. What a marvelous faith David must have possessed. Some lose faith in God at the slightest inconvenience. Here the author was determined to retain his faith even if God chose to withhold His hand of mercy.

*“And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts”* - David realized that his army absent of the help of Jehovah was merely a “host” of men. He would express the same thought in the next verse.

**108:12:** *“Give us help against the adversary”* - There was a real danger facing the Psalmist. He was fully aware that the help of man was vain. The task facing him required help far beyond what mortal man might provide.

*“vain is the help of man”* - What is said here of temporal troubles is even more true with regard to our spiritual and eternal necessities. When we are burdened down with guilt, or facing the unholy and arrogant enemies of the cross, the help of man is vain. Our help is in God alone. Man cannot guide us, nor can he comfort, pardon, or save. Any attempt to turn to man for spiritual strength and guidance is empty of power.

**108:13:** *“Through God we shall do valiantly”* - This is the Old Testament equivalent of Romans 8:28, Hebrews 13:5-6, Matthew 28:20, and a host of other passages that promise us the victory in Jesus. Let's take a closer look at this word “*valiant*.” Webster says it means, “Brave, courageous; intrepid in danger; performed with valor; heroic.” Barnes noted that in this passage it means “that we shall go forth with spirit and with courage to the war” (Barnes). Here is the confident assurance on the part of the Psalmist that God would indeed help him, and that through God's strength they would achieve the victory. Hence, the Psalm closes with the assurance of God's favor, with the firm belief that the desire of the Psalmist would be obtained. History shows that David's prayer was answered and that Edom was overthrown. Consequently, David became a great hero in the eyes of his countrymen. In the generations to follow David was looked upon with great admiration and respect. “A true hero is the

man who rises above the base cowardice of his own nature to do a noble and courageous deed when shaken by dread of its consequences” (Rimmer, 95). It was Emerson who wrote: “All history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.” Thomas Carlyle said, “Great men, taken up in any way, are profitable company. We cannot look upon a great man without gaining something from him.”

Who is it that is valiant in the church? It is that young person who says NO to drugs; that young lady who declines an invitation to the local dance; that young man who refuses to follow the crowd to do evil; that business executive that will not compromise his/her values for the sake of position or promotion; that Christian who is willing to visit someone in need, for the purpose of saving their soul; that missionary willing to forsake family, country, etc. for the cause of Christ; that child of God who gives sacrificially so that missionaries can be sent; that elder willing to do what is good and right for the flock, without fear or favor of those little “groups” that might want to lead the congregation astray. Yes, there have been, and will continue to be, great heroes in the Lord’s kingdom. May their number increase.

And the amazing promise in this verse is that WE SHALL DO VALIANTLY! And why? Because God “*will tread down our adversaries*”! It is “through God” that we shall be victorious.

### ***Lessons***

1. The fact that two parts of former Psalms are here united in one teach us some lessons: First, repetition is here sanctioned by inspiration. It is sometimes good to “remind” one another of those basic truths taught in God’s word. Repetition is good for impression, confirmation, and preservation. Perhaps the present apostasy facing the Lord’s church would not have occurred had some of our preachers spent more time repeating the basic fundamental doctrines so sorely needed in our generation. Second, rearrangement is also sanctioned by inspiration. It is good on occasion to use different passages to teach the totality of truth. We do this when we combine various passages to come to a full knowledge regarding the nature of the church, the plan of salvation, or what constitutes authorized worship.

2. We learn some important truths regarding praise: First, we must praise God with a heart that is fixed. The heart must be involved in our praise and devotion to God. Second, we should praise God with glory that pours forth from a heart of true devotion and dedication. Third, we should select an appropriate moment to enter into our closet, whether early in the morning, or at the close of day; perhaps both. Finally, we should praise Jehovah in full recognition of His great power.
3. God speaks in His holiness (verse 7); we should “listen” with reverence and adoration for that holy nature of God.
4. All nations belong to God; those who submit to Him will be blessed; those who rebel will become nothing more than “washpots” for God.
5. Through God we will win the victory.

## *“Vengeance Belongeth Unto The Lord”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm presents no little problem to commentators due in large measure to its imprecatory tone. This is the last and perhaps the most vehement of the imprecatory Psalms. Some have rejected the Davidic authorship on the basis of the language in which the author pours forth a spirit of vengeance and bitterness toward his enemies. But these are not the ravings of some malicious hothead. There are two possible explanations that would account for the vindictive language in this Psalm. The most popular position is that the Psalm is a prophecy of the punishment that would be poured out on the final day of judgment upon all those who would rebel against God. If this position is correct then certainly the Psalm is a prophetic denunciation of God's displeasure against sinners. Keil's conclusion is typical of those who hold this view:

The anathemas that are here poured forth more extensively than anywhere else speak in favor of David, or at least of his situation. They are explained by the depth of David's consciousness that he is the anointed of Jahve, and by his contemplation of himself in Christ. The persecution of David was a sin not only against David himself, but also against the Christ in him; and because Christ is in David, the outbursts of the Old Testament wrathful spirit take the prophetic form, so that this Psalm also, like Ps 22 and Ps 69, is a typically prophetic Psalm, inasmuch as the utterance of the type concerning himself is carried by the Spirit of prophecy beyond himself...But these anathemas are still not on this account so many beatings of the air. There is in them a divine energy, as in the blessing and cursing of every man who is united to God, and more especially of a man whose temper of mind is such as David's. They possess the same power as the prophetic threatenings [sic], and in this sense they are regarded in the New Testament as fulfilled in the son of perdition (John 17:12). To the generation of the time of Jesus they were a deterrent warning not to offend against the Holy One of God, and this Psalmus Ischarioticus (Acts 1:20) will ever be such a mirror of warning to the enemies and persecutors of Christ and His Church (Keil & Delitzsch).



Another position is that these are not the curses of David upon his enemies, but the curses of the *enemies of God* upon *David*. The Psalmist describes in detail the curses being heaped upon him by his foes. There were certainly a number of men who cursed, or would curse David, not the least of which was Shimei. This enemy of God poured forth his blasphemies upon David as the King made his way toward Jerusalem. Another who certainly might have cursed David would have been Ahithophel, David's counselor and one-time best friend. It was this former friend who helped Absalom conspire to rebel against David, and one who stands out clearly as a "type" of Judas Iscariot. Our opinion is that the imprecatory nature of the Psalm is best explained by this latter position, namely that the curses are not those of David, but those of David's enemy heaped upon himself. Unless it could be shown that David possessed a malicious spirit, caution should be exercised that we not attribute to David what one author called "a pitiless hate, a refined and insatiable malignity."

The occasion of the Psalm is not certain, but there is little doubt that it belongs to the period in David's life when he was forced to flee from Absalom.

### ***Analysis***

In the first part of the Psalm the author presents his complaint. He speaks of the evil that the wicked have committed against him and the unjust treatment he received in return for the good he had done (verse 1-5). The second movement in the Psalm is a cry for justice. The language is severe and straightforward: "Set thou a wicked man over him," "let him be condemned," "let his days be few," "let the extortioner catch all that he hath," "let his posterity be cut off," "as he loved cursing, so let it come unto him," "let this be the reward of mine adversaries" are but a few of the imprecatory remarks aimed at the enemy (verses 6-20). It should be noted that at this point in the Psalm there is a change from the plural to the singular. The Psalmist returns to the plural in verse 20 giving credence to the position that the curses are not those of David, but of his enemies. Following this the author prays for himself, that God would help and provide comfort (verses 21-29). The Psalm closes with a joyful expectation that God would answer that prayer (verses 30-31).

We found a number of good outlines which we could recommend for your study. Roy Deaver provided the following outline (Volume 2, page 79):

Distress, verses 1-5;  
Destruction, verses 6-20;  
Deliverance, verses 21-31.

For those who enjoy a good homiletic outline, Phillips' was exceptional (Phillips, Volume 2, page 179):

I. David's Faith Exercised (109:1-5)  
II. David's Foes Exposed (109:6-19)  
III. David's Fears Expressed (109:20-31)

Some years ago I scribbled the following outline into the margin of my Bible, and will use it for our study:

Complaint, verses 1-5  
Cry, verses 6-20  
Comfort, verses 21-29  
Confidence, verses 30-31

## ***Commentary***

### ***Complaint Verses 1-5***

- 1 Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;*
- 2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.*
- 3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause.*
- 4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer.*
- 5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.*

**109:1** - "*Hold not thy peace*" - The Psalmist pours out his heart to God and asks the Almighty not to turn a deaf ear. It is not that God was deaf, or incapable of taking action, but that any refusal to grant the Psalmist's request might be construed by the enemy as inaction

on the part of God. David may have been puzzled as he wondered why God was delaying needed deliverance.

*"O God of my praise"* - The enemy persecuted David; but this righteous man put his trust in God. Even when things were bad, David still looked to God with reverent praise and adoration. David's faith shines in this passage. He was in great danger; his enemies were seeking his destruction; yet he would continue to praise his God.

**109:2** - *"the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit...a lying tongue"* - The power of an ungodly tongue is oft as destructive as the sword in their hand. Deceit and lying are the "swords" of the devil and the barbs and wounds are, in many instances, more destructive than the weapons of war. The Hebrew word here translated "wicked" describes one who is lawless and rebellious. The lying propaganda that this enemy spread throughout the land was designed to put doubt and distrust in the hearts and minds of the people. After all, Absalom had to present some plausible cause for his attempted overthrow of David's throne.

**109:3** - *"They compassed me about also with words of hatred"* - The slanders and accusations were constant, so much so that David could say they "compassed me about." Whereas the previous verse addresses the TYPE of evil words (deceit, lying), in this verse the MOTIVE of the enemy comes to the surface. It was hatred that motivated them to hurl their curses at David.

*"fought against me without a cause"* - David had done nothing against them. Having no cause for their bitter and malicious treatment of the king, they fought against him, speaking evil of him and seeking to do him harm. Many a saint has suffered the barbs of unkindness without justifiable cause.

**109:4** - *"For my love they are my adversaries"* - Looking back, David sought only their good; he bestowed upon them his love and compassion. In turn they slandered him with vicious lies and mistreatment. Nothing could be worse than to have someone in whom we have trusted to turn and stab us in the back. But this is precisely what these "adversaries" had done to David.

*"But I give myself unto prayer"* - David manifested the true spirit of Christ. He would not strike back. Instead, he would leave things in the hand of God and give himself unto prayer.

**109:5** - *"rewarded me evil for good"* - The good that David did for them was recompensed with evil on their part. We can scarcely imagine the depths of such a depraved heart - a heart that would receive good from the hand of another and then render evil in return.

These first five verses provide us with an incredible look at the man David. How many of us would control our self to the extent that this man of God did in the face of such incredible mistreatment? No wonder David has been called a "man after God's own heart."

### **Cry** **Verses 6-20**

- 6 *Set thou a wicked man over him; And let an adversary stand at his right hand.*
- 7 *When he is judged, let him come forth guilty; And let his prayer be turned into sin.*
- 8 *Let his days be few; And let another take his office.*
- 9 *Let his children be fatherless, And his wife a widow.*
- 10 *Let his children be vagabonds, and beg; And let them seek their bread out of their desolate places.*
- 11 *Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; And let strangers make spoil of his labor.*
- 12 *Let there be none to extend kindness unto him; Neither let there be any to have pity on his fatherless children.*
- 13 *Let his posterity be cut off; In the generation following let their name be blotted out.*
- 14 *Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with Jehovah; And let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.*
- 15 *Let them be before Jehovah continually, That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth;*
- 16 *Because he remembered not to show kindness, But persecuted the poor and needy man, And the broken in heart, to slay them.*
- 17 *Yea, he loved cursing, and it came unto him; And he delighted not in blessing, and it was far from him.*
- 18 *He clothed himself also with cursing as with his garment, And it came into his inward parts like water, And like oil into his bones.*
- 19 *Let it be unto him as the raiment wherewith he covereth himself, And for the girdle wherewith he is girded continually.*
- 20 *This is the reward of mine adversaries from Jehovah, And of them that speak evil against my soul.*

There is an obvious change at this point in the Psalm from the plural to the singular. No longer is the Psalmist speaking of "adversaries," but of "he," "his," and "him." There was some definite person in the mind of David. The best explanation is that David would now provide his readers with a description of the curses he suffered at the hands of this enemy. We can only conclude that the language is that of David's enemy, not David. The passage breathes a spirit that is completely alien to David, and the best explanation is that the Psalmist provides us with a vivid picture of the curses of some man who hated him.

**109:6** - "*Set thou a wicked man over him...an adversary*" - This reviler hoped that David would fall under the power of some evil person. The marginal reading has "Satan" rather than "adversary." Was the enemy of David so depraved as to wish that God's anointed would fall under the power of the devil himself? Oh what a wicked heart that man must have had!

**109:7** - "*Judged...come forth guilty*" - Here the curses center on *social injustice*. David was a just man and had done his best to see to it that the people under his rule were treated fairly and equably. But the enemy knows no mercy. Were the wicked ones spoken of here to have their way, they would rob David of any justice and fair treatment. The only man that might fit the description here would be Ahithophel, once David's counselor and friend, but now advisor for Absalom.

*"Let his prayer be turned into sin"* - Some commentators attempt to explain this curse on the grounds that it is a man pleading for justice before some earthly judge. It would seem that the better explanation is that this invective actually expresses the hope that David's appeals to God would not only be refused, but would be looked upon as additional sin.

**109:8** - "*Let his days be few*" - In verses 8 and 9 the reviler hopes that David will suffer *serious injury*. He hoped to see David "broken, beggared, and buried" (Phillips, page 184). In this verse this sinister enemy sought to see a quick end to David's life.

*"Let another take his office"* - It was not enough that David would be run out of town by the conspirators, the King's enemy wanted another to take his office.

**109:9** - *"Let his children be fatherless"* - He wanted this curse to fall upon David and his posterity. It is simply not possible that David could have desired such a curse to come upon his enemies. Language such as this is descriptive of those who had abandoned God and desired the complete overthrow of David, even to the generations to follow. If this "enemy" be Ahithophel, the curse pronounced here would be one that this wicked man might wish upon David. There is little doubt that Ahithophel wanted revenge upon David for the death of Uriah, as well as for David's seduction of Bathsheba. Had the rebellion of Absalom succeeded it is likely that the new king and his evil advisors would have carried out the wholesale massacre of David's family.

**109:10** - *"Let his children be vagabonds, and beg"* - The depths of the depravity of this vile enemy is seen here. Were it within his (their) power he (they) would call down curses upon the orphaned children of David. The desire to curse helpless orphans portrays a heart that is wicked and evil.

**109:11** - *"Let the extortioner catch all that he hath"* - The one hurling these curses at David wanted to see David's family destitute:

In the most subtle, worrying, and sweeping manner the extortioner takes away, piece by piece, his victim's estate, till not a fraction remains to form a pittance for old age. Baiting his trap, watching it carefully, and dexterously driving his victim into it, the extortioner by legal means performs unlawful deeds, catches his bird, strips him of every feather, and cares not if he die of starvation. He robs with law to protect him, and steals with the magistrate at his back; to fall into his clutches is worse than to be beset by professed thieves (Spurgeon).

The word "catch" translates a Hebrew word that depicts some unscrupulous creditor who is scheming to get his hands on someone's property. "It is bad enough when an unsuspecting person falls into the hands of a financial scoundrel. How much worse to pray that such a thing will happen, to watch eagerly for it to happen, to rub one's hands with glee at the sight of a man's widow and children being driven out into the street" (Phillips, page 185).

*"Let strangers make spoil of his labor"* - The fruits of one's labor coupled with frugality and good stewardship will generally produce a tidy sum for later years. The *ideal* situation is for a man to enjoy the

"spoil of his labor." This wicked man who would slur David's name and bring destruction upon the sweet singer of Israel desired as well that the spoil might be given to strangers rather than enjoyed by David or his descendents.

**109:12** - *"Let there be none to extend kindness unto him...to have pity on his fatherless children"* - This is not David pouring out his soul; it is the heart of David's enemy. David demonstrated time and again that he would extend kindness to those who treat him with evil. Even Shimei, who cursed David as the king made his way out of Jerusalem, was treated later with kindness by the king.

**109:13** - *"Let his posterity be cut off...let their name be blotted out"* - A Hebrew family had a strong sense of unity, and to have his genealogy blotted out was considered a terrible calamity. Phillips commented on this:

All the way through the Old Testament we have a sense of family continuity. It shows up again and again in the long lists of names, meaningless to Westerners but full of significance to the devout Hebrew. To be able to trace one's ancestry back to the tribal head, to Judah or Levi or Ephraim; then back to Abraham and to Noah and through him to Adam - what a sense of continuing history. Then to be the man after whom that long and glorious line was brought to a sudden stop - that was the height of tragedy. Not to have a descendant on the earth in the days of the Messiah. To be cut off. To wish such a tragedy on a man was unspeakably cruel (Phillips, page 185-186).

**109:14** - *"Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with Jehovah"* - This one who was cursing David wanted to rake up the past, to bring to remembrance the sins of David's forefathers. Not content to attack only David, he now wanted to go back through David's family tree and curse Jesse, Boaz, and the others who came from a long line of good and godly men and women.

*"Let not the sin of his mother be blotted out"* - A man's love for his mother is universal. Mothers have a very special place in the hearts of their children. Oliver Wendell Holmes once wrote, "Where we love is home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts." Could not the same be said for our mothers, and our fathers? I do not know who wrote the following, but we share it with our readers:

## **Reflections of a Mother**

(author unknown)

I gave you life, but cannot live it for you.  
I can teach you things, but I cannot make you learn.  
I can give you directions, but I cannot be there to lead you.  
I can allow you freedom, but I cannot account for it.  
I can take you to church, but I cannot make you believe.  
I can teach you right from wrong, but I cannot always  
decide for you.  
I can buy you beautiful clothes, but I cannot make you  
beautiful inside.  
I can offer you advice, but I cannot accept it for you.  
I can give you love, but I cannot force it upon you.  
I can teach you to share, but I cannot make you unselfish.  
I can teach you respect, but I cannot force you to show  
honor.  
I can advise you about friends, but cannot choose them for  
you.  
I can advise you about sex, but I cannot keep you pure.  
I can tell you the facts of life, but I can't build your  
reputation.  
I can tell you about drink, but I can't say "no" for you.  
I can warn you about drugs, but I can't prevent you from  
using them.  
I can tell you about lofty goals, but I can't achieve them for  
you.  
I can teach you about kindness, but I can't force you to be  
gracious.  
I can warn you about sins, but I cannot make you moral.  
I can love you as a child, but I cannot place you in God's  
family.  
I can pray for you, but I cannot make you walk with God.  
I can teach you about Jesus, but I cannot make Jesus your  
Lord.  
I can tell you how to live, but I cannot give you eternal life.  
I can love you with unconditional love all of my life . . . and  
I will!!!  
Always, Mom

It must have hurt David deeply to know that someone would curse his mother, and have her sins be made public. Oh the depths of depravity of the man whom David is describing in these verses!



**109:15** - *"That he may cut off the memory of them from the earth"* - The magnitude of this curse is realized when we consider the extent of the hurt this individual wanted to bring upon David and his family. "There is nothing like this appalling curse elsewhere in the Bible, not even the dreadful curses of the Mosaic Law. They are national, this is personal; they are in the nature of divine retribution for apostasy, this is sheer malice and spite" (Phillips, page 186).

**109:16** - *"Because he remembered not to show kindness"* - The enemy attempts to provide a reason for pronouncing such curses upon David. The first accuses David of extreme cruelty. He would have his fellow rebels to believe that David never once showed kindness to the poor and needy. But when we look at the life of David we see that there was never a more merciful man than David. Look at his willingness to forgive Saul, Ahithophel, Shimei, and Absalom.

**109:17-19** - *"He loved cursing...delighted not in blessing"* - A second accusation laid at the feet of David was that he "loved cursing." Phillips categorizes these curses as:

- Spiritual Infamy (verse 6)
- Social Injustice (verse 7a)
- Startling Iniquity (verse 7b)
- Serious Injury (verses 8-9)
- Stifling Insolvency (verses 10-11)
- Sordid Inhumanity (verse 12)
- Sudden Infertility (verse 13)
- Solemn Invective (verses 14-15).

It is amazing that some are adamant in their position that David is the one who is doing the cursing. All things considered, it is more reasonable to view these curses as those heaped ON David by his enemies, and not BY David upon those who did him harm.

**109:20** - *"This is the reward of mine adversaries from Jehovah"* - It is as if David were saying, "This - all of these curses one might heap upon his enemy - is what I get from the 'adversaries' of Jehovah." It is now David who is speaking; not his enemies. They had their say; now David will have his.

### ***Comfort*** **Verses 21-29**

- 21 *But deal thou with me, O Jehovah the Lord, for thy name's sake:  
Because thy lovingkindness is good, deliver thou me;*
- 22 *For I am poor and needy, And my heart is wounded within me.*
- 23 *I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and  
down as the locust.*
- 24 *My knees are weak through fasting; And my flesh faileth of  
fatness.*
- 25 *I am become also a reproach unto them: When they see me, they  
shake their head.*
- 26 *Help me, O Jehovah my God; Oh save me according to thy  
lovingkindness:*
- 27 *That they may know that this is thy hand; That thou, Jehovah,  
hast done it.*
- 28 *Let them curse, but bless thou: When they arise, they shall be  
put to shame, But thy servant shall rejoice.*
- 29 *Let mine adversaries be clothed with dishonor, And let them  
cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe.*

David now offers a prayer. In contrast to his enemies who offered up only curses, David prays for his enemies, and seeks God's divine deliverance.

**109:21** - *"Deal thou with them, O Jehovah the Lord, for thy name's sake"* - David would leave vengeance in the hands of the Lord. Even the most casual reader cannot help but notice the change in the tone of the Psalm. David was saying, "The enemy may deal harshly with me, and may call down curses upon my head, but I will trust in my God to deal with them accordingly."

*"thy lovingkindness is good"* - David recognized that God would be merciful to those who sought Him. He trusted in God's wonderful mercy to deliver him from the hand (and the curses) of the enemy.

**109:22** - *"I am poor and needy"* - Here David asks God to be mindful of his misery. No doubt that misery was multiplied because of the bitter curses David endured at the hands of his foes.

*"my heart is wounded within me"* - The rebellion of Absalom must have pierced David's heart deeply. One can see the great sorrow in David's heart by the words which David spoke upon learning of his son's death: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 18:33).

**109:23** - *"Like the shadow when it declineth"* - In poetic language David describes his plight. Driven from the palace, there must have been times when David felt that his life was nearing its end. Like a shadow that slowly fades in the late hours of the sunset until all about is consumed in darkness, David felt that his life was near unto vanishing. No wonder he called out to God.

*"tossed up and down like the locust"* - He felt powerless in this moment of distress. Like the locust that is driven with the wind, tossed here and there, this humble servant of God cast all his cares upon the Lord and sought divine deliverance.

**109:24** - *"My knees are weak through fasting"* - The depth of David's prayers and private devotions had an affect upon his physical health. Fasting, his strength was taken from him; his knees became weak from lack of nourishment. Hunger often strikes the knees as soon, or sooner, than it strikes the stomach.

*"my flesh faileth of fatness"* - This may have reference to loss of appetite.

**109:25** - *"I am become also a reproach unto them"* - In addition to the physical suffering he endured through the slander of his enemies, David became a reproach to those who were aware of his situation; fair-weather friends were embarrassed by David's plight. When they observed David's physical and mental condition, they could only shake their heads in silence.

**109:26** - *"Help me, O Jehovah my God"* - Having prayed that God would remember his condition, David now prays that God would remember his cause. His cry for help is not a selfish one. He prays for deliverance according to God's "lovingkindness."

**109:27** - *"That they may know that this is thy hand...Thou, Jehovah, hast done it"* - Once the rebellion of Absalom was well under way, the "conspiracy was strong," and the bulk of the nation was with him. David knew that if the kingdom was to be rescued, and his crown secured, he would need help from God. David knew that the situation was so desperate that if deliverance was forthcoming it would need to be of such a nature that the enemy would know that "Jehovah hast done it."

**109:28-29** - *"Let them curse, but bless thou"* - This verse, to the close of the chapter, is a prayer that David's enemies might be

vanquished. Two reasons for his request come to the surface. First, deliverance would vindicate God's cause. They would be put to shame; they would be clothed with dishonor; they would cover themselves with their own shame. God would be vindicated, and "*thy servant shall rejoice.*"

### ***Confidence*** **Verses 30-31**

- 30 *I will give great thanks unto Jehovah with my mouth; Yea, I will praise him among the multitude.*  
31 *For he will stand at the right hand of the needy, To save him from them that judge his soul.*

**109:30** - "*I will give great thanks unto Jehovah*" - Not only would God be vindicated, but great deliverance would provide occasion for great praise. Not only would David give thanks, he would give "great thanks unto Jehovah." He would utter that praise with his mouth openly and without shame.

**109:31** - "*For he will stand at the right hand of the needy*" - David's confidence is expressed as the Psalm closes.

*"To save him from them that judge his soul"* - This closing statement reinforces our conclusion that the curses listed above were those of the enemy upon David. Others may have "judged his soul," but God would deliver from the harm they would have to come upon David.

### ***Lessons***

1. "God, who - in spite of lies and false accusations - knows the facts, will deliver the righteous from the hands of the accusers" (Roy Deaver, Volume II, page 80).
2. When men curse us, we are to bless them. Vengeance is best left to God. Not only is this His will, but any attempt on the part of man to seek vengeance will only lead to a troubled soul and a futile effort to accomplish the same. I once read of a woman who had been bitten by a dog. Since she neglected to go to her doctor, she was advised by her physician to write her last wishes, because it was very possible that she could die from rabies. She spent so long with pencil and paper that the doctor finally remarked something about how long the will would be. "Well," she snorted, "I'm writing a list of the people I'm going to bite."

3. Verse 23 – In the final analysis all life is but a shadow, a vapor that is here but for a moment, and then gone (James 4:14). In view of the brevity of life, wisdom demands that we live in such a way as to receive God's wonderful blessings when this short sojourn is past.

### ***Time Is Filled With Swift Transition***

by Tom Wacaster

The first stanza of that familiar song contains words most sobering: "Time is filled with swift transition, Naught of earth unmoved can stand. Build your hopes on things eternal, Hold to God's unchanging hand." James reminds us that our life is but a "vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14). The speed with which the days and years go by is a reminder of how short life really is. Even as I write these lines it seems like only yesterday that I wrote a similar article some 18 years ago. In that article I pointed out that the average 70 year old will have spent eight years in amusements of one sort or another, six years at the dinner table, five years in transportation, four years talking, fourteen years in labor, three years in reading, twenty four years sleeping, and three years convalescing. When broken into daily and/or weekly segments, those things do not seem to take that much time out of our life. But when they are added up, they amount to a considerable chunk in the overall time frame. Now think about this. If one were to spend four hours per week attending all the Bible classes and worship services offered by the local church, he would amass only twenty months total time over that same 70 year period. At the other end of the spectrum are those who watch two hours of television a day, for a total of fourteen hours per week [and that is far below the national average], 728 hours per year, for a grand total of 50,960 hours of television in that same 70 year time span [and to think, most watch more than that]. That is almost six years of watching television! My point in bombarding you with all these numbers is this: In view of the passing nature of time and the brevity of life it is foolish to waste it on things that are not really all that important. We should redeem the time (Eph. 5:19), and use it carefully as if it were a gift from God, for indeed it is. Ben Franklin has been credited with writing, "Time is the stuff that life is made of. If you squander time, you squander life." Time is a God-given gift. It has been bestowed upon each one of us in equal portion. We all have the same 24-

hours per day. If it seems that some seem to accomplish more in 24 hours than we do, it is probably because such a one is using his time in a wise and prudent manner. Care should be given so that we are good stewards of this precious thing called "time." Someone wrote:

He was going to be all that a mortal should be, TOMORROW!  
No one should be kinder or braver than he, TOMORROW!  
A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,  
Who'd be glad of a lift and who needed it, too;  
On him he would call and see what he could do, TOMORROW!  
Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write,  
TOMORROW!  
And thought of the folks he would fill with delight,  
TOMORROW!  
And all that he left here when living was through,  
Was a mountain of things he intended to do, TOMORROW!

4. Verses 1-3 – God is for His people when the wicked oppose them; the wicked are against God's people when He is for them.

## *“The Priestly King”*

### ***Introduction***

The subscript attributes the Psalm to David. Jesus credited the Psalm to David (Matt. 22:43), and this should remove any question as to its authorship. As to the occasion of the Psalm, there is nothing in the title or in the Psalm itself that might help us determine at what period in David's life, or on what occasion it was written. The Psalm has no particular reference to anything in David's history, and may easily have been composed at any period of his life. In 2 Samuel 6:14 it is said that David “danced before the Lord with all his might” and “was girded with a linen ephod.” On that occasion David, the King, laid aside his royal robes and donned a priestly garment. On this basis some have concluded that this Psalm may have been written on that occasion seeing that the Psalm contains a prophetic reference to both the Kingship and Priesthood of Jesus. This is only conjecture, however, and we cannot be dogmatic as to the occasion of the writing.

The Psalm is quoted at least seven times in the New Testament and in each case it is used in reference to the Messiah (cf. Matt. 22:44; 12:36; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34, Heb. 5:6; 7:17, 21). Phillips made this observation relative to these New Testament quotes of this Psalm:

We find it quoted in Matthew 22:41-46 to confound...We find it quoted in Acts 2:34-35 to convict...We find it quoted in Hebrews 1:13 to confirm (Phillips, page 191).

Does the Psalm refer to Christ? How could we answer other than in the affirmative? The application of the Psalm in the New Testament to our Lord is so unequivocal that we conclude it was written with an original intent to be applied to Him. There may be difficulties in the interpretation of the Psalm, but the fact that it refers to the Messiah is simply beyond dispute. We were particularly impressed with the observation made by Keil & Delitzch:

In this Psalm David looks forth from the height upon which Jahve has raised him by the victory over Ammon into the future of his seed, and there He who carries forward the work begun by him to the highest pitch is his Lord. Over against this King of the future, David is not king, but subject. He calls him, as one out of the people, "my Lord." This is the situation of the prophetic-kingly poet. He has received new revelations concerning the future of his seed. He has come down from his throne and the height of his power, and looks up to the Future One. He too sits enthroned on Zion. He too is victorious from thence. But His fellowship with God is the most intimate imaginable, and the last enemy is also laid at His feet. And He is not merely king, who as a priest provides for the salvation of His people; He is an eternal Priest by virtue of a sworn promise. The Psalm therefore relates to the history of the future upon a typical ground-work. It is also explicable why the triumph in the case of Ammon and the Messianic image have been thus to David's mind disconnected from himself. In the midst of that war comes the sin of David, which cast a shadow of sorrow over the whole of his future life and reduced its typical glory to ashes. Out of these ashes the phoenix of Messianic prophecy here arises. The type, come back to the conscious of himself, here lays down his crown at the feet of the Antitype (Keil-Delitzsch).

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have the following: First, there is the appointment of the Messiah, acknowledged by the author of the Psalms as his "Lord." The Messiah would hold that office until all of His enemies were subdued (verse 1). Second, the Messiah would be granted power necessary to accomplish the purpose of His appointment (verse 2). Third, His "people" would be "willing" to serve and would do so in the "beauty of holiness" (verse 3). Fourth, the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (verse 4). Fifth, we see the conquest and triumph of the Messiah (verses 5-7).

Roy Deaver used a simple four point outline:

In this beautiful Psalm we have –

- I. His Appointment (vss 1-2)
- II. His Subjects (vs. 3)



III. His Nature (vs. 4)

IV. His Reign (vss. 5-7).

Morgan observed that in the first half of this Psalm (verses 1-4) the author sings of the relation of the King to Jehovah. The second half tells of the victory of the King (verses 5-7). This division is clearly marked by different names used in the Psalm to refer to “the Lord” and “my Lord.” “Jehovah said unto Adonahy,” “Jehovah shall send forth,” and “Jehovah hath sworn and will not repent.” In verse 5 it is “Adonahy at thy right hand.” Both of these titles are used to as designations of God.

We will adapt Morgan’s two part division and study the Psalm under the following headings:

I. Christ Appointed (vss. 1-4)

II. Christ Avenging (vss 5-7)

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Christ Appointed Verses 1-4***

- 1 Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.*
- 2 Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion: Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.*
- 3 Thy people offer themselves willingly In the day of thy power, in holy array: Out of the womb of the morning Thou hast the dew of thy youth.*
- 4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*

Phillips noted four things that stand out in these verses. The Psalmist, while focusing upon the appointment of Jesus to be a “priest after the order of Melchizedek,” touches on His position (vs. 1), His power (vs. 2), His people (vs. 3), and His priesthood (vs. 4). We have borrowed Phillips points for further analysis.

*“His Position” (110:1)*

**110:1** – *“Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand”* - Literally, “Spake Jehovah unto my Lord.” ‘Yahweh’ is the

incommunicable name of God. The term is never used to refer to created beings. Our English “Lord” translates ‘*Adonay*,’ and refers to one who has authority; one of high rank, with dominion and power. David, by inspiration, envisions a conversation between God and some *personage* whom David recognizes as *his* “Lord.” The only reasonable conclusion is that David was speaking of the Messiah. God the Father is speaking to God the Son, setting forth a divine “oracle.”

*“Sit thou at my right hand”* – The Psalmist sets forth the *position* of his “Lord” – He was to sit at God’s right hand. David knew that the Messiah would not come in his lifetime; Nathan told him so (2 Sam. 7:12, 16). Here David tells us that his “Lord” would sit with God upon His throne. The only conclusion that could be drawn from this remarkable statement is that David’s “Lord” would be divine – He would be David’s *God*.

*“Until I make thine enemies thy footstool”* – Victory is promised though delayed. The reign of the Messiah would have a terminus point, namely the complete subjection of His enemies. Our Lord is now reigning, and will continue to reign, until the “end” (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

*His Power* (110:2)

**110:2:** *“Jehovah will send forth the rod of thy strength out of Zion”* – The “rod” was the scepter that a monarch used to demonstrate his power in a symbolic way. Jehovah would give unto the King power and authority (cf. Matt. 28:18). This authority would emanate from “Zion.” Almost three centuries later Isaiah would prophecy again of our Lord’s rule: “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (Isa. 2:3). This was fulfilled when the Apostles first declared the gospel in Jerusalem and extended the very first offer for men to come under the scepter, or rule, of Jesus their Lord (cf. Acts 2:1-47).

*“Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies”* – There are two possible applications of this prophetic statement of David. The first would suggest that our Lord would rule in a world that remains, for the most part, at enmity with their Lord. Literally, “in the midst” of those who are His enemies. The other possible explanation would suggest that He would rule among those who were once His enemies, but have been subdued and conquered by the love of the King. Barnes was of the latter opinion:

This is a commission to set up a kingdom “in the very midst” of those who were his enemies; in the hearts of those who had been and were rebellious. His kingdom is set up not by destroying them, but by “subduing” them so that they become his willing servants. They yield to him, and he rules over them. It is not here a commission to cut them off, but one much more difficult of execution - to make them his friends, and to dispose them to submit to his authority. Mere “power” may crush people; it requires more than that to make rebels willingly submissive, and to dispose them voluntarily to obey (Barnes).

The first position, however, seems more reasonable. The second Psalm provided a picturesque declaration of those who simply refused to bow before the King. They were determined to cast off the restraints and bonds the King had placed upon them through His rule. But it would be the Lord who would have them in derision. Even though they might plot and plan their rebellious actions, and perhaps even think they were successful in all such attempts, the King still ruled and His rod of iron still held sway over men. He would rule even in the “midst” of His enemies, and even as they sought how they might cast off the restraints of His Divine law.

### *His People (110:3)*

**110:3:** – From this verse we learn (1) this King would have a “people”; (2) this people would willingly subject themselves to the rule of the King; (3) the subjection of this people would be in “the day of thy power,” or during the gospel dispensation; (4) they would appear before the King in “holy array,” washed in the blood of the Lamb; and (5) by their submission they would enjoy “the dew of thy youth.” Let’s consider each of these

*“Thy people”* – The Messiah would gather about Himself a certain “people.” They would be a chosen people, selected by God for a particular purpose. “Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). “Ye are an elect race” (1 Pet. 2:9). They would be a “possessed” people, belonging to the Messiah, and here referred to as “thy” people. “A people for God’s own possession” (1 Pet. 2:9). “And ye are not your own: for ye were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The connotation inherent in those these two words is rich indeed. *“Thy people!”* God’s people are *Christians!* This describes our relationship to Jesus Christ. We glorify God in this name (1 Pet. 4:16). Just as our children wear our name, so we wear the name of Christ. God’s people are *Brethren!* Here is our relationship one to another. Growing up I had to endure three brothers; and though we may have had our differences (as do all siblings), our mutual respect and appreciation for each other has grown through the years. God’s people are *Saints!* Here is our relationship to the world. Saints are *sanctified people*. We are washed in the blood of the Lamb, set aside for the purpose of serving our Father and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. Rich indeed is our heritage, and we enjoy a wonderful privilege knowing that we are *“God’s People.”*

*“offer themselves willingly”* – The idea is that of “freeness;” or being of a voluntary nature; of doing it out of one’s own choice and not by constraint or coercion. One of the marked characteristics of subjects of the King in the Messianic age would be their willing submission to the King. The Old was written on tablets of stone (cf. Ex. 34:1, 28; Deut. 10:1-5; 2 Cor. 3:7). Under the New Covenant one is not a member of the Kingdom, nor does he enjoy the benefits of the covenant with God, unless he has the commandments of God written on the heart (Heb. 8:10). When the word is written upon the heart it affects the will, and controls the life, so that the members of that New Covenant are really voluntarily offering themselves to God and His Son. Herein we see one of the fundamental differences between that Old Covenant and the New. Under that New Covenant men will want to do God’s will because of a change of heart.

*“in the day of thy power”*– The “day” of our Lord’s “power” began at His ascension to the right hand of the Father and will continue until He returns (Matt. 28:18-20). It is the “gospel dispensation” during which our Lord rules with the “scepter of uprightness” (Heb. 1:8). The “power” to bring men into willing submission to God’s will is the gospel (Rom. 1:16), and there is a fixed time frame in which that power is exercised (cf. 1 Cor. 15:24-26).

*“in holy array”* – The KJV reads, “in the beauties of holiness.” The priests under the Old Covenant wore priestly garments (Lev. 16:4). The Psalmist is looking down the corridor of time to that Messianic age when the people who serve God would not be clothed with special outward garments, but the beauty of holiness. They will, by their lives and in their conduct, manifest all the beauty that is a part of a holy and pure character. “And it was given unto her that she

should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Rev. 19:8).

*“Out of the womb of the morning Thou hast the dew of thy youth”* – The poetic nature of this phrase makes its interpretation somewhat difficult. Seeing the Psalmist is speaking of the people of God, David may have seen the coming multitude of God’s people like the dew from the womb of the morning. When one looks across a grassy lawn in the morning hours he observes the countless sparkling drops. The dew indicates the freshness and youth of yet another day. Two ideas emerge from this beautiful metaphor.

First, there is the innumerable host that shall make up God’s people. Like the dew of the morning in which the drops are without number, so the people of God shall be as the stars of heaven, for so was the promise of God to Abraham: “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Gen. 22:17) “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven” (Gen. 26:4).

Second, “the dew of thy youth” speaks of the endless energy that shall spring forth from God’s people. Human philosophies come and go; but the church of our Lord shall never succumb to the ravages of hell itself (Matt. 16:18). As the dew appears fresh every morning, so the people of God “shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

#### *His Priesthood (110:4)*

**110:4:** *“The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent”* – This is anthropomorphic language utilized here to impress upon our minds the absolute stability that undergirds the promise of God regarding the Priesthood of our Lord. It is not that God would, or could, lie, or in any way fall short of His promises, for it is “impossible for God to lie.” In order to impress upon his audience the irrevocable nature of God’s promise, the Psalmist tells us that “the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent.” He has set forth His promise, and will not change His mind. Of particular interest here is the introduction of the phrase, *“and will not repent.”* When it is said that God will never repent it simply means that God will not will a change in the order He has established through Christ. Consequently there is nothing beyond the priesthood of Christ that will ever take its place as a

means of accomplishing God's purposes regarding redemption. God will never set aside the priesthood of Christ as He did with the Levitical system. The proof of this lies in the fact that there was never an oath attached to the appointment of a Levitical priest. But, concerning the Priesthood of Christ, God did swear "with an oath...Thou art a priest forever."

*"Thou art a priest for ever"* – God will never set aside the Priesthood of our Lord so as to make way for a newer or better order of things. While the priests of Aaron's family were inducted into office when they were 30 years old, and retired at age 50, the Messiah would serve "for ever." The best years of their life were poured into their service to God. But even as those mortal men served, they were fully aware that their service would eventually cease, either by age or by death. But the Messiah would serve forever.

*"after the order of Melchizedek"* - Of all characters in the Old Testament, this "High Priest of God Most High" is "most" fascinating. There are only two Old Testament passages which provide us information, one being the historical account of his association with Abraham (Gen 14:18-20), and the other a prophetic quote regarding the priesthood of the Messiah (Psa. 110:4). In the historical account, he "arrives out of the blue," so to speak, and just as quickly vanishes from the scene. But before he passes into the pages of history, we learn the following about the man:

- 1) He was the king of Salem - generally accepted to be the ancient city of Jerusalem;
- 2) He brought forth bread and wine;
- 3) He was the "priest of the most high God";
- 4) He blessed Abraham;
- 5) He received tithes from Abraham.

Melchizedek's priesthood was unlike the Levitical system in a number of ways. First, we have no record of any predecessor to Melchizedek's office of Priest of the Most High God. Unlike the Levitical system, we have no account of Melchizedek's father serving as a priest. Second, so far as the record is concerned, there is no priestly descendent of Melchizedek. While it is possible, and perhaps very likely that Melchizedek had children, the sacred record provides no information along that vein. Third, so far as the record is concerned, Melchizedek never died thereby bringing a cessation to his serving as Priest of the Most High God. We are not suggesting

that Melchizedek never died; only that the record never records his death.

The significance of this verse is often overlooked. If the Messiah was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, the priestly order under the Mosaic Law would *have to be abolished*. This is the precise point the writer of Hebrews made: “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar” (Heb. 7:13-14). What David wrote here struck at the very root of the sacerdotal system in Israel. When Caiaphas tore his robe because he believed Christ has spoken blasphemy, the significance of his actions were unknown to him. The day Christ died, God reached down from heaven and tore the veil from top to bottom to show men that the rending of that veil was from *heaven*. The Old order was completed; the New was soon to be put in place.

### ***His Avenging Verses 5-7***

- 5 The Lord at thy right hand Will strike through kings in the day of his wrath*  
*6 He will judge among the nations, He will fill the places with dead bodies; He will strike through the head in many countries.*  
*7 He will drink of the brook in the way: Therefore will he lift up the head.*

In these three verses David focuses our attention on the *rule* of the coming Messiah. He is depicted as a victorious warrior. In these three verses we have what Phillips calls “the *day* of battle, the *din* of battle and the *dust* of battle” (page 190). This is not a reference to the battle of Armageddon, but a vision of the rule of Christ in His kingdom as He goes forth “conquering and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2). Ruling on His throne, our Lord is also conquering with His Sword, and will continue to do so until that day when He returns to gather His own unto Himself.

**110:5:** “*The Lord at thy right hand*” – One need only determine when our Lord took His place at the right hand of God in order to understand the time frame of David’s vision of the reign and rule of the Messiah. On the day of Pentecost, Peter proclaimed that Jesus had been raised, and “being therefore by the right hand of God

exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear” (Acts 2: 33). Daniel recorded his vision of that very moment when the Son ascended to the throne of the Heavenly Father: “I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Dan. 7:13-14).

*“Will strike through kings in the day of his wrath”* - This is a prophetic glimpse at the inability of earthly powers to defeat the King (Matt. 16:16-18). Every attempt was made by Rome to destroy Christianity, but our Lord defeated them *“in the day of his wrath.”* Every nation that has attempted to take a stand against God now find themselves, like ancient Rome, as mere relics in the dust bins of history; rotting testimony to the eternal truth that all nations that oppose God will face ruin. Those nations that oppose God will be the recipients of God’s wrath. They will learn the hard way that the Messiah will be victorious.

**110:6:** *“He will judge among the nations”* – This verse provides three vivid pictures of the utter defeat of the enemy. The first of these depicts the King of kings as a judge, pronouncing what is right and wrong; what is pleasing and displeasing to the Lord. Jesus continues to judge through His word. Nations may pass laws to legalize abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, or a host of other ungodly vices, but it is Jesus Who shall “judge.” His scepter is one of “uprightness,” His rule one of righteousness (Heb. 1:8-9), and His word shall judge us in the last day (John 12:48). Our Lord is “judging” even now, “among the nations.” As missionaries carry the gospel to the “nations,” the word of the Lord tells men what is right and wrong, and invites them to submit to His rule (Matt. 11:28-29) or face His wrath.

*“He will fill the places with dead bodies”* – The battle fields of history tell the stories of defeat and victory. Gettysburg, Normandy, and the “killing fields” of history claimed their thousands, each one telling a story of its own. The horrible loss is seen in the numbers that fell slain upon the blood-bathed earth of those memorable battles. The Psalmist uses human language to depict the utter futility of those who seek to battle with God. Those slain on the battle fields



of earthly conflict pale in comparison to the vast multitude who have fallen, and will continue to fall, in their vain confrontation with the King of kings. Jesus expressed it thus: “Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it” (Matt. 7:13-14).

*“He will strike through the head in many countries”* – This is the third description of the complete victory of the King over His enemies. History records the futile attempts of Rome to destroy the kingdom or our Lord. However, it was not Christianity that was destroyed, but the “head” of Rome itself. All those nations that have, throughout history, attempted to drive God out of their midst, have suffered the same kind of ruin as did ancient Rome. “The wicked shall be turned back unto Sheol, Even all the nations that forget God” (Psa. 9:17). “Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34). As America seems more determined to become a secular nation, turning her back on the God Who hath blessed her, she is becoming more and more an enemy of God. Her “head” shall the Messiah “strike through.” When that happens she will go the way of all those “counties” who have rebelled against their God.

**110:7:** *“He will drink of the brook in the way”* – The imagery here is that of the warrior pursuing his enemy with the assurance that eventually time will run out for those who have sought to escape, and they would then be brought to justice. “He here represents him as pursuing those who should escape from the battle, and as pursuing them without fainting or exhaustion. He is like one who finds abundant springs and streams of water in his journeyings; who refreshes himself at those fountains and streams; who, therefore, is not faint and weary. He pursues his foes vigorously and with success” (Barnes). The important lesson in this verse is the truth that all men shall be brought before the “judgment seat of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:10).

### ***Lessons***

1. This Psalm might very well be classified as a “War Song.” It begins with the affirmation that Jesus the Messiah would sit at the right hand of God “until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” That first verse prepares the reader for the conflict that would follow. Those enlisted as soldiers in the army of God are called upon to “suffer hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Tim.

2:3). He calls us to muster; a host of volunteers, not draftees. His soldiers adorn themselves in “holy array,” taking up the whole armor of God with which to confront the enemy (Eph. 6:10-17). Having equipped themselves for battle, they march forth under the banner of their King. But this King is unlike any other king, for He is also a Priest “after the order of Melchizedek.” This tells us that our King’s battle is a spiritual battle. False religion flying under the banner of truth will be first exposed, and then destroyed. When the dust finally settles, the spoils of victory shall be our Lord’s. He shall “drink of the brook in the way.”

2. The Deity of our Lord is affirmed in this remarkable Psalm. The Psalmist affirms that “Jehovah” is speaking to some personage that David refers to as “my Lord” – literally, “My Adoni.” Our Lord used this particular passage to confound the earthly “wisdom” of the Pharisees when He asked them, “What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he?” The Pharisees answered, “The son of David.” Our Lord then asks a second question: “How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I put thine enemies underneath thy feet? If David then calleth him Lord, how is he his son?” (Matt. 22:41-45). The only plausible answer, and one which the Pharisees would not admit, was that David’s “son” must be David’s Lord, and hence divine.
3. Our Lord wants people who willingly give themselves to Him. He does not force or coerce us; but He does require that we willingly submit so as to receive the abundant blessings He has to offer. Under the New Testament we offer ourselves as “living sacrifices” in His service (Rom. 12:1-2). Such surrender calls for humility on the part of the individual. In addition it calls for a *sacrifice*. One definition of “sacrifice” is “the forfeiture of something *highly valued* for the sake of one considered to have a greater value or claim.” Keep this in mind when surrendering your will to that of the Father: someone may *willingly* give something and there be absolutely no *sacrifice* involved. Or, someone may *sacrifice* dearly out of necessity and not of free will. Only the man who gives *willingly* and *sacrificially* has caught the spirit of the Psalmist, and of our Lord.
4. Fighting against God is a futile attempt. How much better it is to submit to His will and avoid His anger in the day of wrath.

5. Finally, this Psalm presents a number of character traits of David's "Lord." He is God (verse 1), He is King (verses 2-3), He is a Priest (verse 4), He is a Victorious Warrior (verse 5-7).

## *“Praise God For His Wonderful Works”*

### ***Introduction***

Whether God intended for this Psalm to follow the 110<sup>th</sup> is uncertain, but it is a fitting addition to the prophetic announcement of the coming Messiah contained in that Psalm. In this beautiful song the author provides us with a glimpse at the blessings granted to those who submit to the Kingly Priest portrayed in the previous Psalm. The occasion of the Psalm is not certain, and we cannot see anything in the Psalm that might help us in this area. It is one of the Psalms, of which there are ten, that commence with the phrase “Hallelu-jah” in the Hebrew, and rendered, “Praise ye the Lord” in our English versions (cf. Ps. 106, 112-113, 135, 146-150). The use of this phrase shows that those Psalms where it is found were designed for public worship.

The author is not known, nor is there anything in the Psalm itself that might help us, other than the fact that its position in the Psalter would suggest it was written by David. It has been pointed out that when a Psalm is not attributed to any specific author it is generally understood to have been written by the same author as the previous Psalm, in this case David. The nature of this Psalm is such that it is a fitting sequel to the previous. Besides this, the language style is Davidic. Though we cannot say with any degree of certainty that the Psalm was written by David, every indication seems to be that he is its author (at least from the human standpoint).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm begins with a call to “Praise the Lord.” This is immediately followed with an affirmation from the Psalmist that he would lead the way by following his own advice and “praise the Lord with my whole heart” (verse 1). In order to motivate his audience to join him in praise to God, he sets forth no less than half a dozen reasons for their consideration. Among my original notes scribbled

in the margin of my old ASV is the following division: Promise, Affirmation, Illustration, and Response. Morgan outlined the Psalm thus:

The first seven lines...tell of His greatness, the next twelve proclaim His graciousness, and the last three declare the wisdom of those who fear Him and act accordingly (Morgan, page 263).

Barnes summarized this Psalm thus:

The psalm is call to the praise of God on account of his “works,” and is designed to suggest grounds of confidence in him as drawn “from” those works. It is, therefore, of universal applicability; and may be used in any nation, at any time, and among any people. It is a psalm which may be translated into all the languages of the world, and whatever language people may speak, it would express in their own tongue what they have occasion to give thanks for in the various lands where they dwell.

We shall use the following outline for our study: Worship (verses 1-3), Works (verses 4-6) and Wisdom (verses 7-10).

## ***Commentary***

### **Worship Verses 1-3**

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.*
- 2 The works of the LORD are great, sought out of of all them that have pleasure therein.*
- 3 His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.*

**111:1:** “*Praise ye Jehovah*” – Here is a call to praise the Lord. Praise is befitting the Lord for the simple reason that He is the Lord. His very nature, His divine characteristics, His great power and majesty all combine to call men to praise His matchless name. When we consider the creative power of God, His wonderful mercy and lovingkindness, and the scheme of redemption provided for man, we cannot help but stand in awe of our God and Father in heaven.

“*I will give thanks unto Jehovah with my whole heart*” – The humble heart is the seat of true worship (cf. John 4:24). If worship is

not rendered with the whole heart, it is not acceptable worship (John 4:24). Also, the Psalmist was willing to lead the way in praise. What duty we call others to, we must be willing ourselves to fulfill.

*“in the counsel of the upright”* – The KJV reads, “In the assembly of the upright.” The Hebrew (*‘sode*) means “*company* of persons (in close deliberation); by implication *intimacy, consultation, a secret*” (Strong H5475). The word suggests some kind of private gathering, perhaps an occasion where a few have assembled to offer up their praise and petitions to the Father.

*“in the congregation”* – Whereas the “assembly [or counsel] of the upright refers to something more of a private meeting, here the Hebrew word (*‘ay-daw*) has the idea of a public meeting. No matter the occasion, whether private or public, the Psalmist would be willing and ready to pour out his praise to the Lord.

Public and corporate worship has played an important role in faithful dedication to the Lord. Those who think they can miss the assembly of the saints and “have church” in their home demonstrate their ignorance regarding what the Bible teaches on public worship, and the very nature of the church itself. The truth of the matter is, those who attempt to “have church” at home don’t! All such declarations that one can praise God in some sort of private setting, with little or no association with the saints, fail to grasp the truth the Psalmist was declaring in this verse. He would praise the Lord both privately and public. We can do no less.

Whether with few or with many he would pour forth his whole heart and soul in praise, and whether the company was made up of select spirits or of the general mass of the people he would continue in the same exercise. For the choicest society there can be no better engagement than praise, and for the general assembly nothing can be more fitting. For the church and for the congregation, for the family or the community, for the private chamber of pious friendship, or the great hall of popular meeting, the praise of the Lord is suitable; and at the very least the true heart should sing hallelujah in any and every place. Why should we fear the presence of men? The best of men will join us in our song, and if the common sort, will not do so, our example will be a needed rebuke to them. In any case let us praise God, whether the hearers be a little band of saints or a mixed multitude (Spurgeon).

In this first verse we have seen the Psalmist's *resolve* to worship his God as he calls others to join him in his determination to honor his God.

**111:2:** *"The works of Jehovah are great"* – Can any deny this truth? It makes little difference whether we are speaking of His creative power, or His redemptive power, every thing He does is nothing short of "great." As we proceed through this short Psalm we will notice, however, that the Psalmist does not focus on the "creative" power of God. Instead he will draw our attention to God's goodness, mercy, truth and uprightness in His dealings with man.

*"Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein"* – There is a hidden nugget here that we might miss if we hurriedly pass over this verse. Careless inattention on the part of a man will cause him to overlook God's greatness as manifested in His wonderful works. The atheist does not see the origin of the universe as an act of God, but attributes it instead to random chance. He refuses to search out the Cause behind the origin of things and robs himself of the truly great blessing associated with knowing the God Who "made it all." The theologian who is shackled to his particular doctrinal bias does not "seek out" the truth regarding the church, and he consequently misses the wonderful work of God in the spiritual creation, the church. The nominal member who is anxious regarding the world and his life in general fails to "seek out" the God Who providentially watches over us. But the faithful child of God is the one who seeks out the great works of God. He knows God, and because he has taken the time and made the effort to "seek out" the great works of God, his life is truly blessed. Spurgeon, in typical fashion, addressed this point:

Those who love their Maker delight in his handiworks, they perceive that there is more in them than appears upon the surface, and therefore they bend their minds to study and understand them. The devout naturalist ransacks nature, the earnest student of history pries into hidden facts and dark stories, and the man of God digs into the mines of Scripture, and hoards up each grain of its golden truth. God's works are worthy of our researches, they yield us instruction and pleasure wonderfully blended, and they grow upon, appearing to be far greater, after investigation than before. Men's works are noble from a distance; God's works are great when sought out...The hidden wisdom of God is the most marvelous part of his works, and hence those who do not look below the surface miss the best part of what he would teach us. Because the works are great they cannot be seen all at once, but must be looked into with care (Spurgeon).

**111:3:** *“His work is honor and majesty”* – The KJV reads, “His work is honorable and glorious.” Our English “honor”/ “honorable” translates the Hebrew word (*‘hode’*) that means “*grandeur*, beauty, comeliness, excellency, glorious, glory, goodly, honour, majesty” (Strong, H1935). The word “majesty” has the idea of splendor. The Psalmist combines these two adjectives to impress upon our minds that God’s work is something of outstanding beauty and splendor. His work, then, bespeaks His character and nature, much like a beautiful painting or a fine piece of furniture might declare the great ability and talent of the artist or builder. A similar statement was made regarding the “works” of our Lord Jesus. In Mark 7:37, following the miraculous healing of the man with an impediment in his speech, it was said of our Lord, “He hath done all things well.” And while the creative power of our God displays His might, the honor and majesty of God shines with radiant splendor in His spiritual and ethical qualities that the Psalmist will call to our attention in the verses that follow.

*“His righteousness endureth forever”* – Unlike mortal men, the righteousness of God is not tempered by time, nor does it in any way diminish with the passing of the years. God’s righteousness is the very foundation for His wonderful works to men.

Worship, then, is the ascription of honor and majesty unto God. It is praising God for His very nature and His mighty work. To this all men are called. Having the *resolve*, the Psalmist has now declared in a very general way, the *reason* for praising the Lord. God’s works are honorable, full of splendor, and grounded in His righteousness.

### **Works Verses 4-6**

- 4 *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: Jehovah is gracious and merciful.*
- 5 *He hath given food unto them that fear him: He will ever be mindful of his covenant.*
- 6 *He hath showed his people the power of his works, In giving them the heritage of the nations.*

These three verses will concentrate on a more detailed description of the works of God referred to in verses 2 and 3.



**111:4:** *“He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered”* – The sacred record speaks of God’s wonderful works. It is man’s responsibility to keep them in memory and teach them to successive generations (2 Tim. 2:1-2).

*“Jehovah is gracious and merciful”* – One of the works of God that men are first prone to forget is God’s wonderful grace and mercy in providing our daily provisions. His goodness toward man in the sending of the rain, along with the seed and harvest time, all declare God’s graciousness to men. But all too often men fail to give thanks to Jehovah for the abundant blessings He sends our way. And it seems the more blessings we receive, the greater our failure in this regard.

**111:5:** *“He hath given food unto them that fear him”* – While it is true that God gives food to “them that fear him,” it is also true that He “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). But it is those who “fear him” that are quick to “remember” Who sends the rain and supplies their daily provisions.

*“He will ever be mindful of his covenant”* – This is likely a reference to God’s covenant with Israel to bless the land as long as that nation remembered their God. Such promises abound in Scripture as to God’s providential care for Israel. Unfortunately that nation failed to remember God. With but a few exceptions the history of physical Israel is a history filled with rebellion, selfishness, and ingratitude.

**111:6:** *“He hath shown his people the power of his works”* – Israel witnessed the ten plagues upon Egypt, the provisions in the wilderness, and the long history wherein God providentially protected that nation. They had “seen” God’s great power.

*“In giving them the heritage of the nations”* – God’s might was demonstrated in providing Israel with the promised inheritance. God showed His sovereignty in disposing of kingdoms as He pleases, and His might in making good His promises. That small nation conquered nations bigger and mightier than themselves. The heathen nations were driven out and Israel granted the land.

## Wisdom Verses 7-10

- 7 *The works of his hands are truth and justice; All his precepts are sure.*  
8 *They are established for ever and ever; They are done in truth and uprightness.*  
9 *He hath sent redemption unto his people; He hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and reverend is his name.*  
10 *The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all they that do his commandments: His praise endureth for ever.*

**111:7:** “*The works of his hands are truth and justice*” – Every thing God does is a manifestation of truth and justice toward men. As Matthew Henry noted, “All he does is consonant to the eternal rules and reasons of equity, all according to the counsel of his wisdom and the purpose of his will, all well done and therefore there is nothing to be altered or amended, but his works are firm and unchangeable” (Henry). It is precisely because God’s works are based upon truth and justice that we can depend upon the promises contained in His word for our salvation and guidance. Were it not for the unfailing and unfaltering nature of God’s promises we simply could not trust in Him in regard to any matter whatsoever.

“*All his precepts are sure*” – What God says will come to pass. His laws are certain, established upon eternal truth. The surety of God’s word shines in this verse. All is said, as all is done, in truth and uprightness, and therefore it is immutable. Men’s folly and falsehood make them *unstable in all their ways*, but infinite wisdom and truth for ever exclude retraction and revocation on God’s part. What God has promised, He will fulfill. Of that men can be certain.

**111:8:** “*They are established forever and ever*” – God’s precepts do not fade with the passing of time. What God has said can never be revoked, repealed, or reversed. His precepts serve as our rule of action, and are unquestionably just and good. All of His promises pertaining to His goodness as well as His severity He will make good. Whether or not men choose to believe His word is up to them.

“*they are done in truth and uprightness*” – Twice in as many verses the Psalmist sets forth the very foundation upon which the promises of God rest, namely truth and uprightness. The philosophies of men change. They are affected by the changing times, and the

inconsistencies of human nature. But God's word is established upon truth which will never change. In the late 1960's A.Z. Conrad penned a poetic tribute to the indestructibility of the Bible:

Century follows century – There it stands!  
Empires rise and fall and forgotten – There it stands!  
Dynasty follows dynasty – There it stands!  
Kings are crowned and uncrowned – There it stands!  
Despised and torn to pieces - There it stands!  
Storms of hate swirl about it - There it stands!  
Agnostics smile cynically - There it stands!  
Profane punsters caricature it - There it stands!  
Unbelief abandons it - There it stands!  
Higher critics deny its inspiration - There it stands!  
Thunderbolts of wrath smite it - There it stands!  
An anvil that has broken a million hammers - There it stands!  
The flames are kindled about it - There it stands!  
The arrows of hate are discharged against it - There it stands!  
Radicalism rant and raves against it - There it stands!  
Fogs of sophistry conceal it temporarily - There it stands!  
The tooth of time gnaws but makes no dent in it - There it stands!  
Infidels predict its abandonment - There it stands!  
Modernism tries to explain it away - There it stands!

**111:9:** *“He hath sent redemption unto his people”* – The Psalmist is speaking of Israel's deliverance from Egyptian captivity and afterwards. But those redemptive acts were typical of man's great redemption from sin brought about by the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior.

*“He hath commanded his covenant for ever”* – God's covenant is personified and represented here as if it were obedient to the will of God, or under His control. Another possible explanation is that God has commanded that His covenant will endure for ever. In either case, the Psalmist is expressing the everlasting nature of God's covenant with His people. It has been asked how God's covenant can be said to last “forever,” when in fact the New Testament teaches that the Old Law was taken out of the way, nailed to the cross, and abolished (Eph. 2:11-15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 9:15-17). There are a number of Hebrew words which we translate with our English “forever.” The one that appears here is *‘olam*, and is variously

translated “everlasting,” “forever,” “for ever and ever.” The meaning of the word may carry the idea of eternal duration, or simply age-lasting. The context must be considered in each case. For example, when God promised Abraham that His covenant would be “an everlasting covenant” (Gen. 17:13), it was limited in its duration. It was also used in this limited sense concerning the promise concerning the Sabbath. In Exodus 31:17 God told Israel that the Sabbath was a “sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.” Any attempt to place a “never ending” duration upon the Sabbath promise produces an insurmountable obstacle concerning the clear statements that the Old Testament Law, including the Sabbath day, was done away. The Psalmist was not saying that God’s covenant to Israel is forever, but only that it was designed to last until the end of that “age.”

*“Holy and reverend is his name”* – The very name of God is holy and reverend. Our Lord taught us that His name is “hallowed” (Matt. 6:9). A number of commentators have pointed out that the word “reverend” appears only one time in the Bible, and it is in this verse in reference to God’s name. In light of its limited use, it is astonishing that men would use that same adjective to refer to themselves, and to wear a religious “title” that raises men to the level of God. What arrogance! Spurgeon’s comments are right on target:

The whole name or character of God is worthy of profoundest awe, for it is perfect and complete, whole or holy. It ought not to be spoken without solemn thought, and never heard without profound homage. His name is to be trembled at, it is something terrible; even those who know him best rejoice with trembling before him. How good men can endure to be called “reverend” we know not. Being unable to discover any reason why our fellow-men should reverence us, we half suspect that in other men there is not very much which can entitle them to be called reverend, very reverend, right reverend, and so on. It may seem a trilling matter, but for that very reason we would urge that the foolish custom should be allowed to fall into disuse (Spurgeon).

**111:110:** *“The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom”*

*“fear of Jehovah”* – The Psalmist is not speaking here of terror, but of respect and honor. To know and honor God is a manifestation of true wisdom, for reverence for one’s Creator leads him to praise and worship the God Who made him.

*“the beginning of wisdom”* – In what way can it be said that “fear of Jehovah” is the beginning of wisdom? The Hebrew *‘ray-sheeth’* has the idea of first in time or rank. But it can also mean “the principle thing” (Strong, H7218). Once men abandon the fear of God, they throw open the door to every wicked philosophy waiting to fill the void.

*“A good understanding have all they that do his commandments”* – Obedience is the outward manifestation of the fear one has for His God. Those who refuse to obey God in all things demonstrate that they think more highly of men than they do of God’s word (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6).

Men may know and be very orthodox, they may talk and be very eloquent, they may speculate and be very profound; but the best proof of their intelligence must be found in their actually doing the will of the Lord (Spurgeon).

*“His praise endureth forever”* – While it may be said that God’s covenant with Israel was for a limited duration, praise to the Creator will last forever, time without end. Indeed, “A word of approbation from the mouth of God will be a mede of honour which will outshine all the decorations which kings and emperors can bestow” (Spurgeon).

## ***Lessons***

1. The Psalmist’s call for men to “praise the Lord” is based upon the wonderful works of God. The “works” to which the Psalmist appeals do not include the mighty power of God manifested in the creation (though certainly an appeal could be made on that basis). Nor does he appeal to the miraculous power of God demonstrated in the overthrow of Egypt and the deliverance of Israel. Instead he appeals to God’s *grace* and *compassion* (verse 4), God’s *providential care* for His creatures (verse 5), the surety and stability of His divine commands (verse 7), God’s truth and uprightness (verse 8), and God’s wonderful redemption unto man (verse 9). These are spiritual qualities of God. We are now in a position to understand the first verse wherein the Psalmist calls for others to follow his lead as he praises God with his “whole heart” in the assembly of the upright. God’s greatest power and wisdom is demonstrated in the spiritual blessings provided for His people and the creation of the church. Paul stated this same truth in Ephesians 3:10, “to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places

might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God.”

2. “The sweet singer dwells upon the one idea that God should be known by his people, and that this knowledge when turned into practical piety is man's true wisdom, and the certain cause of lasting adoration. Many are ignorant of what their Creator has done, and hence they are foolish in heart, and silent as to the praises of God: this evil can only be removed by a remembrance of God's works, and a diligent study of them; to this, therefore, the Psalm is meant to arouse us” (Spurgeon).
3. “This Psalm should remind us of our duty to praise God and of some of the many reasons why He is forever deserving of our praise. Those who do not delight in the worship and praise of God neither fear nor love Him very much” (McClish, *Southwest Lectures: God's Work – Honorable and Glorious*. Sain Publications, 1990, page 269).
4. In this Psalm we are provided a glimpse of the Christian's world view: (1) His sphere, “The works of the Lord”; (2) His work: to seek out the works of God; (3) His delight: “pleasure therein”; (4) His relationship to God: “fear of His holy name”; (5) His conclusion: “Praise the Lord.”
5. We should never forget the wonderful works of God. They are recorded in Holy Scripture for our benefit, and made to “be remembered” by God's people (verse 4).
6. Of all the works of our Creator, none speaks of His great love for man as His work of redemption of mankind.
7. “Truth Never Dies” (author unknown)

### *Truth Never Dies*

Truth never dies. The ages come and go.  
The mountains wear away, the stars retire.  
Destruction lays earth's mighty cities low;  
And empires, states, and dynasties expire;  
But caught and handed onward by the wise,  
Truth never dies.

Though unreceived and scoffed at through the years;

Though made the butt of ridicule and jest;  
Though held aloft for mockery and jeers,  
Insulted by the insolence of lies,  
Truth never dies.

It answers not. It does not take offense,  
But with a mighty silence bides its time;  
As some great cliff that braves the elements  
And lifts through all the storms its head sublime,  
And never dies.

As rests the Sphinx amid Egyptian sands;  
As looms on high the snowy peak and crest;  
As firm and patient as Gibraltar stands,  
So truth, unwearied, waits the era blessed  
When men shall turn to it with great surprise.  
Truth never dies.

## *“Who Is On The Lord’s Side?”*

### ***Introduction***

The first Psalm set the tone for the 149 chapters that would follow. Many of the themes set forth in that first Psalm are expanded in the later chapters. We are reminded that Psalm 1 describes the “blessed man” as one who is (1) contented within, (2) careful in his walk, (3) concentrates on God’s word, and (4) is complete in his work. In this Psalm the author provides us with additional character traits of the blessed man.

This Psalm is a companion to the 111<sup>th</sup>. Both Psalms are alphabetic; both have the same number of verses (8), with the same number of clauses (2) in each verse. While Psalm 111 speaks of the *blessedness of God*, this Psalm speaks of the *blessedness of the man who fears God*. That Psalm speaks of the glory of God; this Psalm speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men who seek and serve their Creator.

There is nothing in the Psalm that helps us with the author, or the occasion for its writing. The similarity in the subject matter and the structure makes it probable that it was written by the same author as the previous. We were impressed with Morgan’s assessment of the Psalm:

The remarkable thing about this psalm is the way in which in describing the blessed condition of the man who fears Jehovah it uses words which the previous psalm used in describing Jehovah. Of Jehovah the psalmist said: “His righteousness endureth forever.” Of the man who fears he says, “His righteousness endureth for ever.” Jehovah is declared to be “gracious and full of compassion.” So also the upright man. The relation of these psalms sets forth truth which is of perpetual application. A man becomes like his God. When a man’s God is blessed, the man also is blessed. To have a great God is to become a great man. True wisdom consists in the maintenance of right relationships with the one God. True happiness consists in becoming like Him who is at once great and gracious (Morgan, page 264).



## ***Analysis***

The Psalm is easily divided. There is a call to praise God, followed by a description of the “blessed man” in stark contrast to the “wicked.” There is a remarkable similarity in this Psalm with Psalm 1. Both Psalms set forth a description of the blessed man and close with the plight of the wicked. Clarke divided the Psalm thus:

- I. The character of the righteous, 112:1
- II. The blessedness of the righteous.
  - 1. There is a blessing entailed upon their posterity, 112:2
  - 2. There is a blessing conferred upon themselves.
    - (1.) Prosperity outward and inward, 112:3;
    - (2.) Comfort, 112:4;
    - (3.) Wisdom, 112:5;
    - (4.) Stability; 112:6-8;
    - (5.) Honor, 112:6, 9;
- III. The misery of the wicked, 112:10.

Willmington selected to divide the Psalm by topic:

- I. The Godly Person’s Consecration (112:1, 4-5, 9)
  - A. He fears God and loves his word (112:1)
  - B. He is compassionate and righteous (112:4)
  - C. He gives freely and generously (112:4-5, 9)
- II. The Godly Person’s Compensation (112:2-3, 6-8, 9, 10)
  - A. His children will be successful (112:2)
  - B. He will have influence and honor (112:9)
  - C. His financial needs are met (112:3)
  - D. He is secure and never shaken by evil circumstances (112:6)
  - E. He and his good deeds are not forgotten (112:3, 6, 9)
  - F. He does not fear bad news (112:7-8)
  - G. He triumphs over his foes (112:8)

The Psalm begins with a call to “praise the Lord” (verse 1a). The Psalmist then sets forth a declaration that the man of God is truly blessed (verse 1b). This is followed by a description of the blessed man, and concludes with a short, one verse description of the wicked man. We suggest the following outline:

- I. Call, 112:1a
- II. The Blessed Man, 112:1b-9

1. His Piety, 112:1b
2. His Posterity, 112:2
3. His Prosperity, 112:3
4. His Position, 112:4
5. His Prudence, 112:5
6. His Permanence, 112:6-7
7. His Promotion, 112:8-9
- III. The Wicked man, 112:10
  1. His Frustration, 10a
  2. His Folly, 10b.

## ***Commentary***

### ***Call Verse 1a***

#### *1a - Praise ye Jehovah*

**112:1a:** The Psalmist begins with a call for us to praise God. He is about to set forth the character traits of God's people, but he does not want us to forget that what we are derives from Who we serve. The glory belongs to God; not man. Whatever goodness we might attain to in this life is but mere vanity if we forget that God is the source of that godliness.

### ***The Blessed Man Verses 1b-9***

- 1b Blessed is the man that feareth Jehovah, That delighteth greatly in his commandments.*
- 2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: The generation of the upright shall be blessed.*
- 3 Wealth and riches are in his house; And his righteousness endureth for ever.*
- 4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: He is gracious, and merciful, and righteous.*
- 5 Well is it with the man that dealeth graciously and lendeth; He shall maintain his cause in judgment.*
- 6 For he shall never be moved; The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance.*
- 7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: His heart is fixed, trusting in Jehovah.*
- 8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, Until he see his desire upon his adversaries.*

*9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy; His righteousness endureth for ever: His horn shall be exalted with honor.*

In this section the Psalmist provides us with a seven-fold description of the blessed man.

#### *His Piety, verse 1b*

**112:1b** - The blessed man is a man of deep piety and devotion to his God. He *fears the Lord* and he *favours God's commandments*. Out of that fear and favor comes the deep seated contentment that God promises to those who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Contentment does not come with friendship of the world, for "friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4:4). In his search for happiness one must first fear God. This is followed by obedience to the commandments from the Father. "Fear" means reverence and respect for God. It is more than a mere "trembling," for men might tremble at the power and might of God but never reverence Him as their God. His very name is "hallowed" and "reverend." Genuine fear is followed by obedience. The blessed man does not find God's commandments "grievous" (1 John 5:3). Every command, every precept, every law is looked upon with great favor so much so that the blessed man "delights" in the law of the Lord (Psa. 1:2).

Solomon is often noted for his great wisdom. He thought he could find happiness in knowledge and education. So he gave himself to seeking wisdom and understanding, but soon learned that the wisdom of the world is no match for the wisdom that comes from above (Jas. 3:15). He then tried to find happiness in the things of the world, and gave himself to the accumulation of things. But those material possessions did not make him happy. Ultimately he concluded (and rightly so) that the key to happiness is to "fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc. 12:13). The blessed man learned long ago that "holiness is his happiness, devotion is his delight, truth is his treasure...Ungodly men may in some measure obey the commandments out of fear, but only a gracious man will observe them with delight. Cheerful obedience is the only acceptable obedience; he who obeys reluctantly is disobedient at heart, but he who takes pleasure in the command is truly loyal" (Spurgeon).

#### *His Posterity, verse 2*

**112:2** - Righteousness lends itself to strong and healthy families. The blessed man, generally speaking, will rejoice in a family that favors and fears the Lord as he does. The Psalmist sets forth two traits of the blessed man's posterity: (1) they are *mighty*, and (2) they are *moral*.

*"His seed shall be mighty upon earth"* – The Hebrew (*'gibbor'*) describes a man who is valiant; a man of valor and courage. The true heroes of our age are those who seek to imitate their godly parents. These shall "mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). There is great reward for a father to see his children walking in truth; to witness their courage in the face of danger and watch as they face temptation with spiritual might. In this there is great contentment.

*"The generation of the upright shall be blessed"* – In addition to their posterity being mighty, the blessed man observes the "uprightness" of his children. They are *moral* in character. Honesty and integrity are the corner stone of their life.

### *His Prosperity, verse 3*

**112:3** – *"Wealth and riches are in his house"* – Some take this as a blanket statement that all of God's saints will be materially wealthy. Even if one could prove that the reference here is to physical wealth, it is not always the case that riches follow righteousness. The Psalmist may have been setting forth a general maxim. Many of the promises to physical Israel center around the physical blessings they would enjoy if they maintained their loyalty to God. True wealth lies in the prosperity of the soul. John, in writing to Gaius, desired that his friend "mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2). Someone once noted, "When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; When health is lost, something is lost; When character is lost, all is lost." Even the world realizes there is a kind of wealth that goes much deeper than the physical man. The man who is truly blessed and genuinely happy is that man who has prospered in the soul.

*"And his righteousness endureth for ever"* – The true man of God does not compromise his spiritual principles for the sake of material gain. God has charged "them that are rich in this present world, that they be not highminded, nor have their hope set on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that

they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is life indeed" (1 Tim. 6:17-19). So often when wealth comes into a man's life, the gospel goes out. But with the righteous man, prosperity does not destroy his holiness. "His character stands the test of examination, overcomes the temptations of wealth, survives the assaults of slander, outlives the afflictions of time, and endures the trial of the last great day" (Spurgeon).

#### *His Peace, verse 4*

**112:4:** The blessed man is serene. He enjoys the "peace that passeth understanding" (Phil. 4:7), a peace that the world cannot provide (John 14:27). Men often rob themselves of the peace that God can offer them. There are at least four causes of anxiety addressed in this verse.

*First, dark days in the absence of divine guidance.* "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." Every man will have his "days of darkness." He may be sick and poor. He may suffer financial reverses. His friends and family may disappoint him. But though the "clouds may lower around him, his gloom shall not last for ever. The Lord shall bring him light in due season, for as surely as a good man's sun goes down it shall rise again" (Spurgeon). Our Lord admonished us, "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you so; for I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2). When men cast off the only source of divine guidance, they throw away the guidebook that will give them peace in the midst of a troubled world.

*Second, self before others.* The Psalmist tells us that the blessed man is "*gracious.*" Webster defines gracious as: "Favorable; kind; benevolent; merciful; disposed to forgive offenses and impart unmerited blessings." The blessed man maintains a gracious benevolence towards others. He knows that the self-centered man will never find true happiness. Someone has written:

When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult or the

oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ, that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take in all in patient, loving silence, that is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any unpunctuality, or any annoyance; when you stand face-to-face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility -- and endure it as Jesus endured, that is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any climate, any society, any raiment, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendations, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances, that is dying to self.

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart, that is dying to self.

Dying to self is the only sure path to genuine peace. Those who are wrapped up in themselves rob themselves of happiness and invite an open door to anxiety and worry.

Third, *harboring resentment rather than offering forgiveness*. The Psalmist says the blessed man is "merciful." Holding a grudge, harboring anger, or seeking revenge when one has been wronged will eat as a cancer at a man's soul. Peace comes when we are merciful toward those who have wronged us.

Finally, *unresolved guilt* will rob a man of peace. When a man is “righteous,” and he is seeking to apply the truths of God’s word to his life, he has been pardoned, and he is free of guilt.

### *His Prudence, verse 5*

**112:5:** – “*Well is it with the man that dealeth graciously and lendeth*” – Webster defines prudence:

Prudence implies caution in deliberating and consulting on the most suitable means to accomplish valuable purposes, and the exercise of sagacity in discerning and selecting them. Prudence differs from wisdom in this, that prudence implies more caution and reserve than wisdom, or is exercised more in foreseeing and avoiding evil, than in devising and executing that which is good. It is sometimes mere caution or circumspection...Prudence is principally in reference to actions to be done, and due means, order, season and method of doing or not doing.

The blessed man is someone who is prudent in his business and his dealings with this fellow man. There are two specific areas in which he exercises graciousness towards others. First, he is willing to “lend” to those in need, and second, he is honest in his business dealings with others. Consider each of these.

First, the blessed man is someone who is not stingy. He is not a miser, but one who realizes that he is to “work with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need” (Eph. 4:28). He recognizes that God’s providence has made him able to lend, and it is a gracious heart that makes him willing to lend. A man who has this world’s goods, “and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doeth the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

Second, the blessed man is honest in his business dealings with others. The Psalmist says, “*He shall maintain his cause in judgment.*” The KJV reads, “He will guide his affairs with discretion.” Here is someone who is known for his honesty and integrity, as well as his frugality and good stewardship. We like Spurgeon’s assessment of the blessed man’s prudent nature:

Those who neglect their worldly business must not plead religion as an excuse, for when a man is truly upright he exercises great care in managing his accounts, in order that he may remain so. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between indiscretion and dishonesty; carelessness in business may become almost as great an evil to others as actual knavery; a good man should not only be upright, but he should be so discreet that no one may have the slightest reason to suspect him of being otherwise. When the righteous man lends he exercises prudence, not risking his all, for fear he should not be able to lend again, and not lending so very little that the loan is of no service. He drives his affairs, and does not allow them to drive him; his accounts are straight and clear, his plans are wisely laid, and his modes of operation carefully selected. He is prudent, thrifty, economical, sensible, judicious, discreet. Men call him a fool for his religion, but they do not find him so when they come to deal with him (Spurgeon).

### *His Permanence, verses 6-7*

**112:6:** – “*For he shall never be moved*” – So long as he meets the other criteria, this blessed man shall stand firm in the face of the enemy. “I shall not be moved” echoes his sentiments, seeing he stands on the Rock of ages, and his footing is sound and secure. This is not to suggest that it is impossible for a man to fall from grace. The point the author makes here is the godly man is not driven from place to place; he is stable; he has secured to himself a good reputation.

*“The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance”* – There may be a few individuals who have earned for themselves a place in history, not because of any goodness on their part, but because of their wickedness and ungodliness. But that number is rare. This is not the sense in which the Psalmist uses the word. The blessed man will secure a place in the hearts of those who knew him, and his influence will have a lingering effect upon their lives. We like Barnes’ comment:

The world has no interest in keeping up the memory of bad people, and as soon as it can be done hastens to forget them. Wicked people are remembered only when their deeds are enormous, and then their memory is cherished only to admonish and to warn. The world has no interest in keeping up the memory of Benedict Arnold, or Alexander VI, or Caesar Borgia except to warn future generations of the guilt and baseness of treason and profligacy; it “has” an interest in never suffering the names of Howard, of Wilberforce, of



Henry Martyn, to die, for those names excite to noble feelings and to noble efforts wherever they are known. Such names are to be had “in everlasting remembrance (Barnes).

**112:7:** – *“He shall not be afraid of evil tidings”* – The permanence of the blessed man goes much further than the memory of his life after he is gone. The blessed man will not wilt in the face of adversity. “Rumours and reports he despises; prophecies of evil, vented by fanatical mouths, he ridicules; actual and verified information of loss and distress he bears with equanimity, resigning everything into the hands of God” (Spurgeon).

*“His heart is fixed, trusting in Jehovah”* – This man of God is not fickle, nor is he cowardly in the face of adversity. “He may change his plan, but not the purpose of his soul. His heart being fixed in solid reliance upon God, a change in his circumstances but slightly affects him; faith has made him firm and steadfast, and therefore if the worst should come to the worst, he would remain quiet and patient, waiting for the salvation of God” (Spurgeon).

#### *His Promotion, verses 8-9*

**112:8:** – The gist of these two verses has to do with the victory the blessed man shall enjoy when his enemies are overthrown.

*“His heart is established, he shall not be afraid”* – We get the impression that the blessed man is one whose love of God is deep and true – his *heart* is firm in his devotion to God. His conviction is such that he will be promoted above his enemies. He is courageous, his trust fixed upon God.

*“Until he see his desire upon his adversaries”* – While he desires good for his enemies, he has been promised that he will see justice prevail and his cause triumph over the wicked. It is the righteous, not the wicked, who will be promoted to a place of honor. Even if the righteous should be vilified in the eyes of those about him, and be driven to his grave in utter defeat in this life, there IS a judgment day coming in which the wicked will know that their temporary promotion to honor and recognition was but for a moment. God does not measure victory by a single battle that is won or lost, but by the outcome of the war.

**112:9:** – “*He hath dispersed, he hath given to the needy*” – Because of the righteous man’s exemplary life, he would enjoy the exaltation that comes from Jehovah. He is not interested in the honor that comes from men. Consequently, he does not hoard the things of this life for himself, but gives to those in need. He has a concern for the poor and needy, and he demonstrates his heart of compassion by the deeds of his life.

If this be one of the marks of a man who feareth the Lord, there are some who are strangely destitute of it. They are great at gathering, but very slow at dispersing; they enjoy the blessedness of receiving, but seldom taste the greater joy of giving (Spurgeon).

“*His righteousness endureth for ever*” – The same words were used in the previous Psalm (111:3) to describe God. We are reminded that a man becomes like the God Whom he worships. Here the Psalmist declares that the righteous man demonstrates the stability of his character. He is not spasmodic, given first to one thing and then another. He does not hold up a finger to check the direction the wind is blowing before acting. “His life is the result of principle, his actions flow from settled, sure, and fixed convictions, and therefore his integrity is maintained when others fail. He is not turned about by companions, nor affected by the customs of society; he is resolute, determined, and immovable” (Spurgeon).

It should be noted that the apostle Paul quotes this verse in the context of the Christian’s obligation to give. “As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever” (2 Cor. 9:9). Giving is a “grace” (2 Cor. 8:7), and our participation in this sacred obligation is a proof of one’s righteousness and love for the Lord (2 Cor. 8:8).

“*His horn shall be exalted with honour*” – The horn is a symbol of strength and power (cf. Dan. 7:7-8, 7:11, 21; Dan 8:5, 8-9, 21). There are two promises in these words. The first is that the strength and the power of the righteous will be exalted. They shall “mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31). The wicked do not enjoy such promises, for “even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall” (Isa. 40:30). The second promise is that the righteous man’s horn shall be exalted with *honor*.

The man whom the Psalmist has described is the one who will honored with an everlasting honor. His recognition is of God, not of man; his honor is not that of the fleeting moment, but one of eternal joy.

***The Wicked man***  
**Verse 10**

*10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: The desire of the wicked shall perish.*

In this verse the Psalmist provides us with a two-fold description of the wicked man. We will see his *frustration* and his *folly*.

His *Frustration*, 10a - “*The wicked shall see it, and be grieved.*” What is it that the wicked “shall see” that shall bring upon him such misery so as to make him grieve? The worth of a man’s life is not measured by things temporal. With every passing year we are reminded that life is short and death is inevitable. There comes a time when each man gives sober contemplation to the tenor of his life. The most probable explanation of this verse is that the wicked shall in some way see the blessedness of the saint.

When the wicked takes into account the whole of his life compared to the life of the righteous man, he will admit, though with great reluctance, that the blessed man really did have it better. Many a man has gone to his grave wishing that he had spent more time paying attention to his soul. When death threatens to draw its curtain upon a man’s life, it is with great remorse that the ungodly man regrets his great neglect of the spiritual man.

The ungodly shall first see the example of the saints to their own condemnation, and shall at last behold the happiness of the godly and to the increase of their eternal misery. The child of wrath shall be obliged to witness the blessedness of the righteous, though the sight shall make him gnaw his own heart. He shall fret and fume, lament and wax angry, but he shall not be able to prevent it, for God's blessing is sure and effectual (Spurgeon).

His *Folly*, 10b.

*“He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away”* – If the wicked man cannot get the upper hand against the righteous he will gnash with his teeth his strength will eventually melt away.

*“The desire of the wicked shall perish”* - The idea seems to be that the wicked man shall not achieve his purpose. He will, in the final analysis die a disappointed man. He may have hoped to accomplish his purpose. On the other hand, the righteous will endure for ever, and he will spend eternity with fond remembrance of the blessings of a godly life. The gulf that separates the righteous from the wicked is great indeed.

### ***Lessons***

1. A good man is benevolent, but a benevolent man is not always good (verse 5).
2. We learn some important lessons regarding the godly man. For one thing, in this life the Christian is *steadfast, calm, and victorious*. When this life is over he will be fondly remembered by others, and his influence will be perpetual for “his works shall follow him.” A Chinese proverb advises: “When you were born, you wept and others rejoiced. Live so that when you die, others will weep and you will rejoice.”
3. The man of God constantly strives to become like his God. He fears the Lord, and delights in His commandments. He will be blessed materially, and his righteousness will endure forever. He walks in the light, is generous, compassionate, just, and abounds unto every good work. He conducts his life with justice, and is not afraid of any evil report that might be cast at him. He will be remembered for his godly character. The wicked man, on the other hand, is the very antithesis of the godly man. All that can be said of the righteous, precisely the opposite is true about the wicked individual. He strives, not to become like God, but to be like his contemporaries. He is not just, will not abound in every good work, and does not conduct his life with justice, except where it might benefit him. He is angered by the life of the righteous, and hates things that are holy.

## *“Songs of Praise”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the first of six Psalms which constitute the *Hallel* or Hymn of Praise which the Hebrews were accustomed to sing at the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. A number of our sources pointed out that these Psalms (113-118) may very well have been sung by our Lord and His disciples on that very night in which He was betrayed. They teach us, among other things, that God’s people are to be a *worshipping* people, even in the face of despair. The word “praise” and its synonyms appear more than 186 times in these six Psalms. Morgan observed:

This first psalm celebrates the name of Jehovah on two accounts. He is high, yet He is lowly, above the nations and above the heavens, yet humbling Himself to behold the heavens and the earth...Think of these words passing the lips of Him who ‘humbled Himself’ and became ‘obedient unto death.’ Then notice the evidences of God’s humility and height. He stoops to lift, for He raiseth the poor, lifteth up the needy, and turns barrenness into the joy of motherhood (Morgan, page 264).

The author of this Psalm is unknown. This chapter is very general in its character, and has no allusion to any circumstances by which one could determine the name of the author, or the occasion on which it was written. We will be content knowing that, whatever the occasion, or whoever the penman might have been, these half dozen Psalms have been preserved by God’s providence and made available for our study.

### ***Analysis***

This Psalm expresses the majesty of God, as having a claim to universal praise. Most sources we consulted divided the Psalm into two parts, with an occasional three part division. The Psalm opens with a general call to praise the Lord (1-2). The Psalmist then provides a number of reasons why God is deserving of praise (3-9a). The Psalm closes as it began with the admonition to “Praise ye the

Lord” (9b). Willmington (*The Outline Bible*,’ page 280) suggests a two point outline with appropriate sub divisions:

- I. The Majesty of the Lord (113:1-6)
  - A. His Horizontal glory (113:1-3): It shines from the east to west so that all might praise the name of the Lord;
  - B. His Vertical glory (113:4-6): It ascends high above the nations and is greater than the heavens.
- II. The Mercy of the Lord (113:7-9)
  - A. It lifts up the poor and needy, setting them among princes (113:7-8).
  - B. It gives a home and children to the barren (113:9).

We will divide the Psalm as follows:

- I. Call To Praise (113:1)
- II. Causes For Praise (113:2-9a):
  - A. His Majestic Name (113:2-3)
  - B. His Magnificent Glory (113:4)
  - C. His Marvelous Humility (113:5-6)
  - D. His Magnanimous Beneficence (113:7-9a)
    - 1. Toward the Downtrodden (113:7-8)
    - 2. Toward the Distressed (113:9a)
- III. Conclusion (113:9b)

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Call to Praise*** **Verse 1**

**1** *Praise ye Jehovah. Praise, O ye servants of Jehovah, Praise the name of Jehovah.*

**113:1:** “*Praise ye Jehovah*” translates one Hebrew word. The author commences these half dozen *Hallel* Psalms (113-118) with a triune admonition – three times in this first verse his audience is called upon to offer praise. In the first use of the word, the author draws our attention to the *object of praise*: “Praise ye Jehovah. Next, the author identifies *those who are to praise God*, “*Praise, O ye servants of Jehovah.*” If God’s people do not praise Him, who will? The verse closes with a stark reminder that even the name of Jehovah is worthy of praise.

Likewise, three times in this verse reference is made to His holy name, leading not a few commentators to see a veiled reference to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### ***Causes for Praise*** **Verses 2-9a**

- 2 *Blessed be the name of Jehovah From this time forth and for evermore.*  
3 *From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same Jehovah's name is to be praised.*  
4 *Jehovah is high above all nations, And his glory above the heavens.*  
5 *Who is like unto Jehovah our God, That hath his seat on high,*  
6 *That humbleth himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth?*  
7 *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, And lifteth up the needy from the dunghill*  
8 *That he may set him with princes, Even with the princes of his people.*  
9a *He maketh the barren woman to keep house, And to be a joyful mother of children.*

Verses 2-9a provide a number of reasons why God should be praised. We will take these up one at a time.

#### *First, God Should Be Praised Because Of His Majestic Name (113:2-3)*

**113:2:** *“Blessed be the name of the Lord”* – The Psalmist calls upon his audience to praise the name of the Lord. This is most fitting because His name is the manifold expression of Who He is. In a lesser sense, we can understand and appreciate this because there are few things in life that are more precious than a good name. The late Joe Gilmore was accustomed to preaching a sermon in which he asked his audience, “When you die, what will you leave your children?” In the course of that sermon he would emphasize the importance of leaving our children a “good name.” If we can understand the association between a man’s name and his character, can we not also understand the association of the very nature of God and His holy name? Truly, God is deserving of our praise because of His *majestic name*.

By mentioning *the name*, the Psalmist would teach us to bless each of the attributes of the Most High, which are as it were the letters of his name; not quarrelling with his justice or his severity, nor servilely [sic] dreading his power, but accepting him as we find him revealed in the inspired word and by his own acts, and loving him and praising him as such. We must not give the Lord a new name nor invent a new nature, for that would be the setting up of a false god. Every time we think of the God of Scripture we should bless him, and his august name should never be pronounced without joyful reverence (Spurgeon).

*“from this time and for evermore”* - What He is now, He will always continue to be; and as praise is proper now, it will be forever and ever.

**113:3:** *“From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same Jehovah's name is to be praised”* – The praises of God encircle the earth. It has oft been pointed out that by the time we rise to worship our God on Sunday morning, His praises have already been sounded forth for a number of hours. And when our day comes to an end, and the first day of the week passes into history for us, others will continue to sing the praises of God for several hours yet to come. We were particularly impressed with Matthew Henry's comments on this verse:

God's *name is to be praised*; it ought to be praised by all nations; for in every place, from east to west, there appear the manifest proofs and products of his wisdom, power, and goodness; and it is to be lamented that so great a part of mankind are ignorant of him, and give that praise to others which is due to him alone...as the former verse gave us a glimpse of the kingdom of glory, intimating that God's name shall be *blessed for ever* (when time shall be no more that praise shall be the work of heaven), so this verse gives us a glimpse of the kingdom of grace in the gospel-dispensation of it (Matthew Henry).

Yes, God is to be praised because of his *majestic name*.

*Second, God Should Be Praised Because of His Magnificent Glory* (113:4)

**113:4:** The Psalmist will now focus on God's glory, greatness, and grace in an attempt to awaken in us a desire to praise our God.

*“And his glory above the heavens”* –The manifestations of God's glorious character are not confined to the earth; they extend to the



heavens, even unto the stars beyond and unlimited space. The universe - the earth and the starry worlds - all are full of the manifestations of his glory; and far beyond the bounds of created things (if they have a boundary), God is there - without limit - the same God - worthy there of universal praise! Who can comprehend such a God? No wonder the Psalmist wrote earlier, "The heavens declare the glory of God and firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1). All things are the result of God's design and purpose. "For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God" (Heb. 3:4).

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 that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him. He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down as atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar" (Spurgeon on Psa. 19:1).

In what way do the "heavens declare the glory of God"? Just a sampling would include the following:

- (1) The sheer vastness of the universe in which we live. There are not merely trillions of heavenly bodies, but trillions upon trillions of them. Though some have attempted to do so, no man has ever numbered just how many stars there may actually be.
- (2) The orderliness of the heavenly bodies declares that there is a Designer. This entire solar system travels through space at incredible speed, yet operating according to precise and predictable laws.
- 3) Then there is the visible beauty of the heavenly bodies. Who has sat under the starry skies on a clear evening and viewed the constellations without being impressed with their magnificent beauty?
- 4) Finally, there is the uniqueness of this earth itself when compared with the other planets of this solar system.

God's glory is high above the heavens. God would have us look UP; to cast our eyes heavenward. "And now we see it: a land of fadeless day; a land where they pave their streets with gold, build their walls of jasper, and make their gates of pearl. We see a land where time is not counted in years. We see a throne, encircled round and round with a rainbow of gleaming emerald, a rainbow such as never arched the skies of the earth. We see, flowing from that throne, a crystal stream. We see the lightnings [sic] play like liquid fire to form the

dazzling draperies against which that throne is set” (Phillips, page 221).

*Third, God Should Be Praised Because Of His Marvelous Humility* (113:5-6)

**113:5:** Next, the Psalmist draws our attention to God’s amazing humility. In these two verses we are first asked to consider the exalted glory of God in contrast to His amazing willingness to humble Himself to “Behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth.”

*“Who is like unto our God?”* - Indeed, who IS like unto our God? No one! Gather all of the great men of renowned into one great mass of intellectual giants - Plato, Aristotle, Archimedes, Solomon, Newton, Einstein; summon the world’s religious leaders – Buddha, Confucius, Muhammad; bring together world’s conquerors – Alexander, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Caesar. Compared to God Almighty, the world’s great ones are dwarfed, discomfited, and dismayed before Him.

Their wisdom is seen to be nothing. They are like men picking up pebbles on the seashore of knowledge and when they have gathered all they can carry, they have gleaned nothing of all that remains to be known. Their religions are seen to be false. Their conquests built them empires of sand swept away by the rising of a later tide. They shrink away in confusion and shame (Phillips, page 221-222).

*“That hath his seat on high”* – Literally, “The one making high to sit.” The language is applicable to one who is seated on a lofty throne (cf. Psalms 8:1). Our God has His dwelling in the heavens, so high and exalted that it requires infinite condescension to look upon the earth, or even upon the heavens.

**113:6:** *“That humbleth himself”* – A number of years ago Charles Hodge wrote an incredible little book entitled, “Will God Run?” It is a homiletic treatment of Luke 15. The title of brother Hodge’s book derives from the fact that the father, upon seeing his son return home, ran to meet him. Yes, God’s interest in mankind compels Him to “run” to meet us when we come home to Him. Let the words of the Psalmist sink in – *“Our God humbleth himself.”*

*“to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth”* – Earlier David had asked, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And

the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psa. 8:4). God has an invested interest in His creation. Unlike the deist who believes that God created the world and then stepped back and only “watches from a distance,” The Psalmist declares that our God bends down to observe not only the things that occur in heaven, but condescends to lowly man. Adam Clarke observed,

Those who are highly exalted are generally unapproachable; they are proud and overbearing; or so surrounded with magnificence and flatterers, that to them the poor have no access; but God, though infinitely exalted, humbleth himself to behold even heaven itself, and much more does he humble himself when he condescends to behold earth and her inhabitants; (Psa. 113:6). But so does he love his creatures that he rejoices over even the meanest of them to do them good.

God’s humility is manifested in that He is willing to condescend to those things in *heaven and earth*. Matthew Henry pointed out:

Much more is it condescension in him to *behold the things that are in the earth*, to visit the sons of men, and regard them, to order and overrule their affairs, and to take notice of what they say and do, that he may fill the earth with his goodness, and so set us an example of stooping to do good, of taking notice of, and concerning ourselves about, our inferiors. If it be such condescension for God to behold things in heaven and earth, what an amazing condescension was it for the Son of God to come from heaven to earth and take our nature upon him, that he might *seek and save those that were lost!* Herein indeed he humbled himself.

There is not a creature whose interests God does not regard; not an insect - a flower - an atom - that He does not regard with as much minute attention as though there were nothing else to demand His care. But the most wonderful manifestation of God’s humility is seen in the coming of our Lord to this world of sin and woe. He was willing to give up the riches of heaven, and to come to this world, not as a King, not as some political power, or philosopher, but as a servant – one willing to give of Himself even unto death.

Great men stoop to inferior things for the purposes of science. But God has a perfect knowledge of all things. Men stoop to the wants and miseries of others, but do not relinquish their rank and station. But God in Christ came in the form of a servant. Great men die for their country or their friends, but not for their enemies. God commended His great love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (C. Short, Pulpit Commentary, on line).

*Fourth, God Should Be Praised Because Of His Magnanimous Beneficence (113:7-9a)*

There are two examples of God's beneficent character that surface in these verses: (1) His beneficence toward the *downtrodden* (113:7-8), and (2) His beneficence toward the *distressed* (113:9a). Let's take a closer look.

**113:7:** *"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, And lifteth the needy from the dunghill"* – The Psalmist is not suggesting that this statement is to be affirmed as a universal truth, or to assert that God raises all the poor out of their miserable poverty. Jesus Himself stated, "ye have the poor always with you" (Matt. 26:11). The author is affirming that the fact that God has, and does, *"raise up the poor"* as a manifestation of His power and majesty. From the humblest position in life God can raise one to sit upon thrones. Consider Joseph as an example. Hated by his brethren, sold into captivity, and falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, he found himself a prisoner. But God lifted him up to sit upon the throne of Egypt, second only to the Pharaoh himself.

**113:8:** - *"That he may set him with princes"* – From the *pit* to the *palace*, our God "offers to make them the aristocracy of Heaven" (Phillips, page 223). History, both secular and Biblical, is replete with instances where this has occurred.

*"Even with the princes of his people"* – James wrote, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you" (Jas. 4:10). Men may consider earthly acclaim as something of great honor. But it is a higher honor to be exalted and counted as one of "his people" than to rule a nation.

When he has some great work to do he chooses to employ those in it that were least likely, and least thought of for it by themselves or others, to the highest post of honor: Gideon is fetched from threshing, Saul from seeking the asses, and David from keeping the sheep; the apostles are sent from fishing to be *fishers of men*. The treasure of the gospel is put into earthen vessels, and the weak and foolish ones of the world are pitched upon to be preachers of it, to confound the *wise and mighty* (1 Cor. 1:27, 1 Cor. 1:28), that the excellency of the power may be of God, and all may see that promotion comes from him (Matthew Henry).

**113:9a:** “He maketh the barren woman to keep house, And to be a joyful mother of children” -

The desire of eastern peoples to have children caused the birth of offspring to be hailed as the choicest of favors, while barrenness was regarded as a curse. Our God displays His condescending grace in regarding those who are despised on account of their barrenness, whether it be of body or of soul. Sarah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and others were all instances of the miraculous power of God in literally fulfilling the statement of the Psalmist.

## **Conclusion**

### **Verse 9b**

*9b - Praise ye Jehovah*

**113:9b:** The Psalm ends as it began. Thus, the structure of the Psalm reminds us that praise to God is unending. Whether with our lips, or with our life, may our praise to Jehovah upon this earth know no ending, until that day when our Lord comes to take us home where we will spend the endless ages praising the God Who made us, and saved us through His Son Jesus Christ.

## ***Lessons***

In this chapter we see the unparalleled condescension of God in contrast to His glory and majesty. Though wonderfully good, He is willing to stoop so low; though infinitely wise, He is willing to “behold” the needs of His little ones. His wonderful condescension and humility were manifested in the sending of His Son for the benefit of mankind. I wrote the following in 2007 and share it with our readers.

### ***Because Of This One Man***

by Tom Wacaster

Many a tribute has been paid to Jesus of Nazareth. “Believers and mockers, skeptics and saints, the mighty and the humble; all have testified to the fact that this Man among men was more than a man.” Those who are diligent students of the Bible see in the pages of that inspired book a portrait of One Who was (and is) the epitome of selfless service and supreme sacrifice. Those who refuse to hear the Word of God cannot deny that the life of this One man made an

impact upon the world that continues to be felt more than two centuries later. The ministry of Jesus lasted only three years. Yet in those three years we find condensed the deepest meaning of history and a manifestation of God "come in the flesh." The impact He made upon history for generations yet unborn is summed up in His own words: "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto myself" (Jn 12:32). He chose twelve apostles, not from among the scholars, or from among the leaders of the elite religious hierarchy, but from the common masses. With no possessions to call His own, and no friends among the mighty and rich, He associated with sinners and publicans - not to stoop to their sinful life, but to raise them up to a higher and nobler life. When zealots sought to make Him their king, He withdrew and boldly declared that His kingdom was not of this world. He was an encouragement to the down-trodden, a teacher of those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness, a Great Physician to those who suffered from bodily ailments that robbed them of their strength and hope. He was kind and compassionate to those who sought His wisdom; and He was stern and straightforward toward those who were determined not to come to the light. He provided unmistakable proof that He was from God by the miracles He performed. Prompted by compassion for those who suffered, He demonstrated the power of God to overcome physical ailments so that men could see in Him the same power to overcome the spiritual ailments. His miracles were performed without ostentation and served to demonstrate the authority of His words. His life was so holy that He could face His accusers and ask, "Which of you convinceth me of sin," knowing that they could find no occasion of stumbling in Him. Philip Schaff commented on the pure and sinless life of Jesus Christ:

Who would not shrink from the attempt to describe the moral character of Jesus, or, having attempted it, be not dissatisfied with the result? Who can empty the ocean into a bucket? Who (we may ask with Lavater) can paint the glory of the rising sun with a charcoal. No artist's ideal comes up to the reality in this case, though his ideals may surpass every other reality. The better and holier a man is, the more he feels his need of pardon, and how far he falls short of his own imperfect standard of excellence. But Jesus, with the same nature as ours and tempted as we are, never yielded to temptation; never had cause for regretting any thought, word, or action; he never needed pardon, or conversion, or reform; he never fell out of harmony with his heavenly Father. His whole life was one unbroken act of self-consecration to the glory of God and the eternal welfare of his fellow-men. A catalogue of virtues and graces, however complete, would give us but a mechanical view. It is the spotless purity and sinlessness of

Jesus as acknowledged by friend and foe; it is the even harmony and symmetry of all graces, of love to God and love to man, of dignity and humility of strength and tenderness, of greatness and simplicity, of self-control and submission, of active and passive virtue; it is, in one word, the absolute perfection which raises his character high above the reach of all other men and makes it an exception to a universal rule, a moral miracle in history. It is idle to institute comparisons with saints and sages, ancient or modern. Even the infidel Rousseau was forced to exclaim: 'If Socrates lived and died like a sage, Jesus lived and died like a God.' Here is more than the starry heaven above us, and the moral law within us, which filled the soul of Kant with ever-growing reverence and awe. Here is the holy of holies of humanity, here is the very gate of heaven (Schaff, History of the Church).

Every great story has a tragedy that unfolds in its plot, along with the triumph of the main character. The history of Jesus is not a myth; it is not a novel; nor is it something written for mere entertainment. But the story of Jesus provides the ultimate tragedy and triumph. As God's mystery unfolded in that little, isolated, insignificant country, Jesus began to tell of His death. But His was not a natural death, for He died the shameful death of the cross, the just for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty. So horrible was the death of the sinless Savior that the sun refused to shine at noon, and the earth shook as its Maker finally gave up the ghost. When He was laid in the tomb, the hopes of His disciples were dashed. An immense stone to seal the tomb, and a powerful Roman legion to guard its entrance, those fishermen returned to their fishing business, their dreams and expectations buried in the tomb with the Man Who walked and talked in their midst for three and one half years. Meanwhile, as the guest of Paradise, Jesus awaited that moment when He would roll back the stone that blocked the exit from that cold dark tomb, and come forth Conqueror over death and the grave. On the third day, He burst the bonds of death. God turned the tragedy into triumph. Today men can have a renewed hope because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The angels in heaven rejoiced at His birth. Men can rejoice today because of His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God the Father.

## *“Our God Will Deliver His People”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm has as its backdrop the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity, and His providential care for Israel from the crossing of the Red Sea to the crossing of the Jordan. A number of the sources we consulted admitted that so far as the sheer beauty of language and glory, this Psalm excels. Of this Psalm, G.Campbell Morgan wrote:

It is the song of the Exodus and is full of beauty. The first movement declares that the people passing out of Egypt did so as the result of the presence of God. Among them was His sanctuary, and they were His dominion. Nature recognized His presence, and obeyed His will. The mountains and the little hills were moved. The singer asks the reason for this commotion, and without waiting for answer charges the earth to tremble at His presence. Notice that this song includes the whole deliverance, the going out under Moses through the sea and the going in under Joshua through Jordan (page 264).

These eight verses contain language of exultation, joy, and triumph. The Psalmist envisions the mountains and hills seized with consternation. Using personification, the author speaks of mountains leaping and skipping like sheep; the Jordan fleeing back as if it were frightened; the earth trembling. "It is elegantly and energetically composed; but begins and ends very abruptly" (Clarke). Roy Deaver quotes the Cambridge Bible: "For perfection of form and dramatic vividness it is almost if not quite unrivalled in the Psalter. It consists of four stanzas of two verses each. In each stanza one dominant thought is presented in the fewest but most expressive words, and in each verse the law of parallelism is strictly observed...Psalm 113 celebrates Jehovah's condescending love in helping the afflicted; Psalm 114 recalls the most signal instance of it in the deliverance of Israel from Egypt" (Deaver, Vol. II, page 98). Finally, we found the following tribute to this Psalm from the pen of Isaac Watts to be worth placing in our notes:



[This] Psalm appears to me to be an admirable ode, and I began to turn it into our own language. As I was describing the journey of Israel from Egypt, and added the Divine Presence amongst them, I perceived a beauty in this Psalm, which was entirely new to me, and which I was going to lose; and that is, that the poet utterly conceals the presence of God in the beginning of it, and rather lets a possessive pronoun go without a substantive, than he will so much as mention anything of divinity there. "Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion" or kingdom. The reason now seems evident, and this conduct necessary; for, if God had appeared before, there could be no wonder why the mountains should leap and the sea retire; therefore, that this convulsion of nature may be brought in with due surprise, his name is not mentioned till afterwards; and then with a very agreeable turn of thought, God is introduced at once in all his majesty. This is what I have attempted to imitate in a translation without paraphrase, and to preserve what I could of the spirit of the sacred author.

When Israel, freed from Pharaoh's hand,  
 Left the proud tyrant and his land,  
 The tribes with cheerful homage own  
 Their King, and Judah was his throne.  
 Across the deep their journey lay,  
 The deep divides to make them way;  
 The streams of Jordan saw, and fled  
 With backward current to their head.  
 The mountains shook like frightened sheep,  
 Like lambs the little hillocks leap;  
 Not Sinai on her base could stand,  
 Conscious of sovereign power at hand.  
 What power could make the deep divide?  
 Make Jordan backward roll his tide?  
 Why did ye leap, ye little hills?  
 And whence the fright that Sinai feels?  
 Let ev'ry mountain, ev'ry flood,  
 Retire, and know th' approaching God,  
 The King of Israeli see him here:  
 Tremble, thou earth, adore and fear.  
 He thunders - and all nature mourns;  
 The rock to standing pools he turns;  
 Flints spring with fountains at his word,  
 And fires and seas confess their Lord.  
*Isaac Watts, in "The Spectator," 1712.*

## ***Analysis***

The Psalm begins with a matter of fact statement of Israel's departure from Egypt. From that historical fact, the author immediately enters into a figurative description of Israel's deliverance, wandering, and glorious victory. What lay behind such majestic demonstration of power? What power would enable a feeble nation of slaves to overthrow the mighty Egyptian army? What power could cause the Red Sea to draw back and allow that baby nation to cross over on dry ground, and then close its massive walls of water upon the pursuing Egyptian army? Power that would provide life giving water to so many people as they wandered in a barren wilderness? Power that could drive back the Jordan and allow that new generation to pass over into the promised land? The answer is not provided until the later part of the Psalm when the author reveals the cause as "the God of Jacob."

We found a number of good outlines of the Psalm. Matthew Henry sees the song as a reminder to Israel that (1) they were brought out of slavery (verse 1), that God set up His tabernacle among them (verse 2), that the sea and the Jordan were divided before them (verses 3 and 5), that the earth shook at the giving of the Law when God came down on Mt. Sinai (verses 4, 6-7), and that God gave them water out of the rock (verse 8). Willmington also divided the Psalm around two specific times in Israel's history - the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan River – when God led his people (1) Out of the Land of Bondage (114:1-3, 5), and (2) Into the Land of Blessing (114:3-4, 5-8).

We found it interesting that the Psalm makes reference to a number of occasions when water played an important part in God's dealings with Israel: (1) The parting of the Red Sea, (2) the dividing of Jordan, and (3) the provision of water from the rock in the wilderness.

We will use the following outline for our study:

The Presence of Jehovah In....

I. Israel's Deliverance - the Red Sea (verses 1-3a)

II. Israel's Victory - the Jordan (verses 3b-6)

III. Israel's Provisions - the Rock In The Wilderness (verses 7-8)

## Commentary

### ***The Presence of Jehovah In Israel's Deliverance At The Red Sea Verses 1-3a***

- 1** *When Israel went forth out of Egypt, The house of Jacob from a people of strange language;*  
**2** *Judah became his sanctuary, Israel his dominion.*  
**3a** *The sea saw it, and fled*

**114:1:** "*When Israel went forth out of Egypt*" – This Psalm begins with a clear statement regarding Israel's departure from Egypt. These words set the background for what will follow. The mighty manifestation of God's power referred to in the following verses is given a historical and textual setting. This is what Spurgeon calls "a burst, as if the poetic fury could not be restrained." Filled with awe at the power of his God, the author calls our attention to one of, if not the most well known historical events in the history of the nation of Israel.

*"The house of Jacob"* – When Israel descended into Egypt, they consisted of a meager 70 souls. No one would, or could ever guess that such a small number of souls would develop into a great and mighty nation over the next couple of centuries. Unknown to men is the mighty providence of God.

*"from a people of strange language"* - The language in Egypt was not known to God's people. God's people do not speak the language of the world, and the "message" of other nations seem as "strange language" to those who know God and walk in His ways.

**114:2:** "*Judah became his sanctuary*" - It was the tribe of Judah that led the way in the wilderness march; and it was this tribe from whence the Messiah would eventually come. No wonder the Psalmist calls Judah God's "sanctuary." There is nothing in these words that demands this Psalm be dated after the divided kingdom, for even God instructed David to "number Israel and Judah" (2 Sam. 24:1) while the kingdom was still united.

*"Israel his dominion"* - Note the Psalmist chooses NOT to mention God at the beginning of the Psalm, perhaps for dramatic purposes. He sets forth in brief summary the amazing works of God from the

deliverance out of Egypt to the crossing of the Jordan, drawing our attention to some of the most amazing miracles ever wrought in the presence of men: the deliverance of a nation of slaves; the dividing of the Red Sea; the parting of the Jordan. What, or Who, caused such commotion? Who was behind these majestic deeds, known not only by God's people, but by the Gentiles? Borrowing from the words of Paul, "These things were not done in a corner." Adam Clarke put it this way:

The author of this Psalm designedly works for effect, in pointing out the miraculous driving back the Red Sea and the river Jordan, and the commotion of the hills and mountains, without mentioning any agent. At last, when the reader sees the sea rapidly retiring from the shore, Jordan retreating to its source, and the mountains and hills running away like a flock of affrighted sheep, that the passage of the Israelites might be every where uninterrupted; then the cause of all is suddenly introduced, and the presence of God in his grandeur solves every difficulty (Clarke).

**114:3a:** *"The sea saw it, and fled"* - The Red Sea is depicted as possessing the ability to see, and upon seeing the might and power of God, that mighty Sea is said to have fled. The stubbornness of Pharaoh's army is contrasted to the fear and consternation of the Red Sea. While the Sea choose to flee, the Egyptian army chose to fight, and Pharaoh and his soldiers were the worse for it.

The word "it" is supplied by the translators. Literally, "The sea saw." In other words, the Red Sea saw the mighty movement, the marshaled hosts, the masses gathering on its otherwise quiet shore, along with the pursuing enemy, and the commotion that was taking place as the Egyptian army descended upon Israel. The usual calmness of the seashore, and the lonely solitude was suddenly interrupted by the vast hosts of men, women, children, cattle, all fleeing in consternation. The sea is represented as being astonished at this unusual spectacle, and as fleeing in dismay.

A bold figure! The Red Sea mirrored the hosts which had come down to its shore, and reflected the cloud which towered high over all, as the symbol of the presence of the Lord - never had such a scene been imagined upon the surface of the Red Sea, or any other sea, before. It could not endure the unusual and astounding sight, and fleeing to the right and to the left, opened a passage for the elect people (Spurgeon).

***The Presence of Jehovah In  
Israel's Victory At The Jordan  
Verses 3b-6***

3b - *The Jordan was driven back.*

4 *The mountains skipped like rams, The little hills like lambs.*

5 *What aileth thee, O thou sea, that thou fleest? Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?*

6 *Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams; Ye little hills, like lambs?*

**114:3b:** The whole of the wilderness wandering is compressed into the two great events that encompassed those forty years of isolation - the crossing of the Red Sea and the Jordan. That 40 years of Israel's history is alluded to in only a few verses.

**114:4:** - "*The mountains skipped like rams*" - Having crossed the Red Sea, Israel made its way to Mt. Sinai. But like the Red Sea, Sinai could not be contained, and like the lambs that grazed at the foot of that massive mountain, and the rams that might venture some distance up the slope of Mt. Sinai, the mountains themselves "skipped." Those majestic rocks are personified as giving way to the power of the Almighty.

Men fear the mountains, but the mountains tremble before the Lord. Sheep and lambs move lightly in the meadows; but the hills, which we are wont to call eternal, were as readily made to move as the most active creatures. Rams in their strength, and lambs in their play, are not more stirred than were the solid hills when Jehovah marched by. Nothing is immovable but God himself - the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his grace abideth fast for ever and ever. Even thus do mountains of sin and hills of trouble move when the Lord comes forth to lead his people to their eternal Canaan. Let us never fear, but rather let our faith say unto this mountain, "Be thou removed hence and cast into the sea," and it shall be done (Spurgeon)

**114:5:** "*What aileth thee, O thou sea?*" - That is, "What influenced thee - what alarmed thee - what put thee into such fear, and caused such consternation?" It is interesting that the Psalmist uses the language of surprise, as if these inanimate objects had been smitten with sudden terror; as if it were proper to ask an explanation regarding this conduct that seemed so strange.

*“Thou Jordan, that thou turnest back?”* – Continuing the personification, the Psalmist now asks the Jordan, “What caused you to turn back, to give passage to Israel into the Promised Land?”

**114:6:** *“Ye mountains, that ye skip like rams; Ye little hills, like lambs?”* - What was it that disturbed you, and put you into a panic, that you skipped like frightened lambs? These questions are put, in beautiful and poetical language, to inanimate creatures; the Red sea, the river of Jordan, the mountains of Sinai and Horeb, and the hills about them; to which an answer is provided in the next verse.

***The Presence of Jehovah In Israel's  
Provisions At The Rock In The Wilderness  
Verses 7-8***

*7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, At the presence  
of the God of Jacob,  
8 Who turned the rock into a pool of water, The flint into a fountain  
of waters.*

**114:7:** *“Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord”* – Unbelievers have sought to provide a “natural” explanation for the miracles at the Red Sea and the Jordan. But short of a miracle, these events are unexplainable. The true explanation – and the only reasonable explanation - of what occurred to the Red Sea, to the Jordan, to the mountains, and to the hills, was the fact that God was there. It was at His presence that the very mountains shook, and the waters fled. We should take great courage in knowing that “He that made the hills and mountains to skip thus can, when he pleases, dissipate the strength and spirit of the proudest of his enemies and make them tremble” (Clarke).

**114:8:** *“Who turned the rock into a pool of water”* – The reference is, undoubtedly, to the water that gushed from the rock which Moses struck in the wilderness. So abundant was the water that God gave to Israel that it is spoken of here as *“fountains of water.”* Oh, what our God can do – yes, He can provide a table in the wilderness!

***Lessons***

1. The power of God should produce fear in the hearts of every soul. If the natural elements – the sea, the mountains and hills – can be made to tremble at the sight of God’s great power, certainly each one of us should bow in great awe as we read of those events from ancient Biblical history.
2. God cares for His people. He will deliver from the most powerful of enemies, and provide in the most remote and desolate places.
3. The rise of Israel as a mighty nation is evidence of the watch care of God over His people to bring about the fulfillment of His promises.
4. “The causing of water to gush forth out of the flinty rock is a practical proof of unlimited omnipotence and of the grace which converts death into life. Let the earth then tremble before the Lord, the God of Jacob. It has always trembled before him, and before him let it tremble. For that which he has been he still ever is; and as he came once he will come again” - *Franz Delitzsch* (as quoted by Spurgeon)

## *“God Will Be Exalted”*

### ***Introduction***

It is not possible to ascertain on what occasion this Psalm was composed, or who was its author. It has been generally believed that it was written in the later periods of the Jewish history, and after the captivity in Babylon. Nor has any ascription been attached to the Psalm regarding the time of its composition. From the context we conclude that it was written during a time of some national peril or impending calamity in which the pagan enemies of Israel were taunting the nation and gloating over the fact that God had failed to deliver them. The Psalmist picks up the banner and encourages Israel to hold fast their faith in God and ascribe to Him the glory which He so fitly deserves. For this reason we have entitled the Psalm, “Keep Your Faith In God.” This is the third Psalm in the *Hallel*, and is born out of passion for the glory of God and His holy name.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have a statement that all glory is to be given to Jehovah God (vs. 1). This is followed by a brief description of the troubles facing the nation and the response of the pagan enemies questioning the existence and help of Jehovah (vs. 2). The Psalmist then provides us with a vivid description of the absolute helplessness of pagan idols (vss. 4-8). Next, the Psalmist exhorts Israel to trust in the Lord on the grounds of what He had done in the past and the blessings they presently enjoyed from His hand (vss. 9-16). The Psalm closes with an exhortation to do this at once, without delay, even while there was the breath of life in them, for once they have gone to the grave there would be no opportunity to fulfill this sacred obligation (vss. 17-18). Morgan’s assessment of the Psalm is noteworthy:

The song having uttered its key-note, proceeds in a passage of fine scorn for idols and idol worshipers. These idols have



from without power, appearance without life, and the effect of worshiping them is that the worshipers become insensate as they are. Following this, there is a fine appeal to the people of God to trust in Him with confident assurance that He will help. There then pass before the mind of the singer the heavens, God's own habitation; the earth, entrusted to men; and *Sheol*, the place of silence. All ends with a declaration which sounds the note of triumph even over death, for the praise of His people is to continue for evermore (Morgan, page 263).

We found a number of good outlines on this Psalm and suggest any of the following for your study:

Willmington's analysis of this chapter (*The Outline Bible*) is topical: "The psalmist delivers a strong polemic against idolatry by comparing the one true God with heathen idols:

- I. The True God (115:1-3; 9-19)
  - A. The psalmist's description (115:1-3)
    - 1. The Lord is loving and faithful (115:1)
    - 2. The Lord is sovereign (115:1-2)
  - B. The psalmist's desire (115:9-18)
    - 1. What he wanted Israel to do (115:9-11)
    - 2. Why he wanted Israel to do it (115:12-18)
- II. The False Gods (115:4-8)
  - A. They are merely silver and gold things (115:4, 8)
  - B. They have mouths, eyes, ears, noses, hands, and feet, but cannot speak, see, hear, smell, feel, or walk (115:5-7).

Phillips' five point outline is homiletic in style:

- I. Appreciation (115:1-3)
- II. Appraisal (115:4-8)
- III. Appeal (115:9-11)
- IV. Application (115:12-15)
- V. Applause (115:16-18).

We will study the Psalm under the following divisions:

We see God:

- I. Deserving Of Praise, verse 1

- II. Doing What He Pleases, verses 2-3
- III. Demonstrating His Power, verses 4-8
- IV. Delivering His People, verses 9-14
- V. Dispensing His Provisions, verses 15-18.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***God Deserving Of Praise*** **Verse 1**

*1 Not unto us, O Jehovah, not unto us, But unto thy name give glory, For thy lovingkindness, and for thy truth's sake.*

**115:1:** *"Unto thy name give glory"* - The Psalmist seeks no glory for himself. Twice he emphasizes this point: *"Not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."* This godly man recognized the majestic honor that is due even the name of Jehovah God. This is because the name of Jehovah stands for the whole of His attributes.

*"For thy lovingkindness, and for thy truth's sake"* - There were two principles at stake here. One was the mercy of God. If God had abandoned them, it would reflect upon the mercy of God. If God were not merciful, then any hope of protection and victory would be forever lost. The other was the truth concerning the one God. The Psalmist would later show the folly of idolatry. But if Jehovah God did not give victory to His people, but allowed the false "gods" to prevail, it would leave the impression that the pagan gods were more powerful than Jehovah and thus make God out to be a liar. Yes, there was a lot at stake here!

#### ***God Doing What He Pleases*** **Verses 2-3**

*2 Wherefore should the nations say, Where is now their God?*  
*3 But our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever he pleased.*

**115:2:** This verse serves as the keynote to the Psalm. The unbelieving taunted the Psalmist. It is as if these mockers scoffed God's seeming inability to deliver Israel in this their hour of need. "Where is your God now? Why does he not deliver you?" Such has long been one of the tactics of Satan. When the evil one tempted our Savior in the wilderness, he used the same form of temptation: "If

you are the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee" (Matt. 4:6). Of course the devil's intent was to produce doubt in the mind of our Lord if, and when, God did not deliver Jesus.

For ages skeptics have asked, "Where is your God?" They argue that suffering and God cannot co-exist. They fail to realize that God often allows suffering to come into the life of an individual to strengthen him and drive him to flee to God for refuge. "A pompous atheist once asked a sincere, dedicated believer whether his God was big or small. The response was courteous and yet comprehensive, '*Sir, he is so big that the universe cannot contain him and yet small enough that he can dwell in my heart.*' Another believer met just such a quibble about where God is by challenging his opponent, '*Show me where he is not and I will show you where he is*' (Robert Taylor, 285).

**115:3:** "*But our God is in the heavens*" - The Psalmist declares, "Our God really does exist! He is the true God, and He reigns in heaven, not upon the earth! His plans and purposes cannot be overruled by the idols and imaginations of men. Here is what Robert Taylor calls "the victorious response to the scoffer's irreverent query in verse 2" (Taylor, 285).

The scoffers seem to think they can mock God without impunity. The one thing they forget is that Jehovah is in the heavens. Unlike the lifeless and limited idols, our God occupies a lofty position far above the earth. He is above the sneers of men, and looks down with silent scorn on those who jeer at these makers of their powerless idols.

Incomprehensible in essence, he rises above the loftiest thought of the wise; absolute in will and infinite in power, he is superior to the limitations which belong to earth and time...If our God be neither seen nor heard, and is not to be worshipped under any outward symbol, yet is he none the less real and true, for he is where his adversaries can never be - in the heavens, whence he stretches forth his scepter, and rules with boundless power (Spurgeon).

An atheist once stood upon his public platform and jeered, "If there is a God in heaven, then let him strike me dead within the next 60 seconds!" He then began to count as the seconds ticked off his watch, and upon the conclusion of the minute, he again jeered, "See, I told you there is no God!" His antics remind us of the ant that stood upon a railroad track and declared, "There is no locomotive! If there is, then let it come along within the next minutes and run me

over!” Do we think for a moment that the engineer would crank up his locomotive and send it down the track to crush that puny unbelieving ant who denied the existence of the locomotive in the face of all obvious evidence? Of course not! Neither will God waste His time immediately sending forth His power to crush those who deny His existence in the face of such overwhelming evidence that He does exist.

*"He hath done whatsoever he pleased"* - He will do what is right and what pleases Him; and *if* He desires that His people suffer temporary defeat, then so be it! He still rules, and "all things work together for good, even to them who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). We liked Barnes' assessment of these words:

He is a sovereign God; and mysterious as are his doings, and much as there seems to be occasion to ask the question "Where is now your God?" yet we are to feel that what has occurred has been in accordance with his eternal plans, and is to be submitted to as a part of his arrangements. It is, in fact, always a sufficient answer to the objections which are made to the government of God, as if he had forsaken his people in bringing affliction on them, and leaving them, apparently without interposition, to poverty, to persecution, and to tears, that he is "in the heavens;" that he rules there and everywhere; that he has his own eternal purposes; and that all things are ordered in accordance with his will. There must, therefore, be some good reason why events occur as they actually do (Barnes).

### ***God Demonstrating His Power*** **Verses 4-8**

- 4 *Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands.*
- 5 *They have mouths, but they speak not; Eyes have they, but they see not;*
- 6 *They have ears, but they hear not; Noses have they, but they smell not;*
- 7 *They have hands, but they handle not; Feet have they, but they walk not; Neither speak they through their throat.*
- 8 *They that make them shall be like unto them; Yea, every one that trusteth in them.*

**115:4:** *"Their idols are silver and gold, The works of men's hands"* - The pagan idols are not eternal. They were created by the hands of men and are a manifestation of the fertile minds of men who are determined to cast God off but still fill that spiritual void in their life

left vacant by the rejection of the true God. "They have no powers of self-preservation or perpetuation except as tendered by their human molders and makers. They are no more valuable than the elements of which they are made; they are not even as potent as their producers. At least in men we have life and movement. The idols are lacking in both of these. It is strange their makers never sensed their utter vanity" (Robert Taylor, 285). Dug out of the earth from some dirty filthy mine, they were formed by the craftsman and are nothing more than man's vain imagination and the works of men's hands. It is the height of folly to think that what man can make could somehow be the maker of man. In such cases, man is not made in the image of his God, but his god is made in man's image, after the likeness of anyone who happens to shape and fashion his idol. The workman made it, therefore, it cannot be from God (Hosea 8:6). The argument is "un-over-gettable" (as one brother was wont to say).

*"silver and gold"* - While some pagans construct their idols of wood, in this particular case the idols of those taunting God were made of silver and gold. As such, they are valuable only in a monetary sense. But because they obtain a value thus, they are no less useless and void of power when it comes to the spiritual man. Today men have their idols of silver and gold but they are not shaped in the form of animals or a distorted mixture of man and animal. Instead, they are small, round, and carried in the pockets of their worshippers. Their "god" comes in the form of bigger houses, fancier automobiles, and stocks and bonds laid up in some earthly store house for safekeeping. Our Lord warned that mammon can become our master, and that "no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other" (Matt. 6:24).

**115:5-7:** *"They have mouths, but they speak not; Eyes have they, but they see not; They have ears, but they hear not; Noses have they, but they smell not; They have hands, but they handle not; Feet have they, but they walk not; Neither speak they through their throat."*

I have had the opportunity to travel to India where more than 80% of the population bows in reverence before such lifeless idols. The craftsmanship of the Hindu gods is, in many instances, quite exquisite. These idols are made with eyes, noses, ears, hands and feet. But there is no life within. The worshippers thereof might just as well worship a dead carcass. Though these idols have eyes, they cannot see or behold their worshippers; though they have noses, they

cannot smell the abundance of incense that is offered upon the burning altar; though they have ears, they cannot hear the chants offered by their "priests"; though they have hands and feet they remain stationary, in a fixed position without so much as an ounce of ability to go whithersoever their worshippers might go. They must be borne along in a wagon, or carried on a stretcher made of bamboo sticks and palm leaves. They cannot breath, talk, or provide even the slightest indication that they have life within. It is the height of foolishness to give homage to such worthless idols. The following appeared in my fifth volume on the Psalms, but certainly bears repeating here:

### **"An Empty Wagon Going Nowhere"**

by Tom Wacaster

(written in September 2005)

This past week has been a week of festivity in honor of the Hindu God. Worship services to that idol occur daily, extending into the late hours of the night during this week long festivity. It is sad to see such devotion to a false god. In contrast it is rewarding to see those who hear the truth and turn away from that false system of worship to serve the true and living God. There is one feature of this week long festivity that caught my interest. During the week gifts are given to this false Hindu god, and at the end of the week's festivity, the idol is placed on a wagon, and taken to the river and thrown in the river, along with the treasures and gifts that were given by the devotees of the idol. Many people die attempting to recover some of the treasures that are cast into the river with the idol. Every town has a number of these idols, and so when these false gods are put on the wagons, the procession can be quite lengthy. We were returning from a late night preaching appointment and passed one of those wagons that had evidently made its way to the river and was now returning to town. The decorations still draped the wagon, but the idol was gone. Gone too were the merrymaking, singing and dancing, and loud musical procession that accompanied the wagon on its way to the river. And I thought to myself, "An empty wagon going nowhere." That adequately describes the essence of the Hindu religion. While it may carry a colorful idol, and be draped with ribbons, and surrounded with singing and dancing, it is really an empty wagon going nowhere. It is empty, vain, and futile, whether it is going to or coming from the river.

Many a life can be described with the same words. All of us are on the road to eternity. Some travel the narrow way; while others

march with the multitudes down that broad path that leads to eternal ruin. Some, like the Hindu idol, are surrounded with wealth, merriment, and pleasure. Some are devotees to false religion; others to no religion at all. Multitudes are marching in the long dark night of spiritual darkness to eternal separation from God. With no awareness of their lost condition, they march on. Like that idolatrous procession going to the river, the masses of humanity are marching toward the river that will forever separate them from the God Who created them and loves them. And so many of them could easily have the epitaph engraved upon their tombstone: "An empty wagon going nowhere." How sad!

**115:8:** *"They that make them shall be like unto them; Yea, every one that trusteth in them"*

Idols are senseless, "blockish things" (Henry). When idol worshippers bow before such lifeless silver and gold, they demonstrate that they are foolish, without the ability to reason properly and think clearly. Though they possess a God-given mind, with the unique ability to reason, they demonstrate that they, like their idols, do not exercise any sense of proper reasoning. "Their makers become their mimickers...They rise no higher than what they deem their idols to be. About the only difference is that men actually perform the vices while their idols are simply supposed to have so acted" (Taylor, page 286-287).

*"They that trust in them shall be like unto them"* – When a man trusts in idols, he acts in a way that is most unreasonable and foolish. Paul stated the same truth when he declared the Gentile world, upon rejecting God, "became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened" (Rom. 1:21b). They became "fools," with no ability to distinguish between right and wrong, and like their "gods" they became senseless, helpless, useless and confused.

### ***God Delivering His People*** **Verses 9-14**

9 *O Israel, trust thou in Jehovah: He is their help and their shield.*

10 *O house of Aaron, trust ye in Jehovah: He is their help and their shield.*

11 *Ye that fear Jehovah, trust in Jehovah: He is their help and their shield.*

- 12 *Jehovah hath been mindful of us; he will bless us; He will bless the house of Israel; He will bless the house of Aaron.*  
13 *He will bless them that fear Jehovah, Both small and great.*  
14 *Jehovah increase you more and more, You and your children.*

**115:9-11:** This section focuses upon the power of God as it is demonstrated in His providential and powerful care for His people. In verse nine, he addresses the nation as a whole, "O Israel." In verse ten, he addresses the house of Aaron specifically, "O house of Aaron." In verse eleven he addresses all those "that fear Jehovah." Each verse concludes with the same refrain, "*He is their help and their shield.*" It is folly to trust in lifeless idols, but it is wisdom to trust in the living God. Having shown the foolishness of idols, the author now admonishes his audience to place their trust in God. Whereas the idols had no power, there was no reason to confide in them. They could not help in time of trouble. God, on the other hand, was a most adequate help and shield.

**115:12:** In verses 12-15 the Psalmist sets forth some reasons why we should trust in God rather than idols. Everything that is said about the true and living God could in no way bespeak the help that powerless and lifeless idols might offer.

First, the Psalmist appeals to *what we have experienced*. God "*has been mindful of us.*" History demonstrated that Jehovah had been mindful of their cause, their wants, and even their burdens and hardships. He had heard their prayers in time past, both remote and immediate. Though Israel had forgotten God on many occasions, the Almighty maintained His compassionate care for them.

Next the Psalmist appeals to *what they might expect*. Whereas God had been mindful of Israel, so God will bless both the nation and the house of Aaron. Though the enemies may enjoy a temporary victory on this particular occasion, God would not forget them; He is still the same God, His goodness and power the same, and His promises sure and firm. When the Psalmist says that God "*will bless us,*" it implies that He will do good for them. As humans we sometimes forget that even the trials and tribulation that God allows us to experience serve to strengthen us. Even as the Psalmist poured out his heart during a time when he was being taunted by his enemies, he never lost sight of the fact that God was still good to Israel. A similar statement was made at the beginning of the 73rd Psalm: "Surely God is good to Israel, Even to such as are pure in heart" (Psa 73:1)



**115:13:** *"He will bless them that fear Jehovah, Both small and great"* - God's blessings are conditional. Those who "fear Jehovah" will be the recipients of His blessings in a special way. While it is true that He blesses all mankind in a very general way, it is upon His people that His spiritual blessings are conferred. Peter acknowledged, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34-35). Whether "small" or "great," all have the opportunity to be recipients of God's blessings.

**115:14:** *"Jehovah increase you more and more, You and your children"* - The promise of "increase" is an appealing promise. Those who see in this nothing more than material prosperity are doomed to disappointment. While it is true that we are blessed materially one must guard against assuming that if he fears God that he will become wealthy. The "increase" and "prosperity" that comes with fearing God and keeping His commandments is the increase in spiritual blessings as well as physical (Matt. 6:33).

### ***God Dispensing His Provisions*** **Verses 15-18**

- 15 *Blessed are ye of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.*  
16 *The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; But the earth hath he given to the children of men.*  
17 *The dead praise not Jehovah, Neither any that go down into silence;*  
18 *But we will bless Jehovah From this time forth and for evermore. Praise ye Jehovah*

**115:15:** *"Blessed are ye of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth"* - It was not the lifeless idols, made from silver and gold, that adorned the heavens and earth with their beauty. Matter did not create matter. Yet when one assumes that the idols might adequately serve as one's "god," he at the same time implies that matter created matter - something that is absurd on the surface. It is Jehovah God Who made the heavens and the earth, and the Genesis account is the only logical and adequate explanation for this world's existence.

**115:16:** *The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; But the earth hath he given to the children of men* - Literally, *"the heavens are heavens of Jehovah."* That is, they belong to Him — He dwells there. On the other hand, *"the earth hath he given to the children of men."*

God framed this world for man's use, and it is to man that He has given dominion. But man's possession is only "temporary." We are but stewards of that which God has granted to us.

**115:17:** *"The dead praise not Jehovah, Neither any that go down into silence" -*

This may very well be a call to repentance. The proper time for men to obey God is this side of death. Persistence in idol worship will cease at death, and no opportunity will be given to render praise to God once this period of probation is past. So far as this life is concerned, the Psalmist calls for his audience to render praise and worship to the true and living God while there is yet time. As Adam Clarke noted: "Those dead men who worshipped as gods dumb idols, dying in their sins, worship not Jehovah; nor can any of those who go down into silence praise thee: earth is the place in which to praise the Lord for his mercies, and get a preparation for his glory" (Clarke).

**115:18:** *"But we will bless Jehovah, From this time forth and for evermore. Praise ye Jehovah" -* As if the Psalmist were declaring: "Our afflictions and tribulation shall not cause us to suspend our praises. Old age, increasing infirmities, and even death itself, will not silence our voice of praise, from henceforth and forevermore." In the face of overwhelming adversity, and even impending defeat, the Psalmist declares that he would continue to show forth praises to Jehovah God.

## ***Lessons***

1. Consider the folly and doom of the idolater (verses 4-8). First, he thinks that God cannot be anywhere because he has not seen God with his own eyes. He is like the Russian cosmonaut who declared there is no God because he could not see Him. Second, he worships an image which owes its very existence to his own cunning, which has no organs with which to see or hear, and is powerless to help in times of need. Third, such a one is destined to disappointment in the object of his trust for in time of need, the impotence of his idol will be seen. Finally, he is like the idol in his moral character. In fact, he is much worse. The idol has no morals because he is incapable of any demonstration of morality. The man who worships that idol likewise has no moral base, but his life demonstrates that void in ungodly and immoral actions.

2. There is a limit as to when men might seek and praise God. Once men pass beyond the boundaries of life and time, there is no more opportunity to seek God or to offer praises unto Him. The time of preparation will have passed. It is a sobering truth that the state in which we die, spiritually speaking, is the state in which we will spend eternity.
3. God is worthy of the highest honor (1) because of His lovingkindness (verse 1), (2) because of His truth and faithfulness (verse 1), (3) because He rules from heaven (verse 3) and (4) because He is omnipotent (verse 3).
4. "A beautiful contrast is formed between the God of Israel and the heathen idols. He made everything, they are themselves made by men; he is in heaven, they are upon earth; he doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, they can do nothing; he seeth the distresses, heareth and answereth the prayers, accepteth the offerings, cometh to the assistance, and effecteth the salvation of his servants; they are blind, deaf, and dumb, senseless, motionless, and impotent. Equally slow to hear, equally impotent to save, in time of greatest need, will every worldly idol prove, on which men have set their affections, and to which they have, in effect, said, "Thou art my God."

- *George Horne.*

5. Some years ago I came cross the following parody on humanism's implied view of the origin of things:

***The Materialistic View of Creation***  
(Author Unknown)

In the beginning there was man: laughing, thinking, smoking, stronger than dirt. It was he who decided that he had created the heavens and the earth, and all the host therein. And man said, "Let there be light." And there was light. Neon lights, florescent lights, spot lights, flash lights, laser lights, mercury vapor lights, General Electric lights, Sylvania and Westinghouse, all blinking on and off at the will of man. Man saw the light, and said, "Live better electrically." And man called the light "Common Wealth Edison," and the darkness he called "power-outage." Man looked at the earth, and said, "Let the earth bring forth green things." So, he tilled the ground, and seeded the cloud. He

saw the bumper crops that he had made and he said, "Yo-Ho-Ho, I'm the Jolly Green Giant." Man split the atom, he assembled computers, he conquered the heavens. The heavens he called "space" and the earth he called "ground control." And man said, "Let there be voices in the heavens praising me for my great wisdom." And the voices came: the lunar orbiter, tell-star and sputnik. And man heard the voices, and nodded his head, and said, "A-OK." Then man said, "I think I will create God, in my own image. Of course, I will make him to have the same color skin that I have, and he will be like a doting father, and everything I do he will always be on my side." So man THOUGHT he created God. Man said, "God, I will give you dominion over one hour on Sunday, though I may sleep through part of it." Then man went back to his own selfish, greedy ways, and he blew himself up. In the end, there was only the true and living God, and His sighs were too deep for words.

## *“The Saint’s Response To God’s Blessings”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is a beautiful expression of personal love we have for Jehovah God, which love grows out of redemption and deliverance in times of distress. In the Psalm we see the saint expressing his great love for his God for answered prayer and preservation in times of trouble. It is the fourth Psalm in the group of songs titled the *Hallel*. It naturally follows the previous Psalm for in this Psalm we find a note of triumph over death with which the last one closed. Evidently the Psalmist had been in some grave peril from which he practically despaired of life. But in this Psalm he has been delivered, and now he sings God's praises.

The author and date of this Psalm are not known. Some have suggested that the Psalm may have been written after the return from Babylon, but there is nothing within the Psalm that suggests such a time frame. The Psalm is very personal in nature. The Psalmist refers to himself 37 times in 16 verses. Only three verses are void of some personal reference. Consequently the Psalm is of such a nature that it could have been written at any time.

### ***Analysis***

The various study sources we consulted are not lacking in good outlines of this Psalm. Phillips’ followed his typical homiletic style thus:

- I. The Psalmist’s Gratitude (116:1-9)
- II. The Psalmist’s Grief (116:10-11)
- III. The Psalmist’s Goals (116:12-15)
- IV. The Psalmist’s Gladness (116:16-19).

We also found brother Deaver’s outline helpful: Declaration (verse 1), Reasons (verse 1b-2), Illustration (verses 3-11), Promises (verses 12-19a), Proclamation (verse 15), and Exhortation (verse 19b).

Morgan breaks the Psalm down into two movements. The first tells of his love, and declares the reason (verses 1-9). The second movement tells of the author's resulting faith, breaks forth into new exultation, and affirms his determination to praise (verses 10-19). If we follow this two fold division the Psalm can be viewed as (1) what God does for the Psalmist (verses 1-11), and (2) what the Psalmist does for God (verses 12-19).

It has been almost four decades since I scribbled the following outline in the pages of my ASV Bible: Love (verses 1-8), Duty and Faith (verses 9-11), and Gratitude (verses 12-19). Our study of the Psalm uncovered a wealth of spiritual truths, all of which revolve around the Psalmist's repeated words, "I Will" in response to what God had done for him. The author declares that he will:

1. "Call upon the Lord" (verses 2b; 17b, 13b);
2. "Walk before Jehovah" (verse 9);
3. "Speak" (verse 10);
4. "Take the cup of salvation" (13a);
5. "Pay my vows" (verse 18);
6. "Offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving (verse 17a)

For this reason, we have selected to title this Psalm, "The Saints Response to God's Blessings." We will divide the Psalm thus:

- I. What God does for the Psalmist (verses 1-11)
- II. What the Psalmist does for God (verses 12-19).

### ***Commentary***

#### ***What God Does For The Psalmist Verses 1-11***

- 1 *I love Jehovah, because he heareth My voice and my supplications.*
- 2 *Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.*
- 3 *The cords of death compassed me, And the pains of Sheol gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.*
- 4 *Then called I upon the name of Jehovah: O Jehovah, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.*
- 5 *Gracious is Jehovah, and righteous; Yea, our God is merciful.*

6 *Jehovah preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he saved me.*  
 7 *Return unto thy rest, O my soul; For Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee.*  
 8 *For thou hast delivered my soul from death, Mine eyes from tears, And my feet from falling.*  
 9 *I will walk before Jehovah In the land of the living.*  
 10 *I believe, for I will speak: I was greatly afflicted:*  
 11 *I said in my haste, All men are liars.*

**116:1:** "*I love Jehovah*" – So far as we know, this is the only place in the Bible where this particular phrase is used. The fact that the Psalmist begins the Psalm with such an affirmation sets the tone for the remainder of the song within his heart. Such an affirmation is a good way to start any day for it determines the set of the sails for the day's journey.

"*because*" - We love God *because* He first loved us (1 John 4:19). That divine love was manifested to the Psalmist in that the Lord heard the voice of the soul in distress and delivered him from the danger that threatened. Our love is a *consequent* love. God's goodness not only gives us opportunity to love, but *compels* us to love Him! But God's love for *us* is a *causeless* love. He loved us...just because! In fact, He loved us *in spite* of our sins (cf. Rom. 5:8).

"*he heareth my voice and my supplication*" – One of most amazing traits of our God is that He listens to our prayers. Like a father toward his child, our heavenly Father bends His ear toward His earthly creature so as to hear their supplication. God's tender compassion toward us is abundant reason to love God in return. "Answered prayers are silken bonds which bind our hearts to God. When a man's prayers are answered, love is the natural result" (Spurgeon).

**116:2:** "*Because he hath inclined his ear unto me*" – The fact that our God "hath inclined his ear" speaks volumes of His compassion for man. "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" (Psa 8:4). God's "mindfulness" is demonstrated in that the Creator of the universe is willing to "incline" His ear to hear our requests. The Hebrew word means "to stretch out, to extend, to bend, or to bow." The same word was used by Isaiah to express God's loving patience toward disobedient Israel: "For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still" (Isa. 9:12, 17).

*“Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live”* – Here is the first “I will” in the Psalm. God had inclined His ear toward the Psalmist, so he (the Psalmist) would stand in readiness to communicate with his God. It is as if he were saying, “I purpose to invoke him as long as I shall live.” The fact that God is willing to listen should embolden us to pray even more.

**116:3:** *“The cords of death compassed me”* – The KJV renders this “the sorrows of death.” The word itself is metaphorical. It is taken from cruel creditors who would bind their debtors fast, as with cords, so that they shall not be able to get loose. The word was also used to refer to things that were tied fast with cords. The word here expresses a most lamentable situation in which the Psalmist found himself. The ASV expresses the “cause” of the sorrows, while the KJV picks up on the “consequence” of the “cords of death” that threatened the author. Both cause and consequence are included in the Hebrew word, hence the difficulty in its rendering.

*“of death”* – The author tells us that the situation was deadly. These “sorrows” were not far off, but even upon him, as waters that threaten a man when he is in the midst of a flood. But they were also in great number, as expressed with the plural “cords.” Like bees that might swarm about a man’s head, so these sorrows were all about the author.

*“the pains of Sheol”* – The *extent* of his sorrows were such that it produced “pain.” This was not some “inconvenience” that might be endured, but something that produced great pain in his heart.

*“gat hold upon me: I found trouble”* – These two verbs are both the same in the Hebrew; they differ only in tense, number, and person. The former (“gat hold upon me”) shows that these miseries found him and seized him. He did not seek them, and would have willingly escaped them were it within his power. The later (“I found”) would suggest that these things were the natural outcome of the course of his life. The New Testament expressed the same “consequence” of godly living: “Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). It is not that the saint goes seeking persecution, but that it comes as a consequence of his godly living. Were it within his power, the child of God would do all to avoid persecution, but he knows that it cannot be avoided if he is to live faithful to his God.



**116:4:** *“Then called I upon the name of Jehovah”* – Many a man has turned away from God in times of distress, hardened by the circumstances of life and unwilling to maintain his faith in He Who would allow him to go through the fire. But the Psalmist, unable to go to God, would therefore *call* upon Him. “In his extremity his faith came to the front: it was useless to call on man, and it may have seemed almost as useless to appeal to the Lord; but yet he did with his whole soul invoke all the attributes which make up the sacred name of Jehovah, and thus he proved the truth of his confidence” (Spurgeon).

*“the name of the Lord”* – The Psalmist realized that God’s name is both glorious and full of majesty. One author put it this way: “God will take good notice of them that take due notice of him, and will open his ears to them by name who rightly call upon his name.” Indeed,

Let us pity those who are shouting to a deaf heaven the names of so-called saints. It is not the name of Mary, Buddah, Muhammad, or Confucius that God honors. The names of bankrupt sinners, no matter how great their reputation among men, cannot move the heart and hand of God...No name but His unlocks the storehouses of the sky (Phillips, page 240).

*“I beseech thee, deliver my soul”* – The plea was short, comprehensive, and to the point. God is not concerned about the length of our prayer so much as the content of our prayer. “Here we have no multiplicity of words, and no fine arrangement of sentences; everything is simple and natural; there is not a redundant syllable, and yet there is not one lacking” (Spurgeon).

**116:5:** *“Gracious is Jehovah, and righteous; Yea, our God is merciful”* – Three beautiful traits of Jehovah are acknowledged by the author. Our God is “gracious,” “righteous,” and “merciful.” Our God is “gracious” in that He bestows upon His children such wonderful blessings. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning” (Jas. 1:17).

He is also “righteous.” He is just and true in all of His ways. He cannot be tempted to do evil, nor does He tempt men to sin (Jas. 1:13). Men may fail in their judgment toward others, but our God executes RIGHTEOUS acts at all times and in every circumstance. None of His decisions are in any way inequitable. Consequently, our God has a special regard for the oppressed, and the needy. It may be

asked, “If God executes righteousness and equity, why then do the wicked seem to prosper more than the righteous?” The 37<sup>th</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> Psalms answer that question. Men may measure justice by the present; the here and now. But God’s justice must be seen through the glasses of eternity and not time. When life is over, those godly saints who have received scorn and persecution shall be justified when their God “executeth righteous acts.”

He is also “merciful,” compassionate, tenderhearted, possessing a heart full of pity, as a father to his child. He sympathizes with His people under all their afflictions (cf. Psalms 86:5). God does not dole out His mercy by bits and pieces. He pours it forth abundantly, even to the point of overflowing. He is not stingy, nor does He withhold His lovingkindness toward us. The prophet has recorded this truth which such elegant words: “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:18-19). God’s mercy is multifaceted. It is manifest in so many ways, to all men. The disobedient and rebellious receive His “sparing mercy.” Toward them God is longsuffering, “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Those who hear His gospel and respond thereto receive His “inviting mercy.” Those who are troubled receive His “consoling mercy.” And those who are faithful to Him will eventually receive His “saving mercy.”

**116:6:** “*Jehovah preserveth the simple*” - Sometimes the word “simple” refers to those who are negligent in their responsibility toward God:

Proverbs 1:32 - “For the backsliding of the simple shall slay them, And the careless ease of fools shall destroy them.”

Proverbs 7:7 - “And I beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, A young man void of understanding.”

Proverbs 14:18 - “The simple inherit folly; But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.”

But the word in this verse refers to those who are of contrite heart and trusting faith. “For all these things hath my hand made, and so

all these things came to be, saith Jehovah: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word” (Isa. 66:2).

Read observantly the histories of the Gospel, and well weigh who they were to whom Christ in the days of his flesh afforded succor, and you shall find them to be such simple ones as are here intended...Behold here how of all others they who seem to have least cause to trust on God have most cause to trust on him. Simple persons, silly wretches, despicable fools in the world's account, who have not subtle brains, or crafty wits to search after indirect means, have, notwithstanding, enough to support them, in the grand fact that they are such as the Lord preserveth. Now, who knoweth not that “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man; it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes” (William Gouge).

*“I was brought low, and he saved me”* – The Psalmist returns to his own case as an example of Divine goodness. He had been brought low by affliction, by distress of his enemies. But in all his trials he was provided succor by God's gracious hand of mercy. He was lifted out of the “pains of death” and set upon a high plane. His faith in God was “simple,” uncomplicated, and without a trace of doubt. The Old Testament records a number of cases of men and women with the same “simple” heart and trusting faith:

They are such as honestly keep the plain way of God's commandments, without question or complaint. Jacob is called a plain man (Gen. 25:27); David a man after God's heart (Acts 13:22). And time would fail us to speak of the faith of Moses, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Gideon, Samuel and the prophets (Heb. 11), all of whom it was said “through faith” they “subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises...from weakness were made strong.” These are the “simple in heart” who have experienced God's deliverance. May their number increase!

**116:7:** *“Return unto thy rest, O my soul”* –The word “rest” is put in the plural, and indicates complete and entire rest, at all times, and under all circumstances. This would be the state of tranquility, the condition of his soul before the danger that threatened. Jesus promised His followers the kind of peace that the world cannot provide (John 14:27).

*“Return”* – This is the very word which the angel used to Hagar when she fled from her mistress, “Return” (Gen. 16:9). As Hagar through her mistress' rough dealing 'with her fled from her, so the soul of this

prophet by reason of affliction fell from its former quiet confidence in God. As the angel therefore bid Hagar “return to her mistress,” so the understanding of this prophet bids his soul return to its rest.

*“Jehovah hath dealt bountifully with thee”* – Looking back on past experiences, the Psalmist projects that experience into the present situation and draws the conclusion that his soul should cease to be anxious about the present calamity and enjoy the “rest” promised. The word which is here rendered “dealt bountifully,” means properly “to deal” with anyone; to “treat” anyone well or ill; and then, to requite, or recompense. When used absolutely, as it is here, it is commonly employed in a good sense, meaning to deal favorably, or kindly, toward anyone; to treat anyone with favor. It means here that God had shown him kindness or favor, and had thus laid the foundation for gratitude and praise. It should be observed that the soul was created to find its rest in God alone. Thus, it cannot find rest elsewhere. When we are discouraged, disappointed, or despondent, we should cease our fretting and return to the rest promised by God.

**116:8:** *“For thou hast delivered”* - Notice the three fold deliverance - (1) my soul from death, (2) my eyes from tears, and (3) my feet from falling. Some distinguish the three particulars thus: *“He hath delivered my soul from death,”* by giving me a good conscience; *“mine eyes from tears,”* by giving a quiet conscience; *“my feet from falling,”* by giving an enlightened and assured conscience.

**116:9:** *“I will walk before Jehovah in the land of the living”* – The Psalmist resolves to live among men *as if* he were living in the sight of God. The same truth was expressed by Paul when giving instructions to servants (which instruction is applicable to all men in every situation):

Ephesians 6:5-7 – “Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph. 6:5-7).

Colossians 3:22 – “Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God”

A man's walk demonstrates his way of life: some men live only as in the sight of their fellow men, having regard to human judgment and opinion; but the truly gracious man considers the presence of God, and acts under the influence of His all-observing eye. “Thou God seest me” is a far better influence than “My master sees me.”

There may be some question as to how a man can “walk” while at the same time “resting.” It must be kept in mind that the *walking* and *rest* here mentioned, being of a *divine* nature, do not oppose each other. Spiritual “rest” does not make a man idle; nor does spiritual “walking” make a man weary. The two actions are actually subservient to each other, and it is hard to say whether that *rest* be the *cause* of this *walking*, or this *walking* a *cause* of that *rest*. Indeed, both are true, since he that *rests in God* cannot but *walk before him*, and by *walking before*, we come to *rest in God*. *Returning to rest* is an act of *confidence*, since there is no rest to be had but in God, nor in God but by believing affiance in, and reliance on him. *Walking before God* is an act of *obedience*; when we disobey we wander and go astray, only by obedience we walk. A companion to this verse would be Isaiah 40:31, “They that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.”

“*the land of the living*” – There are two possible explanations to the Psalmist's vow that he would walk before God “in the land of the living.” The language suggests that he had determined to set the proper example before others so long as he was allowed to live – as long as he was permitted to walk among the living. He might also be making reference to those who were alive *spiritually*. He would be careful as to the company he would keep, making sure that he walked with others of like mind. He had determined that he would, by his example, encourage others of like precious faith to walk in the same path. God's word makes a distinction between those who are *alive* and those who are *dead*, spiritually speaking. “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1 Tim. 5:6); Sardis had a name that she lived, but was dead (Rev. 3:1); “The dead bury their dead” (Matt. 8:22).

**116:10-11:** The meaning of these two verses seems to be this: the Psalmist declares that he spoke what he believed – he was clear and concise in his language, and the words expressed the depth of trust in God as expressed in verse 4. But because of his affliction, and his complete and absolute trust in God, he affirmed that something was said in haste, that something being that “all men are liars.”

One source we consulted suggested that the first part of verse 10 should be connected with verse 9, thus rendering the sentence, “I will walk before Jehovah in the land of the living! I believe, for I will speak.” The last part of verse 10 would then be connected with verse 11, “I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.” Either construction does not materially affect the meaning of the verses.

*“I believe, for I will speak”* – When men are convicted that what they believe is true, how can they do otherwise? The weak and cowardly heart will seek to hide what he truly believes; but the courageous will speak with boldness.

*“I said in my haste”* – Many a word has been spoken in haste and afterward produced great regret on the part of one who thus spoke. James tells us that we should be “swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19). Unfortunately many a man has been swift to speak and slow to hear, and has brought upon himself great sorrow and heartache.

*“all men are liars”* – The Psalmist spoke this in haste, and cannot be taken in an absolute sense. The context suggests that the author was making a comparative statement, and he admitted that his conclusion was not carefully thought out.

It might be noted in passing that the Septuagint and some other ancient versions make verses 10-19 a separate Psalm.

### ***What the Psalmist does for God*** **Verses 12-19**

12 *What shall I render unto Jehovah For all his benefits toward me?*

- 13 *I will take the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of Jehovah.*  
 14 *I will pay my vows unto Jehovah, Yea, in the presence of all his people.*  
 15 *Precious in the sight of Jehovah Is the death of his saints.*  
 16 *O Jehovah, truly I am thy servant: I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid; Thou hast loosed my bonds.*  
 17 *I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, And will call upon the name of Jehovah.*  
 18 *I will pay my vows unto Jehovah, Yea, in the presence of all his people,*  
 19 *In the courts of Jehovah's house, In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye Jehovah.*

The second half of the Psalm contains various promises the Psalmist had made in light of what God had done for him. This is not to say that there is nothing in this section about the blessings bestowed by God, anymore than the first section is void of any promises made by the Psalmist. It is, rather, that the Psalmist is focusing on how he would respond in view of God's goodness to him.

**116:12:** *"What shall I render unto Jehovah..."* – This is a most important question and one that can only be answered with due consideration of God's word, and the appreciation that one has in his heart for the blessings God has given him. It might be good, from time to time, to take stock of what God has given us. He makes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust (Matt. 5:45). It is in Him that we live, move and have our very being (Acts 17:28). For us the rivers flow, the fountains pour forth, the sun shines, and the earth produces its fruit. In addition to the physical blessings we enjoy there are the spiritual blessings provided through Jesus Christ our Lord. Yes,

The question of the verse is a very proper one: the Lord has rendered so much mercy to us that we ought to look about us, and look within us, and see what can be done by us to manifest our gratitude. We ought not only to do what is plainly before us, but also with holy ingenuity to search out various ways by which we may render fresh praises unto our God. His benefits are so many that we cannot number them, and our ways of acknowledging his bestowments ought to be varied and numerous in proportion (Spurgeon).

*"for all his benefits"* - This Psalm, though penned upon occasion of one particular benefit, brought to mind the many benefits bestowed upon the Psalmist. He thus magnifies those blessings and speaks

highly of them. This produces a desire to give back to God. But he knows there is nothing that comes close to measuring up to the blessings bestowed by God; but he desired to render something acceptable, something that God would be pleased with as the acknowledgment of a grateful mind. The next few verses will describe precisely what would most adequately show his appreciation to God.

**116:13:** “*I will take the cup of salvation*” – There are varying opinions as to the meaning of this “cup of salvation.” Barnes views this as “the cup by which his sense of the greatness of the salvation might be expressed - the cup of thanksgiving.” Clarke concluded that the Psalmist was “alluding to the action in taking the cup of blessing among the Jews, which, when the person or master of the family lifted up, he said these words, ‘Blessed be the Lord, the Maker of the world, who has created the fruit of the vine!’”

If these songs were intended to be prophetic of the night in which our Lord was betrayed, the “cup” may have a much richer and deeper meaning. Our Lord prayed on the night He was betrayed that the “cup” might pass from Him. He tempered that prayer with humble submission to the Father by acknowledging, “Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.” If our Lord and His disciples sang this beautiful Psalm on the night of His betrayal, the “cup” would, without doubt, speak of the cup of suffering. In view of the fact that this Psalm contains some severe trial through which the Psalmist was going, it is not unreasonable to see in these words a reference to the cup of suffering that would come with his deliverance. Matthew Henry thus concluded,

Some understand it not of the cup that he would present to God, but of the cup that God would put into his hand. *I will receive, First, The cup of affliction.* Many good interpreters understand it of that cup, that bitter cup, which is yet sanctified to the saints, so that to them it is a cup of salvation. See Philippians 1:19, “*This shall turn to my salvation...*” - it is a means of spiritual health. David's sufferings were typical of Christ's, and we, in ours, have communion with his, and his cup was indeed a cup of salvation.”

It is as if the author were saying, “God, having bestowed so many benefits upon me, whatever cup he shall put into my hands I will readily take it, and not dispute it; welcome his holy will.” Seeing that David was a man after God's heart, it is most fitting that he (if indeed



he is the author of this Psalm) would express the same sentiments of our Lord when facing the hour of trial.

*“and call upon the name of the Lord”* – No matter how bitter that “cup of salvation” may prove to be, there is refuge in God.

**116:14:** *“I will pay my vows unto Jehovah”* – The “vows” refers to the promises the author made during his hour of trial. Such promises are often made in haste and forgotten once the trial has passed. There is nothing wrong with making a vow, but when a vow is made, it must surely be kept. More often than not vows are made in times of severe suffering. The one who makes a vow is, no doubt sincere. But let the trial pass and he soon forgets the promises that were made in haste. Some years ago I had a delinquent family call and ask if I could make the 25 mile drive to the hospital where their father was struggling with some severe illness. I did so, sat for several hours with the family and made a return trip two or three times over the next week. The father recovered, and the family as well as the father, spoke of “getting back into church.” We never saw their face at church; not one single time. Two years later the father was once again struggling with his health, and once again he checked into the hospital. And, once again the family called on me to come visit him. In my youthful impatience I told them that they made a promise to God two years earlier. What made them think that God would listen to them now as they asked God to help their father in his hour of sickness? I never made that visit, and as I expected, that family never darkened the door way of the church.

*“in the presence of all his people”* – Although the vows were made in private, the Psalmist avows that he will perform those vows publicly.

**116:15:** This little verse is one of the most beautiful in all the Psalms, if not the entire Old Testament. The death of a saint is an object of great value in the sight of our God. This is because such a one has surrendered his life in service to God and to the fulfillment of His will. We were particularly impressed with Clarke’s assessment of this verse:

God has a people, even in this world, that are his saints, his merciful ones, or men of mercy, that have received mercy from him and show mercy for his sake. The saints of God are mortal and dying; nay, there are those that desire their death, and labour all they can to hasten it, and sometimes prevail to be the death of them; but it is *precious in the sight of the Lord*; their life is so (2Ki 1:13); their blood is so, Psa 72:14. God often wonderfully

prevents the death of his saints when there is but a step between them and it; he takes special care about their death, to order it for the best in all the circumstances of it; and whoever kills them, how light soever they may make of it, they shall be made to pay dearly for it when inquisition is made for the blood of the saints, Mat 23:35. Though *no man lays it to heart* when *the righteous perish*, God will make it to appear that he lays it to heart. This should make us willing to die, to die for Christ, if we are called to it, that our death shall be registered in heaven; and let that be precious to us which is so to God (Clarke)

This verse allows us to look deep into the heart of the Psalmist and learn an important lesson. In his distress he made promises to God, but those promises were made with the realization that were God to let him die at the hands of his enemies, he would be willing to pass through the shadow of death knowing that his death would be precious in God's sight. "If we have walked before him in the land of the living, we need not fear to die before him when the hour of our departure is at hand" (Spurgeon).

**116:16:** "*I am truly thy servant*" – Having asked, "What shall I render unto Jehovah" (verse 12), the Psalmist acknowledges here that complete submission as a servant is the greatest expression of gratitude possible. "He had called God's people, who are dear to him, *his saints*; but, when he comes to apply it to himself, he does not say, *Truly I am thy saint* (that looked too high a title for himself), but, *I am thy servant*. David was a king, and yet he glories in this, that he was God's servant. It is no disparagement, but an honour, to the greatest kings on earth, to be the servants of the God of heaven" (Clarke).

"*I am...the son of thy handmaid*" – Evidently the Psalmist was a second generation saint and servant of God. There are at least three ways a person could become a servant. When a people are conquered, those who survive are often taken captive and placed into servitude to their captors. They became part of the spoils of war. Second, a person could be born into a family of servants and himself become a servant to his parents' master. Or third, if he were bought, or redeemed at the market, he becomes a servant by right of purchase. Christians are servants because they have been *conquered* by their King, *born* into the family of God, and *redeemed* by the blood of Jesus.

"*thou hast loosed my bonds*" – God had heard his supplication and set him free from his "bonds." Death had threatened him (verse 3),

trouble and sorrow had descended upon him (verse 3b), and tears had filled his eyes (verse 8). In haste he had said some things that, upon closer examination, were unjust and simply not true. From all these God had set him free. Now gratitude filled his heart.

**116:17:** *“I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving”* – It was not just “thanksgiving,” but the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” There is more here than an outward obligation to offer up a thank offering. The author, from the depths of his heart, would express gratitude for the great deliverance he had experienced.

**116:18:** *“I will pay my vows...in the presence of all his people”* – Repetition is a means of reinforcing a truth. Age may account for oft repeated statements, but in this case the author wanted to remind his readers of his intentions to render unto to God a token of his appreciation for divine “benefits.”

**116:19:** *“In the courts of Jehovah”* - He will pay his vows in the courts of the tabernacle, where there was a crowd of Israelites attending, *in the midst of Jerusalem*, that he might bring devotion into more reputation.

*“Praise ye Jehovah”* – The Psalm closes with an encouragement for his readers to follow his example. He was in essence saying, “**I** have offered praise and service to God – now will you not do the same?”

## ***Lessons***

1. We often say things in “haste” (verse 11) because of a hasty temper. As a result we often pass judgment where we have not that right.
2. The death of a saint is an argument for the truth of religion, an example of faith’s sustaining power, and a source of comfort to those who are about to die. No wonder the death of a saint is precious in God’s sight.
3. On being thankful, permit me to share with you two stories that have been in my files for more than 25 years. The first of these tells about a circuit-riding preacher of a hundred years ago who was asked to ride miles out of his way to hold services in a church known for being tightfisted. His text was 1 Thessalonians 5:18, “In everything give thanks for this is the will of God in

Christ Jesus concerning you." The minister preached an eloquent sermon on gratitude and stressed the need of finding a sense of thanksgiving in every situation of life. At the close of the service, the minister passed his wide-brimmed hat for the collection. It came back empty. He turned it upside down, and then shook it, but nothing came out. As the preacher began his benediction, the congregation wondered what he could give thanks for. "Father in Heaven," the minister prayed good naturedly, "I thank thee for many things, but especially for getting my hat back."

Our second story comes out of the life of Matthew Henry, the well known Bible commentator. Mr. Henry was a cheerful man, and reportedly of easy temperament. Once, when he discovered a thief had stolen his purse, he turned to his diary and entered this observation: "Let me be thankful first, because he never robbed be before; second, because although he took my purse he did not take my life; third, because although he took all I possessed, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed."

4. It is often difficult to find a blessing in trials and tribulation. The problem that we face in our affluent society is that we often mistake our luxuries for necessities, and mere inconveniences as severe trials. There is a therapeutic value to gratitude. Being grateful for the beauty of life in any and every circumstance will help us bear the burden of the moment and lift us up to face our tomorrows with a deeper appreciation for what we DO have, rather than fret over what we may have lost.

### ***A Grateful Heart***

Give me a grateful heart, Lord,  
For each small favor granted.  
As years unfold, may I behold  
Life still through eyes enchanted.  
Let me find beauty in all things,  
Nor be too blind to see  
The goodness in my fellowman,  
That he would find in me.

Grant that my ears remain attuned  
To hear the smallest sigh,  
And may I lend a gentle touch  
To those less sure than I.

Let me remember lessons learned,  
And profit from the past,  
And may I build a bridge of dreams,  
That shall forever last.

Let me rejoice in simple things  
I need no wealth to buy  
The scent of pine upon the wind,  
A burnished copper sky.  
Scarlet roses on the fence,  
Sunrise through the trees,  
Lord grant that I may not outgrow  
Affinity with these.

Give me a grateful heart, Lord,  
Let me be satisfied,  
When days are less than sunny  
And plans lie at low tide.  
For life's a sweet adventure,  
That leads to who know where,  
And love was made for sharing,  
And hearts were made to care

.  
--Grace E. Easley

## *“A Small Psalm With A Big Message”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is the fifth in the *Hallel*, and is the shortest in the Psalter, and in the entire Bible. Some have calculated that it is the center chapter of the Bible as well. There must be some reason for including a Psalm of only two verses in our English Bibles and only 17 words in the Hebrew. Morgan wrote, “In it in a very deep sense is fulfilled the saying so common that ‘brevity is the soul of wit.’ It lives indeed with the wisdom of perfect realization” (Morgan, page 265). Roy Deaver likewise pointed out, “A poem does not have to be long to be brilliant. A sermon does not have to be eternal to be immortal. Often it is the case that the shortest is the best” (Deaver, *Southwest Lectures, The Book of Psalms, Volume II*, page 296).

Paul quotes this Psalm in Romans 15:11 and applies it to the salvation of the Gentiles. It is, therefore, *messianic* in its import. It “reaches through the years and envisions the time when the Gentiles (as well as the Jews) could come to have the salvation which is in Christ, upon the terms of the gospel” (Deaver, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms, Volume II*, page 109).

We do not know who wrote the Psalm, nor is there anything that might help us determine the time of its composition. It may have been used as a doxology in worship services, or as a call to worship and praise Jehovah.

### ***Analysis***

Dividing the Psalm is difficult due in large measure to its brevity. Roy Deaver provided a five point outline: (1) Exhortation, wherein the Psalmist exhorts *praise* and *extol*; (2) Identification, in which the author identifies the one to whom praise is to be extended; (3) Application, where he shows to whom this exhortation is applicable; (4) Explanation, wherein he offers a reason why the Lord is to be praised.

It is clear enough that the Psalm is a call for international praise. We will study the Psalm under the following outline:

- I. Call to Praise (verse 1)
- II. Cause for Praise (verse 2a-2b)
- III. Command to Praise (verse 2c)

### ***Commentary***

#### ***The Call to Praise*** **Verse 1**

*1 O praise Jehovah, all ye nations; Laud him, all ye peoples.*

**117:1:** The word *praise* translates the Hebrew *‘hallel’* from which we get our English “Hallelujah,” and the more common word “praise.”

*“all ye nations”* – God makes no distinction between the nations and neither should we. God is not the God of America, or white Caucasians. He is the Creator of all men, and the call to praise Him goes forth to His whole creation. The gospel is to be preached to all the nations. The wall of partition has been taken down (Eph. 2:14). It should be observed that there would come a time when all nations would be permitted into God’s presence. Our English uses two words, “nations” and “peoples,” to translate the same Hebrew word.

*“Laud him, all ye peoples”* – Our English word is defined as “praise, commendation,” and connotes music or singing in honor of anyone (Webster). The Hebrew word is *‘habach’* and means to “address in a loud tone” (Strong). While reverence is to characterize our worship to God, timidity and shyness are not necessarily synonymous with reverence. We are not suggesting that worship should become some kind of “holy Wow” (as per an apostate brother), but this scribe has seen many a saint sing as if there is no joy in his heart. His praises to God are subdued and quiet, almost to the point of silence. Let someone send forth a hearty “Amen” and he is considered overly zealous or just plain “nuts.” It seems to me that there is a happy medium that respects both the reverence and the joy of the occasion to worship our God.

## ***The Cause For Praise***

### **Verse 117:2a-b**

**2** *For his lovingkindness is great toward us; And the truth of Jehovah endureth for ever*

**117:2a-b:** The cause for praise is two-fold. The first is God's "lovingkindness...toward us." If we keep in mind the prophetic nature of this Psalm as it envisions the time when all men could enjoy fellowship with God, then the "lovingkindness" of God would find special application as a cause for praising God. It speaks of a time when these should become one people, partaking of the same grace, blessings, promises, and privileges; in which the grace, mercy, and lovingkindness of God has greatly appeared (Titus 2:11-14).

*"and the truth of Jehovah endureth forever"* – Here is another cause for praise, namely the undeniable fact that God's truth is eternal and everlasting. Through the ages men have attempted to destroy it or render its influence of no effect.

Before we leave this verse please note: It is mercy and truth joined hand in hand that provides salvation for men. It cannot be truth alone, for truth without mercy means no hope. Nor is it mercy separate from truth, for then mercy becomes nothing more than sentimentalism. We like the way one brother put it: "Here lies the difference between the man who is ***pardoned*** and the man who will ***perish***. The man who is ***pardoned*** is interested in truth, no matter what he may have to sacrifice to attain it. The man who ***perishes*** is interested in the truth only if it agrees with what he already has and does not ask for him to make any great changes. The man who is ***pardoned*** would give his life for the truth. The man who ***perishes*** would give up the truth to maintain his physical life" (Jimmy Clark, source unknown).

## ***Command to Praise***

### **Verse 2c**

**2c** - *Praise ye Jehovah.*

**117:2c:** Praise is not only a privilege but an obligation. It is astonishing, in view of the imperative set forth in the Bible to "praise" and "worship" God that so many so called "Christians" fail in this sacred obligation. Sunday has become just another day for pleasure and the pursuit of individual desires, so much so that the



churches have become little more than empty shrines where adoration of God once filled our land. It was recently reported that there are seven times as many who hold to the Christian faith in England than Muslims, but that the worship halls of Islam are filled with more worshippers on any given Friday than the churches are filled with “Christians” on Sunday morning.

Even more tragic are the number of New Testament Christians who no longer fulfill their obligation not to forsake the assembly. Little or no effort is put forth to make the first day of the week a special day for gathering in worship. Worship has been relegated to a matter of option rather than an obligation, and the Lord’s church and this nation are the worse for it.

### ***Lessons***

1. The last verse suggests some things about God: He is always faithful, always infallible, and always acts according to promise
2. In God's worship it is not always necessary to be long. Sometimes few words can express the sentiments of the heart.
3. We do not know who wrote the following but it certainly applicable here:

No fragment of any army ever survived so many battles as the Bible; no citadel ever withstood so many sieges; no rock was ever battered by so many hurricanes, and swept by so many storms. And yet it stands! It has seen the rise and fall of Daniel's four empires. Assyria bequeaths a few mutilated figures of the riches of our national museum. Media and Persia, like Babylon, which they conquered, have been weighed in the balance, and long ago found wanting. Greece faintly survives in it historic fame; and Rome of the Caesars has long since ceased to boast. And yet the Book that foretells all this still survives. While nations, kings, philosophers, systems, institutions, have faded away, the Bible engages now men's deepest thoughts, is examined by the keenest intellects, stands revered before the highest tribunals, is more read and sifted and debated, more devoutly loved and more vehemently assailed, more defended and more denied, more industriously translated and freely given to the world, more honored and more abused, than any other book the world ever saw. It survives

all changes, itself unchanged; it moves all minds, yet is moved by none; it sees all things decay, itself incorruptible; it sees myriads of other books engulfed in the stream of time, yet it is borne along till the mystic angel shall plant his foot upon the sea, and swear by Him that liveth forever that time shall be no longer. The old Book stands!

## *“The King’s Journey Home”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the sixth and last of the *Hallel* Psalms. A careful reading of the Psalm reveals that its author was on his way to the Temple, and in view of some great blessing, was calling upon the people to join him in praise unto Jehovah. Some have connected this Psalm with the feast of the Tabernacles celebrated in Nehemiah chapter eight. The walls of Jerusalem had been completed in spite of the opposition from God’s enemies. The work was completed in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of Artaxerxes (444 B.C.) and one month later the inhabitants of Jerusalem joined in a joyful festival of national rejoicing.

The wise and discerning student will quickly pick up on the prophetic overture of this Psalm. Our opinion is that David is the author of the Psalm, and that the occasion, though not necessarily the purpose of the Psalm, was his entry into Jerusalem as the rightful king of Israel following the death of Saul. Seeing that David was a type of our Lord then it is fitting that he would write of He Who was both the Son, and Lord, of David.

Certain verses in this Psalm were quoted by New Testament writers in reference to the Christ (cf. Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:11; Luke 20:17). Peter quoted from this Psalm in reference to our Lord being “the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the chief corner stone” (Acts 4:11; Psa. 118:22). Some commentators do not think the Psalm was originally intended to refer to Christ, but we do not see how the prophetic tenor of the Psalm can be missed. In fact, almost every verse is applicable to our Lord’s sojourn upon this earth, and His final victory over sin and the devil. Many of the Jewish “rabbins regarded the psalm as referring to the Messiah, and not a few Christian interpreters have supposed that it had such an original reference” (Barnes). Barnes then makes a one hundred eighty degree turn about and concludes:

It seems clear, however, from the psalm itself that it could not have been composed primarily with reference to him. There are portions of it which cannot, without a very forced

use of language, be applied to him, as for example, the allusion to the attack made by “all nations” on the person referred to in the psalm (118:10), and in the allusion to the danger of death (118:17-18). The person referred to in the psalm was in danger of death, but he was not given over to death. He had the assurance in the very midst of the danger that he would not die, but would continue to live (118:17). The Redeemer, however, did die. His enemies accomplished their purpose in this respect. They put him to death, though he rose again from the dead (Barnes).

Our opinion, however, is that this Psalm is a prophetic glimpse at our Lord ascending to the right hand of the Father to receive His coronation. Indeed, this Psalm is a song of the “King’s Journey Home.”

### *Analysis*

As the Psalm begins the author speaks (verses 1-2). He calls on all to praise the Lord and to unite with him in the giving of thanks because of apparent deliverance. The author provides us with a description of his peril and deliverance (verses 5-18). He had called upon the Lord rather than trusting in men. Though all nations had compassed about him as “bees” and had sought to destroy him, he was not dismayed. As the speaker approaches the temple he asks that the doors be opened so that he might enter and present his offering (verses 19-21). Next, the priests and the people speak (verses 22-27), recognizing him as the Ruler, the “cornerstone which the builders rejected” (verse 22). The people recognize this as a marvelous work of God (verse 23), and rejoice in this particular “day which the Lord hath made” (verse 24). The author of the Psalm responds (verses 28-29) and calls on all to praise the Lord.

In a much deeper sense the Psalm is a prophetic vision of our Lord’s journey home. Yes, David could, and did make application to himself, and the things he wrote were in all likelihood a mystery to him, as were most of the prophetic statements regarding our Lord to those inspired men who penned the dozens of prophecies of the coming Messiah. As you go through this Psalm the author will reveal the great joy that filled his heart at the occasion of his coming into Jerusalem. But as you study this Psalm, look beyond David to our Lord, and observe His great joy as he looks upon the “day that the Lord hath made”; the day when He comes home to the Ancient of days.

We have divided the Psalm thus:

I. The Commencement of His Journey (verses 1-4)

II. The Circumstance of His Journey (verses 5-18)

III. The Conclusion of His Journey (verses 19-29).

### ***Commentary***

#### ***The Commencement of His Journey***

##### **Verses 1-4**

*118:1 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever!*

*118:2 Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."*

*118:3 Let the house of Aaron say, "His steadfast love endures forever."*

*118:4 Let those who fear the LORD say, "His steadfast love endures forever."*

Four times in as many verses the Psalmist declares that God's "love endures forever." David had been through his fiery trial. Persecuted by his predecessor, and hounded by his enemies, David had spent years seeking refuge; longing for the time when he could "go home." That time had come. Each one of us is but a sojourner on this earth. The time will come when we will lay aside our armor and enter through the gates into the presence of the Father. No doubt every child of God longs for that day when he will finally go home.

Our Lord was also a sojourner, touched with the feelings of our infirmities, and tempted in all points like as we (Heb. 4:15). He commenced His journey when He took upon Himself the form of a man (Phil. 2:2-5), and was born in that stable in Bethlehem. He did not have to come, but because of His and the Father's "steadfast love" for humanity, He thus commenced that sojourn which would eventually lead Him home, victorious over the devil, crowned with honor and glory, crowned as King of kings and Lord of lords.

**118:1:** *"Oh give thanks unto Jehovah"* – David never failed to thank God for the divine protection provided. He calls on others to join him in declaring that God's "mercy enduring for ever" (KJV).

*"For he is good"* - Some praise God only when God *does* good for them; but David admonishes his audience to give thanks *because*

God is good. “Whatever else may be questionable, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; his dispensations may vary, but his nature is always the same, and always good. It is not only that he was good, and will be good, but he is good” (Spurgeon).

*“for his lovingkindness endureth for ever”* – The KJV renders this “his mercy endureth forever.” God’s goodness and mercy may often be delayed and appear to the humble saint as if it is being withheld. But the man of faith sees beyond the present to the eternal realms and acknowledges that God’s lovingkindness is never exhausted.

It was only our Lord’s eternal love that brought Him to the realms below. As long as the sun shall rise, and the oceans beat upon the sea shore, our Lord’s lovingkindness will continue to exist. Our Father’s “lovingkindness,” mentioned four times in as many verses, is a fitting introduction to the commencement of our Lord’s journey here below. It was His lovingkindness that brought Him to this world of sin and woe; it was His lovingkindness that sustained Him in the face of opposition; it was His lovingkindness that allowed evil men to put Him on the cross for lost humanity. Thank God for His lovingkindness!

**118:2-4:** As David begins his journey home he calls upon others to join him in the declaration that indeed, God’s mercy endures for ever. Specifically he mentions (1) Israel, (2) the “house of Aaron, and (3) “them that fear the Lord.” Each specific group is encouraged to say, “his mercy endureth for ever.” Their leader, who had at last gained his rightful place for which God had destined him, calls for Israel to rejoice with him.

*“Let Israel now say”* – If ever a nation so enjoyed the “lovingkindness of Jehovah,” it was Israel. Recipients of divine favor, they were nurtured and nourished into a great nation in the face of insurmountable obstacles. Delivered from Egyptian captivity, they journeyed from the land of bondage to the mount of blessing. An entire generation was destroyed, yet still God protected, and eventually brought His people into that land that flowed with milk and honey. Oh yes, Israel knew of God’s lovingkindness and mercy. Why would they not sing?

Our Lord calls us to join Him in that journey toward our heavenly home. We are the recipients of God’s favor. “Let Israel now say, That his lovingkindness endureth forever.” Spiritual Israel is the

church. Spiritual Israel sounds forth the wonderful gospel of God's lovingkindness. If we do not sound forth that message, who will?

**118:3:** "*the house of Aaron*" - The sons of Aaron were set apart to serve in holy things and to come into the presence of the Holy God. Every time a lamb was slain, ere blood was shed for their sins and the sins of the people, the priests could declare that they had witnessed the mercy of God. If this Psalm was written by David as he assumed his rightful place as king over Israel, then the priests would have special occasion to rejoice in the mercy of God. Saul had made a great slaughter among the priests, and had, on occasion, interfered with their sacred office. Now a man had come to the throne that would esteem them and preserve them.

Each one of us is a priest in the temple of God (1 Pet. 2:5). As Christians, we are the house of Aaron, the seed of Abraham, and heirs of the promise. We have the honor of heralding the wonderful mercy of God as we tell this poor sin sick world of our Savior's mission of mercy (I wrote this article more than fifteen years ago and include it here for your consideration):

*Mission of Mercy*  
by Tom Wacaster

A number of years ago one of the major television networks produced a made-for-television movie based on the true story of two pilots who attempted to fly two, single-engine crop dusters from the West Coast to Australia. As the story developed, one of the planes never got airborne from the lay over in Hawaii, and the second pilot, at the encouragement of the first, continued the journey alone. Due to the combination of unforeseen circumstances, malfunction in equipment, and pilot error, our lone pilot became lost over the Pacific somewhere northeast of Auckland, New Zealand, now without the necessary navigational equipment to get him safely to his destination. As he radioed for help, a commercial jetliner on its way to New Zealand, heard of the pilot's predicament, and agreed to do what it could to locate the small plane that was, by best estimates, somewhere in the vicinity.

It was like looking for the proverbial "needle in a haystack." But with the consent of the proper authorities, the passengers on board, and the jetliner's crew, the search and rescue effort began. It called for descent in altitude, deviation from the scheduled flight pattern, and a

certain amount of increased "risk" with every passing minute. In addition, it would delay the scheduled arrival of the flight, and present no little inconvenience to the passengers on board. Accordingly, the movie was entitled "Flight 511: Mission of Mercy." As I watched, I was touched by the concern that so many had for this lost pilot, and all that went into this most unusual search and rescue effort.

When our God created man, along with heaven's crowning achievement He began a mission of mercy that had been planned from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Somewhere in the immense universe, the world and its two lonely inhabitants sped on toward eternity, both lost, without hope, separated from the Creator as a result of sin (Isa. 59:1-2). But God in His infinite and eternal wisdom, began the journey toward the cross (Eph. 3:10-11). God was not obligated to save man; but because of His longsuffering, "not wishing that any should perish" (2 Pet. 3:9), He "struck out for Pentecost." Even while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8), God in His immense love, began to enact His wonderful plan, that paradise might be restored and that all men might be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20). Was it a mission of mercy? Indeed! Only His eternal love made Him act in our behalf. For approximately 4,000 years that plan unfolded. In types and shadows of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1), through the prophets, "in divers portions and in divers manners" (Heb 1:1), God unfolded and enacted His wonderful mission. Then in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4), stage two of heaven's mission of mercy began.

In His great love, our Lord surrendered the riches of heaven that were His to enjoy, and He took upon Himself "the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man" (Phil 2:5-8). Nestled in the womb of Mary, our Lord's human body developed and grew, until that moment when heaven's angels announced to the shepherds that indeed "there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). In time, "Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52), until the moment when He fulfilled all righteousness in submitting to John's baptism, and the voice out of the heavens announced, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). For three and one half years, Immanuel, "God with us" (Matt. 1:23), trod the face of His own creation, speaking with all authority, and manifesting the wonderful compassion of heaven's Godhead Three with miracles of healing, and the promise of life eternal. Aware of the ultimate price that would have to be paid, our Lord maintained



steadfastness, and was "faithful to him that appointed him" (Heb 3:2). The crucial moment in heaven's mission of mercy came in the night when our Savior entered the garden to seek strength that the mission might not be aborted. If there was any other way, He desired that the "cup" might pass from Him (Matt. 26:39). So earnest were His cries to the Father that "his sweat became as it were great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22:44). Were the mission to succeed, the Son of David would have to taste of death for every man (Heb. 2:9). But the Son of God would not simply die; He would not close His eyes in peaceful sleep, for the death which He would face would be the "death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). Yes, the mission of mercy had a price. If lost humanity was to be redeemed, it would not be with "silver and gold...but with the precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). And so, because of His great love for you and me, our Lord went to the cross. Nailed between two thieves, He suffered excruciating pain for six long hours. Look at the Savior, beloved, and whisper again those words: "mission of mercy." Now the price was paid! God's wrath could be satisfied. The mission was almost complete. With His dying breath, our Lord could truly say, so far as His part was concerned, "It is finished" (John 19:30).

There was yet more to be accomplished before the mission could be complete; yea, much more. To the consternation of Satan, and in answer to the angels who in wonder and amazement had desired to "look into" these things (1 Pet. 1:12), Jesus burst the bonds of death, and was "declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). Enthroned at the right hand of God, our King reigns in righteousness. In fulfillment of His promise, step three of the mission of mercy could now be initiated. The Holy Spirit, in faithful obedience to the eternal plan, could now be sent forth from heaven to "guide the apostles into all the truth" (John 16:13). This He did, and the words of the mystery were "written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Floundering in the sea of sin, lost humanity now has a "lamp" and "light" to show the way (Psa. 119:105). How grateful we should be that God, in His wonderful wisdom, and in His eternal plan, saw fit to record these things that we might be able to read and come to understand the mystery of man's redemption (Eph 3:3-5).

For almost 2,000 years the lighthouse of the Gospel has cast its beam across the treacherous sea of life's perilous journey, pointing the way for lost humanity unto the shores of safety. The torch has been

passed to this generation, and we must not, we cannot let the flame be extinguished. Heaven's mission of mercy is depending on you and me to "Go...into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Let us go forth with the life saving Gospel, and continue with zeal and determination, heaven's mission of mercy.

**118:4:** *"Let them now that fear Jehovah"* – Korah and Abiram would not sing of God's mercy and lovingkindness, for they despised His blessings. The unbelieving spies and those who sided with them would not sing of God's great mercy. Nor would Nadab and Abihu, who chose to substitute God's pattern with human wisdom. Those who "ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire," or "perished in the gainsaying of Korah," or "went in the way of Cain" serve as examples of the ungodly who did not fear God and who did not appreciate God's lovingkindness. These would never sing the "new song," for such a song is reserved for those who "fear Jehovah."

In each of the three exhortations that appear in verses 2-4, the student should note carefully the word "now." Today is the day of salvation; now is the time for singing God's praises. As God's mercy never ceases, neither should our praise and devotion to Him.

The fourfold testimonies to the everlasting mercy of God which are now before us speak like four evangelists, each one declaring the very pith and marrow of the gospel; and they stand like four angels at the four corners of the earth holding the winds in their hands, restraining the plagues of the latter days that the mercy and long-suffering of God may endure towards the sons of men. Here are four cords to bind the sacrifice to the four horns of the altar, and four trumpets with which to proclaim the year of jubilee to every quarter of the world. Let not the reader pass on to the consideration of the rest of the Psalm until he has with all his might lifted up both heart and voice to praise the Lord, "for his mercy endureth for ever" (Spurgeon).

### ***The Circumstance of His Journey***

#### **Verses 5-18**

Trust (vss 1-9), tragedy (vss. 10-13), and triumph (vss. 14-29) make up this portion of the Psalm. Behind his triumph we see David's trust. Rather than trust in men, he declared, "It is better to trust in

the Lord” (verses 8-9). His unyielding confidence in God would provide him with the strength necessary to face the tragedies in his life. What is said of David is most certainly applicable to our Lord. During His earthly sojourn He *trusted* in the Lord, faced immeasurable *tragedies*, and was ultimately *triumphant*. Pictured in David are the circumstances of our Lord’s journey toward home.

*Trust*: “It is better to trust in the Lord” (verses 5-9, KJV)

*118:5 Out of my distress I called upon Jehovah: Jehovah answered me and set me in a large place.*

*118:6 Jehovah is on my side; I will not fear: What can man do unto me?*

*118:7 Jehovah is on my side among them that help me: Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.*

*118:8 It is better to take refuge in Jehovah Than to put confidence in man.*

*118:9 It is better to take refuge in Jehovah Than to put confidence in princes.*

**118:5**: “*Out of my distress*” – Some pray *only* in times of distress. When their backs are to the wall, they turn to God in desperation. But David’s prayer was rooted in his great trust in God. Those who truly trust in their Savior will take advantage of the refuge available in God and, in times of tribulation, will call upon Jehovah for deliverance. Once deliverance has been granted they will not forget to thank God and praise Him for His wonderful lovingkindness.

“*Jehovah answered me and set me in a large place*” - Our English translates a Hebrew word which means literally, “an open space.” Figuratively it suggests liberty, or removal of restraint. Pressed on every side by his enemies, David could not move freely; he had no liberty to pursue his plans.

We see in David a faint shadow of our Savior. Our Lord was the epitome of trust in the Father. He would spend hours in prayer, on one occasion spending an entire night in praying to the Father. And though He had to endure the cup that He was desirous to have pass from Him, the Father ultimately delivered Him and set Him “in a large place” at His own right hand.

**118:6:** “*Jehovah is on my side*” - Literally, “*Jehovah is for me.*” God was with David, as manifested by the blessings bestowed upon this “man after God’s heart.” With God on his side, David knew that victory was a foregone conclusion.

“*I will not fear*” – David did not say that he would not *suffer*, but that he would not *fear*. The favor of God infinitely outweighed the hatred of men. Setting the one against the other, David knew he had no reason to be afraid. Surely the New Testament equivalent of this verse is Hebrews 13:6, “So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?”

“*What can man do unto me?*” – David would remain calm and confident in the face of his enemies. Like a true warrior, David confronted all his enemies, defying every foe and trusting only in God.

God having purposed to set his servant upon the throne, the whole race of mankind could do nothing to thwart the divine decree: the settled purpose of Jehovah’s heart could not be turned aside, nor its accomplishment delayed, much less prevented, by the most rancorous hostility of the most powerful of men. Saul sought to slay David, but David outlived Saul, and sat upon his throne. Scribe and Pharisee, priest and Herodian, united in opposing the Christ of God; but he is exalted on high none the less because of their enmity. The mightiest man is a puny thing when he stands in opposition to God, yea, he shrinks into utter nothingness. It were a pity to be afraid of such a pitiful, miserable, despicable object as a man opposed to the almighty God (Spurgeon).

Men can do nothing more than what God permits. At the most, men can only kill the body but not the soul. The realization of this truth will produce courage in the most feeble of men, and provide victory for those who put their trust in God.

Our Lord was not taken by men against His will; instead He willingly gave of Himself, declaring that He would lay down His life (John 10:17). When the guards came to arrest Jesus in the garden, they confronted our Lord with every intention of taking Him away. But

John tells us they fell backward (John 18:5-6). The guards would not arrest Jesus until He decided to allow them to take Him away.

**118:7:** *“Jehovah is on my side among them that help me”* – There were those men who stood by David through difficult times. He relied upon their aid. But he was quick to acknowledge that without God, all of the combined efforts of his companions could not defeat the vicious foes that sought to destroy him. When our Lord entered into the remote part of the Garden, He took Peter, James, and John. From these three disciples He had hoped to draw strength in His hour of need. But when it came time to go into the inner recesses of the Garden and pray to His Father, Jesus went alone. He knew that among “them that help me” His greatest strength would be found in the Father.

*“Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me”* - Literally, “I shall see upon those that hate me.” David was confident that with God by his side, he would look upon his enemies and see them overthrown and subdued. There must have been occasions in David’s life when the obstacles seemed so insurmountable; when the enemy seemed so invincible. Yet David knew he was God’s anointed, and that he would eventually sit upon the throne. What amazing faith this man demonstrated throughout his life.

### *OH, FOR A FAITH THAT WILL NOT SHRINK*

Oh, for a faith that will not shrink,  
Tho' pressed by every foe,  
That will not tremble on the brink  
Of any earthly woe;

That will not murmur nor complain  
Beneath the chast'ning rod  
But, in the hour of grief or pain,  
Will lean upon its God;

A faith that shines more bright and clear  
When tempests rage without;  
That when in danger knows no fear,  
In darkness feels no doubt.

Lord, give us such a faith as this;  
And then, whate'er may come,

We'll taste, e'en here, the hallowed bliss  
Of an eternal home.

-- William H. Bathurst

**118:8:** *"It is better to trust in the Lord"* – David may have been speaking out of experience as much as with the eye of faith. David had learned that men often proved weak and faithless; not so with God. Literally the Hebrew reads, "Good is it to trust in Yahweh more than to confide in man." This is because (1) man is weak - but God is Almighty; (2) man is selfish - but God is benevolent; (3) man is often faithless and deceitful - God never; (4) there are situations in life when men simply cannot aid us, however kind and considerate they might be; but there are no circumstances in this life where God cannot provide us help in time of need; (5) the ability of man to help us pertains at best only to this present life - the power of God will last through all eternity. No wonder 'tis better to "trust in the Lord."

**118:9:** *"Than to put confidence in princes"* – It is often true that the power and prestige often corrupt those upon whom it is bestowed. The adage that "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" has proven true in many a situation. Indeed, "A gilded vane turns with the wind as readily as a meaner weathercock...Principle has been forgotten and character has been sacrificed to maintain position at court; yea, the manliness which the meanest slave retains has been basely bartered for the stars and garters of a profligate monarch" (Spurgeon). Men of high estate too often prove themselves proud and vainglorious; it is better to trust in God than to trust in them.

Trust Him when dark doubts assail thee,  
Trust Him when thy strength is small,  
Trust Him when to simply trust Him  
Seems the hardest thing of all.  
Trust Him, He is ever faithful,  
Trust Him, for his will is best,  
Trust Him, for the heart of Jesus  
Is the only place of rest.

Author Unknown.

Tragedy: *"The nations compassed me about"* (verses 10-13)

*118:10 All nations compassed me about: In the name of Jehovah I will cut them off.*  
*118:11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: In the name of Jehovah I will cut them off.*  
*118:12 They compassed me about like bees; They are quenched as the fire of thorns: In the name of Jehovah I will cut them off.*  
*118:13 Thou didst thrust sore at me that I might fall; But Jehovah helped me.*

Having expressed his unyielding trust in Jehovah, David now turns his attention to the “tragedy” which called for such faith. When trust precedes the tragedies of life, the trials we face from time to time are much easier to bear. As you read these four verses, can you not, dear reader, see in them a prophetic glimpse of our Savior? Our Lord had His enemies. From Satan to the Sanhedrin, these wicked plotters and planners were determined that they would destroy our Lord.

**118:10:** “*All nations compassed me about*” – The language is exaggerated in order to emphasize the plight that David faced in the early years of his kingly rule. Having no earthly friend upon whom he could rely, the Psalmist was surrounded by innumerable enemies who hated him. As if by common consent the “nations” sought his destruction. But the author was convinced that with God on his side he was more than a match for them all. He trusted in the name of his God. They sought to destroy him, but he was confident that he would see their destruction.

It takes grand faith to be calm in the day of actual battle, and especially when that battle waxes hot; but our hero was as calm as if no fight was raging. Napoleon said that God was always on the side of the biggest battalions, but the Psalmist-warrior found that the Lord of hosts was with the solitary champion, and that in his name the battalions were cut to pieces (Spurgeon).

“*I will cut them off*” – It should be noted that the Psalmist does not speak of escaping from his enemy, but rather that he would “conquer” them. He vows that he would carry the battle to his enemies and destroy them. As soldiers of the cross, our task is to take the battle to the enemy. There is a time to “defend” the faith;

there is also a time to pick up the sword and take the offensive. The wise soldier knows the difference.

Neither did our Lord seek to escape the bitter cup that awaited Him. Though His enemies encompassed Him like a swarm of bees, He maintained His trust in God. As they laid Him in the grave it appeared to them, at least, that they had won the victory. But the words of the Psalmist echoed through the years, and just as David cut off his enemies, so our Lord would triumph over His enemies three days later. Trusting in His Father, our Lord could have sung the song of David, knowing that in a very short time He “will cut them off.”

**118:11:** *“They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about.”* There were times when David was surrounded by his enemies; when escape seemed impossible and defeat appeared eminent. Twice he tells us “they compassed me about.” A drowning man does not yell “help” but once! He repeats his plea until help arrives.

*“But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them”* - Twice in as many verses the Psalmist declares that he would break his enemy in pieces. He was as certain about their destruction as he was that they had compassed him about. This was not boasting on the part of David but a calm declaration of his trust in Jehovah.

**118:12:** *“They compassed me about like bees.”* The magnitude of David’s enemies is likened unto a swarm of bees, attacking him at every point, stinging and inflicting pain. At times the sheer numbers appeared to be overwhelming. To the eye of reason it would appear as if nothing could be done in the face of so great a host of evil men. But God has never relied on large numbers to achieve His purpose, and on many occasions His small army of faithful servants has defeated an army of far greater proportion. Gideon, with only 300, defeated an army of 120,000 (Judges 7:7 and 8:10). With the jawbone of an ass, Samson defeated 1,000 Philistines. In one night 185,000 of Sennacherib’s army was slain by the angel of the Lord (2 Kings 19:35).

*“They are quenched as the fire of thorns”* – God does not measure success or failure by years. What might seem a lengthy time in the eyes of men is but a fleeting moment when compared with eternity.



“Like thorns which blaze with fierce crackling and abundant flame, but die out in a handful of ashes very speedily, so did the nations which surrounded our hero soon cease their clamor and come to an inglorious end” (Spurgeon).

*“In the name of Jehovah I will cut them off”* – For the third time the Psalmist expresses his confidence that his enemies would be “cut off.” He is careful to attribute his expected victory to Jehovah rather than himself. One of the marks of a godly man is his willingness to keep his hands off God’s glory.

**118:13:** *“Thou hast thrust sore at me”* – Literally, “Thrusting thou hast thrust at me.” Barnes points out, “This is the Hebrew mode of expressing intensity, repetition, or emphasis. The meaning is, that they had made a deadly thrust at him; that they had repeated the blows; that they had come with a fierce determination to crush and destroy him” (Barnes). There is a contrast in this verse between the futile attempts on the part of the enemy to “thrust” at David, and the “help” that God provided in time of need.

*“That I might fall”* - The object of the “thrusting” on the part of the enemy was to bring about David’s destruction. The devil seeks the utter destruction of God’s people. His relentless attacks are designed to bring about the fall of the faithful. He never gives up.

*“But the Lord helped me”* – Unlike many of the “kings” of Israel, David put his trust in Jehovah God. Many a saint could express the same sentiments as David. In times of sorrow and despair; in times of loss; in times of weakness; when all seems hopeless, the saint can say with David, “The enemy sought our destruction, *but the Lord helped me.*” Assailed by innumerable doubts and fears, *“but the Lord helped me.”* When the trials were so intense that there was great temptation to capitulate, *“but the Lord helped me.*” “Doubtless, when we land on the hither shore of Jordan, this will be one of our songs, ‘Flesh and heart were failing me, and the adversaries of my soul surrounded me in the swellings of Jordan, but the Lord helped me. Glory be unto his name’” (Spurgeon).

Triumph: *“The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly”* (verses 14-18)

*118:14 Jehovah is my strength and song; And he is become my salvation.*

*118:15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous: The right hand of Jehovah doeth valiantly.*

*118:16 The right hand of Jehovah is exalted: The right hand of Jehovah doeth valiantly.*

*118:17 I shall not die, but live, And declare the works of Jehovah.*

*118:18 Jehovah hath chastened me sore; But he hath not given me over unto death.*

The storm had passed. Now David could sing of his triumph. “The voice of rejoicing and salvation” can be heard throughout the streets of Jerusalem as David takes his rightful position as king. When the hour of darkness had passed, it was Jesus Who could sing the song of victory; not Pilate, not the Sanhedrin, not the scribes, not the Pharisees!

**118:14:** “*Jehovah is my strength and song...and salvation*” – God was David’s strength in time of need, his song in time of victory, and his salvation in the face of defeat. From tragedy to triumph, David never forgot to attribute his victories to Jehovah. Men may boast in their achievements, but the servant of God knows from Whom he derives his strength, and to Whom he attributes victory. “Every good gift and every perfect gifts is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning” (Jas. 1:17).

**118:15:** “*The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous*” – There will be no rejoicing in the tents of the wicked, but only the weeping and gnashing of teeth. The pleasures of sin are only for a season (Heb. 11:25), but the righteous shall sing of God’s salvation for endless ages.

**118:16:** “*The right hand of Jehovah is exalted...doeth valiantly*” – The “right hand” stands for God’s power and might. It also signifies His sovereign rule and majesty. David recognized that his life was but a manifestation of God’s great power working through him. It was said of Jesus following the healing of the deaf man with an impediment in his speech that “He hath done all things well” (Mark 7:37). God does not do things in half measure.

**118:17:** “*I shall not die, but live*” – The enemies of David would be satisfied with nothing less than his death. But David’s message to his enemies was this: “I shall live as a monument of God’s mercy and power; his works shall be declared in me, and I will make it the business of my life to praise and magnify God, looking upon that as the end of my preservation.” Was this not the song of our Savior? Is this not the song of every saint? Our life is but a monument unto God’s glory and honor. So long as God allows us to live upon this earth, our aim should be to let our light shine that men may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

**118:18:** “*Jehovah hath chastened me sore*” – Our English word conveys the idea of some sort of punitive action. Chastening, however, includes both positive and negative admonitions. We are chastened when we read and follow the instructions contained in God’s word. David’s trials served to chasten him, keep him humble, and strengthen him so that when the time came for him to return to Jerusalem and take his place upon the throne, he would be ready. Our life is a time of testing. God is chastening us, molding us, and preparing us for that heavenly home.

### *The Troubles That Beset You*

The troubles that beset you  
Along life's winding road  
Are sent to make you stronger  
To share another's load.

We cannot share a sorrow  
If we haven't grieved a while,  
Nor can we feel another's joy  
Until we've learned to smile!

Sweet mystery of music,  
Great masters and their art,  
How well we understand them  
When we've known a broken heart!

Let tyrants lust for power,  
Sophisticates be wise,  
Just let me see the world, dear God,  
Through understanding eyes.  
--Nick Kenny

## ***The Conclusion of His Journey***

### **Verses 19-29**

- 118:19 Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will enter into them,  
I will give thanks unto Jehovah.*
- 118:20 This is the gate of Jehovah; The righteous shall enter into it.*
- 118:21 I will give thanks unto thee; for thou hast answered me, And  
art become my salvation.*
- 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Is become the head of  
the corner.*
- 118:23 This is Jehovah's doing; It is marvellous in our eyes.*
- 118:24 This is the day which Jehovah hath made; We will rejoice  
and be glad in it.*
- 118:25 Save now, we beseech thee, O Jehovah: O Jehovah, we  
beseech thee, send now prosperity.*
- 118:26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah: We have  
blessed you out of the house of Jehovah.*
- 118:27 Jehovah is God, and he hath given us light: Bind the  
sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.*
- 118:28 Thou art my God, and I will give thanks unto thee: Thou art  
my God, I will exalt thee.*
- 118:29 Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; For his  
lovingkindness endureth for ever.*

The Psalmist has now arrived home. The gates of Jerusalem loom before him. God's deliverance has become a reality. Our opinion is that we have an illustrious prophecy of the exaltation of our Lord Jesus. In these verses we have:

- I. The *preface* with which the prophecy is introduced (vss. 19-21);
- II. The *prophecy* itself (vss. 22-23);
- III. The *pleasure* which accompanies its prediction and fulfillment (vss. 24-29);
- IV. A *proclamation* in view of the prophecy (vs. 29).

*The Preface*, verses 19-21;

**118:19:** *“Open to me the gates of righteousness”* – Having arrived home, the first thing the Psalmist desires is that he might enter into the temple and offer up his vows of thanksgiving and praise. It is not difficult to see here a prophetic reference to our Lord’s ascension to the Father’s right hand.

I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

So also shall the gates of righteousness be opened for every faithful Saint. That gate is narrow, and the road that leads there is strait (Matt. 7:13-14). It is because those gates lead to our home with the Father that they are called “gates of righteousness.” Righteous deeds were done within its walls, and righteous teachings sounded forth from its courts. The beauty of those gates is depicted in figurative language in Revelation:

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: her light was like unto a stone most precious, as it were a jasper stone, clear as crystal: having a wall great and high; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names written thereon, which are *the names* of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east were three gates; and on the north three gates; and on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that spake with me had for a measure a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof (Rev. 21:10-15).

How tragic that some men never give any consideration at all to the gates that lead to life. There are multitudes who seem not to care whether the gates to heaven are open or not. But the time will come when they shall find themselves standing at the brink of eternity and

those gates shall be shut against them, for there shall by no means be anything enter into those heavenly realm that is defiled.

**118:20:** *“This is the gate of Jehovah”* – Having arrived home, our champion pauses for a moment to admire the gate of the temple and to express his appreciation for it. It is more than the gate of a city, it is the gate that leads to fellowship with Jehovah God. It is a single gate, prepared by God and unlocked and opened by the authority of Jesus Christ for He is the “way” into the holy city.

*“The righteous shall enter into it”* – Seeing that the Psalmist speaks of but one “gate,” and John’s vision speaks of several “gates,” we must conclude that the Psalmist was speaking of the “gate” that takes one into fellowship with God. There is only one way to the Father and that is through Jesus. Many a saint has walked through that gate to the Father by obedience to the gospel, and should the Lord delay His coming another thousand years, there will be others who shall follow those who have gone before. We are convinced, however, that there is much more than immediately meets the eye. If the gate of the Lord’s house upon this earth is pleasant, how much more shall be our rejoicing when we are privileged to enter into the gates of that eternal city that awaits the righteous? We will pass through the gates of pearl into a city wherein only the righteous shall be admitted. The “fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolators, and all liars” shall not be allowed to enter those eternal gates of glory.

**118:21:** *“I will give thanks unto thee; for thou hast answered me, And art become my salvation”* – Our author reflects upon the deliverance provided by God, and acknowledges that it is God Who provided him salvation; it is God Who had answered his prayers; and it is unto God that he would offer thanks. Our hearts swell with thanksgiving for the privilege of being allowed entrance into the church of our Lord, and the corresponding hope of one day entering into that celestial city prepared by our Lord. No wonder the Psalmist was anxious to offer up thanks.

If I had all the words in our language;  
To use at a moment’s command,  
If I had all the beautiful pictures  
Of nature, the sea, and the land;  
If I spoke in a voice never ending  
Speaking only of loveliness,

I couldn't begin to tell you  
How beautiful heaven is.

The *prophecy*, verses 22-23

**118:22:** *“The stone which the builders rejected Is become the head of the corner”* – The immediate application is to David, who had been restored to his rightful role as king over Israel. Those who cannot see here a spiritual application to the “son of David” have not yet grasped the prophetic intent of this Psalm.

The mental picture drawn by the pen of inspiration is quite striking. Imagine if you will that you are standing at a construction site where a beautiful building is being erected. There is a beautiful stone that was intended by the architect to be used as the corner stone of this building. But the workers have cast it aside, deeming it unfit to be worked into the edifice. The words may have been applied in a very limited sense to David, who was considered by many to be unfit to serve as king over Israel. Men looked on the outward appearance, but God looked on the heart of this man, and saw in him that which was suitable to the divine purpose.

Come now to the “fullness of the times,” and let your eyes gaze upon the Lord.

For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised; and we esteemed him not (Isa 53:2-3).

The “builders” are the religious leaders of Israel, who rejected Him and nailed Him to the cross. But that “stone” was made the “head of the corner.” Our Lord confronted these religious leaders head on:

Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; This was from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes? (Matt. 21:42).

As the church is represented in Scripture under the symbol of the temple and house of God, an allusion to the temple of Jerusalem, of

which it was a type (1 Cor. 3:16; Heb 3:6; 1 Pet. 2:5); so Jesus Christ is represented as the foundation on which this edifice is laid (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph 2:20-21), and the cornerstone upon which all parts of the building align. We were particularly impressed with Adam Clarke's assessment of this figure of speech that appears in the Psalm and used by our Lord in Matthew:

An expression borrowed from masons, who, finding a stone, which being tried in a particular place, and appearing improper for it, is thrown aside, and another taken; however, at last, it may happen that the very stone which had been before rejected, may be found the most suitable as the head stone of the corner. This passage, as applied by our Lord to himself, contains an abridgment of the whole doctrine of the Gospel. (1) The Lord's peculiar work is astonishingly manifested in the mission of Jesus Christ. (2) He, being rejected and crucified by the Jews, became an atonement for the sin of the world. (3) He was raised again from the dead, a proof of his conquest over death and sin, and a pledge of immortality to his followers. (4) He was constituted the foundation on which the salvation of mankind rests, and the corner stone which unites Jews and Gentiles, beautifies, strengthens, and completes the whole building, as the head stone, or uppermost stone in the corner does the whole edifice. (5) He is hereby rendered the object of the joy and admiration of all his followers and the glory of man. This was done by the Lord, and is marvelous in our eyes (Clarke on Matthew 21:42).

Spurgeon also sees the passage as specifically applicable to our Lord:

A wise king and valiant leader is a stone by which the national fabric is built up. David had been rejected by those in authority, but God had placed him in a position of the highest honour and the greatest usefulness, making him the chief corner-stone of the state. In the case of many others whose early life has been spent in conflict, the Lord has been pleased to accomplish his divine purposes in like manner; but to none is this text so applicable as to the Lord Jesus himself- he is the living stone, the tried stone, elect, precious, which God himself appointed from of old. The Jewish builders, scribe, priest, Pharisee, and Herodian, rejected him with disdain. They could see no excellence in him that they



should build upon him; he could not be made to fit in with their ideal of a national church, he was a stone of another quarry from themselves, and not after their mind nor according to their taste; therefore they cast him away and poured contempt upon him, even as Peter said, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders (Spurgeon).

**118:23:** *"This is Jehovah's doing; It is marvellous in our eyes"* – God's providential protection of David and his eventual restoration to the throne in the face of all odds was a manifestation of God's wonderful work. In spite of all the attempts by Saul to destroy David, it was he rather than David who was eventually destroyed. But if the wonderful work of God's providential hand is seen in David's protection and deliverance, how much more is it manifested in the life of our Lord.

*"it is marvelous in our eyes"* - God's plan of salvation, the fulfillment of the prophecies of old, the establishment of the church – all bespeak the wonderful power of God. When we consider His great wisdom, we, like the Psalmist, cannot help but declare, "It is marvelous in our eyes."

The *pleasure* which accompanies its prediction (vss. 24-29):

No doubt David was completely unaware of the implications of the prophetic pronouncement he had made. Like the prophets of old, he may have been "searching what time or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand time or the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them. To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angel desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:11-12).

**118:24:** *"This is the day Jehovah hath made; We will rejoice and be glad in it"* - What is this "day" to which the Psalmist refers? To David, it would have been the day when he was restored to his rightful position as king. There may have been moments in his life when he doubted he would ever see this "day"; something that may have seemed only an elusive dream. His "days" had been numbered by others, and it had appeared to some that he would be cut off. But God spared him, and added this "day" to his life; a day of restoration;

a day of victory; a day of rejoicing. His coronation as king was now a reality.

When applied to our Lord, the passage is a prophetic glimpse at the resurrection day, followed by our Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father; a day of victory over Satan's wicked schemes; a day in which our Lord was vindicated. No wonder God chose the first day of the week as the day when Christians would gather together to worship. When we contemplate all of the blessings associated with this "one day" in history we cannot help but repeat the words of the Psalmist. If he found occasion to rejoice and be glad in the day of his restoration, how much more are we to rejoice and be glad.

**118:25:** *"Save now, we beseech thee, O Jehovah: O Jehovah, we beseech thee, send now prosperity"* – Often men tend to define "prosperity" as material gain. Although it may include material blessings, the extent of true prosperity goes far beyond anything this world might have to offer. John prayed that his friend Gaius "mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 2). David's rule never brought the kingdom to the material prominence that it later achieved under the rule of Solomon. But we confidently affirm that the kingdom was far more prosperous under the rule of this "man after God's heart" than that of his son Solomon.

**118:26:** *"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of Jehovah: We have blessed you out of the house of Jehovah"* - Our opinion is that this short refrain is the voice of the priests who tended the house of Jehovah. David was bringing his thank offering, and those within the house, having been admonished to praise God (verse 3), now welcome the king with profound pleasure. But the voice of praise that arose from the "house of Aaron" cannot begin to compare with the voices that blend together under this new dispensation and welcome the Savior into their lives.

**118:27:** *"Jehovah is God, and he hath given us light"* -

Light is the antithesis of darkness. Having wondered as to the remote possibility of ever returning to the city, to be allowed to enter therein, there were certainly days of darkness in the life of David. There were times when a cloud of disappointment may have challenged his faith. Now he has come home; the light shines out of darkness. If David could find occasion for rejoicing at the light he now enjoyed, how much more should we rejoice at the divine light

that illuminates our path to heaven? We have been called “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). We have been “delivered ...out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13). We “walk in light” (1 John 1:6), are “children of light” (Eph. 5:8), we wear “the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12), and bear “the fruit of light” (Eph. 5:9).

*“Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar”* – The origin of the horns is unknown, though there are many theories. Fugitives caught hold of them (1 Kings 1:50-51), and according to this verse the sacrificial victims could evidently be tied to them.

It is not so much the *sacrifice* to which the Psalmist draws our attention, but to what is used to bind that sacrifice to the horns of the altar. Nor are the “cords” such as are made of hard rope, but something more like cords of beauty, wreaths and boughs as it were. The Chaldee paraphrases this verse thus: “Samuel the prophet said, Bind the little one with chains for a solemn sacrifice, until ye have sacrificed him and sprinkled his blood on the horns of the altar.” It is supposed that the words refer to the feast of tabernacles, and here mean the festival victim as it was tied between the horns of the altar in preparation for the sacrifice. The sacrifice that the Psalmist would present on this occasion would be bound with the cords of willing sacrifice.

**118:28-29:** *“I will give thanks...I will exalt thee...Oh give thanks”* - The Psalm closes with praise and adoration for the God who had delivered him. David never lost sight of the “lovingkindness” of the Father, and the Psalm closes as it began. When men forget the wonderful mercy of God, they fail in their giving of thanks, and eventually they refuse to exalt their Creator. This was the pattern of the gentile world that refused to worship the Creator, then failed to give thanks, and eventually slipped into a life of degradation and debauchery.

## ***Lessons***

1. *“The Name of the Lord”* (verse 10) – One stands in awe at the things that have been accomplished in the name of the Lord. Biblical examples abound of the might and power associated with God’s name. It is “the battle cry of faith before which its

adversaries fly apace...The name of the Lord is the one weapon which never fails in the day of battle; he who knows how to use It may chase a thousand with his single arm” (Spurgeon). Let us never be guilty of taking God’s name in vain; but neither let us be guilty of failing to call upon His Holy name in our hour of need.

2. Some years ago my mom wrote this beautiful poem which expresses the flavor of the Psalm:

***The Victor’s Crown***

by Mary Wacaster

When the days are dark and dreary,  
And the flesh is sick and weary,  
It takes all we have to withstand,  
The evils dealt at Satan’s hand.  
But, in the darkness there is light,  
Glowing through our Saviour’s might.  
Upon drops of blood on Emanuel’s land,  
Beneath the Victor’s crown we stand.  
And through all the days I walk to end,  
It is this crown I seek to win.

3. No matter how difficult the problem, the child of God can be confident that he will be victorious. The Psalmist admits that he was “surrounded on every side,” and “surrounded like bees,” he was quick to acknowledge, “The Lord helped me” and has become my salvation.

The day is long and the day is hard;  
We are tired of the march and of keeping guard;  
Tired of the sense of a fight to be won,  
Of days to live through, and of work to be done;  
Tired of ourselves and of being alone.  
And all the while, did we only see  
We walk in the Lord’s own company;  
We fight, but ‘tis He who nerves our arm;  
He turns the arrows which else might harm,  
And out of the storm He brings the calm.  
--Susan Coolidge

4. “It is significant to observe that in so many instances that which is of little value, or of no value, or which is even despised – in the

eyes and thinking of men – is of utmost value in the sight of God. And, that which is often of great importance and value – in the eyes of men – is of little value, or of no value, or is even condemned, in the eyes of the Lord” (Deaver, *Ninth Annual Southwest Lectures: The Book of Psalms*, page 304).

## *“The Magnificence of God’s Law”*

### ***Introduction***

The author is unknown. Some suggestions include David, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Malachi, or Daniel, but the author simply cannot be determined with any degree of accuracy. The style seems that of David, and for this reason some of the commentators have concluded that this Psalm was written by the sweet singer of Israel, King David. Our own opinion is that David is indeed the author. The Psalm itself shows that the penman had a deep respect and reverence for the word of God; something that certainly fits David.

Nothing can be determined with regard to the date or occasion that led to its composition. It is the longest Psalm in the book, and the longest chapter in the Bible. It "excels in breadth of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervor" (Spurgeon). The more one studies this marvelous chapter, the fresher it becomes. One has pointed out that the "grapes of this cluster are almost bursting full of the new wine of the kingdom." The deeper one digs into this Psalm, the greater will be his appreciation for the word of God in all of its aspects. Such an appreciation is developed by more than just looking AT the word; it takes a looking INTO the word, and it would appear that the Psalmist has shaken the tree to gain the fullness of the fruits therein.

Were we to provide a theme for this Psalm it would most certainly be, "The Law Of Jehovah." Every verse (with but three exceptions) makes reference, in one form or another, to the law of God. Morgan has these comments:

A careful consideration will reveal one underlying conception. It is the conception of the will of God as that will has been made known to man. Every word reveals some aspect of the will in itself, of the method of its revelation, and its value in human life" (Morgan, page 266).

While much of our society has a complete disregard for the Bible, it is refreshing to read of the Psalmist's regard for the law of God. Here is the greatest collection of Scripture relating to the Law of God to be found anywhere in the pages of Holy Writ. No doubt this Psalm is a record of the author's personal experiences, as well as his meditation on the law of God through those circumstances in his life. From youth to old age, the word has guided, counseled, encouraged, enlightened and upheld the sweet singer of Israel. Before he closes his eyes in eternal rest the author wanted to pass along to untold generations some things he had learned, especially as it pertains to the roll that the word has played throughout his pilgrimage. We would be wise to drink deeply from this well of divine wisdom.

### ***Analysis***

This Psalm is an "alphabetical Psalm" - the first eight verses of the Psalm begin with the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 'aleph.' The next eight verses begin with the second letter of the alphabet, 'beth,' and so on through the twenty two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It would seem natural, therefore, to simply study the Psalm under each section. This has been the approach of most of the sources we consulted, and seems to have been very useful in a study of this chapter.

The theme of the Psalm is the law of God, which is referred to in 173 or its 176 verses. God is mentioned in every verse. The author uses several synonyms for the word of God. Each of these deserves a closer examination:

*Torah*: translated "law," and means "to direct, guide, teach, make straight, or even, point forward." It guides, directs, and instructs in the way of righteousness; makes our path straight, shows what is even and right, and points us onward to peace, truth, and happiness. It is our school master to bring us to Christ, that we may be justified through obedient faith; and by it one gains a proper knowledge of sin.

*Edoth*: translated "testimonies," the Hebrew means "to bear witness." It often refers to the rites and ceremonies of the law that very often point to matters beyond themselves, being types and representations of the good things that were to come later.

*Pigud*: translated “precepts,” means “to take notice or care of a thing, to attend, to have respect to, to appoint, to visit. This word has to do with the various aspects of life and conversation.

*Chaq*: translated “statutes,” the word means “to mark, trace out, describe, and ordain. These “statutes” mark out our way and describe the line of conduct we are to pursue.

*Mitsoth*: translated “commandments,” this word speaks of those things that we should do, and what we should leave undone.

*Debar*: translated “word,” from the same root, to discourse, utter one’s sentiments, speak consecutively and intelligibly; any prophecy or immediate communication from heaven, as well as the whole body of Divine revelation. In his revelation God speaks to man; shows him, in a clear, concise, intelligible, and rational way, his interest, his duty, his privileges, and in a word, the reasonable service that he requires of him.

*Imrath*: translated “word,” “promise,” or “saying.” It describes the law that is established, steady, confirmed, and ordered in all things; that which is sure; that which should be believed on the authority of God, and trusted to as an infallible testimony from He who cannot lie nor deceive.

*Tsedakah*: translated “righteousness,” and means “to do justice, to give full weight; that which teaches a man to give to all their due; to give God His due, man his due, and himself his due. This word is applied to God’s judgments and commandments.

*Mishpatim*: translated “judge,” the word has the meaning of discernment; to discern what is right and wrong, and decide accordingly.

No certain outline can be given of the Psalm. Morgan points out that “any dealing with this psalm must necessarily be general and not particular.” The earlier verses are of such a character as to lend themselves to the hypothesis that the author was a young man, while many of the later passages could only have suggested themselves to age and wisdom. We might very well call this Psalm, “The Holy Soul’s Soliloquy Before An Open Bible” (Spurgeon). We have chosen to title this chapter, “The Magnificence of God’s Law,” and provide



our readers with an additional title at the beginning of each section. Barnes had a beautiful assessment of this Psalm:

The general subject of the Psalm is the law of God considered as a rule of life; as sanctifying the soul; as a support in trial; as imparting happiness to the mind - in its contemplation, and in obedience to it. The psalm appears to have been intended to set forth the excellency of that law, and the happy effects of obeying it, in every variety of form, and with every variety of expression. In its great length, extending to one hundred and seventy-six verses, there was ample opportunity to illustrate this; and the purpose of the author of the psalm seems to have been to see how much could be said on this, and to say all that could be said on it. It is remarkable that a single subject could be pursued so far with so much variety, and with so little that can be regarded as repetition, for there are perhaps no two verses in the psalm so exactly similar that there cannot be seen, either in themselves, or in their connection, some new phase given to the subject, or some new shade of thought not expressed elsewhere. So marked is this design of the psalm, so constant is the reference to the law of God - the testimonies of God - the statutes of God - that, according to the Masora, there is "only one verse in the psalm which does not contain some title or description of the word of God." (Barnes).

This Psalm has proven to be a blessing of all who study it and mediate upon the truths contained therein. Indeed, this Psalm is rich in truth, unsurpassed in its depth, and stands alongside other great chapters of the Bible. Let us study it with reverence and respect for God and His word. Some years ago I came across the following poem that seems a fitting summary of the message of this Psalm:

When I am tired, the Bible is my bed;  
Or in the dark, the Bible is my light;  
When I am hungry, it is vital bread;  
Or fearful, it is armor for the fight;  
When I am sick, 'tis healing medicine;  
Or lonely, thronging friends I find therein.

If I would work, the Bible is my tool;  
Or play, it is a harp of happy sound.  
If I am ignorant, it is my school;  
If I am sinking, it is solid ground.  
If I am cold, the Bible is my fire;  
And wings, if boldly I aspire.

Should I be lost, the Bible is my guide;  
Or naked, it is raiment, rich and warm.  
Am I imprisoned, it is ranges wide;  
Or tempest-tossed, a shelter from the storm.  
Would I adventure, 'tis a gallant sea;  
Or would I rest, it is a flowery lea.

-- Amos R. Wells

Our comments on this chapter are, at best, only a faint glimpse of the deep truths contained herein. Entire books have been written on this one chapter alone, and no doubt "the half hath not been told." The depths of divine wisdom in these 176 verses are a monument to the inexhaustible treasures that lay buried beneath the surface. Hopefully what we have provided the reader in our introduction to this chapter will give him a greater appreciation for this wonderful chapter and encourage him to dig deeper into its 176 verses. With these matters before us we turn our attention to our study of this chapter. We have selected to insert "lessons learned" in our comments, or near the end of each of the stanzas rather than at the end of the chapter itself, in order to help the student make application of the lessons learned in each of the eight verse divisions.

### **'Aleph'**

(1-8)

#### ***"Blessed Are Those Who Walk In The Way Of The Lord"***

*119:1 Blessed are they that are perfect in the way, Who walk in the law of Jehovah.*

*119:2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, That seek him with the whole heart.*

*119:3 Yea, they do no unrighteousness; They walk in his ways.*

*119:4 Thou hast commanded us thy precepts, That we should observe them diligently.*

*119:5 Oh that my ways were established To observe thy statutes!*

*119:6 Then shall I not be put to shame, When I have respect unto all thy commandments.*

*119:7 I will give thanks unto thee with uprightness of heart, When I learn thy righteous judgments.*

*119:8 I will observe thy statutes: Oh forsake me not utterly.*

We have selected to entitle the first eight verses of this chapter, "Blessed Are Those Who Walk In The Way of the Lord." These verses serve as a fitting introduction to the remaining one hundred-sixty-eight verses, much like the first Psalm introduces us to the one-

hundred-forty nine chapters that follow it. In this section the Psalmist refers to those who “walk in the law of Jehovah” – they are blessed; they do no unrighteousness; they are careful to “observe” the statutes of God; they are not put to shame; they have respect unto the commandments of God; they give thanks with uprightness of heart; they are anxious to learn the righteous judgments of the Lord. Though not an exhaustive list, these are some of the character traits of those who truly walk with the Lord and enjoy sweet fellowship with the Father and Son. Their WALK is in tune with the law of God; their WILL is submissive to the law of God; their WORDS are words of thanksgiving; and their heart is WHOLLY upright. Consequently, they are truly “blessed who walk in the way of the Lord.”

**119:1:** *"Blessed are they that are perfect in the way, Who walk in the law of Jehovah"* - The Psalmist counts it of utmost contentment to conform his life to the law of God. True religion is not dry and cold, but alive and filled with zeal. It is not "boring," but life giving. It is a genuine blessing to be led in the way. While the world has a woeful misconception of what it is to be "happy," the Psalmist sets forth here, and throughout the Psalm, what constitutes true happiness. While the world equates happiness with pleasure, prosperity, popularity, and position, God equates happiness with a godly walk in the law.

Ab-el-Raham, a Moorish ruler, is reported to have said, "I have reigned above fifty years in victory and peace, beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honor, power and pleasure have waited on my call. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness which have fallen to my lot; they amount to 14." Someone reported seeing a bumper sticker that read, "If my life was a TV show I'd change the channel." I fear that these two examples express the sentiments of a large number of our population. Five plus decades of material affluence have produced naught but frustration, disappointment and disillusionment. Friend, you will not find happiness in pleasure, possessions or pride. It comes from deep within, out of a heart that has learned to be content with life's circumstances. Expensive clothes, a nicely furnished house, and a large bank account just don't seem to satisfy that deep inner longing. Life's unexpected tragedies leave us asking, "Where did happiness go?" It is time we learned that happiness is not just a feeling; it is a state of mind. Poor people can be happy. Sick people can be happy. Surely all of us are familiar with brethren who, while enduring great trials and suffering, are still happy. They have recognized that true

happiness comes from being at peace with oneself and from being content with one's situation. Dr. William C. Menninger, one of the world's most highly respected psychiatrists of our generation, wrote: "The big person is rare - the world is filled with many 'small potatoes' who do not grow up in their capacity to give - give of themselves, of their substance, of their energy and their time. Good causes with constructive opportunities exist in every community. There is still validity in the old admonition, 'If you would save your life, lose it.' That is basic to mental good health, and following it is an indication of emotional maturity." God put it this way: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). Likely there are some now reading this book who have sought, but failed to find, genuine happiness. Perhaps it is time you took a closer look at how you are going about finding that happiness.

Being "*perfect in the way*" does not mean that a man is sinless (cf. 1 John 1:8-9). Those who "walk in the law of Jehovah" demonstrate a sense of spiritual maturity in the "way" they walk, and the path they trod. Their lives are directed by the "law of Jehovah" rather than the "counsel of the wicked" (Psa. 1:1-2). Their conduct is marked and directed by God's word.

To "*walk in the law of Jehovah*" is to steadily move toward that heavenly goal set forth in the law of God. It is to "walk in the light" (1 John 1:6-7), refusing to turn to the left or right. The law of God is the godly man's chart and compass. Indeed, this first verse is a fitting introduction to the remainder of the Psalm, as is the first Psalm to the entire collection of sacred songs. It is the text upon which the rest is a discourse.

**119:2:** "*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies*" – A blessing is pronounced upon those who "keep the testimonies." Before one can "keep" the testimonies of God, he must first make diligent effort to learn of those testimonies and determine in his heart that he will abide therein. But what is meant by the "*testimonies*"? The English is derived from a word which signifies bearing witness. The imagery is that of a court room in which a witness is called upon to provide first hand information. God makes His word known by inspiration; His "testimony" is such that it is "sure" (Psa. 19:7). The "testimony" is equivalent to the law and covenant of God (cf. Exodus 25:22; Psa. 25:10; 132:12). God has spoken to us; He has "testified" of His existence, His character, and His demands in our lives. We are to

listen to His "testimony." It should be observed that the man who is genuinely happy is not the man who seeks material gain, but the man who keeps the word of God. Heaven has revealed this truth, and history has never proven it otherwise. Some of the wealthiest men ever to live have testified that their wealth did not contribute one whit to peace of mind.

*"seek him with the whole heart"* – Two truths emerge from these half dozen words. First, every man has the sacred obligation to "seek" God. Second, half-hearted efforts will not produce genuine spiritual growth. Since the heart consists of the intellect, the will, and the emotions, then the whole of man's reasoning and volition is to be involved in searching for and applying the will of God to our lives.

**119:3:** *"they do no unrighteousness"* - It is not that the child of God is sinless, but that he does not PRACTICE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS; his life is not characterized by unrighteousness. The "blessed" are the ones who "walk in his ways" rather than their own way.

**119:4:** *"Thou hast commanded us thy precepts"* - It is God that has commanded; man must heed and obey. To "observe" a commandment of God is to listen and make proper application. This is to be done diligently. God's commands are not obeyed by accident. There must be a concentration of the will toward that end. It is important to keep in mind that an intense search for and application of the laws of God to our lives do not make us "legalists," as some aver.

*"precepts"* - Our English comes from the Hebrew which means "to place in trust; something entrusted to man." Hence, the word of God is that which has been *entrusted* to us. We must use it wisely, handling it aright (2 Timothy 2:15).

*"diligently"* – Our English word means "Superlatively, to the uttermost." Not only must we seek God with the heart, but we must do so with the fullest intensity of our will and determination.

**119:5:** *"Oh that my ways were established, To observe thy statutes!"* David was aware of his own weaknesses and short comings. His desire was to be established, trained, set firm in the statutes of God. One should note the continual emphasis the author places upon DOING God's will in these first eight verses. David was showing us the importance of aligning the HUMAN WILL with the WILL OF THE DIVINE!

**119:6:** *"Then shall I not be put to shame, When I have respect unto all thy commandments"* - The cause is *"respect unto all thy commandments,"* the effect is he shall *"not be put to shame."* Having respect for all the commandments of God will not give occasion for one to be ashamed of following God. Notice in this connection the admonition of 2 Timothy 2:15 to *"Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth."* It should also be noted that the blessed man gives careful attention to ALL of God's commandments. If we allow any one of God's commandments to be transgressed we open the door to invite more disobedience into our lives.

**119:7:** *"I will give thanks unto thee with uprightness of heart, When I learn thy righteous judgments"* - The Psalmist first learns of God's righteous judgments. He observes the equity of justice, the compassion in administration, and the fulfillment of God's promises. Careful consideration of these "judgments" of God will cause the pious soul to render thanks unto Jehovah that arises from the heart. This stands in opposition to those who are fearful of learning the will of God so far as it pertains to certain areas of their life. They would rather be left in ignorance.

**119:8:** *"I will observe thy statutes: Oh forsake me not utterly"* - The Psalmist closes this section with a plea that God will not utterly forsake him. Although it may seem at times that God has forsaken His children, the clear teaching of the Bible is that He never actually forsakes the righteous; it is never an "utter abandonment."

Before we leave this first stanza let us note three things stressed by the Psalmist in these verses. Obviously there is great stress placed upon keeping the law of God. With the exception of verses 6 and 7, every verse speaks of walking in the way of God's law, keeping His testimonies, observing the statutes, etc. Happiness is found in keeping God's law. No greater truth needs to be learned by our materialistic age. Finally, there is the Psalmist's desire to walk as God has directed. We usually manage to accomplish those things that we truly desire.

Unfortunately, only a few choose to follow the path to peace and blessedness (Matt. 7:13-14). God has set before us the way that will lead to happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Notice the characteristics of these "happy" people. First, those who are

genuinely happy are those who make the will of God the rule of their actions; those who govern themselves by that rule and walk therein (verse 1). Second, they seek God with the whole heart. Their allegiance is not divided, and their search for happiness is inseparably connected with their search for God (cf. Matt. 6:33). Third, they walk in the ways of God and not the ways of the world. They carefully mark out the boundaries that God has set, and are determined not to step outside those bounds. Fourth, they are careful to "observe" the precepts of God (verse 5). Theirs is not some casual glance at heaven's revelation, but an intense observation and careful examination of every word of every sentence of every chapter that is contained in God's sacred word. Fifth, they have "respect" unto all God's commandments. They do not trifle with heavenly things, and their lives demonstrate a sense of awe and reverence for sacred things. Finally, they are thankful for the word for they know full well that therein is the only safe guide that will lead them to the heavenly Father. I wrote the following article more than a decade ago:

### ***Obedience Or Opulence***

by Tom Wacaster

Webster defines "opulence" as "wealth, riches, affluence; having large means." The "baby boomer" generation has grown up and become the "yuppies" of the 90's. Success is measured in terms of size. Quality gives way to quantity. Our affluent age is exchanging the true values for a "mess of pottage," and the spiritual and psychological indigestion caused thereby cannot be cured by some "Tums" tablet or quick dose of "I'm Ok, You're Ok." A well known news anchorman once remarked that he had all the material things he could ever hope for, but that happiness and contentment had eluded him. I wonder how many of us could say the same thing. We live in an affluent age. The past half century years have witnessed unparalleled prosperity in our nation's history. But for some reason, psychologists and psychiatrists are busier than ever. Think on these words for a moment. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8). Again, "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (Philippians 4:11). "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). We need to be reminded that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he

possesseth” (Luke 12:15). No, happiness, contentment and peace are not the product of opulence, but of obedience to the will of Christ.

**‘Beth’**

(9-16)

***"The Word Laid Up In The Heart"***

*119:9 Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

*Psa 119:10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: Oh let me not wander from thy commandments.*

*Psa 119:11 Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee.*

*Psa 119:12 Blessed art thou, O Jehovah: Teach me thy statutes.*

*Psa 119:13 With my lips have I declared All the ordinances of thy mouth.*

*Psa 119:14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, As much as in all riches.*

*Psa 119:15 I will meditate on thy precepts, And have respect unto thy ways.*

*Psa 119:16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.*

The general theme of this stanza is that of purity of life as a fruit of keeping the law of God. There is an important connection between this stanza and the previous. While the previous stanza had stressed KEEPING the law of Jehovah, the Psalmist now addresses HOW this is to be done. All of the verses of this stanza begin with the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

**119:9** - *“Wherewith...cleanse his way”* – It does not follow from this inquiry that the writer is a “young man” — rather the reverse. Somewhat advanced in life, the author is anxious to give advice to young men. The ninth verse presupposes the reality of sin and its effect upon mankind, and especially in the days of youth. How great the difficulty for a young man, with the passions of the flesh on the one hand, and the inexperience of life on the other, to maintain faithful allegiance to his God! The means by which purity is achieved is through a diligent application of the word of God to one's life, *“by taking heed thereto according to thy word.”* The younger generation cannot face the temptations of youth and come forth victorious without treasuring up the word of God in their heart. It simply cannot be done. To “take heed” is to listen, meditate upon,



and make application to the life. Implied here is (1) a knowledge of God's will, and (2) an application to one's life. Many a young person has KNOWN the word, but has failed to "take heed," to listen and apply as he should.

**119:10:** "*Oh let me not wander*" - Once a person is in a right relationship with God it is possible to "wander" from the commandments of God. The commitment of the "*whole heart*" is the only preventative of such occurring in one's life. Our prayer should ever be, "Oh God, keep me close to Thy side, and let me never wander from Thee."

It is a mystery to this author why so many professed "Christians" want to "dally" in sin, with one foot in the church and one in the world. It is paramount to having one eye set on heaven, and another eye set on the allurements of the world. The only assurance for faithfulness here, and the hope for a home in the hereafter, is a heart that is wholly dedicated and void of divided allegiance. The only thing that is acceptable is a seeking after God with the WHOLE heart. Nothing less will do.

**119:11:** "*Thy word have I laid up in my heart*" - A believer must "store up" or "lay up" the word of God in his heart as he might safeguard a precious object. This calls for a careful study and meditation of that word. When the time of temptation comes the ready heart will be prepared to answer the temptations of the flesh (cf. Matt. 4:1-11). The following points should be noted:

First, **what** the Psalmist has laid up in his heart: it is the word of God. If we lay up in our heart those philosophies of men, the desired goal will not be achieved.

Second, notice **where** that word is laid up: it is IN THE HEART. Intellectual knowledge in and of itself will not make one closer to God, nor will it keep one from sin. There is a difference between having the word in the head, and having it in the heart. The idea is that of placing a treasure in a secret place in order to keep it safe and secure. The Psalmist had laid up the word in the heart. It was permanently deposited there as a most valuable treasure. And though unseen with the human eye, that word within the heart provided strength to face the temptations of life. The laying up of the word "in the heart" certainly includes meditation and memorization. Psalms 1:1-3 declares that the "blessed man" is the one who finds

great delight in the law of the Lord, and "meditates" on that law both "day and night."

Third, notice **why** the Psalmist laid up the word of God in his heart: in order that he might not sin *against God*. Sin is, above everything else, an offense to God.

**119:12:** "*teach me thy statutes*" – The remaining verses in this section sets forth a half dozen safe guards against wandering from God. The first of these is a willingness to be taught. The repeated emphasis upon knowledge throughout the Bible should impress us with the importance of a good knowledge of God's word. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of God (2 Pet. 3:18), and "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

**119:13:** "*With my lips have I declared All the ordinances of thy mouth*" - Having been taught, the Psalmist would then teach others. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The MEANS by which knowledge would be imparted would be through those who have been taught before, passing that knowledge on to others. Notice in this connection Paul's words to Timothy: "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). While there is great responsibility in teaching (James 3:1), there is abundant reward as well. Those who serve as teachers in the kingdom readily admit that they learn much in the process of teaching. Consider also the responsibility of every child of God to be a teacher (Heb 5:11 ff, 2 Tim. 2:24 f).

**119:14:** "*I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches*" - Having been taught, and having determined to teach others, the Psalmist puts his priorities in proper order. Riches and wealth would not deter him; the testimonies of God mean far more to him than material gain. Until men recognize the wealth of the Pearl of Great Price, and the fleeting nature of material wealth, they will not seek the purity of life that comes from a knowledge and application of the word of God to their lives. Dear reader, God's word is a *treasure*, precious to those who discover it, and calculated to rejoice the heart of all who possess it.

**119:15:** "*I will meditate on thy precepts, And have respect unto thy ways*" – There is great danger in failing to hold the word of God in

high esteem. We are witnessing in our generation the fruits of a world that no longer has a deep and abiding respect for the Bible. It has been scarcely more than a generation ago that our nation had respect for the Bible. It used to be that men could appeal to the Bible for their standard of morality. Today men ask, "Why should we listen to the Bible?" Consequently, if we respect the Bible we will meditate upon it. "As the miser often returns to look upon his treasure, so does the devout believer by frequent meditation turn over the priceless wealth which he has discovered in the book of the Lord" (Spurgeon).

**119:16:** *"I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word"* – This section in the Psalm closes with two additional prerequisites to godly living: a delight in God's statutes, and a resolve not to forget the word of God. That which is "laid up in the heart" (ver. 11) can never be forgotten. Only those who have experienced the blessings of following God's word can appreciate the sentiments of the writer. Indeed there is a great delight in hearing and heeding the words of God. Human language cannot begin to express the great joy that is here for the taking. How tragic when men deprive themselves of the true riches of heaven!

One should notice that "delight" follows the "meditation" noted in the previous verse. One will not delight in God's word until he takes the time to meditate on the same.

There are some very practical lessons that come out of these eight verses. First, we must be **concerned** about purity of life. Notice 1 Tim 4:12 and 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:3. It seems that too few give any consideration whatsoever to what is right, and what is wrong. Purity in many cases is actually disdained by our society.

Next, we should note that it is possible to be spiritually and morally strong, whether young or old. There is a tendency to discredit youth, to look down on the younger generation and conclude that such will always be the case. But this stanza teaches that young people CAN be spiritually strong and pure in life.

Third, each one of us should make a concentrated effort to hide the word of God in our hearts. It will serve as a great preventative to sin. It is possible for a child of God to "wander" away from God and His word. In fact, one of the first steps to apostasy is an abandonment of the study of the Bible. The word of God laid up in the heart will prevent such apostasy.

**‘Gimel’**

(17-24)

***"The Longing Soul Will Be Blessed With Open Eyes"***

- 17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live; So will I observe thy word.
- 18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold Wondrous things out of thy law.
- 19 I am a sojourner in the earth: Hide not thy commandments from me.
- 20 My soul breaketh for the longing That it hath unto thine ordinances at all times.
- 21 Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, That do wander from thy commandments.
- 22 Take away from me reproach and contempt; For I have kept thy testimonies.
- 23 Princes also sat and talked against me; But thy servant did meditate on thy statutes.
- 24 Thy testimonies also are my delight And my counsellors.

In this stanza the Psalmist pleads for proper *circumstances* that might *allow* him to meditate upon the law of God. In the previous stanza (vss. 9-16) the Psalmist prayed as a young man seeking to find help in facing life's temptations. In this stanza, he pleads as a *servant* and a *pilgrim*, who increasingly finds himself a stranger in a foreign land.

**119:17:** "*Deal bountifully with thy servant* " – Our English “deal bountifully” translates the Hebrew ‘*gamal*,’ which means “to reward.” The same word appears in Psalms 13:6, 116:7, and 142:7, and has the idea of rewarding or recompensing either good or evil.

*“that I may live; so will I observe thy word”* – David did **not** ask that he may live and grow rich or be merry, but that he might live so as to observe God’s word. The very essence of his life consisted in keeping the word of God. For that reason he asked God to deal with him “bountifully.” His request was not for length of life so that he could spend it upon himself, but rather that he might live so as to serve God. Any desire that we should have to live long upon this earth should be for no other purpose than to serve our God, and glorify His name.

**119:18:** “*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold Wondrous things out of thy law*” – It is as if the Psalmist were saying, “Provide the opportunity, O God, so that I might gaze upon thy law and admire the beauty of your word.” The Psalmist felt that God had laid up great blessings in His word and he pleads for the opportunity to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy those blessings. There are vast treasures within the word of God. Every chapter, verse, and word contains spiritual treasures waiting to be mined by the student of the word.

It is important to keep in mind that the veil of ignorance is not one that covers the book, but it is upon the heart of the individual who refuses to see. The hearts and minds of this world have been blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4). “What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men amongst the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness” (Spurgeon).

Observe that there are “*wondrous things*” in God’s “*law*,” things which are excellent, and which are to be highly esteemed and valued; things long hidden but now revealed unto those in this dispensation. If there were wonders in the law, how much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose very name is *Wonderful*? Well may we desire to behold those wonderful truths that prior to the coming of our Savior, even the angels desired to look into (1 Pet. 1:12).

**119:19:** “*I am a sojourner in the earth*” – The idea is, “Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. *I am a stranger*, and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. *I am a stranger* here, and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence” (Matthew Henry). This earth is not our home. We are merely sojourners; pilgrims traveling through a land not our own. We have our eyes fixed on that heavenly home which hath foundation whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10). When one recognizes this one truth, he will beseech God to make His commandments known so that he might travel this life in such a way as to reach that heavenly home.

When traveling abroad on numerous occasions it is refreshing to come across something to which I can relate. An American Embassy in a foreign land is a great solace in time of trouble. This is precisely the feeling that the Psalmist has with regard to the word of God. It is a solace in a land that thinks and acts differently than does the child of God. No wonder the Psalmist would beseech God, "Hide not thy commandments from me." Can one even begin to imagine what life would be like were we not able to turn to the living word in times of discouragement, in times of sorrow, or in times of temptation?

**119:20:** *"My soul breaketh for the longing That it hath unto thine ordinances at all times"* - The word translated "breaketh" means "to break; to crush; to break in pieces by scraping, rubbing, or grating" (Barnes). The idea seems to be that the Psalmist's longing for the knowledge of God's word continually crushed his soul. We might say that "it wore upon him" as any strong desire might do. Genuine godliness lies very much in one's desires, for where the heart is, there also is our treasure. The New Testament equivalent is found in the words of our Lord: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

**119:21:** *"Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, That do wander from thy commandments"* - While meditating on the benefit of keeping God's law, the Psalmist naturally thinks of what might be the opposite of such blessings. God has, in every way, and at all times, shown His displeasure toward those who "wander from" His commandments. Only the humble heart will be obedient, for those who genuinely possess a heart of humility will yield to God's rule. Arrogance will blind a man to the truth and bar him from God's presence. Interestingly, the fifth verse of the next two sections (verses 29 and 35) speak of falsehood and vanity, two accompanying sins of pride.

**119:22:** *"Take away from me reproach and contempt; For I have kept thy testimonies"* - Having weighed both sides, the Psalmist comes back to his own faithfulness in keeping the law of God. In view of that faithfulness, he seeks God's favor that the Almighty might take away from him any reproach and contempt.

**119:23:** *"Princes also sat and talked against me; But thy servant did meditate on thy statutes"* - The opening remarks refer to some personal reproach that the author evidently experienced during his life, and the later half describes how he dealt with that persecution. Some might respond in anger to words spoken against them, but the

Psalmist manifests calmness of heart. Here is an amazing contrast. The "princes" of the world have set themselves against David, while David sits with his Bible open.

**119:24:** *"Thy testimonies also are my delight And my counsellors"* - While evil men take counsel with one another, the child of God takes counsel in the inspired scriptures. It may have been their delight to slander; it was his to meditate. If we are to find comfort in the scriptures in such times, we must submit ourselves to its counsel and guidance; and such submission must be with delight and not grudgingly.

In verse 16 the Psalmist had vowed to "delight...in thy statutes." Such promises and determination, with God's help, come to fruition and our desires eventually become attainments.

***'Daleth'***

(25-32)

***"Strength In Time of Weakness"***

- 25 *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: Quicken thou me according to thy word.*  
26 *I declared my ways, and thou answeredst me: Teach me thy statutes.*  
27 *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: So shall I meditate on thy wondrous works.*  
28 *My soul melteth for heaviness: Strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*  
29 *Remove from me the way of falsehood; And grant me thy law graciously.*  
30 *I have chosen the way of faithfulness: Thine ordinances have I set before me.*  
31 *I cleave unto thy testimonies: O Jehovah, put me not to shame.*  
32 *I will run the way of thy commandments, When thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

In this stanza we find the Psalmist in trouble, his soul cleaving to the dust, and expressing an earnest desire to be quickened (vs. 25). The extremity of that depression is seen in verse 28 where he says his "soul melteth for heaviness." On the brighter side, we find the stanza closing with the Psalmist renewed in spirit, and saying he will "run the way of thy commandments." Here we have a beautiful picture of

David as he sings of *depression*, in the spirit of *devotion*, *determination* and *dependence* (Phillips).

**119:25:** *"My soul cleaveth unto the dust"* - This was no accidental falling into the dust. The Psalmist was grieving. Mourners in the east would cast dust upon their heads and sit in ashes as a sign of deep mourning and sorrow. What had happened to bring about this horrible state of despair that he now faced? Whatever it was, the writer had a desire to be "quickened," or renewed to life. The word "cleaveth" means to be "glued to; to stick fast...the sense of adhering firmly to anything, so that it cannot be separated from it" (Barnes). "When a person is depressed in spirit, weak, and bent towards the ground, the main thing is to increase his stamina and put more life into him" (Spurgeon).

**119:26:** *"I declared my ways, and thou answeredst me"* - The Psalmist's confession was not to make his sins known to God (for God was well aware of any sin he had in his life), but to acknowledge his wrong in his own mind and before his Father. We are promised that confession will bring forgiveness (1 John 1:7-10).

*"Teach me thy statutes"* - The willingness of the Psalmist to learn is exemplary. Having received forgiveness the Psalmist is anxious to learn how to avoid offending God again. Hence, he begs to be taught the law of God.

**119:27:** *"Make me to understand the way of thy precepts"* - Note the desire of the Psalmist to understand the precepts of God. The MEANS by which that understanding would come is through meditation upon the "wondrous works" of Jehovah. Likely these "wondrous works" are those things contained within the word (cf. Eph. 3:3-5). There is no hint here of any direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of an individual. His understanding would come as the result of hard study, diligent prayer, and humble obedience.

**119:28:** The Psalmist was "dissolving away in tears...Heaviness of heart is a killing thing, and when it abounds it threatens to turn life into a long death, in which a man seems to drop away in a perpetual drip of grief" (Spurgeon). But alas it is better to be sorrowful for our sins than to be hardened by them; the later leads to repentance and life, the other to death (cf. 2 Cor. 7:10).



Before leaving this verse we must comment on the Psalmist's reference to the soul. Such language is common in this 119th Psalm: See verses 20, 25, 81, 109, 167 and 175. While some men do not recognize that they have a soul, our writer continually sought the betterment of that part of man that would live eternally. Indeed, "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loose his soul?"

**119:29:** *"Remove from me the way of falsehood"* - Not only would David not walk in the way of falsehood, he desired that it be entirely removed from him.

**119:30:** *"I have chosen the way of faithfulness"* - The direction that men travel is a matter of individual choice. The Psalmist exercised his own free-will, having "chosen the way of faithfulness." Holiness does not come by wishful thinking. Godly living is the result of study, deliberation, and earnest determination to know God's will. Any thing else will rob a man of his prize and the way of truth will be missed. "The commands of God must be set before us as the mark to aim at, the model to work by, the road to walk in. If we put God's judgments into the background we shall soon find ourselves departing from them" (Spurgeon).

**119:31:** *"I cleave unto thy testimonies"* - The word translated "cleave" is the same as that in verse 25. How interesting that the Psalmist's soul "cleaveth unto the dust," yet through it all he would "cleave" unto the "testimonies" of God. Here is the key to faithfulness. No matter what may come our way, we must continue to cleave, hold fast to, the testimonies of God. The only alternative is abandonment of the word and that will bring sure disaster to the soul.

*"O Jehovah, put me not to shame"* - The child of God must not be ashamed of his calling.

**119:32:** *"Enlarge my heart"* - Indeed, the heart is the fountainhead of life's issues. Let the heart be enlarged, aroused, and dedicated, and one's feet and hands will, with full force of action and determination, pursue those things within God's word. Evidently the Psalmist felt the need for more life giving strength from God. His determination to *"run the way of thy commandments"* would require an enlarging of the heart so as to provide strength for the occasion.

Before leaving this section of the Psalm, note how the heart has been described up to this point. In verse 2 the Psalmist speaks of the "whole heart, in verse 7 "uprightness of heart," in verse 11 of hiding the word in the heart, and here the enlargement of the heart. Intellect alone is insufficient. A man must obey from the heart (Romans 6:17).

### ***The Cluttered Desk***

by Tom Wacaster

Having just arrived home from my latest mission endeavor, I now find myself facing the dubious task of "catching up" with the backlog of correspondence, reading and filing, and bills. I have not yet figured out how to keep up with all of these things when my office is located in East Texas and I am half way around the world teaching and preaching; to take my office with me is an impossibility, and to stay at home is not an option.

Unfortunately, even when I am home my office tends to get cluttered with first one thing and then another. Occasionally I have to take time and clean my desk off so that I can see what I am doing. As I type this article there are thirteen books laying dormant on my desk in various stages of readiness, one file full of illustrations, a notebook for keeping track of activities during my day, several markers and pens, a stack of the last five months of Reader's Digest, an unread copy of the Dallas Morning News (now at least two months old), a scratch pad or two, and pieces of mail (mostly junk advertisements) all cluttering up the desk. Strangely enough, I do not remember getting some of those things out, or for what purpose I put them there. They are just there, interfering with those more important things that I must get done.

Many a life is nothing more than a cluttered desk! In a frantic effort to get to those really important matters, we must first fight the time-wasting, insignificant things that hinder us at every turn. The tragedy is, most of us never DO get to the really important things in life. We allow the television, pleasure, self interests and the pursuit for things (all of which perish with the using), to distract us from taking care of the most important business of all, preparing for eternity. Were we to stand back and take an honest look at what has cluttered up our lives, we might wonder how in the world they got there in the first place, or what purpose they serve. They are just there! And deep inside we know we must clear them out of the way and tend to those important matters while there is still time.

A number of years ago Walt Disney Studios produced a full length animated movie titled, "Lion King." The theme song contained some very thought provoking words:

From the time we arrive on the planet,  
And blinking, step into the sun;  
There is more to see than can ever be seen,  
More to do than can ever be done.

Seeing that we will never be able to see all there is to see, or do all there is to do, does it not seem reasonable that we would want to make sure we got the truly important things done first? Once we recognize this logical and obvious truth, perhaps it will serve to motivate us to pay attention to that cluttered desk, or whatever else it might be that hinders us from accomplishing the truly important things in life.

**'He'**

(33-40)

***"Prayer For Faithful Adherence To The Word"***

- 33 *Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of thy statutes; And I shall keep it unto the end.*  
34 *Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.*  
35 *Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; For therein do I delight.*  
36 *Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, And not to covetousness.*  
37 *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity, And quicken me in thy ways.*  
38 *Confirm unto thy servant thy word, Which is in order unto the fear of thee.*  
39 *Turn away my reproach whereof I am afraid; For thine ordinances are good.*  
40 *Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: Quicken me in thy righteousness.*

In this stanza the Psalmist prays that he might be taught God's will, and thus strengthened and defended against the onslaught of the enemy. There is prayer for (1) instruction, (2) understanding, (3) spiritual ability, (4) inclination toward God's will, (5) exemption from vanity, (6) Divine quickening, (7) and request that God make good His promise to His servant. While in the previous stanza he

trembled with a sense of sin and the desire to depart from it, in this stanza he seeks for the life giving power found only in the word.

**119:33:** - *"Teach me, O Jehovah, the way of thy statutes; And I shall keep it unto the end"* - Only the Lord can be our teacher in matters pertaining to life eternal. Jeremiah wrote, "I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Only God can satisfy man's spiritual longings.

In order to be "taught," man must have a willingness to learn. The request made by the Psalmist demonstrates that he had a heart that was capable of being molded by God's word. "He would know that path of holiness which is hedged in by divine law, along which the commands of the Lord stand as sign-posts of direction and mile-stones of information, guiding and marking our progress" (Spurgeon). Thus guided, the Psalmist is determined to keep the way of God's statutes "unto the end."

**119:34:** *"Give me understanding"* - Having been taught, he now prays for understanding. Learning without a proper understanding is a miserable existence. One might "learn" how to drive an automobile; but unless he "understands" how to coordinate all of the factors that go into the safe operation of that automobile he is a danger to himself and others. The Psalmist first prayed that he might be taught the word; he then beseeches his Father to provide him with understanding of the truths previously taught.

*"observe it with my whole heart"* - The understanding and affections compliment one another in genuine service to God. To observe God's law with a grudging spirit renders service and worship null and void.

**119:35:** *"Make me to go in the path of thy commandments"* - This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run. The Psalmist pleads with God that He would provide the proper circumstances, and grant Divine Providence in seeing to it that he walked in the path of God's commandments. It should be noted that he does not ask to be carried, but that he might be made to go.

*"For therein do I delight"* - The writer's great delight in the law is a golden thread that runs throughout the 150 chapters of the Psalms.

Real delight in the law of God is one of the best means of securing its observance.

**119:36:** *"Incline my heart unto thy testimonies"* - The direction in which the heart is inclined is the direction in which the feet will trod. If a man's heart is inclined toward holy things, he will walk in the paths of righteousness. If his heart is inclined to the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the vainglory of life" (1 John 2:15-16) his feet will carry him into sin. The Proverb writer warns us to "Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it are the issues of life" (Pro. 4:23).

*"And not to covetousness"* - There are any number of sins that might well have been included here for in the final analysis any sin is transgression of the law and the antithesis of inclining one's heart unto the testimonies of God. Covetous is mentioned here because of its deceptive nature and its effect upon the heart of a man's soul. When a man is stingy and greedy his soul he is not inclined to listen to anything else that God has revealed in His word.

This vice is as injurious as it is common; it is as mean as it is miserable. It is idolatry, and so it dethrones God; it is selfishness, and so it is cruel to all in its power; it is sordid greed, and so it would sell the Lord himself for pieces of silver. It is a degrading, groveling, hardening, deadening sin, which withers everything around it that is lovely and Christ like (Spurgeon).

This particular sin has probably drawn away more precious souls from service to God than any other single sin. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and many who are minded to be rich have been overcome by its strong pull toward the world. Let us flee covetousness, never once looking back at what might have been, but what through faith, will be!

**119:37:** *"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity"* - In an effort to make doubly sure of his safety and faithfulness, the Psalmist now asks that God would turn his eyes away from beholding vanity. The eyes are one of the primary instruments by which Satan tempts us to sin. John listed the lust of the eyes as one of three major avenues to sin (1 John 2:15-17). There is danger in gazing steadily on that which God calls evil. Just as an ugly object loses much of its ugliness when looked at too often, so also sin loses its abhorrence when men gaze upon its pleasures. Rather than look upon things that are worldly and temporal, why not rather gaze upon those things that are eternal

and pure? We should be thankful that God has given us eyelids so that we can close our eyes to that which is forbidden.

*"quicken me in the way"* - Someone has noted that "vitality is the cure for vanity." When the heart is filled with pure thoughts, there will be no room for vanity. When the child of God presents himself as a "living sacrifice" in service to God he is more apt to avoid the temptations that Satan sends his way.

**119:38:** The various renderings of this verse suggest the difficulty that there is in translating the Hebrew. The idea seems to be that the word produces a fear of Jehovah, and it is in that word that the Psalmist desired to be confirmed or grounded. Here is a selection of renderings of this verse (I do not recommend either the Revised Version or the NIV for study Bibles but present them here to prove our point):

American Standard: "Confirm unto thy servant thy word,  
Which is in order unto the fear of thee"

The New Revised Version: "Confirm to your servant your  
promise, which is for those who fear you."

The NIV: "Fulfill your promise to your servant, so that you  
may be feared."

The KJV: "Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is  
devoted to thy fear."

Rawlinson provided some help on the verse:

The antecedent to the relative is "word" or "promise," and not "servant;" and the prayer is that God will make good to his servant that promise, which lies at the root of all reverence and godly fear (Pulpit Commentary).

Our opinion is that the Psalmist was asking God to confirm the word by fulfilling the promises contained therein. This in turn would produce greater fear and reverence for that word. When a father repeatedly makes promises to his child and yet never follows through, the child soon comes to disrespect the father. Reverence for that authority figure in his life goes by the way side and there is no fear of him who otherwise might be adored and respected by the child. The Bible is replete with examples of God's faithfulness. He

“cannot lie,” and every single promise He has extended to His children can be depended upon.

**119:39:** *“Turn away my reproach whereof I am afraid”* This prayer to turn away his reproach is very similar to the 31st verse in the previous stanza. It is also similar to many of the 7th verses in other stanzas as well. It is as if David were praying, “Turn away from me the only reproach of which I am afraid — the reproach of transgressing against thy Law.”

*“Thine ordinances are good”* – There are some things in life that are “good,” thought not necessarily pleasant to endure. Here is one of several things that the Psalmist itemizes as “good.” “Thy judgments are good,” “thou art good and doest good” (verse 68), “good for me to have been afflicted” (verse 71), and “teach me good judgment” (verse 66). We should keep in mind that God’s estimation of what is “good” is often contrary to what the world considers good.

**119:40:** *“Behold, I have longed after thy precepts”* - Because of the delightful nature of God’s precepts (24) the Psalmist could say that he “longed after thy precepts.” There are those — few, it may be, but truly blessed — who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). In view of the blessings contained within the word of God how could the Psalmist do anything other than “long” after them?

### ***“The Bread Of Life”***

by Tom Wacaster

It is sometimes noted that a preacher’s sermon is not long remembered upon the closing “Amen” of the weekly service. Some have, therefore, disparaged the importance of listening to religious sermons on the grounds that they are soon forgotten. A number of years ago a reader of the British Weekly wrote a letter to the editor addressing this matter. “Dear sir, I noticed that ministers seem to set a great deal of importance on their sermons and spend a great deal of time in preparing them. I have been attending services quite regularly for the past 30 years and during that time if I estimate correctly, I have listened to no less than 3,000 sermons. But, to my consternation, I discover I cannot recall a single one of them. I wonder if a minister’s time might be more profitably spent on something else? Sincerely....” The letter provoked a great deal of discussion, with responses both pro and con appearing in the “letters to the editor.” The following response ended the debate: “My dear

sir, I have been married for 30 years. During that time I have eaten 32,850 meals, mostly my wife's cooking. Suddenly I have discovered that I cannot remember the menu of a single meal. And yet, I received nourishment from every one of them. I have the distinct impression that without them, I would have starved to death long ago. Sincerely....."

**'Vau'**

(41-48)

***"I Will Meditate On Thy Statutes"***

- 41 *Let thy lovingkindnesses also come unto me, O Jehovah, Even thy salvation, according to thy word.*  
42 *So shall I have an answer for him that reproacheth me; For I trust in thy word.*  
43 *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; For I have hoped in thine ordinances.*  
44 *So shall I observe thy law continually For ever and ever.*  
45 *And I shall walk at liberty; For I have sought thy precepts.*  
46 *I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, And shall not be put to shame.*  
47 *And I will delight myself in thy commandments, Which I have loved.*  
48 *I will lift up my hands also unto thy commandments, which I have loved; And I will meditate on thy statutes.*

Our title for this section comes from verse 48. The Psalmist's desire to meditate on the word arises out of an appreciation for all that the word had done, and would continue to do in his life. Barnes has pointed out that "there are almost no words in Hebrew that begin with this letter, which is properly a conjunction, and hence, in each of the verses of this section of the psalm (41-48) the beginning of the verse is in the original a conjunction." The closest we can come in English is to say that each verse begins with the word "And." It is as if the Psalmist was anxious to communicate the wonderful blessings of meditating on God's word.

**119:41:** *"Let thy lovingkindnesses also come unto me...even thy salvation"* – This is the first time that the word "salvation" appears in this particular Psalm and it is coupled with God's wonderful grace. In fact, it is a companion of not just a single grace of God, but a multitude, for it is also the first place in the Psalm wherein the "lovingkindness" of the Lord is presented in the plural. "Salvation is



an aggregate of mercies incalculable in number, priceless in value, incessant in application, eternal in endurance" (Spurgeon). God's love for man is unconditional. He loved us even while we were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). While it is true that God's grace is *available* to all men, it is not the case that His grace will be *extended* to all men. This is because man must reciprocate; he must respond to God's grace in loving obedience (Titus 2:11-14).

*"According to thy word"* – David did not seek for salvation *apart* from the word, but in *accord* with the word. Salvation is bound up in the word of Jehovah for apart from it there is no salvation. Many a miserable soul seeks salvation but is unwilling to submit to the word. Rather than doing things God's way, they seek to impose *their* way on God. David was not of that mind set.

**119:42:** *"So shall I have an answer for him that reproacheth me"* - In verses 41 and 42 we see two pillars on which our hope is built: (1) The wonderful grace of God ("Let thy lovingkindnesses...come unto me"), and (2) the promise of God ("For I trust in thy word"). The former provides *peace* for the sin sick soul; the later *power* to answer the critic. With the word as a part of his arsenal, the child of God can go forth conquering and to conquer, giving "answer to every man that asketh him a reason for the hope that is within" (1 Pet. 3:15).

**119:43:** *"And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth"* - Without the word of God, there is no hope. The Psalmist was asking that God not allow him to be without some access to the word. He trusted in the word, and as long as he could hold on to that word, even to the slightest degree, then he knew he would be safe. Man's hope lies within the word. Without it we would be completely helpless.

**119:44:** *"So shall I observe thy law continually, For ever and ever"* – The Psalmist was determined to observe the law. There would be no turning aside; he would observe that law "continually."

**119:45:** *"And I shall walk at liberty; For I have sought thy precepts"* - The "and" attaches this verse to the preceding. Freedom comes only when men "observe" the law of God. In order to "observe" the laws of God, one must have "sought" that law. The association of the words "observe" and "sought" suggest that the Psalmist had determined to obey what he knew, and continually endeavor to know more. This certainly characterizes the child of God who will "give diligence" so as to show himself "approved unto God" (2 Tim 2:15).

The word provides true liberty. "The Hebrew word means *wide, broad, large, spacious*. The reference is to that which is free and open; that in which there are no limits, checks, restraints; where a man does what he pleases. The meaning here is, that he would feel he was free. He would not be restrained by evil passions and corrupt desires" (Barnes). Such freedom comes through an honest and intent search of the word.

As one who is out of prison, unimpeded by adversaries, unencumbered by burdens, unshackled, allowed a wide range, and roaming without fear. Such liberty would be dangerous if a man were seeking himself or his own lusts; but when the one object sought after is the will of God, there can be no need to restrain the searcher....The Spirit of holiness is a free spirit; he sets men at liberty and enables them to resist every effort to bring them under subjection. The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King's highway for freemen, who are joyfully journeying from the Egypt of bondage to the Canaan of rest (Spurgeon).

The idea is that the righteous man does not feel the burden of restraint because he is living within the law of God. The New Testament equivalent of this verse is found in 1 Timothy 1:8-9:

But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;  
Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man,  
but for the lawless and disobedient.

This is not to say that the righteous man is in no way under the law. Our English word "made" translates '*keitai*' and refers to the custom of writing laws on boards, and hanging them up in public places within reach of every man, that all may be able to read it ; thus all would be able to see against whom the law LAY. The meaning is, that law, any law, does not "press" the righteous man. He abides by the law and is, therefore, under no guilt or feeling of intimidation. To illustrate: If a man exceeds the speed limit he is constantly looking, watching, etc; he cannot relax. But if a man is within the speed limit, he can relax, knowing that he is within the confines of the law. The speed limit sign is "made" for the lawless in that it POINTS HIM OUT AS A TRANSGRESSOR. But the law is NOT for the righteous man in that it does not stand "opposed" to his lawful action.

**119:46:** *"I will also speak of thy testimonies before kings, And shall not be put to shame"* - While some would be ashamed of the word

before even the lowest class of humanity, the Psalmist would not be ashamed, even in the presence of kings. His willingness to appear before kings suggests freedom from fear of even the most powerful of men. Oh for the courage to simply speak when opportunity affords itself. Failure to speak where such an opportunity exists is a shame to those who claim to be God's child. Like Paul who was "not ashamed of the gospel," the Psalmist declared that he would "not be put to shame." It is unfortunate that some are more willing to remain silent rather than offend their company.

**119:47:** *"And I will delight myself in thy commandments"* - Delight follows hard on the heels of one's love for the word. When one has learned the word and applied it to his life, there is great delight in having obeyed the Lord. This delight arises not only from a knowledge of having pleased the Lord, but in finding the peace that comes with living within the guidelines set forth by our God. It is interesting that, while the whole of this Psalm contains the undertones of the Psalmist's love for God and His word, it is here that this love is first expressed.

**119:48:** *"I will lift up my hands also unto thy commandments, which I have loved"* - The lifting up of the hands suggests the carrying out of the law in his life. Here he states that he has loved the word of God, and that he will continue to meditate upon that law.

*"And I will meditate"* - In the process of assimilating the word of God into one's heart and life each individual must go through at least three steps in order to take full advantage of that process. First, there is reading. We are admonished to give ourselves to the reading of God's word (1 Tim. 4:13). When we "read" we simply gather the facts. We acquaint ourselves with what each book contains with regular and consistent reading of God's word. Next, there is study. Study is more than reading. When a man studies the word of God he determines the meaning of words, he cross examines the scriptures, and he seeks to learn the meaning of any particular passage. Finally, there is meditation. After a passage has been read, and the student has done all within his power to learn what it says, he then meditates upon the truths contained therein. He "chews" on that word in search of how it can be applied to his life. Now note: Few in our society today ever get around to reading the word of God. Of those who happen to read the Bible, too few take the time to study it. And of those who might read and study, one might only wonder how few of those take the time to meditate upon what he has learned. Ask yourself: "Do I read the word? Have I taken the time to study that

word? And have I sought diligently to make the application of what I have learned to my life?"

**'Zayin'**

(49-56)

***"Refuge In Remembering"***

- 49 *Remember the word unto thy servant, Because thou hast made me to hope.*  
50 *This is my comfort in my affliction; For thy word hath quickened me.*  
51 *The proud have had me greatly in derision: Yet have I not swerved from thy law.*  
52 *I have remembered thine ordinances of old, O Jehovah, And have comforted myself.*  
53 *Hot indignation hath taken hold upon me, Because of the wicked that forsake thy law.*  
54 *Thy statutes have been my songs In the house of my pilgrimage.*  
55 *I have remembered thy name, O Jehovah, in the night, And have observed thy law.*  
56 *This I have had, Because I have kept thy precepts.*

The emphasis in this section is upon the Psalmist's reaction to the mistreatment he had received at the hand of his enemies. It is said that "the proud" had the author in "derision" (vs. 51), and that they had forsaken God's law (vs. 53). In response the Psalmist states that he would remember God's ordinances, he would remember the name of God even in the night, he would observe the law of God, and he had kept the precepts of God. Consequently, he would enjoy enumerable blessings, including comfort in affliction, the power of the life giving word, and a song in his heart.

It is clear that the Psalmist's hope is the outgrowth of his study and meditation upon the word. The language is that of a lonely man who puts his confidence in the promises of God, with a humble request that his Father would care for him as an earthly father cares for his children.

**119:49:** - *"Thou hast made me to hope"* – Past promises served as the basis of the hope within. The same God Who had *promised* had also *performed* and thereby raised the Psalmist's expectations of more to come. The faithfulness of our God to fulfill all of His avowed blessings to His children is one of the divine traits that make Him

what He is. Seeing that God “cannot lie,” those to whom the Father has promised blessings can rest assured these promises will come to pass.

*“Remember the word unto thy servant”* – Sometimes a single word is rich in spiritual truth. This is the case with this word “remember.” On more than one occasion Job prayed that God would remember him in his hour of distress (Job 10:9; 14:13). Here the Psalmist pleads with the Father that He not forget His servant. Should God fail to remember His word unto this His servant, then no doubt all would have been in vain.

**119:50:** *“This is my comfort in my affliction”* – The same word that is said to produce hope also provides comfort in times of affliction. Men may *curse* us; God’s word will *comfort*. It has been noted by not a few of our sources that the Hebrew word translated “comfort” occurs only here and in Job 6:10. The purpose here is to show the value of the word of God as our source of comfort in times of trouble.

The worldling clutches his money-bag, and says, “this is my comfort”; the spendthrift points to his gaiety and shouts, “this is my comfort”; the drunkard lifts his glass and sings, “this is my comfort”; but the man whose hope comes from God feels the life-giving power of the word of the Lord, and he testifies, “this is my comfort” (Spurgeon).

*“thy word hath quickened me”* - The student should note that the author speaks of the quickening power of the word as the source or cause of his comfort in times of affliction. Only those who have experienced the life giving power of the word through humble obedience to that word can rightfully claim the comfort that God’s word provides.

**119:51:** The Psalmist identifies the source of his “affliction” of the previous verse. The “proud” had somehow gained the upper hand and placed the writer in great “derision.” And yet, in spite of the abundant affliction that they might have heaped upon him, he had not “swerved” from God’s law, but had instead maintained his faithfulness. The enemy may have ridiculed him for his praying, or scoffed at him for his strict adherence to the word, but the Psalmist declares that he was not moved by their jeers and taunts. Indeed, “The traveler goes on his way though the dogs bark at him” (Matthew Henry).

**119:52:** *"I have remembered thine ordinances of old"* - Here is the key to maintaining faithfulness. In times of temptation one must "remember" God's word. But a man can only "remember" what he has first laid up in his heart through study and meditation on the word.

"Comfort" during times of affliction arises out of the recognition that our "light affliction is but for the moment," and that heaven's riches and rewards will far outweigh any momentary affliction that might come our way. The words "of old" refer to the constancy and uniformity of the Divine principles set forth in God's word. "In the trials of life, in the changes which occur, in the apparent wreck of things, in the fearful prospect of disaster and ruin at any time, it is well for us to think of the unchanging principles which mark the Divine dealings" (Barnes). It is in the realization of this truth that the Psalmist found comfort.

When David was ridiculed for his godliness he not only held fast his integrity, but he comforted himself in God's word. He not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully. The jeers of his enemy did not disturb his peace, or rob him of the calm repose he found in God. It was evidently a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find no occasion against him, save only in the matter of his God (cf. Dan. 6:5). Those who are derided for their adherence to God's law may comfort themselves with this: that the reproach of Christ will prove, in the end, greater riches to them than the treasures of Egypt.

**119:53:** *"hot indignation hath taken hold upon me"* - This is the first mention of the Psalmist's "hot indignation" against the wicked for their failure to obey God's law. This arises out of the Psalmist's great hatred for sin and every false way (verse 104).

He was horrified at their action, at the pride which led them to it, and at the punishment which would be sure to fall upon them...Truths which were amusement to them caused amazement to him. He was astonished at their wickedness, stunned by their presumption, alarmed by the expectation of their sudden overthrow, amazed by the terror of their certain doom" (Spurgeon).

Barnes has this paraphrase:

I see them rebelling against God. I see them exposed to his wrath.  
I see the grave just before them, and the awful scenes of judgment  
near. I see them about to be cast off, and to sink to endless woe,

and my soul is transfixed with horror. The contemplation overwhelms me with uncontrollable anguish...Can men be thus in danger? And can they be so calm and composed when so near such awful horrors?...No one can truly realize that his fellow men are exposed to the horrors of that abode without having his soul filled with anguish (Barnes).

**119:54:** *“thy statutes have been my songs”* - Men sing of those things nearest to their heart. The Psalmist recognized that this life is but a pilgrimage and that the law of God was the only thing that could produce a song in the heart in a world of wickedness. It is the stability of the law, the faithfulness of God, and the revelation of that law to man, which produced occasion for joy and song for the Psalmist. Some men sing of things that are base and unholy; their songs are expressions of nothing more than the sensual pleasures of life for this is all they know. The child of God, however, sings a new song; a song that fills his heart with genuine joy and wonderful expectations of a home in heaven.

As travellers are wont to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God. God’s statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man is accustomed to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage-solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and put gladness into his heart more than those have that chant to the sound of the viol, Amos 6:5. Is any afflicted then? Let him sing over God’s statutes, and try if he cannot so sing away sorrow, Ps. 138:5 (Matthew Henry)

One writer has expressed both the temporal nature of this world and the lasting value of true riches in one of the most beautiful songs in our hymnal.

“There are things, as we travel, this earth’s shifting sand,  
That transcend all the reason of man.  
For the things that matter the most in this life,  
Can never be held in our hand.”  
*“A Hill Called Mt. Calvary”*

**119:55:** *“I have remembered”* – Memory can be a blessing or a curse. The rich man who failed to give unto Lazarus those things needful to life will have all eternity to remember lost opportunities. How sorrowful to look back on a life wasted in sin and remember

how it MIGHT have been. But the Psalmist, in times of trouble, would have the name of Jehovah to remember.

*"in the night"* - The quiet evenings gave the author ample opportunity to meditate on those things spiritual and lasting. There is another thought that emerges from these words. The "night" may well be the night of danger and tribulation; the "night" of calamity and sorrow. Even in the darkest hour, when all else seems futile and failing, there is strength in remembering that God cares for His own.

**119:56:** *"This I have had"* – When sorrow surrounded him; when the enemy jeered and taunted, the Psalmist could face his accusers and boldly proclaim, ***"This*** I have had; ***this*** is my strength; ***this*** will see me through the hour of adversity." Numerous blessings were his to enjoy. Specifically, the power of memory of a God Who could bless and care for him. Behind his confidence and faith was the fact that he had kept the precepts of God. When men come to the end of life's journey, there is nothing that might sadden the heart more than bad memories of what *might have been*.

This joyful remembrance of thy law in the night of affliction, this stability and firmness on my part in keeping thy law...this comfort which I have derived from meditation on thy statutes; this solicitude for the welfare of others; this peace which I have enjoyed in thy law in the house of my pilgrimage; this consolation which I have had in thee in the night-season -- all this has been granted to me because I have kept thy statutes...These are the proper fruits and effects of keeping the law of God (Barnes).

As you meditate upon this Psalm, do not forget that the faithful child of God has a home prepared for him in heaven. It is to that end we toil and labor.

### ***"There's No Place Like Home"***

by Tom Wacaster

Home! The very word conjures up images of mother and father, delicious meals, a warm fire burning in the fireplace and lessons learned as a child that we took into adulthood when first we loosed the strings of familial relationships. So much of what we know and love, we learned at home. These five words, "There's no place like home," were spoken by Dorothy upon her reunion with her loved ones in Kansas. These same sentiments have been expressed by hundreds, if not thousands of poets, authors, and editors. Oliver Wendell Holmes is credited with having said, "Where we love is



home, home that our feet may leave, but not our hearts." Another put it this way: "Home, the spot of earth supremely blest, a dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest" (Robert Montgomery). There may be some exceptions, but most of us realize the truth of these six simple words: "There is no place like home."

Having had the opportunity to make more than two dozen trips overseas in the past twenty years, my love for home has not lessened. The sentiments of a wary traveler on his way home cannot be captured in words or phrases any more than the depth of one's love for God can be summed up with our limited vocabulary. It is no different with this scribe, whether that journey be several months or only a few weeks. Almost without exception, when I climb off that plane on to American soil after a lengthy mission trip, and make my way through customs, the officer on duty who might have the task of clearing my incoming documents, and those of thousands others like me in a week's time, will speak words to the effect, "Welcome home," to which I have responded so many times, "It's good to be home." But those words simply do not capture what one feels deep inside.

There is another "home" to which I will someday have the pleasure of arrival. I cannot purchase a ticket on Delta, or Northwest airlines to this home for it lies beyond the heavens that we view with the human eye or through a telescope. We can only see that home with the eye of faith. It is described in the Bible as the "New Jerusalem," wherein every faithful child of God has a mansion awaiting his arrival. The welcoming guests will not be customs agents, policemen, FDA agents, drug sniffing dogs, or anxious taxi drivers who desire your business. Instead, we will be ushered into that celestial home by the angels, and welcomed by our Father and His Son. That home will surpass any and every expectation we might have of its beauty. It is for that home that the soul longs to inhabit; it is that home for which the heart of this weary traveler longs.

"There Is No Place Like Home!" To the child of God those words take on new meaning. And with the passing of each year, and with the completion of each leg of this life long journey, we draw closer to that moment when time will give way to eternity and we hear our Lord say, "Welcome home." Won't that be a wonderful occasion?

**'Heth'**  
(57-64)  
**"God Is My Portion"**

- 57 *Jehovah is my portion: I have said that I would observe thy words.*  
58 *I entreated thy favor with my whole heart: Be merciful unto me according to thy word.*  
59 *I thought on my ways, And turned my feet unto thy testimonies.*  
60 *I made haste, and delayed not, To observe thy commandments.*  
61 *The cords of the wicked have wrapped me round; But I have not forgotten thy law.*  
62 *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee Because of thy righteous ordinances.*  
63 *I am a companion of all them that fear thee, And of them that observe thy precepts.*  
64 *The earth, O Jehovah, is full of thy lovingkindness: Teach me thy statutes.*

God was to the Psalmist what other men seek in honor, pleasure, and wealth. God was all he needed. When the enemy sought to overwhelm him, he meditated on God's law, rising at midnight to give thanks to his Father. He found strength in others who fear God and obey His precepts. This stanza focuses on the providential care of God over His children. Hence, the title of these eight verses: "God Is My Portion."

**119:57:** "*my portion*" – This earth has nothing to offer of lasting value. Having observed the spoils that the enemy often enjoyed, David realized that God was his portion. Like the Levites, he realized that his reward was to be found in fellowship with God. Like Abraham, he looked for that city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God. With God as our portion, our inheritance is lasting, it is abundant, and it outlasts anything this world might have to offer.

*"I have said I would observe thy words"* – He makes the law of God his rule. Those who would claim God as their portion must take His word as their guide. It is not possible to lay claim to heaven's promises if we are not going to observe God's *precepts*.

**119:58:** The Psalmist "entreated" God's favor. He did so with the "whole heart." Divided allegiance is not acceptable to our God. Having *embraced* God as his *portion*, the Psalmist *entreated* God for

His *pardon*. Recognizing that he was weak and sinful, this godly man sought God's mercy. We should observe here that those who are *governed* by God's word are the only ones who can call upon the mercy of God in times of need.

**119:59:** *"I thought on my ways"* – There may be a suggestion here that at some point in the Psalmist's life he may have been out of harmony with God's will. It describes some situation in which the author gave serious consideration to what he might have been doing, and then made the necessary correction. Upon recognizing that he was walking in the wrong direction, he (1) sought to bring his actions into harmony with the proper standard, and (2) he did so with a sense of urgency (verse 60). Like the prodigal, he came to the word of God, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his father. Where the mind leads the feet are soon to follow.

*"turned my feet unto thy testimonies"* – He thought beforehand what he had done, what he should do, and quickly turned his feet to the ways of God and what he would do.

**119:60:** *"I made haste, and delayed not"* - The important truth in this passage is the *urgency* with the Psalmist acted. In both positive and negative terms he emphasizes his swift response to the word. There was no delay; he acted at once and at such a point in time as the conviction was present.

If all convicted sinners would follow this example, and do at once that which they are commanded to do, and which they know they ought to do, there would be in no case any difficulty about conversion, for the main difficulty in conversion lies in the fact that the sinner is not willing to obey God at once; that he will not break away from his sins; that he pleads for delay; that he waits for God to do what he himself ought to do (Barnes).

**119:61:** *"the cords of the wicked have wrapped around me"* - There may be here an indication as to WHY the Psalmist had to make a correction in his course of actions. The word "cords" is curious. It would suggest that there was a coordinated effort on the part of the wicked to crush the Psalmist. Evil men often band together in their opposition to good when they would otherwise avoid each other on other circumstances. The mock trials of Jesus brought Herod and Pilate together when prior to that moment they had been enemies.

David, as a type of the Savior, experienced great persecution at the hands of his enemies. They were wicked men who hated him for his godliness. They evidently banded together and conspired against him, in much the same way the enemies of Jesus banded together to destroy Him. As for David, these “wicked” men robbed him of his power, his prestige and his possessions. Saul seized his power, Absalom his palace, and the Amalekites his possessions. When stripped of what was rightfully his, David refused to bow to their level of wickedness and chose instead to reflect upon God’s law.

**119:62:** *“at midnight I will rise to give thanks”* - We should be thankful for God's righteous ordinances. Man's wisdom cannot provide life, neither can it bring peace. Only the laws of our Eternal Father can give us such great spiritual blessings. Thanks be to the Almighty that He has seen fit to provide us with guidance, and give unto us laws that will lead our feet in the paths of righteousness. For this we should be eternally grateful. Spurgeon observed that "he rose, not to watch his house, but to praise his God...He thought not of thieves, but of thanks; not of what they would steal, but of what HE would give to his God. A thankful heart is such a blessing that it drives out fear and makes room for praise" (Spurgeon). Indeed, the child of God has within himself a sense of peace that passes all understanding.

But why "midnight"? In the wee hours of the night there would be solitude and the Psalmist would be unobserved and undisturbed. As one day gives way to another (according to our measure of time), when sleep escapes us, what better thing might we do than pray to the Father. While the men of the world revel at the stroke of midnight, God's child will be rejoicing in his God.

**119:63:** *“I am a companion of all them that fear thee”* - We should be careful whom we choose for our associates and close companions. We note that the Psalmist spent his nights with God and his days with those that keep God's precepts. He was careful to extend his fellowship and association with "all" those who also loved God. David walked with kings, and fought with soldiers. There is never any indication that this "man after God's own heart" ever played favorites.

A man is known by his company. Those who have no fear of God before their eyes seldom desire the society of saints; it is too slow, too dull for them. Be this our comfort, that when

we are let go by death we shall go to our own company, and those who loved the saints on earth shall be numbered with them in heaven (Spurgeon).

Paul warned that "evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33). The companions of the Psalmist were those who (1) fear Jehovah, and who (2) observe His precepts. God has drawn the lines of fellowship at precisely this point (1 John 1:6-8). The company we choose is evidence of our spiritual state. "A member of a church should regard it as a dark sign against himself in regard to his piety, if his chosen friends are taken from the world, and not from the professed friends of God; if he finds more pleasure in their society, and the scenes where they meet, than he does in the society of Christians" (Barnes).

**119:64:** *"The earth, O Jehovah, is full of thy lovingkindness"* - Those things listed so far in the Psalm are a manifestation of our God's grace and lovingkindness. If men will simply look about them they will see that God's lovingkindness fills the earth. His goodness causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust. The very air that we breathe, and food that we eat, are manifestations of our God's lovingkindness. Yes, the earth is "full" of God's lovingkindness!

Before leaving this stanza, notice the connection between the first verse and the last in this section. That man who has recognized Jehovah as his "portion" is always anxious to be taught the statutes of the Almighty. Even so, he who is taught, and taught properly, will come to realize more and more that God is his portion in this life, and the life to come.

### **'Teth'**

(65-72)

### **"God's Marvelous Goodness"**

65 *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Jehovah, according unto thy word.*

66 *Teach me good judgment and knowledge; For I have believed in thy commandments.*

67 *Before I was afflicted I went astray; But now I observe thy word.*

68 *Thou art good, and doest good; Teach me thy statutes.*

69 *The proud have forged a lie against me: With my whole heart will I keep thy precepts.*

70 *Their heart is as fat as grease; But I delight in thy law.*

71 *It is good for me that I have been afflicted; That I may learn thy statutes.*

72 *The law of thy mouth is better unto me Than thousands of gold and silver.*

The title for this section is derived from the various references in these verses to the goodness of God, either directly or implied. The writer speaks of God's dealings with man (verse 65), good judgment (verse 66), the goodness of God (verse 68), and that the law is better than gold and silver (verse 72). The Psalmist looks back on the affliction which he had suffered and draws the conclusion that "it is good" to have been "afflicted."

**119:65:** *"Thou hast dealt well with thy servant"* - What an amazing thing that the Almighty God would "deal with thy servant" at all! And when all is said and done, He has dealt with us in a most marvelous way. But has He not promised the same? "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Indeed, "the book of providence tallies with the book of promise: what we read in the page of inspiration we meet with again in the leaves of our life-story" (Spurgeon).

**119:66:** *"Teach me good judgment and knowledge"* - Good judgment comes from proper instruction and adequate knowledge of what is right and wrong. Ignorance has always led to an absence of discernment, and consequently, poor judgment. The word here rendered "judgment" means "taste." The Psalmist was desirous of being taught so as to be able to discern what is right or wrong, good or bad, holy or profane. Undoubtedly, *knowledge* is the *means* by which *discernment* is achieved (cf. Heb. 5:12-14).

**119:67:** *"Before I was afflicted I went astray"* - Affliction can serve to check us when we are going astray. Affliction tends to bring a man to his senses and reevaluate his priorities.

*"But now have I kept thy word..."* We note the following: (1) there was a change, reflected in the word "but"; (2) there was an immediate change, "now"; (3) there was a personal change, "have I"; (4) there was an inward change, "have I kept"; (5) and there was a godly change, "thy word."

Among those things for which good men have most occasion for thankfulness are afflictions; and when we lie

down on the bed of death, and look over life and the Divine dealings with us through life, as glories of heaven are about to open upon us, we shall feel that among the chiefest mercies of God are those dealings of his holy hand, trying at the time, which kept us from going astray, or which recalled us when we had wandered from him (Barnes).

By combining this verse with the 71st we learn that the Psalmist must have strayed from God's word, received affliction through some unknown source, and learned from that affliction the great need to return to God and His word.

**119:68:** *"Thou art good, and doest good"* - The true definition of "goodness" is set forth for our consideration. Having acknowledged the value of affliction, the Psalmist now admits that God is "good, and doest good." Who would dare admit that the trials and tribulations of life are, in fact, good for them? Only he who sees the guiding hand of God behind all of life's ups and downs.

*"Teach me thy statutes"* - The Psalmist was a learner. This characteristic of the writer is evident throughout the Psalm. The author had a deep desire to learn from the heavenly "class book."

**119:69:** *"The proud have forged a lie against me"* - The proud had him in *derision* (verse 51), and then *defrauded* him with their lies (verse 61). And yet, in spite of their treatment of him, the Psalmist had determined that he would keep God's precepts with his whole heart.

The word *forged* is used here to describe the charges or accusations against David. These charges consisted of shreds and patches of information, brought together and artfully woven so as to make out what appeared to be a plausible case against the author. A wicked man may take statements that are made by another and weave these into a story which some might believe, while the conclusion itself is false. How true that "a malicious man may thus start a slander which may require years to correct, and which may even operate injuriously against a man all his life" (Barnes).

**119:70:** *"Their heart is as fat as grease"* - The heart of the wicked may enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, but those things are not lasting. In contrast, the Psalmist would rather "delight" in the law of the Lord. It is much better to delight in eternal things than in sensual pleasures that are only for a season.

**119:71:** *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted"* - The affliction that the Psalmist had received may not have seemed good at the moment. But God is able to overrule even wickedness for His purpose. In many instances those circumstances in life wherein evil appears to have the upper hand may in fact be used for our good.

**119:72:** *"The law of thy mouth is better unto me"* – The Psalmist believed in verbal, plenary inspiration. The law comes from God's mouth. Hence, the Psalmist considered the word of God of more value than thousands of gold and silver. Our generation no longer has the kind of respect for the Bible as did the generation of our parents and grandparents. Perhaps this is why some of the leading theological institutes in this generation no longer teach that the Bible is verbally inspired. We may never know whether the *disrespect* for the Bible led to the *denial* of inspiration or visa versa. The two go hand in hand and spell disaster for any individual or nation that imbibes such nonsense.

*"better...than thousands of gold and silver"* – While there may be some disgruntled soul who thinks the "grapes are sour," and that men who have no wealth are the first to despise it, it should be remembered that this is the verdict of a man who possessed his *thousands*, and could make such a statement as this based on his experience.

The word is better than gold and silver for many reasons. First, gold and silver may be stolen, but the word laid up in the heart is secure. Second, gold and silver are temporal, but the word of God will abide for ever. Third, gold and silver will do us no good in the day of death, but God's word, faithfully applied to the soul in life will usher a man into the eternal habitations when body and spirit forever separate.

**‘Jod’**

(73-80)

***“Fashioned For Understanding”***

- 73 *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*  
74 *They that fear thee shall see me and be glad, Because I have hoped in thy word.*  
75 *I know, O Jehovah, that thy judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.*



- 76 *Let, I pray thee, thy lovingkindness be for my comfort,  
According to thy word unto thy servant.*
- 77 *Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live; For thy  
law is my delight.*
- 78 *Let the proud be put to shame; for they have overthrown me  
wrongfully: But I will meditate on thy precepts.*
- 79 *Let those that fear thee turn unto me; And they shall know thy  
testimonies.*
- 80 *Let my heart be perfect in thy statutes, That I be not put to  
shame.*

Verse 73 commences the next section in the Psalm in which each verse begins with the Hebrew letter ‘jod.’ The letter is equivalent to our letter “I” and was the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. In the first verse the Psalmist reflects upon his very being as having been fashioned by God (vs. 73). This is followed by a prayerful request that God grant him understanding so that he might learn the commandments of God, and thus demonstrate it in his life (vs. 74). The Psalmist then acknowledges that whatever affliction he might have experienced was due to his faithfulness to God (vs. 75). The remainder of this section of the Psalm sets forth a five-fold request from the author, each request introduced with our English word “let” (vss. 76-80).

**119:73:** *“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me”* – The hands are instruments by which we do something. This is anthropomorphic language; God does not literally have hands. The creative power of God is under consideration by the author. It is only when men recognize that they are the product of *creation* rather than *evolution* that they gain understanding. The modern theory of *evolution* that has been fostered upon this generation has led to an overall loss of understanding in virtually every facet of life. The disrespect for life that is manifested in abortion, euthanasia and/or murder is the consequence of a failure to recognize the very truth with which the Psalmist begins this section. Let men *first* acknowledge that they are created in the image of God and that it is God Who has “made” them and “fashioned” them, and they will be in a better position to receive understanding. The New Testament equivalent of this passage is contained in James 1:5: “If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.” Wisdom and understanding are acquired through diligent study of God’s word.

*“that I may learn thy commandments”* – Learning something *mentally* is quite different than learning with the determination to apply those things to one’s life. The Psalmist was seeking more than mock memorization of the word, or even the ability to correctly and grammatically analyze some difficult passage. He wanted to *learn* the commandments of God in order that the sacred truths contained therein might mold his life.

**119:74:** *“They that fear thee shall see me and be glad”* – The Psalmist valued the friendship and fellowship of those who, like himself, fear God. Men of the world value the friendship of those who have no fear of God. But to the godly man, the friendship of those who love God is of far greater value than the friendship of the world. “Despondent spirits spread the infection of depression, and hence few are glad to see them, while those whose hopes are grounded upon God’s word carry sunshine in their faces, and are welcomed by their fellows” (Spurgeon).

**119:75:** *“I know, O Jehovah, that thy judgments are righteous”* – Our conclusion is that the “judgments” here are not the *laws* of God, but the Divine dealings with the Psalmist, with particular emphasis upon the afflictions that the Psalmist had suffered. Implied in this is the Psalmist’s complete confidence that God would deal properly with His people.

*“thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me”* – The Psalmist’s affliction was not because of any evil that he had done. Nor was the affliction unnoticed by God or outside the power of the Almighty to intervene. God **allowed** the affliction to come upon the Psalmist in order to strengthen him; that he would be better after having gone through the affliction. In turn, the author recognized that God’s discipline was *right*. We learn that God’s judgment in matters pertaining to the testing of our faith is always best, though we may not always understand the “why” in any given situation. The Psalmist had passed through the fiery trials that come with godly living. In retrospect he realizes that God in His wisdom had done what was best.

With regard to chastisement, the Bible obviously teaches that (1) God DOES indeed chastise us; (2) That such chastisement is good for us; (3) That He does so through the word. These things being true, what would be the means by which that chastisement would come IF the sinner is guilty of neglect of study? Would not fellow Christians serve as spokesmen for God in seeking to bring their brother to

repentance? Indeed this must be the case. Hence, we are told to "restore" those who have been overcome in a trespass in a spirit of gentleness (Gal 6:1).

**119:76:** *"Let, I pray thee, thy lovingkindness be for my comfort"* – Rather than ask that the rod be removed, the Psalmist instead asks for comfort during that trial. The KJV renders this: "Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort." Notice the combination of those beautiful words "merciful" and "kindness." Is this not what every child of God needs when undergoing a fiery trial? Mercy to FORGIVE the sin, and KINDNESS to sustain us during and after the trial.

**119:77:** *"Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live"* - How wonderful is life when God's tender mercies are granted unto us. It is not the mere existence for which the Psalmist prays, but the genuinely happy life that comes with a close walk with God.

*"for thy law is my delight"* – Delight in the law of God is what makes life a genuine joy.

**119:78:** *"Let the proud be put to shame"* – The proud are never ashamed. Humility is not a word in their vocabulary. They never blush at their sin; they mock God and all that is holy and right. The Psalmist was beseeching God that the proud might be brought to the full consequence of their sin.

*"without a cause"* - or literally, "by a lie" (Barnes). Their charges were false. The Psalmist had not given them any cause for the treatment he had received from his enemies.

**119:79:** Those that "fear" Jehovah would have a close affection for and association with the writer. Those who "fear" Jehovah are identified as those *"that have known thy testimonies."* "This is a permanent ground of affection. All friendship founded on earthly distinctions; all derived from titled birth, from rank, from affluence, from civil, military, or naval renown, from beauty, strength, or nobleness of form, must be temporary; but that which is founded on attachment to God, to his law, and to the Saviour, will abide forever" (Barnes).

**119:80:** It is only in the statutes of God that the heart can ever hope to be sound, or healthful. Consequently, such a one will "be not ashamed." "A man has no occasion to be ashamed of a pure heart;

and that which can alone keep us from being ultimately ashamed is sincerity, uprightness, and purity in the services of God" (Barnes).

**'Kaph'**

(81-88)

**"Grace To Help In Time Of Need"**

- 81 *My soul fainteth for thy salvation; But I hope in thy word.*  
82 *Mine eyes fail for thy word, While I say, When wilt thou comfort me?*  
83 *For I am become like a wine-skin in the smoke; Yet do I not forget thy statutes.*  
84 *How many are the days of thy servant? When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?*  
85 *The proud have digged pits for me, Who are not according to thy law.*  
86 *All thy commandments are faithful: They persecute me wrongfully; Help thou me.*  
87 *They had almost consumed me upon earth; But I forsook not thy precepts.*  
88 *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; So shall I observe the testimony of thy mouth.*

The tenor of this stanza is bleak; despair and discouragement seem to have plagued the Psalmist. He thus acknowledges that his "soul fainteth," and his "eyes fail for thy word." He longed for comfort; he had become like "wine skin in the smoke." He suffered persecution at the hands of those who had "dugged pits" for him. They had persecuted him wrongfully, and had "almost consumed" him. Spurgeon calls this octave "the midnight of the Psalm." Indeed it is very dark and black; and yet out of that darkness shines the promise of something better, for the Psalmist speaks of God's "lovingkindness" and "salvation." He appears to be confident of God's ability to eventually "execute judgment on them that persecute me." Like Job of old, our author affirms that he would "hope in thy word," and "not forget thy statutes." He would continue to "observe the testimony" of God.

**119:81:** *"My soul fainteth for thy salvation"* – The Psalmist had been severely persecuted, so much so that he was in danger of fainting. He longs for the "*salvation*" of the Lord that was according to the word. He desired deliverance from the present calamities under which he was groaning as well as the doubts and fears that

oppressed him. It may be that he had such an intense desire for God's salvation that he became weak as a result of these strong emotions. His longing for heaven coupled with the persecution he faced may have brought him to his knees so as to impress upon his mind the full realization of his utter helplessness. He depended upon GOD'S salvation. So dependent was he that his soul is said to "faint."

*"But I hope in thy word"* – The faithful servant of God looks for the "city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." It looks beyond the here and now and focuses on the promises contained with Sacred Writ. Someone once noted, "hope sustains when desire exhausts."

**119:82:** *"Mine eyes fail for thy word"* – Rather than seek the counsel of men, the Psalmist sought the counsel of God. It is not hard to imagine him pouring through the pages of his Bible as he searched for and meditated upon the promises contained therein. So intense was his meditation on the word that his eyes grew weary and failed him.

*"When wilt thou comfort me?"* - Many a saint has asked this same question in times of despair. The Psalmist had undergone such severe persecution for so long a time that he may have questioned whether God would ever deliver him. Many a saint this side of the cross has asked the same question: "When?...How long?" And though our God may *delay*, He does not *desert*. His deliverance may be in the last watch of the night, at that very moment when our eyes have failed us, and our heart is it's heaviest.

To read the word till the eyes can no longer see is but a small thing compared with watching for the fulfillment of the promise till the inner eyes of expectancy begin to grow dim with hope deferred...A humble eye lifted to heaven in silent prayer may flash such flame as shall melt the bolts which bar the entrance of vocal prayer, and so heaven shall be taken by storm with the artillery of tears...How much better to watch for the Lord with aching eyes than to have them sparkling at the glitter of vanity (Spurgeon).

**119:83:** *"For I am become like a wine-skin in the smoke"* - The words and phrases that the Psalmist uses are characteristic of one in the depths of sorrow and despair. We can only imagine what may have brought him to this point. He had wept so much that his body

had dried out like wine skins hung in an enclosed room containing smoke. We can almost image the Psalmist's face wrinkled, furrowed by his incessant shedding of tears. On another occasion the Psalmist wrote: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; And my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; And thou hast brought me into the dust of death" (Psa. 22:15).

His character had been smoked with slander, and his mind parched with persecution; he was half afraid that he would become useless and incapable through so much mental suffering, and that men would look upon him as an old worn-out skin bottle, which could hold nothing and answer no purpose (Spurgeon).

*"Yet I do not forget thy statutes."* Here is the patience and the faith so characteristic of those who put their trust in God in spite of the circumstances in which they might find themselves. In spite of all that had happened to the Psalmist, he did not, yea he would not forget the statutes of God. No matter the distress and sorrow that might come upon the child of God, he will determine to stay the course. He will not forget the statutes of God. He will find comfort in the promises of God, and will, even in the face of adversity, determine to remain faithful to his God.

**119:84:** *"How many are the days of thy servant?"* - How long would God allow this to go on? Was there to be no end to what he was bearing? Why does God not render judgment upon those who were making his life so miserable?

The brevity of life is a good argument against the length of an affliction...No one knows the appointed number of our days except the Lord, and therefore to him the appeal is made that he would not prolong them beyond his servant's strength (Spurgeon).

*"When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me"* - The Psalmist put his trust in God, and fully expected the Lord to execute justice upon his enemies. He was confident that God would eventually avenge His elect. He desired to know "when" divine judgment would be poured out on those who persecuted him.

One unique feature of this verse is that it does not, like so many other verses in this chapter, contain any of the ten words so repeatedly used to refer to God's word.

**119:85:** *"The proud have digged pits for me"* - One can hardly imagine the vile wickedness of an enemy that would dig "pits" with the sole purpose of destroying another. It was not just one pit, but many. Why would anyone want to cause someone to stumble and fall into such a pit; to treat their fellow human being no better than a common animal?

*"Who are not according to thy law"* - The answer to the question we asked is found in the character of those who sought the Psalmist's destruction. These were not governed by God's law. They hated God, and they hated those who loved God. Their standard was the world, and their "god their belly." The Psalmist opposed all they stood for. In order to succeed in their wicked and vile deeds they had to destroy the king who opposed them.

They who have done this are people who do not regard thy commands; people who are open and public offenders. It is that class of people with whom I have to contend - inert who set at defiance all the laws of God; men high in rank, who wield great power, and who have no regard to the law of God in their conduct. Even they have sought my destruction in the meanest way possible - by covert arts, by underhanded means, by digging pits, as they would for wild beasts (Barnes).

Adam Clarke has this interesting note on this verse:

The Vulgate, Septuagint, Ethiopic, and Arabic, translate this verse thus: "They have recited to me unholy fables, which are not according to thy law." They wish us to receive their system of idolatry, and the tales concerning their gods; but these are not according to thy law. The Anglo-Saxon is the same: "They quothed me the unrightwise spells; but no so law thine" (ESword Notes).

**119:86:** *"All thy commandments are faithful"* - What a contrast! While the enemy was unfaithful to the law, God maintained His faithfulness in keeping His promises. While the enemy would "persecute" him wrongfully, God would provide help in time of need.

**119:87:** *"They had almost consumed me upon earth"* - Notice the limitations that are here implied. They had "almost consumed" the writer. When Satan sought to destroy Job, God set limits. And while

Satan may be allowed to test us, we can rest assured that limits have been set, and no man will be tempted beyond that which he is capable of enduring (1 Cor. 10:13). If we hold fast the *precepts* of God, we will enjoy the *promises* contained therein.

**119:88:** *“Quicken me after thy lovingkindness”* - The constant reference to God's lovingkindness is suggestive of the Psalmist's humble heart. He recognized that blessings granted were by God's divine favor. It should be noted that the Psalmist closes this stanza, not with a prayer for deliverance, but that he might be renewed with strength to endure the trial he faced.

In the dark night of despair the saint trusts in God for deliverance. The promise of victory is secured by the word of God which will, in its season, be fulfilled. We may not understand why the promises are sometimes deferred, but the child of God lives in full expectation that deliverance will be granted. Meanwhile, we keep our eye on God, we drink deeply from the word He has provided, and we patiently wait.

### **‘Lamedh’**

(89-96)

#### ***“The Beauty And Benefit Of God’s Word”***

89 *For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven.*

90 *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*

91 *They abide this day according to thine ordinances; For all things are thy servants.*

92 *Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

93 *I will never forget thy precepts; For with them thou hast quickened me.*

94 *I am thine, save me; For I have sought thy precepts.*

95 *The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me; But I will consider thy testimonies.*

96 *I have seen an end of all perfection; But thy commandment is exceeding broad.*

The tenor of the Psalmist changes with this stanza. Each verse begins with the Hebrew letter ‘lamedh.’ Five of the eight verses express a positive attitude on the part of the Psalmist. Whereas the previous stanza was one of dark despair, here the faith of the Psalmist shines above that darkness. He was confident that the word of God was “settled,” and that God’s faithfulness is “unto all generations.” The



“servants” of God enjoy the wonderful benefits of God’s providential care for them. The law was his “delight,” and it had “quickened” him. The stanza ends with a declaration on the part of the Psalmist that, while there are limitations to the threats of men, God’s word is exceeding broad in its scope, and unfathomable in its depth. We have before us a wonderful song of the *beauty and benefit of God’s word*.

**119:89:** “*For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven*” – The English Standard Version renders this, “Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens.” The word here rendered “settled” in the both the ASV and the KJV means “to set, to put, to place;” and then, to stand, to cause to stand, to set up, as a column.” The idea is that the word (i.e. the law of God; the promises of God) is firm; it is established and stable, and would remain so forever. What God has ordained will always remain true. Men may *think* that the Bible is out of date, irrelevant, and of no intrinsic value, but the Psalmist realized the permanent and abiding value of God’s eternal word. How wonderful to know that God’s word is forever settled in heaven. Like God Himself, the word is unchanging and unchangeable.

**119:90:** “*unto all generations*” - God is not affected by the passing of time. He is faithful in keeping His promises unto “all generations.” His promises do not become worn and tattered with the passing of time or centuries of use.

“*established the earth, and it abideth*” - The same power that set this universe into motion, and sustains it still, is the power that establishes His word and confirms His promises. Just as this world continues from season to season, even so the word of God will not fail. And when this earth shall finally be burned up, the word of God will continue to abide.

**119:91:** “*By your appointment they stand this day*” - “*They*” has reference to the created things of God. He “upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3). Though centuries have passed, the earth still spins on its axis, and its annual cycle around the sun has not abated or changed its course. Even so, the word of God remains true to its course.

“*abide*” - They (the heavens and earth) are what God had ordained them to be. They continue according to God’s design and purpose.

*"all things are thy servants"* - The elements of the universe are used by God for His purpose. Oh, that men would submit to serving God as do the inanimate objects of His creation!

**119:92:** *"If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction"* – Each of us has a list of “delights” that lift up our soul and refresh our spirit within. The Psalmist puts the law of God at the very head of that list. Like the “blessed man” of Psalms one, “his delight is in the law of the Lord and in that law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:1-3). Had he not delighted in the law of the Lord his affliction would have been more than he could bear; he would have perished under the sheer weight of his trials and tribulation. The meaning is expressed by Spurgeon so eloquently: “We should have felt ready to lie down and die of our grief if the spiritual comforts of God’s word had not uplifted us; but by their sustaining influence we have been borne above all the depressions and despairs which naturally grow out of severe affliction.”

**119:93:** *"I will never forget your precepts, for by them you have given me life"* - How could anyone forget that which has given life? The most impressionable memories are those which intersect our life and produce significant and lasting change. How often have we been asked, “Where were you when.....?” How often have we reflected upon that day, that one day, when we first met the one whom we would marry? Yes, memorable occasions impress our minds in a rather unique way. The Psalmist reflected with favor upon that occasion when the “precepts” of God quickened him and gave him life. Indeed, "how COULD he ever forget that which had wrought such a change in his character and condition; which had inspired such hopes; which had opened before him such an immortal career of glory" (Barnes). How near to death our writer came we may never know. But we are assured that it was the "precepts" of God which sustained him and gave him renewed life. "How blessed a thing it is to have the precepts written on the heart with the golden pen of experience, and graven on the memory with the divine stylus of grace" (Spurgeon).

**119:94:** *"I am thine"* - All men belong to God in the ultimate sense by divine right of creation. But since our God respects the free will agency of man, He has left it up to us WHOM WE CHOOSE to submit as servants. There are some who never recognize this truth, but insist that they are their own man, and subject to no one. Such are the bondservants of sin.

*"For I have sought thy precepts."* Here is the basis for the claim that he belonged to God. He who seeks will find; and he who finds, can then claim a relationship to the Almighty. The ungodly do not seek God and they have no interest in the "precepts" of God except to see how quickly they might break or destroy those eternal truths.

**119:95:** *"The wicked...waited...to destroy"* - Like wild beasts waiting to devour him, the wicked sought opportunity to destroy the Psalmist. But notice here the Psalmist's response to such vile intentions of the enemy: *"I will consider thy testimonies."* He did not allow the vile intentions of the wicked to deter him from a study of God's "testimonies." "He was so calm that he could 'consider'; so holy that he loved to consider the Lord's 'testimonies'; so victorious over all their plots that he did not allow them to drive him from his pious contemplations" (Spurgeon).

**119:96:** The word rendered *"perfection"* occurs only here; but a similar word occurs in Nehemiah 3:21, and Job. 26:10, in both places rendered as "end." The word means "completion," or in some instances "hope, confidence" (Barnes). The word rendered "end" here refers not to the fact of its existence, or to its duration, but to a limit or boundary as to its extent. "To all claims to perfection made by man, he had seen an end or limit. He had examined all which claimed to be perfect; he had found it defective; he had so surveyed and examined the matter, as to be able to say that there could be claim to perfection which would prove good. All claims to perfection on the part of man must be abandoned for ever" (Barnes). "This could well be a summary of Ecclesiastes, where earthly enterprise has its day and comes to nothing, and where only in God and his commandments do we get beyond these frustrating limits" (Coffman quotes Derek Kidner, page 375).

*"but thy commandment is exceeding broad"* - Albert Barnes' comments were quite succinct:

There could be no just claim to perfection among men. All claims to perfection had arisen from the fact that the law was not properly understood, that its true nature was not seen. Men thought that they were perfect, but it was because they had no just view of the extent and the spirituality of the law. They set up an imperfect standard; and when they became conformed to that standard, as they might do, they imagined themselves to be perfect; but when their conduct was compared with a higher and more

just standard - the law of God - it could not but be seen that they were imperfect men. That law had claims which they had not met, and would never meet, in this life. It is very easy to flatter ourselves that we are perfect, if we make our own standard of character; it is not possible for man to set up a claim to perfection; if he measures himself by the standard of God's word; and all the claims of men to perfection are made simply because they do not properly understand what the law of God requires" (Barnes).

Earthly things are finite; they are temporal at best, and quite limited in their scope. But God's law meets the needs of mankind for all time. The idea seems to be that only the commandments of God provide true freedom and genuine perfection. There is no perfection in the things of this world. The "end" or culmination of perfection is to be found only in the word of God.

### ***The Bible: Criticized and Scrutinized***

By Tom Wacaster

The Bible is, without doubt, the greatest book ever written. Consisting of 66 books, it stands as a monumental representation of heaven's love for mankind. From the moment that God's word went forth to man, Satan has scrutinized, criticized, de-emphasized and sought to minimize the Holy word. Critics have assailed its "contradictions" and "inconsistencies." But the honest seeker knows that all such attempts to find fault with Scripture are mere subterfuge, and a whistling in the wind. The Bible has survived the onslaught of critics, and the more scrutiny and examination the Bible receives, the more it shines. A few years ago brother Curtis Cates wrote the following:

No book has ever been scrutinized so closely or vigorously, and, I might say, viciously. The microscope and the telescope of man have been applied to 'the Book of books,' but the more close the investigation and the more detailed the study, the more beautiful its fabric. The productions of men undergo but a mere fraction of a fraction of such investigation; they are examined, riffled through, and somewhat rigorously tested at the mercy of mankind; and such results in their complete exhaustion and abandonment. Man moves on to other thoughts, other pursuits, and other works. Now, why does the Bible multiply in its beauty and complexity [as a snowflake or a butterfly wing under a

microscope] as its innermost thoughts, precepts and principles are dissected and scrutinized? That, my friend, is the difference between the meager and fallible works of finite man and the inexhaustible and vibrant revelation of the infinite Creator! 'The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul' (Psa. 19:7).

Beloved, we hold within our hands the map that can help us to successfully chart the troubled seas of life. It is the compass that will ultimately lead us across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Have faith, weary pilgrim! The Book is true, the Author trustworthy, and the hope sure and steadfast. For this we give thanks, and to this end we have committed our very souls.

**'Mem'**

(97-104)

***"The Wisdom From Above"***

- 97 *Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.*  
98 *Thy commandments make me wiser than mine enemies; For they are ever with me.*  
99 *I have more understanding than all my teachers; For thy testimonies are my meditation.*  
100 *I understand more than the aged, Because I have kept thy precepts.*  
101 *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, That I might observe thy word.*  
102 *I have not turned aside from thine ordinances; For thou hast taught me.*  
103 *How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*  
104 *Through thy precepts I get understanding: Therefore I hate every false way.*

James wrote: "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy" (Jas. 3:17). We have selected to title this stanza, "The Wisdom From Above" for the simple reason that the Psalmist acknowledges the power in the word to provide wisdom to him during those times when he faced severe persecution at the hands of his enemy. Any attempt to divorce this stanza from the whole of the Psalm, and especially the two previous stanzas, would be a tragic mistake on the part of the student. There is a

natural progression in the two previous stanzas and this one. Whereas the first (verses 81-88) portray dark and dismal days for the Psalmist, the second stanza (verses 89-96) focuses on hope for those who put their trust in God and His word which is “settled in heaven.” This stanza draws our attention to the fact that the word teaches and enlightens us, thereby equipping us to face the trials and temptations of life. From a proper knowledge of the word of God certain benefits derive: (1) Love and appreciation for the word increases; (2) Wisdom that is superior to that of one’s enemies, one’s teachers, and the aged is granted to us; (3) Understanding is acquired; (4) Victory over evil; (5) The joy of life is restored; (6) Proper discernment regarding “every false way” is acquired.

We are particularly interested in the timely truth regarding heavenly wisdom that shines in this stanza. Like a fine thread that weaves its way through a beautiful garment, so the thought of heavenly wisdom binds each of the eight verses of this stanza into a beautiful spiritual garment that provides joy and satisfaction to those who would meditate on the precepts of God.

**119:97:** *“Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day”* – This verse sets the tone for the remaining seven verses. Unless a man loves the law of God, he will not meditate thereon. Consequently he will deprive himself of the wisdom from above. Love for the word grows out of one’s deep appreciation for its holiness, the wisdom provided therein, and the perfection to be obtained thereby. The more we meditate on the law, the more we love it; and the more we love it, the more we will meditate on it.

**119:98:** *“Thy commandments make me wiser”* – With this verse the Psalmist draws our attention to wisdom that we receive by a proper love for and meditation upon God’s word. Knowledge of God’s law makes one wiser than his enemies (verse 98), gives more understanding than worldly teachers (verse 98), and greater understanding than the aged (verse 100).

*“than mine enemies”* – God’s word does indeed make us wiser than our enemies. Wisdom is knowledge put to use. When we exercise those spiritual truths that have entered our minds, we will defeat our enemies. “A holy life is the highest wisdom and the surest defense” (Spurgeon).

*“For they are ever with me”* – That is, the “commandments” are “ever with me.” He had laid the word of God up in his heart. He was

determined to make the application of the truths presented therein with the full assurance that the advice from heaven is of far greater value than the advice of men. God's battle plan is far superior to that of infidels and the good soldier of the cross is quicker to follow the instructions from his Captain than bow to the threats of the enemy. As a consequence, the Psalmist was granted greater love for the law (verse 97), a deeper desire for the words of God (verse 103), and sound judgment regarding "every false way" (verse 104).

*"For they are ever with me."* The Psalmist was always studying God's word; holy truths were his constant companion. The "sword" of the Spirit was David's weapon of choice; to sheath it for just a moment could be disastrous.

**119:99:** *"I have more understanding than all my teachers"* - Heavenly wisdom is the outgrowth of proper instruction. There is more wisdom in a single word from our heavenly Father than in volumes of material that might be written by men. Of all the nations that have ever existed upon the face of this earth, it has been said that the Greeks provided us with a degree of wisdom unsurpassed by any other. The history of ancient Greece helps us to see what great heights can be achieved while having no knowledge of God. But the lesson to be learned from the ancients of Greece, with her philosophers and teachers, is not how far a man can go *without God*, but rather it is that no matter how "wise" men may become in a worldly sense, it pales in comparison to the wisdom that comes from above. If men insist on attaining to earthly wisdom void of heavenly understanding, they cannot expect to discover any more than did the Greeks, nor can they ever hope to rise any higher, morally speaking, than did that ancient civilization.

*"thy testimonies are my meditation"* - Heavenly wisdom is more than knowledge. It comes as a result of *knowing* the word of God and *meditating* on that word. One meditates when he mulls something over in his mind, weighing the outcome and consequences of his actions.

**119:100:** *"more than the aged"* - Age is no guarantee of wisdom or understanding. It simply means that we have had sufficient time to acquire these things. The keeping of the "precepts" of God gives us the understanding that comes with age. "The old is better: but the oldest of all is the best of all, and what is that but the word of the Ancient of days" (Spurgeon). Heavenly wisdom is not restricted to those older in years; neither is it guaranteed to men as a

consequence of longevity. The Psalmist realized that the wisdom obtained from the Father was of far greater value than what the ancients might have to offer.

**119:101:** Meditation upon God's word is vain unless we determine to make application and maintain purity of life. We must "refrain" from "every evil way." Note in these words that (1) there is such a thing as an evil way, (2) the child of God is to refrain from following in that way, (3) that the child of God is to refrain from every evil way, not just a portion, and (4) refraining from the "evil way" is part and parcel of observing the word of God. How true that there is no genuine reverence for God's law until there is the application of the same to our lives.

**119:102:** *"I have not turned aside from thine ordinances"* - The Psalmist affirms his faithfulness in keeping God's ordinances. Our opinion is that he was sending a message to those who sought to do him harm and who may very well have been bewildered as to why they could not defeat him. It is often the case that a rather "insignificant" turn away from God leads to complete abandonment of the proper path.

**119:103:** *"How sweet are thy words unto my taste"* - The Psalmist's attitude toward the word is significant. How do we perceive the word? Is it "sweet...unto my taste"? Do I derive pleasure from that word? Or is it bitter medicine that we endure from week to week for appearances sake? Wisdom comes to those who find the word of God sweet to their spiritual palate.

**119:104:** *"Through thy precepts I get understanding"* - When men do not *"hate every false way"* it is an indication that they have not attained unto understanding. A proper understanding of man, sin, evil, and righteousness will help us to view sin in precisely the same way that God views sin. We will hate every false way if for no other reason than the fact that God hates sin.

**‘Nun’**

(105-112)

***"God's Word: Our Light and Lamp"***

105 *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, And light unto my path.*

106 *I have sworn, and have confirmed it, That I will observe thy righteous ordinances.*



- 107 *I am afflicted very much: Quicken me, O Jehovah, according unto thy word.*
- 108 *Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill-offerings of my mouth, O Jehovah, And teach me thine ordinances.*
- 109 *My soul is continually in my hand; Yet do I not forget thy law.*
- 110 *The wicked have laid a snare for me; Yet have I not gone astray from thy precepts.*
- 111 *Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage for ever; For they are the rejoicing of my heart.*
- 112 *I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes For ever, even unto the end.*

This particular stanza is one of the most beautiful of the chapter. Many a saint has memorized selected portions of this stanza, especially the 105th verse. It has provided seed for a number of sermons, and is worthy of serious and sober reflection by every child of God. Each verse in this stanza begins with the Hebrew letter 'Nun' which corresponds to our letter "n." The Psalmist points out three things about God's word: (1) It serves to illuminate our path and brighten our way; (2) It guards us against those who might do us harm; and (3) It provides peace and happiness by rejoicing the heart.

On a hazardous journey, the torch was most necessary when there was no light to illuminate the path. Life is likened to a journey, we are but pilgrims and sojourners, and God's Word is the true light to provide direction to the child of God (cf. Prov. 6:23; John 8:12).

**119:105:** - "*Thy word is a ... And light*" – The word of God provides guidance in our *walk*. As a "lamp," the word helps the child of God avoid the obstacles that might cause him to stumble in his journey toward heaven. It provides us with the necessary illumination to not only *discern* the pitfalls, but where we might place our feet so as to *avoid* those dangers.

Some years ago I was invited to go raccoon hunting with a young man in the congregation where I preached. I was not aware that "coon hunting" (as they were fond of calling it) occurred at night when these nocturnal creatures came out of their nests to search for food. Our "hunt" began at 10:30 that night. After parking the pickup and letting his hound dog out of the cage, brother Wendell gave me what appeared to be a hard hat with a carbon lamp attached to the front rim. After lighting the lamp, and with a little adjustment, the lamp illuminated the path for several yards ahead of us. In addition I was handed a flashlight to shine directly on the next few steps so as

to avoid the stones, logs, pits, and other dangers that posed an *immediate* threat. One served as the “light unto my path,” the other a “lamp unto my feet”; one warned of *impending* dangers, the other of *immediate* danger. I needed both to provide safety through the dark night.

Since there are two paths in which men may walk (Matt. 7:13-14), it is important that we be provided information about the destiny of both paths so we can make the proper decision as to that path in which we will choose to walk. The Psalmist spoke of both “ways” (Psa. 1:6). Solomon warned of the “way of evil men” (Pro. 4:14), and warned that the “way of the wicked is as darkness” (Pro. 4:19). “The way of the wicked is an abomination to Jehovah; but he loveth them that follow after righteousness” (Pro. 15:9). Like a road map that shows where any particular road or highway might take the traveler, the word of God serves as a “light unto my path,” showing where the “way of the wicked” and/or the “way of the righteous” will take a man. But in addition, the word of God provides the necessary warning against specific sins. It is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction that is in righteousness” so as to direct our very steps in our journey to that heavenly home.

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead thou me on.  
Night is dark, and I am far from home,  
Lead thou me on.  
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene; one step enough for me.  
--John Henry Newman

**119:106:** - *"I have sworn, and have confirmed it"* - It is one thing to acknowledge the value of the word of God as our “lamp” and “light.” It is another pick up that light and use it. Recognizing its inherent value, the Psalmist tells us, “I have sworn, and have confirmed it, That I will observe thy righteous ordinances.” The Psalmist had made up his mind; he was resolved that he would observe the ordinances of God. There would be no turning back to the ways of the world.

*"I have sworn, and have confirmed it"* – Promise is one thing; performance another. Many a troubled soul has made a promise in time of need, but when the danger has passed, there is no lasting dedication. No so with the Psalmist. He had sworn to observe the ordinances of God, and then confirmed that oath with action.

*"That I will observe thy righteous ordinances"* – The will of man ("I will") bowing to the will of God ("thy righteous ordinances") will produce the fruit of the Spirit in our life. The consequence of the Psalmist's dedication will appear in the verses to follow. We will see in verses 107-108 the Psalmist's application in times of *weakness* and *worship*.

**119:107:** - *"I am afflicted very much"* – It would appear that the Psalmist was suffering from affliction and depression. From without were the numerous enemies who sought his destruction. Within he was depressed and discouraged; he needed something to lift him up and revive his spirit. Having affirmed his determination to observe the righteous ordinances of God, he now makes specific application to his life.

*"Quicken me, O Jehovah, according unto thy word"* – Did he truly believe that the word was a lamp and light? Was he willing to trust in that word, come what may? Oh yes! Turning to that word he pleads, "Quicken me, O Jehovah! Give me life; my soul is suffering." The Psalmist's words could be taken in one of two ways. The first would suggest that the Psalmist was willing to abide by God's will. "Let it be according to they word – as you have chosen; thy will, not mine." Or, the Psalmist might have been expressing confidence in a promise from God, and here asking that he be quickened as God had afore promised in His word. Of course either position is warranted in light of other passages in God's word, and neither does injustice to this Psalm.

**119:108:** - *"Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill-offerings of my mouth"* – There is a hint in this verse that the prayer of the previous verse had been answered. Having been quickened by the word, the Psalmist would offer his praise of thanksgiving. But it would be more than the burnt offerings of animals. We have no doubt that the author conformed to the demands of the law to present the animal sacrifice set forth in God's word. Along with that animal sacrifice he would offer the "freewill-offerings" of his "mouth," and he pleads with God to "accept" his praise.

*"O Jehovah, And teach me thine ordinances"* – The humble heart of the Psalmist shines in this verse. He desired to learn precisely *how* to praise God, and thus sought to be taught the ordinances of Jehovah. The multitude of innovations in places of worship in "Christendom" attests to the unwillingness of man to do things God's

way. It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23). The only acceptable worship is that offered from a willing heart and in compliance to the ordinances of God.

**119:109:** - *"My soul is continually in my hand"* – The idea seems to be that his "life" was always in jeopardy. This may have been a proverbial expression in which anything taken in the hand is liable to be quickly and suddenly snatched away. David was well aware that there was but a step between himself and death (1 Sam. 20:3).

*"Yet do I not forget thy law"* – Though danger surrounded him, the Psalmist was determined not to forget the law of God. The extreme danger that the Psalmist faced was no reason to forget God and abandon His teachings in the Psalmist's life. The child of God will keep the law of God close to his heart, even in times of danger; yea, especially in times of danger. "If we remember the law even when death stares us in the face, we may be well assured that the Lord is remembering us" (Spurgeon).

**119:110:** - *"The wicked have laid a snare for me"* - The wicked have such a disrespect for the righteous that they will seek to lay a snare, much like a hunter seeking his victim. Oft times those anxious moments, such as the Psalmist describes here, may cause the saint to become agitated and nervous. Here we are reminded to hold fast to God's word, even when the enemy seeks to destroy us and when danger threatens us.

**119:111:** - Our inheritance is undefiled, does not fade away, and is reserved for us in heaven (1 Peter 1:4). It is, however, our responsibility to rise up and take possession of the heritage that God has provided for us. Motivation to act quickly, and with great courage in acquiring our heritage is found in the desires of the heart.

**119:112:** - Here is one who is not half hearted in his devotion and determination, but fully "inclined" to "perform thy statutes."

Many are inclined to preach, but the Psalmist was inclined to practice; many are inclined to perform ceremonies, but he was inclined to perform statutes; many are inclined to obey occasionally, but David would obey always; and alas, many are inclined for temporary religion, but this godly man was bound for eternity, he would perform the statutes of his Lord and King even unto the end (Spurgeon).

**‘Samekh’**

(113-120)

***"The Wicked: Hated By The  
Righteous, and Judged By The Almighty"***

- 113 *I hate them that are of a double mind; But thy law do I love.*  
114 *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word.*  
115 *Depart from me, ye evil-doers, That I may keep the*  
*commandments of my God.*  
116 *Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live; And let*  
*me not be ashamed of my hope.*  
117 *Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe, And shall have respect*  
*unto thy statutes continually.*  
118 *Thou hast set at nought all them that err from thy statutes; For*  
*their deceit is falsehood.*  
119 *Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross:*  
*Therefore I love thy testimonies.*  
120 *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; And I am afraid of thy*  
*judgments.*

The stanza now before us presents opposites: the righteous and the wicked; love and hate; evil doers and those who keep the commandments of God. The first five verses in this stanza focus on the Psalmist's *Trust* (vs. 113-117); the second half sets forth the author's *Trembling* at the justice and judgment of God (vss. 118-120).

**119:113** - Two classes of humanity are set before us: those who are "double minded," and those who "love" the law of God. As for the "double-minded," their thinking is unstable; their reasoning illogical and senseless. They vacillate from one opinion to another, carried about by every wind of doctrine. Like the prophets of Baal who "halted" (literally, "leaped") between two opinions (1 Kings 18:21), these enemies of God simply refused to take a stand on the word. In contrast, David loved the law, and it is implied that the meditation upon and application of God's law to our life will produce proper thinking and reasoning. While the previous stanza focused upon the practical application of the word of God in his actions, here the Psalmist turns his attention to the emotions of his soul from which those actions proceeded.

**119:114** - The assurance of the Psalmist shines in this verse. In times of danger God was his "hiding place" and his "shield."

Someone has noted that “we need a hiding place when danger threatens; we need a shield when danger makes its thrust.” The hiding place provides us refuge when the danger is not imminent, but the shield gives us protection in the heat of battle; and the promise of both is contained in the word. No wonder the Psalmist declared, “I hope in thy word.” The Psalmist had proven the reliability of God’s word in his life. In times past it had provided protection, and upon it he would now rely. When the world would discourage us, there is great strength in the hope that God’s word provides.

**119:115** - The Psalmist’s hope was demonstrated in action. In the next three verses he would set forth a triplet of safety measures to protect him from the ways of the wicked. The first of these appears in this verse. The author knew the importance of *separation* from evil doers. The best way to avoid falling into the temptation of sin is to separate oneself from those who practice evil. The New Testament equivalent is found in the words of Paul: “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33).

There is in this verse a prophetic ring of our Lord’s final judgment when He would tell the workers of iniquity to depart from Him (Matt. 7:21-23). Evil doers will corrupt those in their company. Separation from the wicked is the means of self preservation, spiritually speaking.

**119:116** - The second safety measure was trust in the *scriptures*. Without an implicit trust in the word of God the enemy will devour us. Seeing that the devil is a roaring lion going about seeking to destroy us, it is essential that we rely on the word that we might live. Jesus turned to the word in time of temptation (Matt. 4:1-12). Strength comes from the word, and men will not attain unto moral excellence apart from it.

**119:117** - The third safety measure is God’s *support*. Dependence on God is a difficult lesson to learn. Human tendency is to lean upon one’s own strength and power. We have often heard some poor lost soul delay obedience to this gospel because he thought he could “work things out” in his life by his own power. One’s respect for the word is demonstrated in his reliance upon that word.

*“respect unto thy statutes”* – One reason why men ignore the word is because they have no respect for it. It means little to them, and consequently they do not devote the time to read and study the

“statutes” contained therein. Salvation is conditional upon continued faithfulness. Many have stumbled at the word for the simple reason that they have little or no respect for the statutes of God. When men place their wisdom above the simple command of God they begin the journey down the slippery road of rebellion, and respect for the word of God ceases.

**119:118** - The last three verses focus on the *justice* and *judgment* of God. Whereas in the first five verses the Psalmist *trusted* in God, here he *trembles* at the prospect of the wicked facing God’s judgment.

*“Thou hast set at nought all them that err from thy statutes”* - The KJV reads, “Thou hast trodden down all them that err.” Those who set at nought God’s word would themselves be set at nought by God. “He *treads them all down*. He brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are ever so high, he can bring them low (Amos 2:9); he has done it many a time, and he will do it, for he resists the proud and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but, sooner or later, he will trample upon them” (Matthew Henry). On this Spurgeon has noted, “There is no holding up for them; they are thrown down and then trodden down, for they choose to go down into the wandering ways of sin” (Spurgeon).

*“For their deceit is falsehood”* - The idea is that they deceive themselves by setting up false rules, in opposition to God’s statutes; they purposefully go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good and their crafty projects of mischief. It is important to note here that “deceit” is equated with “falsehood.” Men may call it “diplomacy,” but our God calls it falsehood. Those who would deceive others to have them walk in the pathways of error, whether moral or religious, have espoused a falsehood, and both the blind, and those deceived thereby, shall pay the price.

**119:119** - The wicked are like dross, and will be so treated by the Almighty God. Our God is not some sort of an old doting grandfather who will never call men to answer for their ungodly ways. Indeed, He will put away the wicked like so much refuse. He will put them away from the church, separate them from His people, and eventually away from Himself for all eternity. We should note that the reason for that final separation is for no other reason than the fact that they are “of the earth.” Such men would not enjoy heaven, were it given to them without any conditions whatsoever.

*"Therefore I love thy testimonies"* - It is the Psalmist's realization of that final separation which caused him to proclaim, "Therefore I love thy testimonies." The promise of judgment lends courage to the faithful, knowing that their cause will be vindicated.

**119:120** - *"My flesh trembleth...I am afraid of thy judgments"* - A serious and sober consideration of God's impending judgment ought to make every man tremble at the prospect. The Psalmist trembled when he contemplated the "judgments" of God. Our generation no longer trembles at the prospect of standing before the judgment seat of Christ. There is no fear of God in their hearts or minds. The humanists, atheists, agnostics - all of them walk with such arrogance characteristic of those who have no fear of God.

**'Ayin'**  
(121-128)

***"All God's Precepts Are Right"***

- 121 *I have done justice and righteousness: Leave me not to mine oppressors.*  
122 *Be surety for thy servant for good: Let not the proud oppress me.*  
123 *Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, And for thy righteous word.*  
124 *Deal with thy servant according unto thy lovingkindness, And teach me thy statutes.*  
125 *I am thy servant; Give me understanding, That I may know thy testimonies.*  
126 *It is time for Jehovah to work; For they have made void thy law.*  
127 *Therefore I love thy commandments Above gold, yea, above fine gold.*  
128 *Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; And I hate every false way.*

The key verse in this stanza is the last one wherein the Psalmist expresses his attitude regarding error. His love for the truth and his "esteem" of the "precepts" of God provided a solid basis for faithful service to God. Why could he lay claim to having done "justice and righteousness" (vs. 121)? Why was he so willing to be taught the "statutes" of God (vs. 124)? Why did he "love" the "commandments" (vs. 127)? It was because he esteemed all of God's precepts to be right, and he hated every false way.



**119:121** – *"I have done justice"* - It was a noble thing for a king to be able to claim these words as his own. Most kings of that era, and that part of the world, were nothing more than despots who cared more for their own pleasure than the needs of their citizens. David could say that he had done justice AND righteousness. His throne was founded upon God's law; justice and righteousness were his scepter. Using the heavenly standard for his constitution, he would judge and rule as expected by God.

**119:122** - *"Be surety for thy servant for good: Let not the proud oppress me."* – The word "surety" means "to mix; to mingle; to unite oneself with another so that the interest of one becomes the interest of another; to become answerable for; as when one endorses a note for another" (Barnes). It would appear that the Psalmist was in the valley of despair; the enemy seemed to have the upper hand. The Psalmist was calling upon God to draw near; to be a surety for this humble servant. Sometimes life is like that. By all appearances the devil has the upper hand; God seems so far away. In times of despair it is proper to call upon God for assistance in such times of peril.

This is one of those rare occasions in the chapter wherein the Psalmist does not employ one of the ten synonyms for God's word.

**119:123** - David looked to God alone. He looked long, and hard, until he could affirm, "mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for thy righteous word." There are times when the eyes of the saint fails, not because of an unwillingness to learn, but because he is weary from his search for truth. Until men wear themselves out in the search for truth, they will not attain unto it. Here is the Psalmist's application of that divine principle that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled (Matt. 5:6).

**119:124** - Although he had judged with justice and righteousness, David still recognized the need for God's merciful lovingkindness. To this he even adds the request that God "teach me thy statutes." We should be ever grateful that our God has condescended to teach us His word; and then in His wonderful mercy He has patiently held our hand as we learn to apply it to our life.

**119:125** - Having asked for instruction, the Psalmist now asks for understanding. The order is significant. Men will never understand God's law until they are instructed therein. It is possible for a person to *know* the word, but be void of any proper understanding of

it; it is, however, impossible to *understand* the word without a good knowledge of the same. Consider, for example, the multitude of denominational preachers who are as familiar with the Bible as are faithful gospel preachers, and yet they have a complete *misunderstanding* of the subject of baptism. Understanding comes from a humble and contrite heart that immerses itself in a study of the word with the sole purpose of knowing God's will and submitting thereto.

**119:126** - Men have, through the centuries, made void the law of God. In the final analysis, the law of God can never be "*made void*" insofar as the authority of that law is concerned. When the Bible says that men make void the law of God, it means that they have rendered God's law useless in their own lives. They do this in a number of ways. They make the law of God void when they refuse to apply it to their lives; when they deny the power thereof; when they teach as doctrines the commandments of men; or by completely disregarding and scorning the authority of the Lawgiver.

*"It is time for Jehovah to work"* – The precise meaning of this little phrase presents no little difficulty to the student. Literally the words are translated, "Time to do for Yahweh." There are two possible meanings, both of which express a truth elsewhere presented in the Bible. First, seeing that the latter part of the verse contains a direct address to the Lord, some take these words to contain a plea to God that He perform His work. Since the people had made *void* the law, it is time for God to interpose so as to restrain them; to bring them to repentance and assert His authority and power. When so understood we learn it is appropriate to pray that when iniquity abounds, that God will take action and vindicate His people. The other possible meaning is that it is a call to action on the part of God's people; as if the Psalmist were saying: "It is time for us to do something; since the enemies of God have made void divine law, it is time for those who are God's servants to rise up and "work" so as to stay the tide of wickedness and uphold the virtue of the law.

**119:127** - When I was a small child my faith was the faith of my parents reflected in their instruction and guidance given to me. When I became an adult, my respect for the scriptures and individual determination to know and obey the truth produced a faith that was borne out of personal initiative. Unfortunately many a soul has never developed his own faith, relying instead upon the faith of parents, teachers, and/or preachers.

It is the mark of a true believer that he does not depend upon others for his religion, but drinks water out of his own well, which springs up even when the cisterns of earth are all dried...Wealth brings with it so many conveniences that men naturally esteem it, and gold as the symbol of it is much set by; and yet, in the judgment of the wise, God's laws are more enriching, and bring with them more comfort than all the choicest treasures (Spurgeon).

**119:128** - Love for the truth begets hatred for every false way. For too long men have not abhorred evil, but have tolerated it, and eventually embraced it. Our godly author was not indifferent to evil. He was a lover of good, and a hater of evil. He had nothing to say good about those things that would not bear the search light of the truth of God's word.

### ***"Enter Not Into The Path Of The Wicked"***

by Tom Wacaster

There is not much in this world that is so baffling as random and senseless violence. We recently learned of a gang of youth on the West coast who broke into a high priced home, not to steal, but to vandalize. The house was "trashed" (as per the news report). Walls were kicked in, cabinets and furniture destroyed, and fixtures and appliances ripped from the wall. Indeed, these things cause the sensible and sane to marvel at the extent men will go when under the control and power of Satan. The Proverb writer has given us some insight into the "mind set" of such wicked individuals that we would be wise to note. "For they sleep not, except they have done mischief; and their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall" (Pro. 4:16). "The night is their time for spoil and depredation. And they must gain some booty, before they go to rest. I grant also that there may be some of so malevolent a disposition, that they cannot be easy unless they can injure others, and are put to excessive pain when they perceive any man in prosperity, or receiving a kindness" (Adam Clarke, Commentary on Proverbs). One can scarcely imagine such depths of depravity, but inspiration tells us that men CAN arrive at such a state, and experience teaches us that an ever increasing number ARE DOING SO! There are two or three truths which we must not miss here. First, one can become just as zealous for evil as he can for good. To be sure, it is a progressive thing, but it is possible nonetheless. One does not become wicked and vile overnight, nor is he born that way. Sin is progressive for the simple reason that it does not satisfy the deep needs of the soul. Second, one can become so

steeped in sin that wickedness is his very nourishment. Verse 17 tells us that such individuals "eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence." Depravity has reached such a point in their lives that they feed on those things that are wicked. Third, the best way to avoid such a state of depravity is to avoid the path that leads thereto. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men" (verse 14). Avoid the path, and you avoid where the path leads! We are told to "enter not," "avoid it," "pass not by it," "turn from it," and "pass away." Many a hardened criminal has lamented his past life with the ever familiar words, "If someone had just warned me." Well friend, someone IS warning, shouting from heaven itself, "Enter not into the path of the wicked..." Men are just not listening!

**‘Pe’**

(129-136)

***"Thy Testimonies Are Wonderful"***

- 129 *Thy testimonies are wonderful; Therefore doth my soul keep them.*  
130 *The opening of thy words giveth light; It giveth understanding unto the simple.*  
131 *I opened wide my mouth, and panted; For I longed for thy commandments.*  
132 *Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me, As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.*  
133 *Establish my footsteps in thy word; And let not any iniquity have dominion over me.*  
134 *Redeem me from the oppression of man: So will I observe thy precepts.*  
135 *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; And teach me thy statutes.*  
136 *Streams of water run down mine eyes, Because they observe not thy law.*

All the verses of this section begin with the Hebrew letter 'pe.' This section is "precious, practical, profitable, powerful: peculiarly so" (Spurgeon). There is, in this stanza, an appreciation on the part of the Psalmist for the wonderful nature of God's word. The very first verse in this stanza sets the tone for the seven verses that follow. This section begins on the mountaintop and descends into the valley. The Psalmist declares his faithful obedience, and bemoans the fact that others "observe not thy law."

**119:129** - The words of God are wonderful in every aspect. They are free from error. They manifest in their very nature the evidence of truth. The word is able to strengthen, instruct and comfort the soul (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Psalmist realized the value of the word, and was so impressed by that intrinsic worth that he was determined to keep them in his memory. Indeed, when one contemplates the marvelous guide that we have within our hands, and the grace that is revealed unto us, we stand in awe more so with every passing day at the wonderful nature of our God's testimonies. Because of its wonder, we, like the Psalmist, are committed to keeping them in our life. Someone noted, "The Scriptures are 'wonderful' with respect to the matter which they contain, the manner in which they are written, and the effects which they produce" (author unknown).

The words of God are wonderful in the following ways:

- (1) For the matter and depth of the mystery contained therein;
- (2) In their majesty and composure;
- (3) For the purity and perfection they set forth;
- (4) For the harmony and unity contained in them;
- (5) For the power to change lives and save the souls of men.

Consider, for example, simplicity of the word of God. So far as the Old Testament was concerned, the legal code that God gave to Israel was of such a nature that even a child could understand the commands. Every situation that men might face was anticipated by God, and the Law was written void of the legal verbiage that is so characteristic of legal matters today. No wonder the Psalmist considered the testimonies of God to be wonderful.

*"therefore my soul doth keep them"* - The Scriptures provide a compass by which we shall plot our course through life. They are the universal medicine for the sin-sick soul. The Scriptures are the source of grace to lost man. They provide warnings against those things that would keep the soul from its eternal home. It is no wonder that the writer would proclaim that "my soul doth keep them."

**119:130** - It is not the mere head knowledge that provides illumination, but the "opening of thy words" into the heart. Some never see the truth in the word because of prejudice or pride, or a number of other reasons. The idea behind this "opening of thy words" is that of unveiling or unfolding the truths contained therein.

Once the word is opened to us, it gives "understanding even unto the "simple." "These simple-hearted ones are frequently despised, and their simplicity has another meaning infused into it, so as to be made the theme of ridicule; but what matters it? Those whom the world dubs as fools are among the truly wise if they are taught of God" (Spurgeon). The "simple" are those who are teachable; those who have no desire to argue with God, or excuse themselves from their responsibility toward their Creator.

**119:131** – *"I opened my mouth...and panted"* - David appealed to the animal world to find an illustration of his strong desire for God's word. Like an animal that longs for breath, or for refreshing water, so the writer tells us that he "opened wide" his mouth, and "panted" for God's commandments. He longed to know them, learn them, keep them, and teach them to others.

Such a desire for God's Word is certainly not the normal human experience. Most people ignore their Bibles – just as they ignore the stars. Stars are a spectacular phenomenon but we are so used to them that we scarcely give them a passing glance. Someone has commented that if the stars came out only once every five hundred years people would certainly wait up all night to see them. They would never stop talking about the marvelous sight. But as it is, the stars are such a common sight that people generally ignore them. They do that with the Bible...It is in our mother tongue. It is available in any bookstore for a few dollars. There are societies organized to give it away for free. We take it for granted. But let it be taken away from us; then its value will be known. Then, like the Psalmist, we will long for it (Phillips, Volume 2, page 384).

**119:132** - There is a certain "look" that God has toward those who love His name. It is a look of mercy and pardon. It was the Psalmist's desire that God look upon him with such compassion and mercy. This should likewise be our desire, that God look upon us, not with scorn or displeasure, but as one who loves His name, and who are willing to keep all His commandments. Before leaving this verse, take note of the *consistency* of our God. Whether in the past, or the present, our God looks with mercy upon those who love His name.

**119:133** – *"Establish my footsteps"* - There is a hint of God's providential care for His children in this verse. God will "establish" those who abide in His word (cf. John 8:32-34). But notice the

human element in the appropriation of divine blessings. The Psalmist prayed that sin would have no dominion over him; he was determined to be obedient. The man whose steps are ordered by the Lord, who walks in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:6-8) will have every step established on the road to eternal life.

**119:134** - Oppression from the unrighteous is a great temptation. The Psalmist asks that God redeem him from such. We have been promised that God will not allow us to be tempted above that which we are able to endure, and this no doubt, includes oppression from our enemies. While it is true that the godly shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12), we rest in the promise of strength to see us through.

**119:135** - Notice how the Psalmist continually seeks to be instructed in the laws of God. Those who are willing to be taught will be the glad recipients of the sunshine of God's marvelous blessings. God's approval is expressed in this beautiful language. For God to make His face to shine upon us is expressive of His fellowship and blessings.

**119:136** - The words of this verse suggest a depth of maturity and love for the souls of men on the part of the Psalmist. Here is one who could weep extensively for the sins of others.

He wept in sympathy with God to see the holy law despised and broken. He wept in pity for men who were thus drawing down upon themselves the fiery wrath of God...His tears were not mere drops of sorrow, but torrents of woe...None are so affected by heavenly things as those who are much in the study of the word, and are thereby taught the truth and essence of things. Carnal men are afraid of brute force, and weep over losses and crosses; but spiritual men feel a holy fear of the Lord himself, and most of all lament when they see dishonor cast upon his holy name" (Spurgeon).

### **'Tzaddi'**

(137-144)

### ***"Righteous Are Thy Commandments"***

*137 Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, And upright are thy judgments.*

*138 Thou hast commanded thy testimonies in righteousness And very faithfulness.*

*139 My zeal hath consumed me, Because mine adversaries have forgotten thy words.*

140 *Thy word is very pure; Therefore thy servant loveth it.*  
 141 *I am small and despised; Yet do I not forget thy precepts.*  
 142 *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, And thy law is truth.*  
 143 *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me; Yet thy commandments are my delight.*  
 144 *Thy testimonies are righteous for ever: Give me understanding, and I shall live.*

A prominent word in this section is "righteous," or an equivalent. In addition, this stanza addresses the soul's struggle to attain unto righteousness, and the part that the Law played in that endeavor.

**119:137** - This is one of those rare occasions when the writer of this Psalm uses the word "Jehovha." There are two notable truths here, both of which are inseparably connected one with the other. The first is the righteous character of God; the second the uprightness of His word. Were it not for His righteous character, His judgments would not, in fact could not be upright.

**119:138** - The commands of God are not only upright (verse 137), they are also "righteous" and "faithful." His word can be trusted to provide the perfect guide for our earthly sojourn. That word cannot be impeached, questioned, or in any way shown to be ineffective for the purpose for which is given.

Meditate, fellow Christian, upon those words, "very faithful." Men may fail us; our God will not. His word is so sure that it cannot, in any wise, fail us. He has promised that He cares, and that He will provide; and indeed He does. We can put our full confidence in every word.

But in addition to the faithful fulfillment of God's testimonies, we can rest assured that what God has spoken will, indeed, come to pass. It is impossible for God to lie, to tempt us, or to fail in keeping His promises. While politicians may vacillate, bowing to the whims of the people, God is not swayed by public opinion, or popular polls. His very words are wonderful in scope and substance. "In His law, God has spoken to moral issues, political issues, social issues. He has spoken about diet and dress, family and financial matters, warfare and welfare. He has addressed Himself impartially to sovereigns and to slaves" (Phillips, page 391).



**119:139** - The idea is that his strength was exhausted because of the efforts he put forth to extol and honor God's Word. His efforts seemed to be frustrated by his adversaries who had forgotten the words of God. How often do we become agitated because men forget the words of God? When was the last time that our zeal literally "consumed" us because of the failure of sinful man to respect and obey the words of God's law? Indeed, men have "forgotten" the words of God. Here is why men sin: they forget God. They forget His goodness toward them; they forget His warnings; they forget His commands; they forget His promises; they forget His wrath; they forget His holy nature. Yes, men have forgotten God; and this is precisely why our nation is in the mess that it is in. In this election year (2008) polls have revealed that a majority of our society does not believe the nation is on "the right track." The sad fact is they do not *know* how to get back on that "right track." So long as our leaders leave God out of the picture, and pass laws to restrict the proclamation of His word, the direction will be down, Down, DOWN.

**119:140** - It is only natural that the Psalmist would have a deep love for the word of God. Perhaps men have failed to see the purity of God's word, and have lost a love for its message and promises. There is nothing of a contaminating nature in the word of God. There is not a single lie, a single mistake, or a single error of any kind. It is not only *pure*, it is *very pure*. The Psalmist could drink deeply from the word of God without fear of any contamination or corruption in the direction it provided. Indeed, the word of God is "truth distilled, holiness in its quintessence" (Spurgeon).

**119:141** - The next three verses will provide us with three important attitudes that each and every child of God must strive to implement into his life: (1) a correct view of self, vs. 141; (2) a correct view of scripture, vs. 142; and (3) a correct view of suffering, vs. 143. Let's take a closer look.

First, it is important that we have a correct view of *self*. The world measures success in the size of one's prosperity, popularity, or physical stature. Note the following truths relative to a proper view of oneself. David's physical stature did not hinder his faith in God. David was of small physical stature when he slew Goliath; but even more, he was small in power, and this drove him to depend on the power of God for his deliverance. If David be the author as we have supposed, no doubt he recalled those times in his life when his physical stature and weakness of the flesh caused him to depend upon God. When men consider themselves "big" in their own eyes, it

is then that they are their smallest. But when a man views himself as small in the eyes of God he is his biggest.

Next, in addition to being *small*, the Psalmist freely admitted that he was *despised*. In his younger years, the scorn that was heaped upon him by his brothers, King Saul, and Goliath did not weaken his faith nor did it in any way affect his resolve to face that giant who defied the armies of God. History tells us that this young boy grew up to become a man, and eventually king over Israel, and that his determination to face his enemies never diminished.

Finally, the Psalmist says that he *did not forget* the precepts of God. He may have been small in physical stature, and scorned by the enemies of God, but this giant of a man was smart. "David could see the shortsightedness of measuring a man by his height. Nor should a man be measured by the number of degrees he has after his name. That is the world's yardstick, not God's. God measures a man by His Word – and for that reason this small man was a very large man indeed. He was very much bigger than the enemies he mentioned in the previous verse" (Phillips, page 394).

When men despise us, let us cling more closely to the precepts of God. The unrighteous "forget" God (verse 139), but the righteous do not forget God's precepts.

**119:142:** - Not only does the righteous man have a correct view of himself, he has a correct view of *Scripture*. Among other things, he recognizes the *everlasting nature* of the Word. If God is everlastingly righteousness, then so is His Word. "For, All flesh is as grass, And all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: But the word of the Lord abideth for ever. And this is the word of good tidings which was preached unto you" (1 Pet. 1:24-25).

Additionally, he acknowledges that God's law is "*truth*." Pilate asked, "What is truth?" Today men deny any absolute truth, and foolishly claim that the only thing we can know for certain is that we cannot know anything. The Psalmist declares that God's law IS truth. It is not ABOUT truth; it does not merely CONTAIN truth; rather it IS truth. Those who are obedient to the Word of God will find that they are walking in a way consistent with facts, while those who walk contrary to the word are walking in darkness (cf. 1 John 1:6-8).

**119:143:** - The lot of the faithful is persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). The degree of that persecution is proportionate to the degree to which a society is ruled by righteousness or wickedness. When godliness rules a nation, and the people have a respect for the Word of God, the persecution of God's people is minimal, restricted to taunts and jeers. But as men cast off the word, the persecution increases dramatically. Given the absence of laws that are just and in accord with the Word of God, injustice rules, and God's people are the worse for it. The Psalmist suffered because of his faith. "*Trouble and anguish*" had taken hold on him. The key word here is "*yet*." The commandments of God were his delight, and it is this love for God's word that has provided the martyrs of years gone by with the faith to face persecution and triumph over their enemies. When the pressures of life close in upon us, and it would seem that "trouble and anguish have taken hold" on us, that is the time that we should turn to God's commandments. "Thus he became a riddle; troubled, and yet delighted; in anguish, and yet in pleasure. The child of God can understand this enigma, for well he knows that while he is cast down on account of what he sees within himself he is all the more lifted up by what he sees in the word" (Spurgeon).

It has often been observed that sometimes criminals can face death with calmness and courage. The political prisoners in the Bastille could face the guillotine with a haughty indifference, fierce pride of class making them scorn to show fear. But Christian martyrs have met death with jubilation, facing the fangs of wild beasts in the arena with hymns of praise to God, singing in the fire when burned at the stake, pouring out praises to God and praying for their tormentors. Trouble and anguish, Satan's grim jailors, could not silence the song of the psalmist (Phillips, page 395).

**119:144:** - The writer closes this section by noting once again the lasting righteousness of God's commandments. His plea is that God would give him understanding, that he might live. The stanza ends with an expression of the Psalmist's strong desire that God give him understanding. Without that understanding of the testimonies of God, this man of God knew that genuine life would elude him.

**‘Qoph’**

(145-152)

***“Calling With All The Heart”***

- 145 *I have called with my whole heart; answer me, O Jehovah: I will keep thy statutes.*  
 146 *I have called unto thee; Save me, And I shall observe thy testimonies.*  
 147 *I anticipated the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy words.*  
 148 *Mine eyes anticipated the night-watches, That I might meditate on thy word.*  
 149 *Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: Quicken me, O Jehovah, according to thine ordinances.*  
 150 *They draw nigh that follow after wickedness; They are far from thy law.*  
 151 *Thou art nigh, O Jehovah; And all thy commandments are truth.*  
 152 *Of old have I known from thy testimonies, That thou hast founded them for ever.*

The Psalmist was still struggling; enduring persecution at the hands of a merciless enemy. While they drew near to him in wickedness, he was determined to call on God and trust in heaven's eternal and everlasting word. We have the saint: (1) Calling, vss 145-146; (2) Crying, vss 147-149; (3) Contending, vs. 150; and (5) Comforted, vss. 151-152. Let's take a closer look.

### *The Psalmist Calling* (119:145-146)

**119:145:** - In times of distress it is natural to call out for help. A drowning man will not remain silent; and a saint in distress will naturally call to his God for help in his hour of need. When the saint calls to God he puts *passion* into his *prayers*; he calls with his "*whole heart*."

"*Answer me, O Jehovah: I will keep thy statutes*" – Two ingredients that make for a successful call are the heart and the will. The heart says, "I am desperate," the other says, "I am determined" (Phillips, page 397). Calling upon God is an individual responsibility. Those who seek the Father and His righteousness are promised that He will, indeed, answer (Matt. 7:7; 6:33).

**119:146:** - Twice in as many verses the Psalmist says, "I have called." To emphasize the point he is trying to make, he then repeats the message. The unity of the two verses is apparent. Both speak of calling; both speak of keeping God's word. The "save" of

this verse is equivalent to "answer" of verse 145, and the "observe thy statutes" is equivalent to "observe thy testimonies" of the previous verse. Often when men find themselves in desperate straits they make promises to God if He will but act on their behalf. Making a vow, even in times of distress, is not inherently evil; but when men make a promise to God they must put forth the most diligent effort to fulfill their vows.

Note that the Psalmist desired *deliverance*; in return he expresses his *determination*. "The one says, 'Rescue me!' The other says, 'Rule me!' The answer to such prayer is never far away" (Phillips, page 397).

He did not ask to be delivered that he might sin with impunity; his cry was to be delivered from sin itself. He had vowed to keep the statutes or laws, here he resolves to keep the testimonies or doctrines, and so to be sound of head as well as clean of hand. Salvation brings all these good things in its train. David had no idea of a salvation which would allow him to live in sin, or abide in error: he knew right well that there is no saving a man while he abides in disobedience and ignorance (Spurgeon).

### *The Psalmist Crying* (119:147-148)

There is a note of desperation now in the plea of the Psalmist. Having "called," he now "cries." His prayer is earnest, and enduring; the situation is urgent!

**119:147:** - Our English word "anticipated" (ASV) and "prevented" (KJV) translates the Hebrew '*kaw-dam*.' Strong defines the word: "A primitive root; to *project* (one self), that is, *precede*; hence to *anticipate*, *hasten*, *meet* (usually for help)" (Strong). More specifically we have the idea of: "(1) to meet, come or be in front, confront, go before: (a) to meet, confront, come to meet, receive; (b) to go before, go in front, be in front; (c) to lead, be beforehand, anticipate, forestall; (2) to come in front; to confront, anticipate" (Brown-Driver-Briggs). He would rise ahead of the dawning, and present his petition to God. Some men fear the morning, but those close to God have glad expectations of each new day. Each dawning brings new opportunities for serving God. He did not *dread* the new day; rather he *desired* that it come.

*"I hoped in thy words"* – Severe trials often drive men *away* from God. Not so with the Psalmist. He would hope in God's word despite the persecution. Here is our only hope. Without the promises and consolation that found in the pages of Scripture, there is no hope whatsoever.

A "man after God's heart," David foreshadowed his Lord. In the hour of adversity, our Lord entered into the garden. His plea went before the throne of God. "Let this cup pass!" Thankfully, His tears were tempered with tender submission: "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done!"

His hope was fixed upon God's word, and this is a sure anchorage, because God is true, and in no case has he ever run back from his promise, or altered the thing that has gone forth from his mouth. He who is diligent in prayer will never be destitute of hope. Observe that as the early bird gets the worm, so the early prayer is soon refreshed with hope (Spurgeon).

**119:148:** - Not only did our writer anticipate the morning, but even the "night watches." And why anticipate the night watches? It was in order that he might meditate on the word. Wicked men anticipate the late night watches that they might revel in fleshly lusts. Not so the godly and righteous. Night time was the occasion for meditation. When all was quiet, and the mind could reflect upon the day's activities, and contemplate the wonderful blessings received from God's bountiful hand, the heart could meditate upon the word and gain strength for the following day, and peace for the night's rest.

There is another thought that emerges from this verse. In those times when the Psalmist could not sleep, he would not waste his time tossing and turning, but would use that time in devotion to God. Most of us waste time during our waking hours; the Psalmist would not waste time during those hours when sleep escaped him. Someone has calculated that the average person, if he lives to be seventy five years of age, will spend 25 of those years in sleep, 17 years at work, 6 years traveling, and more than 9 years watching television. If he were to attend every service of the church, and read his Bible only 30 minutes each evening, that would add up to only 4 years. Imagine: NINE years watching TV; FOUR years meditating on God's word. That's only four years out of seventy five preparing for eternity! On the other hand, if we cut two thirds of our time used in watching TV and invested that into a study of God's word, we would increase the time spent in prayer and Bible study by NINETEEN YEARS!

**119:149:** - Calling and crying, the Psalmist pleads for *life*: “Quicken me, O Jehovah!” He begs God to “hear” his voice. It is as if he were saying, “Lord, I have something to say to thee; shall I obtain a gracious audience?” He is confident that God will answer, not because of any merit of his own, but because of God’s *love* and *law*. The one bespeaks the goodness of God; the other His loyalty.

*“according to thy lovingkindness”* - He depends upon God’s lovingkindness, knowing that his Father is good, and will in turn be good to him. “He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me” (Matthew Henry).

*“according to thine ordinances”* – “Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us: which we have as an anchor of the soul, *a hope* both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil” (Heb. 6:17-19). God’s mercy is secured by His covenant; His word insures us that He will keep His promises.

### *The Psalmist Contending* (119:150)

**119:150:** - Armed with God’s love and law the Psalmist stands ready to face the enemy. Those who would pursue wickedness were now pursuing David. They were drawing nigh in an attempt to destroy him.

*“They...follow after wickedness”* – As Spurgeon noted:

He could hear their footfalls close behind him. They are not following him for his benefit, but for his hurt, and therefore the sound of their approach is to be dreaded. They are not prosecuting a good object, but persecuting a good man. As if they had not enough mischief in their own hearts, they are hunting after more. He sees them doing a steeple-chase over hedge and ditch in order to bring mischief to himself, and he points them out to God, and entreats the Lord to fix his eyes upon them, and deal with them to their confusion. They were already upon him, and he was almost in their grip, and therefore he cries the more earnestly (Spurgeon).

*"They are far from thy law"* - The root cause of their evil designs was their distance from the law of God. They are not just slightly removed therefrom; they are *"far from"* it. They are far from the law in their consideration of its contents, for they never study it. They are far from it in observance, for they know not what it says. They are far from its light, for they walk in darkness. Here is the root of much evil, namely distance from God's law. Let men draw near to the law, and they will draw near to God. Let them embrace it, and its promises and protection will embrace them. "A mischievous life cannot be an obedient one. Before these men could become persecutors of David they were obliged to get away from the restraints of God's law" (Spurgeon).

*The Psalmist Comforted*  
(119:151-152)

David was confident that God heard his prayer. From this he derived comfort in his time of trial. There are four wonderful truths presented for our consideration: (1) God is near; (2) His word is true; (3) Personal experience strengthens our faith; (4) God's word endures forever. Let's look at each of these.

**119:151:** *"Thou art nigh, O Jehovah"* - As near as the enemy might be, God was nearer. This is one of the choicest of comforts for the persecuted child of God. A good illustration of this comes from the Exodus. Following ten plagues and God's judgment upon Egypt, Pharaoh agreed to let Israel go. Some three million slaves marched out of Egypt taking with them the spoils of a defeated and humiliated nation. But once again, the king's heart was hardened, and in one last act of arrogance, he sought to pursue and destroy Israel. With their back to the Red Sea, and Pharaoh's army bearing down upon them, God intervened and stood between His people and His enemies. God was nigh; Israel was safe!

*"And all thy commandments are truth"* - The writer could say that God was nigh. His association with God, and his walk in His word produced closeness to God. He had, by his proximity to the law, proven its value and worth. He had learned, by practical experience, and from revelation itself, that "all thy commandments are truth." It is not that only a portion was true, or that even a majority of it is truth. ALL the commandments of God are truth. In addition, the



commandments of God do not just **contain** truth, they **are** truth. "Sanctify them in truth; thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

**119:152:** - "*Of old have I known thy testimonies*" - Those who think that David was a young man when he wrote this Psalm will find it rather difficult to reconcile this verse with the theory. It seems more likely that the author has grown old, his hair has turned grey, and his years of experience are now in the past. He has reaffirmed God's promises time and again. From personal experience he has proven God's faithfulness. Men have, through the years, proven the absolute integrity of our God. What He says is certain; where He leads is secure. "Prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2b).

*"That thou hast founded them for ever"* – It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass into absolute nothingness than for God's word to fail (cf. Matt. 5:18; 1 Pet. 2:22-25). Realization that God's word is ever lasting provides the saint with great comfort and consolation in times of persecution. We were particularly impressed with Spurgeon's lengthy comment on the point we are making here:

He knew at the very first that the doctrines of God's word were settled before the world began, that they had never altered, and never could by any possibility be altered. He had begun by building on a rock, by seeing that God's testimonies were "founded," that is, grounded, laid as foundations, settled and established; and that with a view to all the ages that should come, during all the changes that should intervene. It was because David knew this that he had such confidence in prayer, and was so importunate in it. It is sweet to plead immutable promises with an immutable God. It was because of this that David learned to hope: a man cannot have much expectation from a changing friend, but he may well have confidence in a God who cannot change. It was because of this that he delighted in being near the Lord, for it is a most blessed thing to keep up close intercourse with a Friend who never varies. Let those who choose follow at the heels of the modern school and look for fresh light to break forth which will put the old light out of countenance; we are satisfied with the truth which is old as the hills and as fixed as the great mountains. Let "cultured intellects" invent another god, more gentle and effeminate than the God of Abraham; we are well content to worship Jehovah, who is eternally the same. Things everlastingly established are the joy of established saints. Bubbles please boys, but men prize those things which are solid and substantial, with a foundation and a bottom to them which will bear the test of ages (Spurgeon).

**‘Resh’**  
(153-160)  
**“Quickened By God’s Love and Law”**

- 153 *Consider mine affliction, and deliver me; For I do not forget thy law.*
- 154 *Plead thou my cause, and redeem me: Quicken me according to thy word.*
- 155 *Salvation is far from the wicked; For they seek not thy statutes.*
- 156 *Great are thy tender mercies, O Jehovah: Quicken me according to thine ordinances.*
- 157 *Many are my persecutors and mine adversaries; Yet have I not swerved from thy testimonies.*
- 158 *I beheld the treacherous, and was grieved, Because they observe not thy word.*
- 159 *Consider how I love thy precepts: Quicken me, O Jehovah, according to thy lovingkindness.*
- 160 *The sum of thy word is truth; And every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever.*

The theme of this stanza focuses upon *God’s quickening power through His word*. Three times in these eight verses the Psalmist beseeches his God to “quicken” him. Once again he finds himself in the throws of the enemy; and once again he reminds himself of the quickening power of God’s wonderful word.

**119:153:** *“Consider mine affliction”* – The Psalmist prayed that God would look upon his trial and regard his situation as it really was; that Jehovah would not turn away or pass it by, as if it were unworthy to claim His attention. The child of God must never forget that God is never unmindful of His people’s afflictions. But more than that, God desires that we spread our case before Him, and leave such things in His hands to do with as His wisdom directs, in His own time, and His own way.

*“For I do not forget thy law”* – It is important to note here that the Psalmist did not believe that suffering was the direct result of sin. Even though he was suffering, he pled his righteousness, declaring that he had not, nor did he at the moment, forget the law of God.

**119:154:** This verse appeals to God for *intervention*; he pleads for deliverance. Such deliverance was expected in view of his

faithfulness in keeping God's law. He begs for life; that he might be "quickened...according to thy word."

*"Plead thou my cause"* – He asks that God be his "advocate." The image is that of a court room in which the accused pleads to a powerful and effective lawyer to take his case and argue his cause. David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them; he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity and silence their false accusations. If God does not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually.

*"Quicken me according to thy word"* – The Psalmist was unable to bear his troubles; his spirit was cast down, apt to sink in the mire of despondency. He beseeches God to quicken him in the face of complete and utter defeat.

**119:155:** - Many a deluded and deceived soul expects to obtain salvation by some mystical, magical or miraculous means, when all the while they are not the least bit interested in the statutes of the Almighty. A number of years ago I attended the funeral of young man who was known for his "rowdy" nature. Spiritual things were the farthest thing from this man's mind. When we passed by the casket, in one hand they had placed a Bible, and in the other a can of chewing tobacco. Draped across his midsection there was a six-pack of Budweiser. The music selected for comforting those attending were a number of songs by Jim Croce. The family evidently believed that their departed loved one had somehow gained entrance into that heavenly abode with the redeemed in spite of the way he lived.

The wicked will not inherit salvation, no matter how they may desire it, or long for it. In contrast, our author points out that salvation is no further away than the seeking and application of God's statutes to one's life.

We note from these verses some important truths relative to the wicked: First, there is the *description* of the wicked man. They do not *do* God's statutes; in fact, they do not so much as seek them. They are not acquainted with them, nor do they have any desire to do so. Second, the Psalmist tells us of their *doom*. Salvation is said to be "far from them." They may flatter themselves with the delusion that salvation is near, and that they are on their way to heaven; but they are mistaken.

*“For they seek not thy statutes”* - There is no condition worse than being lost and not knowing that one is lost. It is bad enough for the wicked to be far away from salvation, but when salvation is said to be *far* from the wicked, that is much worse. The root cause is the fact that they “seek not” the statutes of God. Their interest is consumed with things temporal; their time wasted on the pleasures of the flesh. No doubt every child of God who has sought to teach others the gospel has heard on numerous occasions the excuse, “I just don’t have time.” It is not that such lost souls don’t have time, for they have the same amount of time as everyone else. The fact of the matter is, they have no interest in seeking the statutes of God.

**119:156:** - *“Great are thy tender mercies”* – Whether great in number, or in nature, the tender mercies of God are far beyond our ability to comprehend such wonderful grace. His mercies are a “fountainhead that can never be exhausted” (Henry).

*“according to thine ordinances”* – Some have the strange notion that God’s grace is not compatible with divine law. In the 1970’s and 80’s many of our brethren fell for the devil’s lie that grace and law are mutually exclusive; that where there is law there is no grace and where there is grace there can be no law. There are at least two observations relative to such sophisticated silliness. First, if there is no law where grace is present, then neither is there sin, since sin is transgression of the law. And if there is no sin, then there is no need for grace. Second, the greatness of God’s tender mercies did not lessen the power and purpose of the word. He trusted in God’s “ordinances” to provide him with life.

**119:157:** - *“Many are my persecutors”* – The Psalmist turns his attention to the number of his enemies and the effect they might have in turning one away from the truth. We might be able to withstand one enemy, and overcome him; but the danger increases when numbers are combined in their efforts to destroy us, or turn us away from God.

It is easy to follow the multitude to do evil. It is much more difficult to maintain faithfulness when all around are following wickedness and persecuting the righteous. Though his persecutors were many, he maintained his faith in God.

*“Yet have I not swerved from thy testimonies”* – David maintained his integrity. In the face of so many enemies, he did not swerve from

the testimonies of God. “A man who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none” (Henry).

**119:158:** *“I beheld the treacherous”* - The KJV reads, “I beheld the transgressors.” The Hebrew word describes those who are deceitful, and who accomplish their ends treacherously. Here are those who violate their allegiance by betraying a trust; those who surrender a fort to an enemy, with no consideration for what is right and holy.

*“and was grieved”* – The original word suggests more than mere sorrow. The word used here means commonly to loathe, to nauseate, to sicken. David was made *sick* at heart. He did not look upon them with anger. His heart was broken because these evil, treacherous enemies of God did not observe the word of God.

*“Because they observe not thy word”* – He was cut to the quick to see them dishonor God, serve sin, and ruin their own souls. When is the last time that we were “grieved” over the disobedience of the rebellious? Have we wept over their lost condition? Do we shed tears because they do not “observe” the word?

**119:159:** - *“Consider how I love thy precepts”* – Having asked God to consider his affliction, he now invites God to consider how he loves the divine precepts of the Father. We were impressed with Albert Barnes’ comments:

Search me. Behold the evidence of my attachment to thy law. This is the confident appeal of one who was conscious that he was truly attached to God; that he really loved his law...A man who truly loves God may make this appeal without impropriety. He may be so confident - so certain - that he has true love for the character of God, that he may make a solemn appeal to him on the subject - as he might appeal to a friend, to his wife, to his son, to his daughter, with the utmost confidence that he loved them. A man “ought” to have such love for “them,” that he could affirm this without hesitation or doubt; a man “ought” to have such love for God, that he could affirm this with equal confidence and propriety (Barnes).

He does not say, “Consider how I fulfill thy precepts.” He was conscious of his failure to live up to the law; in many ways he no doubt came short. It has been said that a man is often measured by his reach, rather than his grasp. There is some element of truth to this. A godly man, though unable to achieve sinless perfection, will constantly strive to obey the law of God in all things because he loves

the precepts of God. As he reaches toward perfection he grows in the grace and knowledge of God.

**119:160:** - "*The sum of thy word is truth*" – The difficulty in this verse is the variance between the ASV and KJV. The KJV renders this: "Thy word is true from the beginning."

"It is all the same in the end whether we render [the Hebrew] *quippe qui* or *siquidem*. Psalms 119:160 signifies the *head-number of sum*. If he reckons up the word of God in its separate parts and as a whole, truth is the denominator of the whole, truth is the sum-total. The nearer it draws towards its end the more importunate does the Psalm become" (Keil & Delitzsch)

The idea is that it is the *whole* of God's word that constitutes truth. Though each individual part is in and of itself true, it is only when the whole of God's word is considered that one comes to a knowledge of truth as a body of information. This fundamental truth seems to have been ignored by the multitude of false teachers who would isolate any single passage to the exclusion of others. The doctrine of salvation by "faith only" is just such an example.

There is an additional truth that emerges from a consideration of the Psalmist's words. Men have found every saying in the Bible to be true. In some cases it may be a record of some falsehood expressed by someone, but it is an accurate record of that person's error. Satan may have lied to Eve regarding the forbidden fruit; he may have made promises he could not keep. But the Sacred record contains a *true* record of the incident itself. Every historical tidbit of information is accurate right down to the last detail. Every geographical statement is precisely as it is known to be. Whether science, biology, geography, or history, in those places where the Bible utilizes these fields of study, this book contains no errors and presents the truth in every respect.

*"And every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever"* - It will be found faithful to the end because it is righteous. The doctrines of men will fail; their scientific theories will continue to go by the wayside; and governments will come and go. But God's word will endure. It has never been proven false, nor will it.

**'Schin'**  
(161-168)

***"Peace in the Face of Adversity"***

161 *Princes have persecuted me without a cause; But my heart  
 standeth in awe of thy words.*  
 162 *I rejoice at thy word, As one that findeth great spoil.*  
 163 *I hate and abhor falsehood; But thy law do I love.*  
 164 *Seven times a day do I praise thee, Because of thy righteous  
 ordinances.*  
 165 *Great peace have they that love thy law; And they have no  
 occasion of stumbling.*  
 166 *I have hoped for thy salvation, O Jehovah, And have done thy  
 commandments.*  
 167 *My soul hath observed thy testimonies; And I love them  
 exceedingly.*  
 168 *I have observed thy precepts and thy testimonies; For all my  
 ways are before thee.*

The predominant feature of this stanza is the Psalmist's emphasis upon his love for the law of God and the wonderful blessings he derived from his observance of that law. Though persecuted by "princes," he would maintain his faithful adherence to the words of God. This would be the last time the Psalmist would draw our attention to the persecution he had endured. With this stanza he turns the corner, preparing the way for the last stanza in which he focuses upon his victory.

Three times in these eight verses our author would extol his great love for the law of God. His love would provide strength in the face of persecution (vss 161-163), peace in times of distress (vss 164-165), and hope to motivate him to faithful and godly living (vss 166-168).

*Strength in the face of persecution (vss. 161-163):*

**119:161:** - While princes persecuted him, he maintained his respect for the word. What a contrast! While suffering persecution at the hand of earthly sovereigns, this godly king stood in awe of the word of God. He had greater fear for the Potentate of potentates than for the princes of earthly domain. Jesus warned, "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). "It has been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case is the worse if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and a color of justice. It is sad that the power which

magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him” (Henry). While all about him seemed to be coming apart at the seams, here was a man who was determined that nothing would deter him from his faithful adherence to the law of God.

He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and scepters become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God. We are not likely to be disheartened by persecution, or driven by it into sin, if the word of God continually has supreme power over our minds (Spurgeon).

**119:162:** *“I will rejoice at thy word”* – The enemy may have rejoiced in their wicked schemes and evil intentions, but the Psalmist rejoiced at the word of God. Instead of reeling from the threats of wicked and evil men, he chose to walk on a higher plane. Each of us has a choice as to how we will react when we find ourselves being persecuted without a cause. We can bemoan our lot, or we can rejoice in our blessings.

*“As one that findeth great spoil”* - When men examine the word in depth, they will soon come to realize that within every verse, every word, every chapter, there is “great spoil.” Like a soldier that has conquered the enemy, and gathered great spoil, so those who dig deep into the riches of God's everlasting word will find great wealth. David took pleasure in the word of God; he rejoiced that he had made such a discovery; he took pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it (cf. Psalms 1:1-3).

**119:163:** *“I hate and abhor falsehood”* - It was not only “falsehood” that the Psalmist hated. He selected this particular sin because he had witnessed the full effect of the lies that had been spoken against him. His complete disdain for this particular sin is an indication of his piety and devotion to God. In contrast, he affirms his great love for the law. Love and hate are the two of the strongest affections of the heart. The mention of these two emotions, along with the object of each emotion, helps us to appreciate even more the Psalmist's great respect for the word of God. He abhorred lying, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the very reason why he loved the law of God was because of the truth contained therein. The more



one sees the beauty of truth, the more he will detest and abhor the corruption of that truth with a lie.

**119:164:** Likely the number "seven" is used for emphasis and may be figurative. His praise went up before Jehovah "seven times a day," or very frequently. The basis for his praise is here stated to be the "righteous ordinances" of God. Observe in this verse (1) how often he praised God, and (2) what he praised God for. Some grow weary of giving more than an hour on Sunday morning. We wonder if the reason they grow weary with worship is because they do not appreciate the ordinances of God as did the Psalmist.

**119:165:** There are two blessings that come to those who love the law of God. The first of these is "great peace." Here is the peace that passeth understanding (Phil. 4:7). The second blessing is a safeguard against apostasy. The Psalmist is not suggesting that they "cannot" fall, but rather that so long as they love the word, they will find stability, strength, and a rock solid faith to sustain them in times of temptation. The peace that is founded upon conformity to and love of the word of God is a lasting peace.

*"they that love thy law...have no occasion of stumbling"* – The marginal reading is, "they shall have no stumbling block." It is not that nothing will pain them, or test their faith, but that the challenges of life would not become a stumbling block. They would rise above the circumstances of life and maintain their faith in God.

**119:166** - "Hope" consists of expectation and desire. The Psalmist certainly desired. But he could expect to receive that salvation because of the fact that he had obeyed God's commandments. How men can conclude that man can somehow be saved without obeying the will of God is quite astonishing. And yet there are multitudes who seem to think that God is just going to save everyone, regardless of their life style, or their devotion to God (or the lack thereof).

When the Psalmist was persecuted without a cause, he did two things: He *hoped* in God, and then he *did that which was right*. The first without the second is presumption; the second without the first is formalism.

**119:167** - Here is a man who is in love with God's testimonies. This is why he kept them so faithfully. Not only did he store up the word

in his heart, but because of his deep affection for that word, he “observed” those testimonies.

**119:168** - Our author was motivated to observe the precepts and testimonies of God because he was aware of the omniscience of God. “All my ways are before thee” expresses the Psalmist’s realization that there is an all seeing eye watching us.

The prophet addressed this character trait of our God: “For who hath despised the day of small things? for these seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel; these are the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth” (Zech 4:10). The very thought that nothing can be hid from the eyes of Jehovah prompted me to write the following some years ago:

### ***The Eyes Of The Lord***

by Tom Wacaster

Second Chronicles is perhaps one of the most neglected of the inspired writings among otherwise good Bible students. I must admit that my yearly trek through the genealogies in 1 and 2 Chronicles takes some patience. Much of what we read in the Chronicles is a repeat of the material in 1 and 2 Kings with but little difference. It is interesting, therefore, that on my journey through the Chronicles this year that my eyes happened to light upon a little phrase that I have read a number of times, though only in passing. But first, some background information. It was the 36th year of the reign of Asa, king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Asa was instrumental in maintaining pure worship before God. He removed his own mother from being queen because she had made an idol unto false gods (1 Chron. 15:16). In addition, he brought into the house of God the things that his father Abijah had restored to the temple. When the 16th chapter opens we learn that Baasha, king of the Northern Kingdom, rose up against Judah. Rather than depend upon God for protection, Asa turned to Benhadad, the king of Syria, and sought an alliance with that idolatrous nation. The union was successful and Baasha retreated from his aggression. Asa may have won the battle, but he lost what might have otherwise been a blessing from God in the final overthrow and defeat of Syria itself. Hanani the prophet was sent to Asa: "Because thou hast relied on the king of

Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand." Hanani then makes this interesting statement: "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect before him. Herein has thou done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars" (16:9). Please note these lessons from this record.

First, God has searching eyes. Here it is said that He is looking for those "whose heart is perfect toward him." Jeremiah was once instructed to "run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it" (Jer. 5:1). Those must have been trying times when a righteous man was hard to find. Wickedness was rampant. Both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were, for the most part, corrupt. How easy it would have been for God to simply turn His back. Instead, God was searching. Like the prodigal son whose father must have never ceased to look, our Father in heaven keeps searching for one more soul that is "perfect toward him."

Second, God has far reaching eyes. His eyes are said to run "to and fro throughout the whole earth." There is no hamlet, no small village, no isolated corner of this globe that can escape the penetrating look of the eyes of God. "And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). One wonders by the timing of Hanani's statement from God whether or not Asa may have attempted to make this "league" with Benhadad in secret. Men may perpetrate and perform their crimes in the dark of night where they THINK they can escape detection. Law makers and politicians may receive a bribe "under the table" in an effort to conceal their wicked deeds. But our God sees all, and all will answer to the Almighty for their ungodly deeds.

Third, God has urgent eyes. It is said that His eyes "run." Time is of the essence. "The King's business requires haste" (1 Sam. 21:8). We must preach the word, "be urgent in season out of season." But what is it that makes the search so urgent? It is the limited time constraint that faces you and me. Life is but a vapor. There is no certainty of tomorrow. God knows this. And I, for one, am happy that He does not linger in searching for those of perfect heart.

Fourth, God has revealing eyes. He was to "shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect." I, for one, am glad that God is a revealing God and that He WANTS to make Himself known. How grateful we should be that not only has He made "one of every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth," but that God's desire is that we "should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:26-27). Some years ago it was declared that "God is dead." No, God is not dead. He is alive, and He has made Himself known. For those who miss Him, the fault is solely theirs for God is looking for them, and He is ready and willing to show Himself to those who earnestly seek after Him (Heb. 11:6).

Fifth, God has demanding eyes. While His love is unconditional, His blessings are for a limited few. He is strong in behalf of "them whose heart is perfect toward him." The context of those words helps me understand what God means by a "heart that is perfect toward him." Asa failed to trust God. He doubted the power of God to fulfill the promises given. While Asa may have proven himself noteworthy by seeking to eradicate idolatry and return to true worship of Jehovah, he failed in this one area. He failed to seek God's advice, and then to follow it when it came to him. God demands that we bow in submission in every single aspect and area of our life. Failure to do so will be catastrophic.

**'Tau'**  
(169-176)  
**"The 'Let Me' Song"**

- 169 *Let my cry come near before thee, O Jehovah: Give me understanding according to thy word.*  
170 *Let my supplication come before thee: Deliver me according to thy word.*  
171 *Let my lips utter praise; For thou teachest me thy statutes.*  
172 *Let my tongue sing of thy word; For all thy commandments are righteousness.*  
173 *Let thy hand be ready to help me; For I have chosen thy precepts.*  
174 *I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah; And thy law is my delight.*  
175 *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; And let thine ordinances help me.*

176 *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; For I do not forget thy commandments.*

Approaching the end of the Psalm, the force and fervency of the author reaches the peak as he seems now to come into the very presence of God whose help he is seeking. As the Psalm comes to its close we find the Psalmist upon his face in deep humility, begging that God might let him come near before Him. Six times in eight verses our author beseeches that God might "let" his petitions be heard and blessings received. "Let my cry come near before thee"; "Let my supplication come before thee"; "Let my lips utter praise"; "Let my tongue sing of thy word"; "Let thy hand be ready to help me"; "Let my soul live."

Phillips introduced this section with similar words:

The singer has now come to his last stanza. Letter by letter he has alternately sung and sobbed his way through the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Again and again he found that his tears turned into rainbows when he looked through them at the Word of God; his triumphs turned into hymns. Now he is about to conclude his rhapsody on the wonders of the Word, a Word that has met him in every need of his life (Phillips, page 418).

**119:169:** *"Let my cry come near before thee, O Jehovah: Give me understanding according to thy word"* - As the Psalmist draws his song to a close, he beseeches God not to turn a deaf ear.

**119:170:** Twice in as many verses reference is made to *"according to thy word."* The divine standard must be that by which we measure our actions and desires of the heart. May God always act "according to" His word, and never in opposition thereto.

**119:171:** Having been taught properly, praise pours forth from the heart. The lips are the instrument, suggesting expression of thought in audible tones.

**119:172:** *"Let my tongue sing of thy word"* - The Psalmist would use his tongue to express his heartfelt thanks in grateful appreciation for the word and its effect upon his life. In humility he avers that he would sing of God's word, not his own.

*"all thy commandments are righteousness"* - Not just a portion, but the whole. If men would be righteous, then they must abide by the divine commandments given by a righteous God. What was the

Psalmist saying in this verse? If a man is to control his tongue; if he is to “speak” and/or “sing” of God’s word; then he must have respect for that word. He must meditate on that word, and know and believe from the depth of his heart that *“all thy commandments are righteousness.”*

Computer language that uses the numbers 1 and 2 is called “binary” computer language. Men have developed the capability to use those two numbers, 1 & 2, to solve problems in math, to guide spaceships to the moon, and to provide a number of amazing programs for our every day use. But there is one truth that the computer programmer knows; one thing that even the novice realizes: It is that if you put “garbage” into the computer, you will get “garbage out” of the computer. In like manner, if a man is to control the tongue so that it will speak the praises of God out of the abundance of the heart, then let that man meditate on God’s word; let him believe and know that God’s commandments are righteousness.

**119:173:** With this verse the Psalmist turns his attention to his deep felt need. He longed for God to deliver him from his enemies. He sets forth a four-fold petition: (1) “Let thy hand be ready to help me,” verse 173; (2) “I have longed for thy salvation,” verse 174; (3) “Let my soul live,” verse 175; (4) “Seek thy servant,” verse 176.

*“Let thy hand be ready”* – The prayer reminds us of Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink; he too cried, “Lord, help me,” and our Lord stretched forth His hand. The author had *“chosen”* God’s precepts. It was a willful determination to follow God, and to trust in the promises of the Almighty. The New Testament equivalent of this verse might very well be Hebrews 13:5-6, “for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord *is* my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.”

Note here the power of man to choose what course he shall pursue regarding the keeping of God’s precepts. God has always allowed man to make the choice, though he will live with the consequences of that choice in eternity.

**119:174:** *“I have longed for thy salvation”* – No doubt the New Testament equivalent of this passage is found in Matthew 5:6: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Here the Psalmist expresses his desire for salvation. This is not simply a “wish,” or futile expectation; he has an ache within, a longing that only God could fill.

*"Thy law is my delight"* - The blessed man is the one who "delights in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth he meditate day and night" (Psa. 1:1-3).

Here are two vital character traits that separate the saved from the lost: (1) a longing for salvation, and (2) a delight in the law of God. The majority will not be saved for the simple reason that they do not long for that salvation; they do not delight in the law of God.

**119:175:** *"Let my soul live"* – The fictional character, George Bailey, in Frank Capra's, *"It's A Wonderful Life,"* learned what it meant to live. Given the unique opportunity to see the impact he had made on the world about him, he relented of his foolish pride and cried out, "I want to live...let me live again." David had a burning desire to *live*. But that desire was not a selfish one, for the purpose in this deep desire was that he might *"praise"* God.

*"And let thine ordinances help me"* – "He that would love life, And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips that they speak no guile: And let him turn away from evil, and do good; Let him seek peace, and pursue it" (1 Pet. 3:10-11). It was not mere *existence* for which David longed. He knew, as did Jeremiah that "the way of man is not himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Hence, his prayer, *"Let thine ordinances help me."* He was pleading, "Let *YOUR* word provide the guidance necessary to *let me live*. Let *YOUR* counsel, and not the counsel of the wicked, help me live life to its fullest."

**119:176:** *"I have gone astray like a lost sheep"* – Was the Psalmist confessing sin? After 175 verses, does he conclude the Psalm on such a negative note as to suggest that after all was said and done, after complete trust and confidence had been placed in God's word, after 175 verses in which he had extolled the majesty of God's word and the benefit for his life, that after all of this, he was no closer to God than when the journey began? Some seem to think so. Our opinion, however, is that he is expressing the same sentiments of Solomon: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc. 12:13). Having completed his journey through the Hebrew alphabet, with each letter focusing on some aspect of God's word, he closes with a positive affirmation: "Yes, I have gone astray! Yes, before I put my trust in God, I was like a lost sheep! Let God seek me out and discover that *I do not forget His commandments.*"

## ***Conclusion***

Our journey through this 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm, as through the previous 118, has been both rich and rewarding. This chapter is one of the most concise treatises on the word of God and the value of that word in the life of the child of God. It is descriptive of God's communication with man. More than that, it provides tools for the saint in his journey toward heaven.

Both the *names* and *nature* of God's word provide us with great spiritual benefit. While men may look upon the Bible as negative, narrow minded, and nonessential, the child of God longs for that word, searches it out, and applies it to his heart. God's *law, decrees, light, commandments, principles, precepts, statutes, and judgments* provide complete guidance to the soul making his way to heaven.

The *nature* of that word is such that it

- (1) Brings blessings and happiness (verses 1-2, 122);
- (2) Keeps us pure (verse 9);
- (3) Gives wise advise (verse 24);
- (4) Keeps us from sin (verse 11, 29, 121);
- (5) Encourages those who are grieving (verse 28);
- (6) Provides answers for life's uncertainties (verse 42);
- (7) Develops a thankful heart (verse 62);
- (8) Offers hope (verse 49);
- (9) Comforts and quickens (verse 50);
- (10) Gives wisdom (verses 98-100);
- (11) Enlightens (verse 105);
- (12) Brings peace (verse 165);
- (13) Deserves respect (verses 46 and 120);
- (12) Nourishes the hungry soul (verse 103).

These dozen blessings are only the hem of the garment, and in the words of the Queen, "the half hath not been told," for time and space would fail us were we even to attempt to exhaust the blessings and benefits that derive from a proper respect for and application of the word to our life.



## *“The Slandered Saint”*

### ***Introduction***

The next fifteen Psalms have been grouped together and titled “Songs of Degrees.” We must rely upon the ancient inscription attached to the Psalms so far as the author of each one is concerned. Four of them are ascribed to David, and one includes David’s name in the first verse (chapters 122, 124, 131, 132, and 133). One is said to be *for* Solomon, and may very well have been penned *by* him (127). The rest are anonymous. As to who might have written the anonymous Psalms, they have been attributed to David, Ezra, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. We will be content to simply allow the author to remain anonymous knowing that it is God Who wrote the Psalm; the human penman was nothing more than the stylus in the hand of the Almighty. No doubt, these fifteen chapters are “excellent in their kind, and written with much elegance; containing strong and nervous sentiments of the most exalted piety, expressed with great felicity of language in a few words” (Clarke).

It might be best to start our study of these fifteen Psalms with at least some consideration of what is meant by “a song of degree,” and what purpose these fifteen Psalms (120-134) might possibly serve. One thing we observed was that there is much disagreement among our sources, and many of them were of the opinion that it is not possible to determine the meaning of the subtitle, “song of degree,” or “song of ascent.” Some have suggested that these Psalms may have had something to do with the composition of the Psalm itself. The first or last words of a preceding line are repeated at the beginning of a succeeding line. An example of this is in Psalms 121:1-2 where it is said “from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord.” Others think these Psalms were written for and used on the occasion in which David brought up the Ark of the Covenant from Kirjath-jearim to the house of Obed-edom. On that occasion, the Hebrew word used to describe “bringing up” the Ark of the Covenant is of the same etymology with the word here translated “degrees.” Still others conclude that there were fifteen steps by which the priests ascended into the Temple, and on each of these they may have sang one of these fifteen Psalms. One popular opinion is that these Psalms were

sung by devout pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem to keep the great feasts of the Lord. The content of these Psalms are such that it would be natural that these songs were chanted or sung during that journey. Frank Dunn had this interesting note:

Four of the group are attributed to David, and one to Solomon. The remaining ten are anonymous. Some scholars favor the explanation given by John Lightfoot some 300 years ago. The ten were written by Hezekiah celebrating his recovery, one song for each degree that the shadow on the sun dial turned backward. The other five were added so that the total would correspond to the fifteen years that God prolonged his life" (Frank Dunn, page 360-361).

Another interesting observation is that the central Psalm in the collection, the only one attributed to Solomon, has on either side of it a group of seven Psalms, each such group having two Psalms ascribed to David and five anonymous Psalms. Each of the ascribed Psalms are separated one from another by an anonymous Psalm in such a way that no two of the ascribed Psalms come together. This, we are convinced, is not the result of mere chance.

We do not happen to think there is enough information regarding these "songs of ascent" to make any dogmatic affirmation as to their purpose in the design of arrangement, or why they are given that designation. We will leave that to the student who may wish to pursue that further. That being the case, we turn our attention to a study of this specific Psalm.

Spurgeon had this interesting introductory note to this Psalm, and the fifteen Psalms as a whole:

Suddenly we have left the continent of the vast Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm for the islands and islets of the Songs of Degrees. It may be well to engage in protracted devotion upon a special occasion, but this must cast no slur upon the sacred brevities which sanctify the godly life day by day. He who inspired the longest Psalm was equally the author of the short compositions which follow it. If these Psalms were sung at the ascent of the ark to Mount Zion, and then afterwards by the pilgrims to Jerusalem at the annual festivals and at the return from Babylon, we shall find in the life of David a reason for this being made the first of them. Did not this servant of God meet with Doeg the Edomite when he enquired of the oracle by Abiathar, and did not that wretched creature belie him and betray him to Saul? This made a very painful and permanent impression upon David's memory, and

therefore in commencing the ark-journey he poured out his lament before the Lord, concerning the great and monstrous wrong of 'that dog of a Doeg,' as Trapp wittily calls him. The poet, like the preacher, may find it to his advantage to 'begin low,' for then he has the more room to rise the next Psalm is a full octave above the present mournful hymn. Whenever we are abused it may console us to see that we are not alone in our misery: we are traversing a road upon which David left his footprints" (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

This chapter contains the plea of some sufferer who was asking God for deliverance. In his "distress" he called to God. He was suffering the barbs of an unkind and slanderous enemy. He seeks deliverance from "lying lips" and a "deceitful tongue." The Psalm closes with an affirmation that the author had taken steps to bring about peace, but this vile and wicked enemy would have none of the peace offered. Instead, "they are for war."

We found several good outlines for study. Willmington (*The Outline Bible*, page 284) provided an excellent homiletic outline:

- I. Save Me From Wicked Tongues (120:1-4)
  - A. The psalmist's petition (12:1-2): Rescue me from liars and deceitful people.
  - B. The psalmist's prediction (120:3-4): Divine punishment will fall upon his enemies.
- II. Save Me From Warring Hearts (120:5-7).
  - A. His persecutors' identity (120:5): They are of Meshech and Kedar;
  - B. His persecutors' iniquity (120:6-7): They demand war when the psalmist pleads for peace.

I copied the following outline into my personal notes more than twenty years ago. I do not recall the source or if I developed it out of my own study, but it is a fitting outline for our study.

- I. Plea, in which the Psalmist seeks deliverance from lying lips, verses 1-2;
- II. Personal, in which the Psalmist addresses the one who has lied asking what should be done unto him for his lies, verses 3-4;
- III. Pathetic, in which the Psalmist laments his circumstances, namely that he has to live among them that lie, and hate peace, verses 5-7;

## **Commentary**

### ***Plea*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 *In my distress I cried unto Jehovah, And he answered me.*  
2 *Deliver my soul, O Jehovah, from lying lips, And from a deceitful tongue.*

**120:1** – “*In my distress*” – In these verses the Psalmist seeks deliverance from lying lips. There is nothing as distressful as being slandered by another. In what way God answered the Psalmist’s prayer is not revealed. The author’s reaction to the situation is exemplary for all those who find themselves in like circumstances. “Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander” (Spurgeon).

“*I cried unto the Lord*” (or Jehovah). This was the wisest course that he could follow. It does little good to appeal to those who were themselves the slanderers. One might just as well plead with a wild beast as to plea to those who have so wronged us. It should be noted that on those occasions when we are treated unjustly that God can use such for our good, especially if it drives us to our knees in prayer.

**120:2** - “*Deliver my soul, O Jehovah, from lying lips.*” When we were children we often chanted that well known refrain: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” In this case, the lying lips of the author’s enemy cut him to the quick, and drove him to the mercy seat of God that he might find deliverance from this evil perpetrated upon him. “Lips are soft; but when they are lying lips they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men’s reputes, nor salved with malicious falsehoods” (Spurgeon). The Psalmist pled for deliverance! He had been slandered, deceived, and misrepresented. He could not find comfort. When we are treated by our fellow man in such a way as the writer was treated, we should go to God in prayer and seek the peace that only He can give.

### ***Personal*** **Verses 3-4**

- 3 *What shall be given unto thee, and what shall be done more unto thee, Thou deceitful tongue?*

#### *4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, With coals of juniper.*

In these two verses the Psalmist addresses the one who has lied asking what should be done unto him for his lies.

**120:3** - The exact meaning of the verse is difficult due to the problems in interpretation. Literally the verse says, “What shall the tongue of deceit give to thee, and what shall it add to thee” (Barnes). It would appear that the Psalmist was asking what should be done to the one who so treated his fellow man as to slander and malign him. What action should be taken? What consequences should he suffer? The next verse gives the answer.

**120:4** – “*Sharp arrows of the mighty*” – If our conclusion on verse one is correct then these words describe the judgment *from* God *upon* the slanderer. That judgment would be “sharp pointed arrows of a Mighty One.” To this shall be added “coals of juniper.” Evidently coals from the juniper would burn hotter and longer than other wood thus inflicting greater pain.

How shalt thou be visited? The law of retaliation can hardly meet the case, since none can slander the slanderer, he is too black to be blackened; neither would any of us blacken him if we could. Wretched being! He fights with weapons which true men cannot touch. Like the cuttlefish, he surrounds himself with an inky blackness into which honest men cannot penetrate. Like the foul skunk, he emits an odour of falsehood which cannot be endured by the true; and therefore he often escapes, unchastised by those whom he has most injured. His crime, in a certain sense, becomes his shield; men do not care to encounter so base a foe. But what will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered his most terrible threats against them, and he will terribly execute them in due time... The slanderer shall feel woes comparable to coals of juniper, which are quick in flaming, fierce in blazing, and long in burning... The shafts of calumny will miss the mark, but not so the arrows of God: the coals of malice will cool, but not the fire of justice. Shun slander as you would avoid hell (Spurgeon).

#### ***Pathetic*** **Verses 5-7**

*5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Meshech, That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!*

*6 My soul hath long had her dwelling With him that hateth peace.*

*7 I am for peace: But when I speak, they are for war.*

In these verses the Psalmist laments his circumstances, namely that he has to live among them that lie, and those who hate peace.

**120:5** – *“That I might sojourn in Meshech”* - The words are not to be taken literally. So far as we know Israel never dwelt in those lands. It would seem that the Psalmist is saying that it is “as if” he lived there, among heathen people; people who might treat him in such a fashion as that described in the previous verses.

*“Meshech”* designates the descendants of the son of Japheth by the same name (cf. Gen. 10:2) who later inhabited the area between the Black and Caspian Seas. *“Kedar”* refers to the tribe of Bedouin Arabs who sprang from the second son of Ishmael (cf. Gen. 25:13). Taken together, these two names represent the hostile environment in which the Psalmist lived.

*“That I sojourn”* suggests that the Psalmist recognized the temporary nature of these trials that he was suffering.

**120:6** – *“My soul hath long had its dwelling with him that hateth peace”* - Who this was that the writer spoke of is not certain. That it is a specific individual is certain. The meaning seems clear. He had been forced to dwell with someone who constantly slandered his name; who practiced deceit; who used every opportunity to ridicule and malign. When the Psalmist made any attempt at peace, his adversary would have nothing to do with such negotiations. His enemy actually “hated peace.” What a miserable life that must be. How anyone could fall to such a low state in life so as to actually hate peace is beyond our imagination.

**120:7** - The writer had evidently made some attempt to bring about peace. It was his nature, his desire. But when he spoke of peace, the one spoken of here would have nothing to do with it. His kindest words seemed to provoke the enemy to even more malicious slander. If he remained silent, this enemy would criticize even more.

## ***Lessons***

1. What should one do when he finds himself in such a situation as that of the author of this Psalm? He might separate himself from those who would do him such evil. If that is not possible he should avoid any situation which might further agitate the strife. If slander and deceit continues, and he cannot remove himself from the situation, he should bear it in Christian conduct,

exercising patience. Finally, he should keep in mind that he is indeed a “sojourner” in this land and that someday all such trials and tribulations shall cease.

2. Let us never be guilty of slandering others. It is better to be on the receiving end of a malicious tongue than to be guilty of the sin ourselves.

***“The Wrecker”***

I watched them tearing a building down,  
A group of men in a busy town.  
With a ho-heave-ho and a lusty yell  
They swung a beam and the side-wall fell.  
I asked the foreman: “Are these men skilled  
And the men you’d hire if you had to build?”  
He gave a laugh and said, “No, indeed,  
Common labor is all I need.  
I can easily wreck in a day or two  
What builders have taken a year to do.”  
I thought to myself as I turned away,  
Which of these roles have I tried to play;  
Am I a builder who works with care,  
Measuring life by the rule and square?  
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,  
Patiently doing the best I can;  
Or am I a wrecker, who walks the town,  
Content with the labor of tearing down?

## ***“Jehovah: Keeper of His People”***

### ***Introduction***

The author of this Psalm is not known. Nor is it possible to determine the precise occasion when it was written or under what circumstances. Some have suggested that it might have been written on the return from Babylonian captivity. But as Barnes pointed out, “the language is such as *might* then be employed, but it is also such as might be used on many other occasions” (Barnes). Others are of the opinion that the Psalm may have been penned by David when fleeing from Saul and facing various hazards and threats upon his life.

While the previous Psalm addresses the absence of peace and the Psalmist’s exposure to the venomous assaults of his enemy, this Psalm turns our attention to the source from whence the author sought his help. We have titled this Psalm, “Jehovah: Keeper of His People.”

### ***Analysis***

The first two verses contain an exclamation on the part of the first voice. The remainder of the chapter contains a response on the part of the people, or a close companion of the author. Hence, we have a *resolution* and a *response*. Willmington had an excellent homiletic outline:

- I. The Psalmist Looks Up To The Lord (121:1-2): When in need of help, he depends upon the Creator himself.
- II. The Lord Looks Out For The Psalmist (121:3-8)
  - A. He will not allow him to fall or stumble (121:3-4);
  - B. He will protect and preserve him day and night (121:5-8).



We scribbled the following outline into our notes more than twenty years ago, which will serve for our study of this chapter:

- I. Exclamation, in which the Psalmist declares his intentions in time of need, verse 1;
- II. Explanation, in which the Psalmist explains the source of his help, verse 2;
- III. Elaboration, in which the Psalmist describes the power and might of his help, verses 3-8;
  1. He will give stability, 3a;
  2. He does not sleep, 3b-4;
  3. He will protect, 5-6;
  4. He will preserve, 7-8;

There is an interesting progression as we move through the Psalm. The “degrees” or “steps” in the Psalm consist of a reiteration of a word or thought occurring in one clause or verse, which is used in the following verse as a “step” to a higher truth. In verse one the Psalmist refers to “my help.” This is repeated in verse two but raised to a higher level of truth with the introduction of the “Lord” as his source of strength. As we move to the third verse we reach yet a higher plane wherein the Psalmist describes his Lord as He that “does not slumber,” with the same idea carried over to the fourth verse. Another “degree” is reached in verse five wherein “He who slumbers not” is designated as “Jehovah,” the word appearing *twice* in that one verse. The last three verses reach the climax of the Psalm when the author unfolds the application regarding our preservation and safekeeping.

## Commentary

### *Exclamation* Verse 1

*1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: From whence shall my help come?*

**121:1:** If the Psalmist was returning to Jerusalem, or making his annual trek to the Holy City to offer his sacrifices, he would have viewed Jerusalem from afar. The city sat upon the mountains and served as a fitting representation of God’s presence. Those hills must have been impressive to anyone approaching the city. Jerusalem stood on a rocky plateau some 2,550 feet the Mediterranean to the

west, and 3,800 feet above the Dead Sea to the east. But the Psalmist knew deep within that there would be no help from the hills where Israel had erected her idols of various shapes and sizes. Most commentators agree that the Psalmist did not think his help would come from the hills, but from Him Who sits above all hills. The Psalmist was simply asking, “Where shall I look for help? Will it come from the mountains?” Likely the writer was using the “mountain” to refer to the mountain of the Lord, His strength, and all that is involved in the help that Jehovah might offer.

### ***Explanation*** **Verse 2**

*2 My help cometh from Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.*

Here we have the “all sufficient helper.” A God Who can make “heaven and earth” with naught but the sound of His voice is powerful enough to help the sin sick soul seeking a refuge in the hour of need.

### ***Elaboration*** **Verses 3-8**

In these verses the Psalmist describes the power and might of his help. He does this by pointing to the following facts about God: (1) He will give stability, 3a; (2) He does not sleep, 3b-4; (3) He will protect, 5-6; and (4) He will preserve, 7-8. We will take these in order.

*First, He will give stability, verse 3a.*

*3a He will not suffer thy foot to be moved:*

**121:3a** - He that keeps Israel is none other than the Lord Himself. When the path seems slippery and fraught with danger, God has promised to protect His own. Almost 3,000 years of history demonstrated God’s faithful watch care over His people.

*Second, He does not sleep, 3b-4:*

*3b He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

*4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep.*

He is an ever watchful God. He never closes His eyes, always beholding His children, and ever interposing in their behalf. While man might grow weary from lack of sleep, our God never slumbers; He is never in need of “rest.” A sentinel may fall asleep at his post; the quarter master may slumber at the helm; a mother might even fall asleep at the bedside of her sick child; but our God is never exhausted, never weary, never sleepy. And though there may be times when it seems that God is not aware, or that He might *appear* to be asleep, we must never forget that God keeps an ever watchful eye upon us.

The Hebrew word here translated “keepeth,” is rich in meaning. Like a rich man that keeps watch over his treasures, or a captain that guards those under his charge, so our God “keepeth Israel.” The full application of this is realized in the promise that Jesus made, “Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20).

*Third, He will protect, 5-6:*

*5 Jehovah is thy keeper: Jehovah is thy shade upon thy right hand.  
6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, Nor the moon by night.*

**121:5** - God is our Defender; our Preserver! Like the shadows that provide safety on a hot and dreary day, Jehovah protects His children from the heat of the enemy’s hatred and evil intentions.

*“Jehovah is thy shade upon thy right hand”* - Being at the right hand suggests closeness, trustworthiness, and friendship between comrades.

Here the preserving One, who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—Jehovah is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king’s name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven (Spurgeon).

Regarding the “right hand,” Barnes had this interesting observation:

The idea here may be derived from the fact that in Scripture the geographer is represented as looking to the east, and not towards the north, as with us. Hence the south is always spoken of as the *right*, or at the right hand; and as the intense rays of the sun are from the south, the idea may be, that God would be as a shade in the direction from which those burning rays come (Barnes).

With God as our “keeper,” what is there to fear? Those who stand under the universal protection of Jehovah can suffer no injury.

**121:6** – “*Nor the moon by night*” - As a tree might provide protection from the dangers of over exposure to the burning sun, our God provides safety and protection from faintheartedness when exposed to the wrath of the enemy. Protection from the “sun” is understandable. But what of protection from the “moon”? Albert Barnes has these comments:

The psalmist here refers to some prevalent opinion about the influence of the moon, as endangering life or health. Some have supposed that he refers to the sudden cold which follows the intense heat of the day in Oriental countries, and which, because the moon rules the night, as the sun does the day, is either poetically or literally attributed to the moon (Barnes).

No matter what extreme might threaten us, God is there to answer the call. Whether light or dark, heat or cold, our God will care for us.

*Fourth, He will preserve, 7-8:*

*7 Jehovah will keep thee from all evil; He will keep thy soul.*

*8 Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in From this time forth and for evermore.*

**121:7** - Not only will God protect us from the wrath of our enemies, but will keep us from ALL evil; whatever form in which it might appear. Notice that the inner man is that part of man which is promised to be protected. God has always put the premium upon the soul, not the body. And while physical life is certainly important, it is the spiritual life which must take priority. Those who walk in the light are promised protection. No man can snatch us from the Father.

**121:8** - When traveling; when going home and coming back; everywhere and at all times, God will watch over us. What great comfort there is for the troubled soul in knowing that God will watch over him. Albert Barnes provided us with this beautiful poem. The author was not given, but simply attributed to “Addison’s Spec.”

In foreign realms, and lands remote,  
Supported by thy care,  
Through burning climes they pass unhurt,

And breath in tainted air.  
When by the dreadful tempest borne,  
High on the broken wave,  
They know thou art not slow to hear,  
Nor impotent to save.  
The storm is laid - the winds retire,  
Obedient to thy will;  
The seas that roars at thy command,  
At thy command is still.  
In midst of dangers, fears, and death,  
Thy goodness we'll adore;  
We'll praise thee for thy mercies past,  
And humbly hope for more.  
Our life, while thou preserv'st that life,  
Thy sacrifice shall be;  
And death, when death shall be our lot,  
Shall join our souls to thee"

### ***Lessons***

1. It has been my privilege now to travel to the mission field in Russia, Ukraine, India, Ethiopia, South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. Travel is always fraught with danger, especially when traveling abroad. The freedoms we enjoy in this country do not exist in many other parts of the world. And while we enjoy a rich heritage of Christian influence, other places do not have the same value system that for so many years has served as the foundation of this nation. Unfortunately that foundation here at home is now being rejected by the leaders of our land and those in positions of higher learning.
2. We also learn from the Psalm the importance of individual responsibility in seeking help from God. Man must "lift up" his "eyes unto the hills" from which Divine help comes. Lifting up the eyes entails much more than a mere glance in God's direction. It suggests dependence upon the source to which we are looking. God will preserve us, but we must put our confidence in Him.
3. Our God does not slumber. Elijah called upon the prophets of Baal to arouse their god. Was he asleep? Did he slumber? Not so with our God. He is ever ready to help us in time of need.
4. What a great comfort there is in knowing that our God watches over us. This is because our God is a God that cares for His

children. Unlike the imaginary gods which have no life, no feeling, no concern, and no power to deliver, Jehovah God is intently concerned with the well being of his children (cf. Rom 8:28).

## *“I Was Glad When They Said, Let’s Go Up To The House of God”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is attributed to David, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we will accept the opinion of the ancients who so declared it to have been written by the sweet singer of Israel. The exact time in David’s life, or the occasion, is not discernable. If the Psalm was written by David, it would likely belong to the series of Psalms written during the time of persecution by Absalom. While absent from the Holy City, David obviously had a yearning to go back home and enter into the house of God (cf. *Psa.* 23:1-6; 26:1-2; 55:15; 61:1-8; and especially 63:1-11). Some have placed the date of the Psalm at the return from Babylonian captivity and see in it the rejoicing on the part of Israel. Regardless of the exact date, the Psalm could serve as a song of worship in any occasion when Israel, or David, desired to express their heart-felt thanksgiving for the opportunity to “go unto the house of Israel.” Just because a Psalm might have been used on a particular occasion does not mean that it was written at that time. Hezekiah might have used the Psalm when inviting Israel to come to Jerusalem to worship; Ezra might have used the Psalm upon the return of Israel from Babylonian captivity. But because these men used the Psalm does not mean that either of them was its author.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm seems to naturally divide into three parts. The first two verses focus on the joy with which the worshippers were to go up to Jerusalem, and particularly the worship in the house of God. Verses 3-5 focus on the esteem and respect they were to have for the city as it represented the very seat of God’s righteous judgment of the “thrones of David.” The last four verses encourage the audience to

pray for Jerusalem; for its peace and prosperity and for divine blessings upon the people. We found several good outlines of the chapter:

Willmington provided a two-part outline: (1) Praise for Jerusalem, verses 1-5; (2) Prayer of Jerusalem, verses 6-8. It has been almost two decades since I wrote the following outline in my persona notes; we will use this for our study of the chapter:

- I. The PLEASANTNESS of entering into the house of the Lord, verses 1-2;
- II. The PLACE of worship, being Jerusalem, verses 3-5;
- III. A PRAYER for PEACE within the walls of Jerusalem, verses 6-9;

## Commentary

### ***The Pleasantness of Worship*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah.*
- 2 Our feet are standing Within thy gates, O Jerusalem*

**122:1** – “*I was glad*” - Some invitation was given to the writer to enter into the house of Jehovah. At that invitation the author says that he “was glad.” How marvelous is the privilege of worshipping God, and how bankrupt must be the heart which finds no pleasure in worshipping its Creator. Whoever wrote this Psalm, this opening verse speaks volumes of that man’s heart. He was glad to go into the house of the Lord; glad to be in company with those who were of like mind and soul; glad to spend precious time in worship to his heavenly Father. If the sin sick soul finds no joy at entering into the house of God in worship here, what will be his expectations of that heavenly home that awaits God’s children?

**122:2** – “*Our feet are standing*” - It is not certain whether the words were spoken in anticipation of entering Jerusalem, or if they were already there. The most natural interpretation would be that they had been given the invitation (verse 1) and had accepted that invitation and were presently standing within the gates. If this be the



idea then there is a sense of urgency in the response to the invitation. There was no procrastination, but a ready response based upon the desires of the heart to so enter into the house of God.

Many feet are running the downward road, or kicking against the pricks, or held by snares, or sliding to an awful fall; but our feet, through grace divine, are “standing” – an honorable posture, “within thy gates” – an honorable position, and there shall they stand for ever – an honorable future (Spurgeon).

### ***The Place of Worship*** **Verses 3-5**

- 3 *Jerusalem, that art builded As a city that is compact together;*  
4 *Whither the tribes go up, even the tribes of Jehovah, For an ordinance for Israel, To give thanks unto the name of Jehovah.*  
5 *For there are set thrones for judgment, The thrones of the house of David.*

**122:3** – “*A city that is compact*” - The “compact” nature of the city of Jerusalem was typical of ancient cities, built for defense and protection. The planning and design of that ancient city served a heavenly purpose. We are convinced that there is much more here than meets the eye. While David may very well have called their attention to the Jerusalem that sat upon a hill, the Holy Spirit calls our attention to the city whose builder and make is God; the city that John calls the heavenly Jerusalem. The “house of the Lord” is the church, a holy city that is set in the “heavenly places” (Eph. 1:3). The Old Jerusalem is a type of the New, and the Temple a type of that great Temple, the Church of Jesus Christ. It is not surprising, therefore, to see subtle hints of the coming Kingdom in the Psalms. The city of which you and I are a part is also a “compact city,” closely knit together in love and fellowship one with another and with God the Father (Eph. 4:16).

**122:4** – “*Wither the tribes go up*” - The Feast Days of Israel were typically occasions for thanksgiving unto Jehovah. Those occasions of praise and devotion called for an effort on the part of the Jew to make the journey to the city to offer up the sacrifices according to the “ordinance for Israel.” Every family, of every tribe, would make the pilgrimage, swelling the population of Jerusalem if only for a short time.

*“For an ordinance”* – Worship in the Old Testament was regulated: every sacrifice, every feast day, every offering was according to a distinct pattern. For some unknown reason men seem to think that worship under the New Testament need not follow any distinct pattern. But our Lord told us that God expects worship to be in “spirit and truth” (John 4:24). In our dispensation there are “ordinances” directing our worship unto God. We must follow those commands, examples and implications that are prescribed in the pattern given unto us. The joy of the Psalmist in going up unto the house of Jehovah is indicative of a proper spirit and attitude necessary for acceptable worship. We must have that same joy and desire to worship God, thus providing the proper spirit necessary to please God.

**122:5** – *“There are set thrones for judgment”* - Ideally, justice was to be exercised in God’s holy city. The citizens should have been able to go to the city and receive just treatment at the hands of the king and his counselors. The kings that ruled over Israel during the times of the divided kingdom, however, did not practice justice and equity as they should. Although there were exceptions to the injustices practiced, by and large the period of the divided kingdom was a time of great disappointment, judicially speaking. During the reign of David, and later under Solomon, that justice seemed to be more equitable and honorable than in later times. It is this judicial fairness of which the Psalmist speaks. There ARE thrones, he would point out, in Jerusalem. And those wishing to receive fair treatment can go to that city and expect to receive a fair hearing.

There is no greater institution than the church of our Lord, when it comes to just treatment. Indeed, in spiritual Jerusalem there is a throne in heaven and one can be assured that he will always be treated fairly by our Lord.

***A PRAYER for PEACE within the walls of Jerusalem***  
**Verses 6-9**

- 6 *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee.*  
7 *Peace be within thy walls, And prosperity within thy palaces.*  
8 *For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.*

9 *For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God I will seek thy good.*

**122:6-7** – *“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”* – Here is the Old Testament equivalent of such verses as Ephesians 4:3, and John 17:20-21. The church can, and will, function as God intended when peace prevails within her walls. The 1980’s and 1990’s have been two decades of turmoil within the walls of Spiritual Jerusalem, and it does not look as if this new century promises much better. The false teachers have flourished, and they have caused considerable unrest within a number of congregations of our Lord’s church. Consequently, the effectiveness of the church has been hindered to a great degree.

*“They shall prosper that love thee”* - Our English word “prosper” does not convey the idea that is in the original. The Hebrew word means “to be secure,” to be “tranquil,” or “at rest.” Job spoke of the opposite state of mind when he said, “I am not at ease, neither am I quiet, neither have I rest; But trouble cometh” (Job 3:26). The Psalmist’s prayer was that those who loved Zion would have peace, followed by genuine tranquility and rest; rest here, and the eternal rest with the Father, Christ and the redeemed of every age.

**122:8** – *“For my brethren and companions’ sakes”* - Disruption and strife destroys precious souls. Peace is desirable because souls are at stake. Wherever strife disrupts the peace within a congregation, there are always souls that are caused to stumble. Some recover; a great number are lost to the cause. But when even one soul is lost to the cause of Christ, the damage is too costly. Yes, “for my brethren and companions’ sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee.”

**122:9** – *“For the sake of the house of Jehovah our God”* - Another reason for seeking the good of the Kingdom of God is for the sake of the church itself. Notice that the Psalmist has committed himself to do everything within his power to promote God’s glory. A brother in Christ once stated, “It is our responsibility to make God look good.” Nothing makes our God more attractive, and the church more beautiful, than peace and harmony in the church, and a genuine love of brethren one toward another.

*“I will seek thy good”* - Nothing good was ever achieved by accident. It takes a purposeful “seeking” of that which we want to obtain. So it is with the Lord’s cause. It will not be advanced by accident. The

seed must be planted; the battles must be fought; the name must be proclaimed.

## Lessons

1. Opportunities to engage in worship unto Jehovah should produce joy in the heart of every child of God. Unfortunately this is not the case. Large numbers of the Lord's church find it inconvenient to assemble with the saints on Sunday evening, or Wednesday night. To many, when the call for worship is sent forth, it is not an occasion for joy. But to those who love the Lord, opportunity to gather with the saints is an occasion of great happiness.
2. The blessings of genuine peace were captured by an unknown author:

The years have taught me many things  
But none so sure as this:  
That shelter, solace, joy and strength  
Are always where God is.

So now when hope and courage fail,  
And only fear is strong,  
My heart will sing as in the past  
An unforgotten song.

God is my refuge and my strength  
I will not be afraid,  
And though the night be wild and dark  
I'll meet it undismayed.

## *“Humility In Prayer”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the fourth of the Psalms entitled “Song of degrees.” The author is not named, nor are we provided any information as to the occasion or date of its writing. The fourth verse would suggest that the author and his friends were exposed to some sort of derision and contempt for their dedication to God. In this respect the Psalm is as relative today as it was centuries ago when first penned. When God’s people are exposed to scorn and contempt, it is then that they are driven to their knees in prayer and petition for the Father’s help.

Of particular interest is the humility of the Psalmist that shines in this short chapter. We see the poet standing in the very presence of Jehovah God, with his eyes fixed on the hand of Jehovah, watching with patient expectation for some sign, some gesture, however slight it might be, that would indicate the Master’s will. He pleads for mercy, and longs for deliverance. More than anything else, our attention is drawn to the humble and contrite spirit of the author. We have, therefore, entitled this Psalm, “Humility In Prayer.”

### ***Analysis***

In this chapter we have: (1) an affirmation on the part of the Psalmist regarding the source of his strength (verse 1); (2) an illustration of the humble attitude on the part of the author (verse 2); (3) a plea for mercy (verse 3a); and (4) a description of the disdain received at the hand of the enemy (verses 3b and 4).

We have in this song an expression of the soul’s strong confidence in Jehovah. The soul first affirms confidence as an experience, then breathes it as a prayer, and finally tells the circumstances calling forth the cry (Morgan, page 268).

Try to imagine a pilgrim who has been living in the midst of an ungodly multitude. As he begins his journey toward the place of worship he is scorned by those about him. Though his soul is vexed, this scorn becomes the occasion of a prayer for the mercy of God.

We found the following outlines of the Psalm helpful in developing a useful aid for our study of this chapter. Willmington divided the Psalm into two major points with some excellent sub points (Willmington, page 285-286):

- I. The Servant/Master Relationship (123:1-2)
  - A. Israel's focused service to God (123:2): As slaves and servants watch their masters, so Israel is to watch God.
  - B. Israel's total service to God (123:1-2): Israel is to look to God for mercy.
- II. The Persecuted/Protector Relationship (123:3-4)
  - A. Israel's prayer (123:3): "Have mercy on us, Lord."
  - B. Israel's problem (123:3-4): They are ridiculed and held in contempt by their foes.

Phillips also had a helpful homiletic outline (page 450):

- I. The Simple Concern of the Few (123:1-2)
  - A. The Far Look (123:1)
  - B. The Fixed Look (123:2)
- II. The Scornful Contempt of the Foe (123:3-4)
  - A. The Full Measure of That Contempt (123:3)
  - B. The Foolish Motivation of That Contempt (123:4)

We will use the following outline for our study:

- I. Affirmation (verse 1)
- II. Prayer (verses 2-3a)
- III. Explanation (verses 3b-4).

## ***Commentary***

### ***Affirmation*** **Verse 1**

*1 Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes, O thou that sittest in the heavens.*

**123:1** – “*Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes*” – The second of these songs of ascent expressed the same sentiment. In that Psalm the singer's thought focused on He “who made heaven and earth” (121:2). Here the focus is on Jehovah's rule and dominion. His rule

is fixed, firm, and final. Man cannot change heaven's decrees, and the faithful servant trusts therein.

It was with the eye of faith that the Psalmist looked and longed for God's aid, for the physical eye cannot see those things in the spiritual world wherein God dwells.

### ***Prayer*** **Verses 2-3a**

- 2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their master,  
As the eyes of a maid unto the hand of her mistress; So our eyes  
look unto Jehovah our God, Until he have mercy upon us.*  
*3 Have mercy upon us, O Jehovah, have mercy upon us*

**123:2** - A servant looks to his master for provision, protection and instruction. The servant looks to his master "for deference and respect; that they attentively mark every expression of their will; that they are ready to obey their commands on the slightest intimation of their wishes" (Barnes). As it is with the servant and his master, so also with the maid and her mistress.

*"our eyes look unto Jehovah our God"* - It is this higher source unto which we look. Implied is the futility of looking unto man. Only God can provide in the absolute sense of the word. The Psalmist recognized this and was determined to look unto God so that he might find God's mercy.

**123:3a:** *"Have mercy upon us"* – The Psalmist seeks the mercy of God. Three times in these two verses he expresses his desire for that divine mercy in this hour of need.

With the enemies of God there is no mercy. For the saint there is abundant mercy; mercy that reaches down to the depths of humanity to offer heaven's salvation; mercy that reaches across all boundaries of race and nationality to extend divine help to those sunk deep in the mire of sin.

### ***Explanation*** **Verses 3b-4**

- 3b For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.*  
*4 Our soul is exceedingly filled With the scoffing of those that are at ease, And with the contempt of the proud.*

**123:3b** – “*We are exceedingly filled*” - The word translated with our English “exceedingly filled” means to be “saturated; to have the appetite fully satisfied...Then it comes to mean entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be; they could experience no more” (Barnes, page 240). The “we” is likely the nation; in some way the enemy had manifested utter contempt for God’s people. Exactly how that contempt was expressed, or what form it might have taken, is not known.

**123:4** – “*exceedingly filled with...scoffing*” - The “scoffing” has reference to derision, or mockery. Evidently those who were at ease, at least materially, were mocking the people of God. Some have suggested that the language could easily apply to the mockery of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Gershom regarding the attempts of Israel to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem upon return from captivity. While it might fit that occasion, it is not limited to that particular time period nor would it prove that it was written then. There are many occasions in the life of David in which the language might find application.

## **Lessons**

1. The Psalm reveals to us much concerning the writer. We learn (1) he was a man who believes in God. God is real to him. While the atheist might doubt, the Psalmist’s belief in God was so sure, so steadfast, that in times of need he turns his eyes to heaven in much the same way one might turn to his friend or companion. (2) He was a man who longed after God. It is not that he merely believes in God; he believes that God is a “rewarder of them that diligently seek after him” (Heb. 11:6). (3) We learn that he is a man of humble heart. He likens himself to a slave, watching for the inviting hand of his master to know what he should do. I have read that Orientals do not speak to their servants, but by the beckoning and gesture of the hands they convey their desire to the servant. (4) Finally, we learn that the Psalmist sought refuge in moments of deepest distress.
2. We must lift up our eyes to Jehovah for help; failure will follow self dependence as sure as night follows day. There are some things man cannot do; some trials and tribulation through which man cannot lead.



3. "This Psalm (as ye see) is but short, and therefore a very fit example to show the force of prayer not to consist in many words, but in fervency of spirit. For great and weighty matters may be comprised in a few words, if they proceed from the spirit and the unspeakable groanings of the heart, especially when our necessity is such as will not suffer any long prayer. Every prayer is long enough if it be fervent and proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints." - *Martin Luther*.
4. "The lifting up the eyes implies faith and confident persuasion that God is ready and willing to help us. The very lifting up of the bodily eyes towards heaven is an expression of this inward trust, so David in effect saith, From thee, Lord, I expect relief, and the fulfilling of thy promises. So that there is faith in it, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. How great soever the darkness of our calamities be, though the clouds of present troubles thicken about us, and hide the Lord's care and loving-kindness from us, yet faith must look through all to his power and constancy of truth and love. The eye of faith is a clear, piercing, eagle eye, Moses 'endured, as seeing him who is invisible' Hebrews 11:27. Faith seeth things afar off in the promises (Heb. 11:13), at a greater distance than the eye of nature can reach to. Take it either for the eye of the body, or the mind, faith will draw comfort not only from that which is invisible, but also from that which is future as well as invisible; its supports lie in the other world, and in things which are yet to come." - *Thomas Manton*.

## *“Escaped As A Bird”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the fifth of the Psalms labeled "Songs of degree." This one is attributed to David, but the exact occasion of the Psalm or time in his life when it might have been composed, is not known. We were impressed with Spurgeon's response to those critics who might question the Davidic authorship of this Psalm:

Of course the superfine critics have pounced upon this title as inaccurate, but we are at liberty to believe as much or as little of their assertions as we may please. They declare that there are certain ornaments of language in this little ode which were unknown in the Davidic period. It may be so; but in their superlative wisdom they have ventured upon so many other questionable statements that we are not bound to receive this dictum. Assuredly the manner of the song is very like to David's, and we are unable to see why he should be excluded from the authorship. Whether it be his composition or no, it breathes the same spirit as that which animates the unchallenged songs of the royal composer (Spurgeon).

This is a beautiful Psalm of deliverance from some danger that had threatened God's people. The opening two verses, "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side" sets the tone for the Psalm.

### ***Analysis***

In the first two verses the Psalmist acknowledges God's protection. This is followed with a description of the extent of the peril they faced. The Psalm then closes with a statement of preservation from the bondage of defeat. Breaking the chapter down further we note that the Psalmist recognized the fact that it was the Lord who provided escape from the danger he had faced. When men rose up against him, when their anger was kindled, it was God Who

delivered. “If it had not been the Lord who was on our side” expresses the complete trust the author had in God. Had God not intervened, the enemy would have swallowed up God’s people; the flood would have swept them away; the waters would have gone over them. The second part of the Psalm is one of thanksgiving in that they had not been left as a prey; they had escaped from the trap set by the enemy. The chapter concludes on a note of praise “in the name of the Lord Who made heaven and earth.”

Willmington had a two point outline (page 286):

- I. The Worst of All Possible Worlds (124:1-5): “If the Lord had not been on our side”
  - A. The wicked would have swallowed Israel up (124:1-3);
  - B. The waters would have engulfed Israel (124:4-5);
- II. The Best of All Possible Worlds (124:6-8): “Our help is from the Lord”
  - A. They are not torn apart by their foes (124:6);
  - B. They are delivered from their foes, as a bird escapes a hunter’s trap (124:7-8).

I scribbled the following outline in the margin of my American Standard Bible more than thirty years ago. We’ll use this outline for our study of the Psalm:

- I. Protection (verses 1-2)
- II. Peril (verses 3-5)
- III. Preservation (verses 6-8)

## Commentary

### ***Protection*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 *If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, Let Israel now say,*
- 2 *If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side, When men rose up against us*

**124:1-2** – “*If it had not been Jehovah who was on our side*” – Twice in as many verses the Psalmist acknowledges the Divine Protection. The translators supplied a string of words in an attempt to give some sense to the broken and fragmented sentence in the Hebrew. “*It had*

*not been*" has been added to make the reading a little more coherent. Had they left the added words out it would have read something like this: "If Jehovah on our side! May Israel say! If Jehovah on our side! When men rose against us!" The deliverance was of such a nature that without the help of God the enemy would have destroyed God's people. In addition, the deliverance served as a demonstration of such power and might as to lead to the inevitable conclusion that it was God Who provided the victory!

*"when men rose up against us"* - Note from whence the danger came; *"men rose up against us."* It remains a mystery why men would lift up their hands against their fellow man. "That men should thirst after the blood of men, Absalom after the blood of his own father, that a woman should be drunk with the blood of saints, is what, with St. John, we may wonder at with great admiration" (Matthew Henry). Yet it has been so since the dawn of creation! Of all the dangers that the child of God might face, the greatest threat is his fellow man.

### ***Peril*** **Verses 3-5**

- 3 *Then they had swallowed us up alive, When their wrath was kindled against us;*
- 4 *Then the waters had overwhelmed us, The stream had gone over our soul;*
- 5 *Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.*

**124:3** - The threat was real; physical harm was a real possibility; in anger the enemy had risen up. Had God not intervened the enemy would have *"swallowed"* Israel *"up alive."*

**124:4-5** - *"the waters had overwhelmed us"* - The words are not meant to be taken literally. The Psalmist was simply saying that the threat of the enemy was AS IF the floods had engulfed him; AS IF the stream had overwhelmed his soul. There is a sense of helplessness when caught in raging waters. Regardless of any effort to the contrary, one is swept along with the tide. Had God not intervened, Israel would have been swept away by the raging flood of unbelievers.

## ***Preservation*** **Verses 6-8**

- 6 *Blessed be Jehovah, Who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.*
- 7 *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: The snare is broken, and we are escaped.*
- 8 *Our help is in the name of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth.*

**124:6-7** - In these final three verses we see the Psalmist blessing the Lord for the deliverance He had provided them. In the first of three picturesque illustrations the Psalmist points out that Israel had become like "*a prey to their teeth.*" Like some wild beast seeking to devour its victim, Israel faced the horrible prospect of becoming nothing more than meat for the merciless. The enemy was near to devouring them, as a wild animal might sink his teeth into his prey. Like a bird already trapped by the hunters, the writer was CAUGHT. But "the snare was broken," and they were freed. What an occasion for rejoicing and offering thanks to one's God.

**124:8** - "*Our help is in the name of Jehovah*" - It was not LUCK, or HAPENSTANCE! The deliverance was wrought by Jehovah. If God could create the heavens and earth, it stands to reason that He could deliver His people; and this He had done for the Psalmist.

## ***Lessons***

1. The **only** reason for Israel's deliverance was the hand of the Almighty. How many times would we have been utterly defeated had God not intervened? Yes, in our weaknesses we come to learn the great strength of our Lord.
2. "God suffers the enemies of his people sometimes to prevail very far against them, that his own power may appear the more illustrious in their deliverance" - *Matthew Henry*
3. "The motto of a royal house is, 'Tossed about but not submerged': we should have needed an epitaph rather than an epigram, for we should have been driven by the torrent and sunken, never to rise again" - *Charles Spurgeon*

4. The child of God has nothing to fear from the enemy that threatens. God has promised that His church shall never be overthrown, that the truth will never die, and that Divine help will always be there when we need it the most. In this we can take great comfort.

## *“They That Trust In Jehovah”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the 6th of 15 of the Psalms entitled "Song of Degree." The author of the Psalm is unknown, and the exact occasion or date of its composition cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. The view that it was written sometime after the Babylonian captivity is certainly appealing, and contextually speaking, it certainly fits what we see in the Psalm itself.

The contents of the psalm accord well with the supposition that it may have been written after the return from the Babylonian captivity, and may have been designed to strengthen and comfort those who were engaged in rebuilding the city, and restoring the ancient worship, either against the Samaritans and those who opposed them (Neh. 6:12-13) or against the lukewarmness of a part of the people themselves (Barnes).

Clarke opined, "It belongs most probably to the times after the captivity; and has been applied, with apparent propriety, to the opposition which Sanballat the Horonite, Geshem the Arabian, and Tobiah the Ammonite, gave to the Jews while employed in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and restoring the temple" (Adam Clarke). Internally, the Psalm suggests that there were some people who were disposed to turn away from God or who had reached the point of open rebellion; such a state of social and religious disobedience might find application at a number of points in Israel's history. The gist of the Psalm is captured in the words of Isaiah: "Say ye of the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for what his hands have done shall be done unto him" (Isa. 3:10-11).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm has four parts to it. There is a statement on the part of the author regarding those who trust in God (verses 1 and 2). This is followed by acknowledgement of God's protection in behalf of those who follow Him (verse 3), and a prayer for the godly (verse 4). The Psalm closes with a description of the lot of the wicked (verse 5a) in contrast with the blessings for the righteous (verse 5b).

The following outlines might be useful in your study of this Psalm. Roy Deaver divides the Psalm into six parts, with the lead in statement, "In these verses the Psalmist (1) Expresses confidence in Jehovah, verse 1; (2) Speaks of God's protecting care, verse 2; (3) Stresses that God will not allow wickedness to destroy Israel, verse 3; (4) Prays for God's blessings to be upon the righteous, verse 4; (5) Warns with regard to the wicked, verse 5; and (6) Prays for peace, verse 5b.

One of my original outlines of this Psalm included the following four point outline:

- I. Security For Those Who Trust In God, verses 1-2;
- II. The Persecution Of The Wicked Will Not Prevail, verse 3;
- III. A Prayer For The Upright In Heart, verse 4;
- IV. A Contrast of the Wicked and the Righteous, verse 5;

We will study the Psalm using the following three point outline:

- I. The Protection of the Godly, verses 1-4;
- II. The Plight of the Wicked; verse 5a;
- III. The Promise for the Righteous, verse 5b.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Protection for the Godly Verses 1-4***

- 1 *They that trust in Jehovah Are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever.*
- 2 *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, So Jehovah is round about his people From this time forth and for evermore.*
- 3 *For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; That the righteous put not forth their hands unto iniquity*



4 *Do good, O Jehovah, unto those that are good, And to them that are upright in their hearts.*

**125:1** - *"They that trust in Jehovah"* - There are two character traits of the people of God set forth in verses 1-3. The first appears here. Those who shall not be moved are those who trust in God, who depend upon His strength and devote themselves to His service. Those who come to God must come, trusting that He will provide salvation, for "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6).

*"are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved"* - Zion was the mount upon which the city of Jerusalem was built; the mountain which David fortified when he overthrew the Jebusites and took the "stronghold of Zion" (2 Sam. 5:6-9). Mountains manifest strength and stability. Those who "trust in Jehovah" shall be "firm as a mountain supported by providence, much more as a holy mountain supported by promise" (Matthew Henry). It is no accident, therefore, that the church of our Lord is referred to as "Mount Zion" (Heb. 12:22), and that the Divine promise is that her gates shall never be destroyed (Matt. 16:18-20).

**125:2** - *"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem"* - Those who place their trust in God shall receive His protection from their enemies as Jerusalem was fortified against her earthly enemies. The mountains round about that city protected it from the forces of nature and provided protection from those who would attempt to assail her walls. Note (1) the compass of that protection: the Lord has surrounded His people on every side; there is no gap, no weakness, no breach in the walls of the holy city, the church. Note (2) the continuance of it: "From this time and for evermore." While the mountains may crumble and the rocks be removed out of their place, God's faithfulness will remain true throughout eternity; His covenant will never be broken nor His promises fail.

### ***The Persecution of the Wicked Will Not Prevail*** **Verse 3**

3 *For the sceptre of wickedness shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; That the righteous put not forth their hands unto iniquity.*

**125:3** - *"The sceptre of wickedness"* - The power of God's enemies may occasionally descend upon the righteous; their anger may vex them and their power may occasionally oppress them. "It may fall upon their persons, their estates, their liberties, their families, their names, any that falls to their lot, only it cannot reach their souls" (Matthew Henry). And should God allow Satan to buffet us, we are assured that the torments of the enemy shall not *"rest upon the lot of the righteous"* - for the chastening of the Lord is but for the moment. The persecution of the wicked shall not prevail; the righteous shall not be overcome. God would see to it that the righteous do not fall under the dominion of the wicked.

Here the rod of the wicked is the punishment and persecution they level against a class they hate and despise - the righteous, temperate and godly. The Lord may use a pagan nation to discipline His people when they digress from truth but it always is temporary and designed to be corrective. The Lord will not allow an overwhelming of such lest His people grow discouraged and turn to transgression themselves. The Pauline passage in 1 Corinthians 10:13 promises that God will not put more on us than we can bear but will provide escape" (Robert Taylor, page 343).

### ***A Prayer For The Upright In Heart*** **Verse 4**

4 *Do good, O Jehovah, unto those that are good, And to them that are upright in their hearts*

**125:4** - Although God has promised to care for His people, and indeed do good unto them, we are still to beseech His blessings. What an uplifting verse this is, especially in times that try men's souls. It is important to note that the upright in heart are those who receive God's abundant blessings. The wicked are far from the Lord, but those who draw near will be comforted. "When the rod of the wicked is gone his own rod and staff shall comfort us" (Spurgeon).

### ***A Contrast of the Wicked and the Righteous*** **Verse 5**

5 *But as for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, Jehovah*

*will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel.*

**125:5** - It is possible for one that is righteous to "*turn aside*" to their former life, their "*crooked ways*." Every sinful way is the crooked way. It is possible for those once enlightened to turn from the narrow way to the crooked way. Should that occur, and repentance not be forthcoming, God will not withhold punitive action. He will, in fact, render unto them as unto the workers of iniquity. The verse is a veritable death blow to Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance of the Saints. Indeed, if the backsliders "salvation is just as secure as those of steadfast, solid saints, then there is not much motivation to remain faithful. If so, what would it be?" (Robert Taylor, page 343).

Two kinds of men are always to be found, the upright and the men of crooked ways. Alas, there are some who pass from one class to another, not by a happy conversion, turning from the twisting lanes of deceit into the highway of truth, but by an unhappy declension leaving the main road of honesty and holiness for the bypaths of wickedness. Such apostates have been seen in all ages, and David knew enough of them; he could never forget Saul, and Ahithophel, and others. How sad that men who once walked in the right way should turn aside from it! (Spurgeon).

Those who remain faithful enjoy the blessed "*peace that passes understanding*."

### ***Lessons***

1. Absolute trust in Jehovah God is essential to strength. It has been more than a decade since I last flew a small airplane, and just over two decades since I obtained my pilots license. I can still recall my instructor driving home the importance of trusting my instruments in times of crisis. That one rule, applied in a moment of crisis, has probably saved my life more than once. It is a sign of mistrust when men seek to worship in a way contrary to God's will. It is mistrust when men allow the need for "money" to keep them from walking away from a job that interferes with their service to God. Unless we come to believe and abide by the command in Matthew 6:33 to seek first the Kingdom of God, we will not receive the promise that "all these things shall be added to you."

2. "Those that are as they should be shall be as they would be, provided they be *upright in heart*, that they be really as good as they seem to be" - *Matthew Henry*
3. The destruction of those who walk in crooked ways will contribute to the peace and safety of the church. When Herod was cut off *the word of God grew* (Acts 12:23-24).

## *“Thanksgiving For Return From Captivity”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the 7th of the Psalms entitled "Song of degree." The very first verse sets the tone for the Psalm and identifies the time frame: "When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion" (126:1). Most of the sources we consulted agreed that the Psalm was written when the Jews returned from captivity. Barnes so concluded:

There can be no reasonable doubt as to the occasion on which it was composed, for it bears internal evidence of having been composed with reference to the return from Babylon. It may have been designed to be sung as the returning captives went up to Jerusalem, but was more probably composed subsequently to that event, as designed to keep it in remembrance. It was evidently, however, written not long after the return, and by someone who had been personally interested in it, for the author manifestly, in describing the feelings of the people *Psa. 126:1-2*, speaks of himself as one of them, or as participating in those feelings which they had when the exile was closed, and when they returned to their own land (Barnes).

The Psalm itself suggests that it may have been written shortly after Ezra returned to the Promised Land and before Nehemiah's return. When the Psalm was written there was joy on the part of the Psalmist (verses 1-2) but prayerful concern for those who were still in captivity (verses 4-5). We were particularly impressed with Matthew Henry's opening comments on this Psalm:

While the people of Israel were captives in Babylon their harps were hung upon the willow-trees, for then God called to weeping and mourning, then he mourned unto them and they lamented; but now that their captivity is turned they resume their harps; Providence pipes to them, and they

dance. Thus must we accommodate ourselves to all the dispensations of Providence and be suitably affected with them. And the harps are never more melodiously tunable than after such a melancholy disuse. The long want of mercies greatly sweetens their return (Henry, ESword Electronic Notes).

## *Analysis*

The first movement in the Psalm focuses upon the deliverance that God wrought for Israel (verse 1). They may have been in captivity for their punishment, but God had promised deliverance. Cyrus was the instrument in God's hands, and though it was he who declared liberty for Israel, it was "the Lord's doing." "God sent them into captivity, not as dross is put into the fire to be consumed, but as gold to be refined" (Matthew Henry). The fact of deliverance is followed by the reaction of the people. Their deliverance was so sudden that at first they thought they were dreaming; that it was simply too good to be true (verse 1b). But once they realized they were free at last there followed rejoicing (verse 2a). Next the Psalmist speaks of the reaction of the nations: "Jehovah hath done great things for them" (vs. 2b). While the nations had observed the overthrow of Israel and had rejoiced in it (cf. Jer. 22:8-9; Psa. 137:7), now they admired the deliverance of God's people at the mighty hand of Jehovah. The Psalm closes with the affirmation that while there was a time for weeping, there was also a time for rejoicing; and the time for rejoicing is compared to the gleanings of the harvest previously sown.

We found a number of helpful outlines for this Psalm. Matthew Henry divides the Psalm into two sections: First, those who had *returned* out of captivity are here called upon to be thankful, verses 1-3. Second, those who *remained* in captivity are here prayed for and encouraged, verses 4-6. We also liked Spurgeon's analysis: "The Psalm divides itself into a narrative (vss. 1-2), a song (vs. 3), a prayer (vs. 4), and a promise (vss. 5-6)."

We have borrowed from both Willmington and Phillips to come up with a workable outline for this chapter:

- I. The Reality (126:1)
- II. The Reaction (126:2-3)
- III. The Request (126:4-6)

## **Commentary**

### **Reality**

#### **Verse 1**

*1 When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion, We were like unto them that dream.*

**126:1** - "*When Jehovah brought back those that returned to Zion*" - Israel had spent 70 years in captivity. They were returned in various stages, even as they were carried away. The joy of going home seemed "like a dream" (as we might say). While Israel was in Babylonian captivity their harps were tucked away in some dark corner of their homes; their voices silent with no song to sing or reason to rejoice. God had called them to weeping and mourning; but now that their captivity is "turned" they can resume their rejoicing.

*"We were like unto them that dream"* - At the decree of Cyrus the children of Israel were allowed to make the journey home. They did not return empty handed, but took with them the vessels taken out of the house of God. The joy that accompanied their return must have completely overwhelmed them; the long ordeal was over, the news seemed too good to be true! When at last every faithful saint is saved in heaven, and we are delivered from our captivity, this life will seem but a dream, and we will rejoice with the saved of every generation. On that day we will be going home. What a glorious day that will be.

One striking feature of these verses was the apparent surprise on the part of the captives that they actually were going home. Had they not been told they would eventually go home? Had they failed to trust in God's promises? Why is it that when God providentially works in our lives we are so surprised? When Peter was miraculously delivered from imprisonment at the hands of Herod, the disciples manifested disbelief that he was actually at the door.

### **Reaction**

#### **Verses 2-3**

*2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing: Then said they among the nations, Jehovah hath done*

*great things for them.*

*3 Jehovah hath done great things for us, Whereof we are glad.*

There were at least four reactions, three from God's people and one from "among the nations." God's people were "filled with laughter," there was "singing," they were "glad." The "nations" responded in awe in view of the "great things" God had done for Israel.

**126:2** - Isaiah had prophesied the return, along with the glory and honor that would be given to God for His mighty deliverance of Israel (cf. Isaiah 54). "Our mouth filled with laughter" and "our tongue with singing" are descriptions of the great joy and happiness which accompanied their return. This was not some temporary moment of joy; this was an occasion of exuberant rejoicing.

*"Then said they among the nations, Jehovah hath done great things for them"* - The demonstration of God's great might and power was seen by the nations. His prophets had foretold this return, calling the things that were yet to come as if they already existed. None of the idols of the Gentiles had such power to promise and then deliver. Indeed, God is great, and He hath done great things for Israel. When Israel had been carried off their land, the heathen had triumphed in it (Jer. 22:8-9; Psalms 137:7). Now they could observe the deliverance of Israel and admire it.

**126:3** - *"Jehovah hath done great things for us"* - What the nations round about were proclaiming, Israel had experienced. Israel had a rich history of Divine protection. The return from captivity may have been the immediate cause for their rejoicing, but it was not the only cause.

*"Whereof we are glad"* - As well they should be. And as well we should be, those of us living this side of the cross who enjoy the wonderful salvation from our God; not a salvation from physical captivity, but from spiritual captivity!

A surrounding world may see in the conversion of a man, in his being turned from sin, in the influence of religion upon him, in his comfort, calmness, and peace, that "the Lord has done great things" for him; but he himself, while he responds most fully to what they say, will see this more clearly than they do. There is more in his redemption, his



conversion, his peace and joy, than they do or can perceive, and with emphasis he himself will say, "The Lord has done great things for me" (Barnes).

***Request***  
**Verses 4-6**

- 4 *Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah, As the streams in the South.*  
5 *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.*  
6 *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with joy, bringing his sheaves with him.*

**126:4** - "*Turn again our captivity, O Jehovah, As the streams in the South.*"

The Psalmist recognized that there were yet some of Israel in the land of Babylon, and he was asking for their return. There were returns under Cyrus, Darius, and Xerxes.

*"As the streams in the South"* – The rivers and streams in southern Palestine would dry up when the summer heat came, and then swell their banks when the fall and winter rains came. The Psalmist is asking God to bless those still in Babylon that they be allowed to come home and that the returning refugees be like those swollen streams of Palestine until all have made their way back home. Our Lord expressed the same sentiment when He told the disciples to "lift up your eyes...for the fields are already white unto harvest."

**126:5-6** - "*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy*" - The journey home would be a long and arduous journey for those waiting to make the trek back to the Promised Land. With the tears they might shed along the way there would come great joy at the end of the journey. The farmer knows the hardships of planting the seed, only to have his crop wither under the heat, or be blown away by some storm. But through all the heartache there is rejoicing when the crop comes in. The chore of sowing the "seed" of God's word (Luke 8:11) is one of great effort and often one of disappointment. We are assured, however, that when we are diligent in our efforts, we shall reap in due season, and the tears that we may have shed will eventually produce joy.

There is a law of sowing and reaping which God has set in motion from times beginning, applicable in so many areas. In the natural and animal kingdom, each produces after its kind. But here the language describes the abundant harvest of spiritual blessings that shall be ours if we are faithful in sowing. And although the sowing may involve much anguish, sorrow and disappointment, we are given the promise that we will eventually come with joy, bringing our harvest with us. What a marvelous promise we are given that our labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Cor 15:58). Spurgeon provided this excellent food for thought:

"In the two parts of this verse we may behold a threefold antithesis or opposition; **in the progress**,

I. A sojourning: "He that now goeth on his way."

II. A sorrowing: "weeping."

III. A sowing: "and beareth forth good seed."

**In the regress there are three opposites unto these.**

IV. Returning: "He shall doubtless come again."

V. A Rejoicing: "with joy."

VI. A Reaping: "and bring his sheaves with him." - *John Hume*.

### ***Lessons***

1. The power of sowing and reaping is not often realized in the heat of the sun or the trials and tribulation of the moment. I filed the following illustration away more than fifteen years ago:

During Ignace Paderewski's career, he agreed to play a concert organized by two Stanford University students working their way through school. Paderewski's manager said they would have to guarantee the artist a fee of \$2,000. The boys agreed, and eventually, the concert was held. However, though the two student promoters worked hard, they took in only \$1,600. Discouraged, they told Paderewski of their efforts and handed him the \$1,600 with a note promising to pay him the balance of \$400. But the pianist tore up the note and gave them back the \$1,600. He said, "Take your expenses out of this, give yourselves each 10 percent of what's left for your work, and let me have the rest."

Years went by and Europe was convulsed by the first World War. Paderewski struggled after the war to feed the people in his war-ravaged Poland. Amazingly, even before a request was made, thousands of tons of food were sent to Poland by the United States. Later Paderewski traveled to Paris to thank Herbert Hoover, who headed up the U.S. relief effort. "That's all right, Mr. Paderewski," said Hoover. "I knew that the need was great and besides, though you may not remember it, I was one of the two college students whom you generously helped when I was in need." Paderewski reaped a harvest he had planted years earlier.

## *“The Builder’s Psalm”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the 8th of the Psalms entitled "Song of degree." The subtitle is "a song of degrees for Solomon." As with the previous Songs of ascent, this one exalts Jehovah. Spurgeon picked up on this:

Observe how in each of these songs the heart is fixed upon Jehovah only. Read the first verses of these Psalms, from Psa. 120:1-7 to the present song, and they run thus: "I cried unto the Lord, I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, Let us go unto the house of the Lord...Unto thee will I lift up mine eyes...If it had not been the Lord...They that trust in the Lord...When the Lord turned again the captivity." The Lord and the Lord alone is thus lauded at each step of these songs of the ascents. O for a life whose every halting-place shall suggest a new song unto the Lord! (Spurgeon).

The people are pictured in this Psalm as belonging to God, cared for by Him, and protected by His ever watchful eye. We are taught that those who seek to build houses, cities, empires, churches, and even families, do so in vain without the Lord as their guide.

The Syriac version includes the subscript: "From the Psalms of Ascent; spoken by David concerning Solomon." It is not certain whether the Psalm was written by Solomon or for him. The language is similar to that of the Proverbs, leading some to conclude that the Psalm was written by Solomon. Those who believe it was written by David for Solomon consider the Psalm as wise advice for the young monarch. Matthew Henry presented this view succinctly: "It is entitled (as we read it) 'for Solomon,' dedicated to him by his father. He having a house to build, a city to keep, and seed to raise up to his father, David directs him to look up to God, and to depend upon his providence, without which all his wisdom, care, and industry, would not serve" (Matthew Henry).

### ***Analysis***

A careful reading of the Psalm reveals the following points: (1) Unless God be involved in the building of our “house” (i.e. family), then our labor is vain (verse 1a); (2) Unless a city allows God to be her “keeper” then the watchmen watch in vain (verse 1b); (3) It is vain to labor for the things of life and leave God out of our plans (verse 2a); (4) God cares for His “beloved sheep” (verse 2b); (5) Children belong to Jehovah and are His “heritage” (verse 3); (6) Children are compared to arrows in the hand of a mighty warrior (verse 4); (7) Children are a blessing to their parents (verse 5).

Our conclusion is that the Psalmist had the family in mind. The extent of application, however, extends far beyond the family, and the principles that emerge from this chapter are applicable to any endeavor, whether it be building a city, a nation, or in this case, the family. This is a beautiful Psalm and provides wonderful truths regarding those who seek to establish their home on godly principles. G. Campbell Morgan picked up on the two-fold application:

The house, the city, labor, all are important to conserving the strength of the family. Toward these the pilgrims look, but as they hope they recognize that, as in the settlement which will make these possible Jehovah is the one Worker, so in these also He is the one and only Strength of His people. He must build the house and guard the city. He must be the Partner in toil, giving to His beloved even when they rest in sleep after toil is over. The last is a thought full of comfort to the toiler. Jehovah is never weary, and carries on the enterprise while his trusting child gains new strength in sleep. Children, the glory of the home, are His gift, and they become the support and defense of their parents. Thus the pilgrims look forward to the rest which follows exile in the city of God, and recognize that this also, in all its details, will result from His power and working (Morgan, pages 269-270).

We have decided to adapt Willmington’s outline for our study:

- I. The Foundation For A Successful Family (127:1-2)
- II. The Fruits From A Successful Family (127:3-5)

## Commentary

### ***The Foundation For A Successful Family*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 *Except Jehovah build the house, They labor in vain that build it:  
Except Jehovah keep the city, The watchman waketh but in vain.*
- 2 *It is vain for you to rise up early, To take rest late, To eat the bread of toil; For so he giveth unto his beloved sleep.*

**127:1** – “*Except Jehovah build the house, They labor in vain that build it*” – This word “except” has the meaning, “If, and only if.” The Psalmist will point out three “vanities” of attempting to do something without the Lord being included in our endeavors. The builders of houses, cities, churches or empires all labor in vain without God’s blessings. Everything is vain (note the three occurrences in vv. 1, 2) if the Lord is not in it. This is doubly true of the home. There is a beautiful picture in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament which is lost in translation: (1) the Hebrew word for son is *ben*, (2) the Hebrew word for daughter is *bat*, and (3) these two words are similar to the Hebrew verb *banah*, meaning “to build.” To the Israelite a house was an opportunity to “build” sons and daughters. It is implied that one works at building a *family* just as one works at building a house.

Notice the change in subjects in the first two lines. In the first line it is the *Lord who builds*; but in the second line the subject is “*they*.” Building a family is a joint effort of both parents teamed up with God in the building process. God does the building, but He does it through the parents. This is why Charles Spurgeon titled this Psalm “The Builder’s Psalm,” the title which we have applied to our study of this chapter.

“*Except Jehovah keep the city, The watchman waketh but in vain* – Seeing the Psalm is addressing the building of a “family,” our opinion is that the latter half of this verse is addressing the same entity. The Psalmist uses the illustration of a city, pointing out that the “watchman” cannot protect a city unless God is with him. By the same token, a father cannot adequately protect his children from the ravages of the influence of an ungodly world unless he lets God provide the protection. God has given His word, with all of the truths and principles contained therein, to help godly parents protect their children from the wiles of the devil and the influence of ungodly

forces. Like building a house, or watching a city, a parent is “building” his family, and providing protection for those whom he brings into the world.

**127:2** – *“It is vain for you to rise up early, To take rest late, To eat the bread of toil”* - Here is the picture of one who concentrates on his business, and neglects his family. What has a man gained if he should arise early, work unto the late hours of the evening, labor and toil for the bread that perishes, if lose his family in the end thereof? Absolutely nothing!

*“For so he giveth unto his beloved sheep”* – If we lay this verse alongside the words of our Master recorded in Matthew 6:24-33 we see a remarkable similarity. The gentiles seek the things of the world, rising early, toiling late into the night, all in an effort to acquire the “bread of toil.” The child of God, on the other hand, seeks “first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and all these things are added to him. The child of God has faith that God will give to his beloved sheep those things necessary for life.

### ***The Fruits From A Successful Family*** **Verses 3-5**

- 3 *Lo, children are a heritage of Jehovah; And the fruit of the womb is his reward.*
- 4 *As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, So are the children of youth.*
- 5 *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: They shall not be put to shame, When they speak with their enemies in the gate.*

The last three verses of this Psalm serve to motivate parents to raise their children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord.” We see no less than four blessings that come when parents put forth the effort to raise their children in a godly manner: the children are a “heritage,” they are a “reward,” they are like “arrows” in the hand of a mighty man, and they bring honor and not shame to their parents.

**127:3** – *“Lo children are a heritage of Jehovah”* – There are two possible meanings, both of which teach valuable lessons. One position is that our children are a gift from the Lord and we are but stewards of that “heritage” placed in our hands. Consequently, our children are granted unto us as a blessing and a responsibility and

we will be held accountable to God for the stewardship we exercise in the care of our children.

The other view is that the children are the means by which we extend our very self and the labors we put into life. Spurgeon expressed this view when he wrote:

This points to another mode of building up a house, namely, by leaving descendants to keep our name and family alive upon the earth. Without this what is a man's purpose in accumulating wealth? To what purpose does he build a house if he has none in his household to hold the house after him? Hundreds of wealthy persons would give half their estates if they could hear the cry of a babe born of their own bodies. Children are a heritage which Jehovah himself must give, or a man will die childless, and thus his house will be unbuilt (Spurgeon).

*“And the fruit of the womb is his reward”* – God does not give us children as a burden, but as a reward. Whether or not our children are considered a “burden” or a reward has a lot to do with what we put into the raising of those children. If we seek to provide them with a godly home, and raise them on the truths contained in God’s word, then yes, they are a reward. But leave a child to himself, undisciplined and without supervision, and the fruit of one’s womb becomes a burden rather than a reward.

**127:4** – *“As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, So are the children of youth”* – Godly children show honor to their mother and father, and provide them protection in their later years. The more children a man has, the greater the resources from which to draw in his hour of need. We were particularly impressed with Spurgeon’s assessment of this verse:

Children born to men in their early days, by God’s blessing become the comfort of their riper years. A man of war is glad of weapons which may fly where he cannot: good sons are their father’s arrows speeding to hit the mark which their sires aim at. What wonders a good man can accomplish if he has affectionate children to second his desires, and lend themselves to his designs! To this end we must have our children in hand while they are yet children, or they are never likely to be so when they are grown up; and we must try to point them and straighten them, so as to make arrows



of them in their youth, lest they should prove crooked and unserviceable in after life (Spurgeon).

The "children of youth" are those children born in the prime and vigor of the parents' life.

**127:5** – *"Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them"* - The "quiver" was the device which carried the arrows. What is praised here is a large family. The more children a man might have, the greater the source of comfort. Like a quiver filled with arrows, the man who has many children has increased resources from which to draw for strength and comfort in time of need.

*"They shall not be put to shame, When they speak with their enemies in the gate"* – The precise meaning of this is not clear. The difficulty arises out of the meaning of the word "they." To whom does the pronoun refer? To the "man that has his quiver full" of children, or does it refer to the children. We are prone to accept the pronoun as a reference to the fathers, rather than the children. Spurgeon may have caught the idea here: "Nobody cares to meddle with a man who can gather a clan of brave sons about him" (Spurgeon).

### ***Lessons***

1. A godly man directs his family and raises his children with a proper sense of those things that are "vain." He knows that whether he is working or watching, if he does so without due consideration to the will of the Lord then all of his labors are useless.
2. "It should be pointed out that children are 'of the Lord.' Only the Lord is able to give them; and, although they come 'through' earthly parents, they still belong to God; and the parents who fail to recognize this and to rear their offspring in the fear and admonition of the Lord are of all human beings the most reprehensible" (Coffman, page 423).
3. "If we realize the futility of labor without divine favor, we realize our utter dependence upon God. He is the one from whom all blessings come (Jas 1:17)" (Roy Deaver, Vol II, page 193).
4. It makes no difference how powerful an arsenal a nation may have, if that nation is not built on the foundation of godly principles. A

nation is only as strong as its family units. Let the family be destroyed, and the destruction of the nation will not be far behind.

5. Seeing that children are a heritage granted to us by the mercy of God, it behooves us to instill in them the godly principles contained within the word of God. Consider the following poem:

I took a piece of plastic clay  
And idly fashioned it one day.  
And as my fingers pressed it, still  
It moved and yielded to my will.

I came again when days were past,  
That bit of clay was hard at last.  
The form I gave it, still it bore,  
And I could change that form no more.

Then I took a piece of living clay  
And gently formed it, day by day.  
And molded with my power and art,  
A young child's soft and yielding heart.

I came again when years were gone,  
It was a man I looked upon.  
He still that early impress bore,  
And I could change it nevermore.

6. I wrote the following article in the mid 80's:

***"Home For Sale"***  
by Tom Wacaster

We were returning from Oklahoma City and outside Purcell we passed a house with a sign out front which read, "Home For Sale." Most of us recognize the connotation which goes with the words "house" and "home." The house is the dwelling place. It is the brick and mortar, the land, the roof, etc. The house is the material structure in which the home is built. But the home is the family. It is built (or should be built) upon the foundation of moral principles and fidelity on the part of each of the family members. In light of this, it seems to me that one could sell a house, but it would be rather difficult to sell a home. Or would it? I wonder how many of the homes in our society are being sold

every day. While the economic pressures have slowed down the real estate business, many of the ills of society have only stepped up the sale of the "homes." Here is what I mean.

A home is sold when the family is dissolved. Each decides they are going to take what belongs to them and go their separate ways. No matter what this might do to the psychological stability of the children (if there are children), the two consenting adults have decided that they want to sell the home. Consequently our divorce rate is running somewhere close to 50% of the marriages performed. When this happens, the "home is sold."

And then, some are selling their homes due to the spiritual bankruptcy they are experiencing. They have sown to the wind and now they must reap the whirlwind. Because of the lack of spiritual values within the home, the family will soon be putting their "home" on the market. If we would avoid the disruption of the family we must instill within our children those basic principles which God intended to guide the family; namely permanence of marriage, respect for parents, love for the children, etc.

And finally, some are selling their homes to social pressures placed upon them. The home becomes nothing more than a pit stop for refueling and checking the oil. Seldom do the parents see the children, and vice versa. We run all the time, seeking to find some sort of fulfillment in our lives. Is it any wonder that our children do the same?

Going, going, GONE! The "home" has been sold simply because of the neglect of each member to recognize the needs of the others. The home is sold on the auction block of pleasures and pressures. Take time with your family!

You can sell a house, take the money, and buy another. When a "house" is destroyed it can be replaced. But when a "home" is sold, it is gone forever. When we neglect those guidelines given us in God's Word we are well on the way to placing a sign in front of our house which reads, "Home For Sale."

## *“Blessings Of A Godly Family”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is a beautiful companion to the previous. It would seem that this Psalm was written to show the advantage of religion on the affairs of life, particularly as it pertains to domestic life. It is another of the songs of "degree," and like the others, its author and occasion are not known. While chapter 127 focuses on the way in which a man's house should be built, this Psalm draws a picture of the completed house, adorned with happiness. Spurgeon pointed out, "There is clearly an advance in age, for here we go beyond children to children's children; and also a progress in happiness, for children which in the last Psalm were arrows are here olive plants, and instead of speaking 'with the enemies in the gate' we close with 'peace upon Israel.' Thus we rise step by step, and sing as we ascend" (Spurgeon). One interesting feature of this Psalm is the author's conception of the relationship between the prosperity of the family and that of the city. This is not surprising seeing that cities and nations are made up of family units. It has been pointed out on a number of occasions, "As the families go, so goes the nation." As the Psalm progresses we are given a glimpse of the blessings that are promised. The line of development is important. We have the God-fearing man, who builds a God-fearing family, which contributes to a God-fearing city. Morgan made this observation:

It is of real significance that these songs of home and of true civic consciousness are found among those which are sung on the way that leads to worship. It is ever good to carry into the lace of our communion with God the interests of home and city. It is only by doing so that we can influence these for their lasting good (Morgan, page 270).

The Psalmist proclaims that a truly happy person is the man who fears the Lord in his speech, and in his actions.

## ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have the following: (1) A blessing is pronounced upon those who fear the Lord and walk in His ways, verse 1; (2) a general statement of well being and happiness, verse 2; (3) the joy of a godly wife and well disciplined children, verse 3; (4) a concluding statement regarding general blessings upon the man that fears the Lord, verse 4; (5) a blessing upon the city of Jerusalem, verse 5; (6) a blessing extended to the next generation of the godly man, verse 6. We found the following outlines of this chapter helpful in our study. Willmington developed the Psalm around two points (page 287): "I. The Requirements (128:1): Those who follow the Lord will be happy. II. The Rewards (128:2-6)."

We were particularly impressed with Phillips' outline and have decided to use it for our study of this chapter:

I. The Sanctity of Our Home Life (128:1-4)

II. The Security of Our Home Land (128:5-6)

## ***Commentary***

### ***The Sanctity of Our Home Verses 1-4***

- 1 A Song of Ascents. Blessed is every one that feareth Jehovah, That walketh in his ways.*
- 2 For thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands: Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*
- 3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, In the innermost parts of thy house; Thy children like olive plants, Round about thy table.*
- 4 Behold, thus shall the man be blessed That feareth Jehovah.*

These four verses contain a wonderful expose of the blessings that are promised to those who build their houses upon the Lord, and order their lives by His word. Phillips divides these four verses into three sub-points which we will deal with one at a time.

*The Secret of the Lord's Blessings, 1a*

**128:1** - Hebrew poetry has a parallel construction in which the first part of phrase is explained or expanded by the second. This is likely the case here. The one that "feareth Jehovah" is the man that

"walketh in his ways." His life is one of submission and obedience to the commands and ordinances of God. The word "walk" is often used in the scriptures to designate a life style, be it evil or righteous. The Gentiles "walked" in the vanity of their minds (Eph. 4:17), while God's people "walk in the light" (1 John 1:6-8).

### *The Scope of the Lord's Blessings, 2-3*

**128:2** - The context would suggest that the "labor of thy hands" is the joy and peace of a happy home. While the scriptures often promise a more prosperous and fruitful life in the physical sense when God's laws are obeyed, it is nevertheless true that the importance is placed on the spiritual man more than the physical.

**128:3** - Numerous children were considered a great blessing among those of ancient times. Such is promised to those who walk according to God's will. Like a vine bearing fruit, a man who lives according to God's will would have a full and happy family life. It is not so much the *quantity* of children, however, that produces happiness, but the *quality* of those who are raised according to God's word. The children as "olive plants" would further suggest the strength and joy derived from offspring. "Their children around the dining table are likened to living plants which suggests health, vitality, growth, aspirations, etc. Meals should be times of family centeredness and in which all share in intense interest in the welfare of each other" (Robert Taylor, page 351, B78).

### *The Surety of the Lord's Blessings, 4*

**128:4** - The verse is a reiteration of the previous thought. It is as if the Psalmist were saying, "Look at the blessed man; observe his joy, his prosperity, and his family life. Notice his posterity, his lovely wife, and his well mannered children; observe his cheerful family! Look at this and you will see the man that is blessed from pursuing a godly, upright, and righteous walk with Jehovah."

## ***The Security of Our Home Land*** **Verses 5-6**

5 *Jehovah bless thee out of Zion: And see thou the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.*

6 *Yea, see thou thy children's children. Peace be upon Israel.*

In these two verses our author will focus upon the blessings bestowed upon Israel as a nation, with particular emphasis upon the generations that would follow.

**128:5:** *"And see thou the good of Jerusalem"* - Barnes suggests that the Hebrew could be rendered, "And look thou upon the good of Jerusalem." Such would be a command to observe the welfare of Jerusalem. Whether a promise that God will bless Jerusalem, or a command to observe the goodness of God's Zion, the lesson is essentially the same. One who lives as God directs will see the advancement of God's honor and glory upon the earth. "No higher blessing could be promised to a pious man than that he should see religion always prospering" (Barnes, page 255).

**128:6:** *"Yea, see thou thy children's children"* - What great promise to see one's children rear their children in such a manner as to further the cause of Christ from generation to generation. Having raised my children to believe in God, and serve Him faithfully, I can now hope and pray that they will rear their children in like manner. What joy and peace will be mine when the time comes for me to close my eyes in death to have faithful, godly, dedicated Christian, grandchildren, and yes even great-grandchildren to stand by my side. That will be life's crowning achievement, and the years that God has given me upon this earth will have been well spent. With such attainment, I can genuinely say that "peace" has been mine and will continue to be mine through eternity.

### ***Lessons***

1. We know not who wrote the following, but it expresses the sentiments of this Psalm:

A dreary place would be this earth,  
Were there no little people in it;  
The song of life would lose its mirth,  
Were there no children to begin it.

No little forms, like buds to grow,  
And make the admiring heart surrender;  
No little hands on breast and brow,  
To keep the thrilling life-cords tender.

The sterner souls would grow more stern,  
Unfeeling nature more inhuman,

And man to stoic coldness turn,  
And woman would be less than woman.

Life's song, indeed, would lose its charm,  
Were there no babies to begin it;  
A doleful place this world would be,  
Were there no little people in it.

2. The breakdown of family life in the United States is alarming. The divorce rate, abuse of children, and the lack of responsibility on the part of the parents who brought those children into the world has combined to produce a state of chaos in American families. In the last five decades the unbelieving world has made remarkable strides in their attempt to destroy family life in the Western world. Raising children takes time and effort. Any parent unwilling to take that time will soon find that the time has flown, the children are gone, and naught but headache and heartache coupled with a life of regret awaits the negligent parent. Some years ago I came across the following, attributed to John Dresches: "Now is the time to love. Tomorrow the baby won't be rocked; the toddler won't be asking why; the school boy won't need help with his lessons, or will he bring his friends home for some fun. Tomorrow the teen-ager will have made his major decisions."
3. "Families are enduring institutions. They have been the foundation for virtually every society known to history. They possess incredible strength and resiliency, especially when faced with adversity. This was one of the major messages of the powerful television presentation of *Roots*. Yet, families are undergoing changes, and too many are experiencing stresses and pressures" (Walter Mondale).
4. "Many parents feel that their traditional values have had their day and are out of date. In order to stay in fashion, they have loosened up, but in doing so, they have come up with no new values. The result is that many children today live in a moral vacuum without any goals to strive for" (Naomi Alcalay).
4. I first came across this little article almost two decades ago.

### ***What Is A Family?***

By Edith Schaeffer



A family is a mobile strung together with invisible threads – delicate, easily broken at first, growing stronger through the years, in danger of being worn thin at times, but strengthened again with special care. A family – blended, balanced, growing, changing, never static, moving with a breath of wind – babies, children, young people, mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, uncles – held in a balanced framework by the invisible threads of love, memories, trust, loyalty, compassion, kindness, in honor preferring each other, depending on each other, looking to each other for help, giving each other help, picking each other up, suffering long with each other's faults, understanding each other more and more, hoping all things, enduring all things, never failing! Continuity! Thin, invisible threads turning into thin, invisible metal which holds great weights but gives freedom of movement – a family! Knowing always that if a thread wears thin and sags, there is help to be had from the Expert – the Father – Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

## *“How Long, O Lord?”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the tenth of the Psalms entitled "A Song of degrees." There is nothing in the Psalm that suggests when it was penned, but it would seem from the nature of the Psalm that it was penned either while Israel was still in Babylonian captivity, or shortly thereafter. It is more out of curiosity than necessity that we would seek the occasion of its origin. Nor do we know who wrote the Psalm. The first verse suggests that the Psalm was written by someone who was old and was looking back upon a life of affliction in which he had suffered from the days of his youth. There is no title in any of the versions, nor in the Hebrew text, other than that it is "A Psalm of Degrees." Exactly why it was made one of the "songs of degrees" is not certain. However, "The principle on which it is founded is, that there is nothing to be dreaded as the result of trial, if we have passed through the same form of trial before, and if we have not sunk but have been sustained under it" (Barnes). This short chapter is a beautiful encouragement for those who may be suffering persecution at the hands of the ungodly. Even as I write these lines our brethren in the Orissa district of India are being slaughtered at the hands of Hindus and haters of God. May God grant them mercy in their hour of need!

### ***Analysis***

Here is what we have in the Psalm: First, the author immediately calls upon Israel to join in the refrain that they have been afflicted (vs. 1). He repeats the refrain for emphasis (vs. 2b), and adds that these haters of God have not "prevailed against me" (vs. 2b). The severity of the affliction is likened unto "plowers" who have "plowed" a field, only in this case the field is their backs, and the furrows are deep (vs. 3). Lest God's persecuted child feel that he has been abandoned by his God, the Psalmist reminds them that "Jehovah is righteous" (vs. 4a) and that history has shown that "He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked" (vs. 4b). The next portion of the Psalm is imprecatory in nature, beseeching God to render vengeance and "let them be put to shame and turned backward" like grass upon the housetops which withers before it has time to grow (vss. 5-7).

The Psalm closes with a reminder that God will not bless those who hate God and neither should we (vs. 8).

No doubt this Psalm is a song of the faithful child of God who, ascending toward the place of worship, looks back and sees how in the past God has delivered him from sore perils. His backward look was motivated by his present peril. Though he is now suffering some trial there seems to be a complete absence of despair on the part of the Psalmist.

We found the following outlines helpful in our study: The late Roy Deaver titled this chapter, "A Psalm of Confidence" and divided it into three parts: Affliction, verses 1-3; Proclamation, verse 4; and Prayer, verses 5-8. I have borrowed from a number of sources to come up with the following workable outline for our study of this chapter:

- I. The Persecution of God's People, 129:1-4; in which it is noted that:
  - A. Israel's enemies often attack, verses 1-2;
  - B. But Israel's enemies cannot annihilate her, verses 3-4
- II. The Petition of the Psalmist, 129:5-8; in which he asks:
  - A. That God's enemies be defeated and disgraced, verse 5;
  - B. That God's enemies be dried up, verses 6-7;
  - C. That God's enemies be denied heaven's blessings, verse 8.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***The Persecution Of God's People Verses 1-4***

- 1 *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up, Let Israel now say,*
- 2 *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth up: Yet they have not prevailed against me*
- 3 *The plowers plowed upon my back; They made long their furrows*
- 4 *Jehovah is righteous: He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*

In these first four verses two points come to the surface, namely (1) that Israel's enemies often attack, verses 1-2, but (2) Israel's enemies cannot annihilate her, verses 3-4.

**129:1** - "*Many a time have they afflicted me*" - The marginal reading has "much" rather than "many." Both ASV and KJV read "many a time," while The English Standard Version reads, "'Greatly have they afflicted me.'" "Many a time" focuses upon the number of times Israel suffered, while "much" emphasizes the depth of that suffering. Both ideas seem to be suggested by the general nature and message of the Psalm. Since the early years of her existence, Israel has suffered at the hands of her enemies.

*"From my youth up"* - The nation of Israel is personified as an older man looking back upon his youth. Reflection shows that God has providentially cared for Israel through the many years of her existence. The reference to Israel's "youth" is a common metaphor for her early years. "And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall make answer there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt" (Hos 2:15). "Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer. 2:2). Matthew Henry observed:

God's people have always had many enemies, and the state of the church, from its infancy, has frequently been an afflicted state. Israel's youth was in Egypt, or in the times of the Judges; then they were afflicted, and thenceforward more or less. The gospel-church, ever since it had a being, has been at times afflicted; and it bore this yoke most of all in its youth, witness the ten persecutions which the primitive church groaned under (Matthew Henry, ESword Notes).

We were particularly impressed with Spurgeon's assessment of this verse:

"Many a time," Israel says, because she could not say how many times. She speaks of her assailants as "they," because it would be impossible to write or even to know all their names. They had straitened, harassed, and fought against her from the earliest days of her history - from her youth; and they had continued their assaults right on without ceasing. Persecution is the heirloom of the church, and the ensign of the elect. Israel among the nations was peculiar, and this peculiarity brought against her many restless foes, who could never be easy unless they were warring against the people of God. When in Canaan, at the first, the chosen

household was often severely tried; in Egypt it was heavily oppressed; in the wilderness it was fiercely assailed; and in the promised land it was often surrounded by deadly enemies. It was something for the afflicted nation, that it survived to say, "Many a time have they afflicted me." The affliction began early - "from my youth"; and it continued late. The earliest years of Israel and of the church of God were spent in trial. Babies in grace are cradled in opposition. No sooner is the man-child born than the dragon is after it. "It is," however, "good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," and he shall see it to be so when in after days he tells the tale (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

*"Let Israel now say"* - This, the Psalmist admonishes, is to be upon the lips and minds of the nation as a whole. It would appear from this portion of the verse that the Psalm was not written at an early period in Israel's history.

**129:2** - *"Many a time have"* - The first part of the verse is a repetition, and serves as an emphasis upon the fact that God has indeed blessed the nation of Israel. Of all the occasions when it might be said that Israel has been afflicted, God has seen her through. The enemy has not "prevailed" against the nation. Even in her darkest hour of captivity in Babylon, the promises of Jehovah were abundant, and the deliverance was sure. "This repetition is designed to fix the thoughts on the fact, and to impress it on the mind. The mind dwells on the fact as important in its bearing on the present occasion or emergency. The idea is, that it is no new thing to be thus afflicted. It has often occurred. It is a matter of long and almost constant experience" (Barnes). "These repetitions are after the manner of poetry: thus she makes a sonnet out of her sorrows, music out of her miseries" (Spurgeon).

*"Yet they have not prevailed against me"* - Though the enemy sought to destroy Israel, they were not successful. One can almost image the resounding chorus as Israel sang, "Yet, they have not prevailed." "The 'yet' breaks in like the blast of trumpets or the roll of kettle-drums" (Spurgeon). They may have been cast down, but they were not destroyed. And though the enemy has had numerous occasions to completely destroy Israel, not once have they gained the victory.

**129:3** - *"The plowers plowed upon my back"* - The imagery is very forceful. Without mercy, the enemy lashed upon Israel like a plow digging deep into the earth. The comparison here is undoubtedly taken from the "plowing" of land, and the idea is that the sufferings

which they had endured were such as would be well represented by a plow passing over a field, tearing up the sod; piercing deep; and producing long rows or furrows. We would be tempted to see in this an allusion to the stripes that had been laid across the backs of God's people. Likely the Psalmist is using the analogy to speak of all of their sufferings, including the scourging they may have received but not limited to that one act of affliction. It seems that the immediate thing in the mind of the Psalmist was the hard bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt, when they were subjected to all the evils of servitude. Clarke agreed:

It is possible that this mode of expression may signify that the people, during their captivity, were cruelly used by scourging, etc.; or it may be a sort of proverbial mode of expression for the most cruel usage. There really appears here to be a reference to a yoke, as if they had actually been yoked to the plough, or to some kind of carriages, and been obliged to draw like beasts of burden (Adam Clarke, ESword).

*"They made long their furrows"* - There is no "ploughman" as busy as the devil; his cruel hatred and persecution of God's people never ceases. His "furrow" is never short, nor his cruel affliction brief. Like a furrow that is plowed from one end of a long field, so the devil hurls his darts endlessly. The word rendered "made long" means to "prolong, to extend in a right line, and it may be used either in the sense of making long as to extent or space, or making long in regard to time, prolonging" (Barnes). The devil's work is a work of long and continued oppression. His aim is nothing less than the complete destruction of the church (cf. Rev. 12:6, 17).

**129:4** - *"Jehovah is righteous"* - Having described the affliction which Israel had faced through the years, the Psalmist now speaks of the mighty hand of God in avenging His people and overthrowing the enemy. The writer is careful to point out that God's reaction is not one of uncontrolled anger, unjust and without cause. Just the opposite! God is righteous, and His judgment upon nations, and individuals, is always absolutely just. He is righteous in permitting this; righteous in what he has done, and will do, in the treatment of those who inflict such wrongs. That being the case, we can commit our trust to Him Who has saved His people in the past and will do so again. Whatever men may be, God remains the same and will keep His covenant with His people and deal out justice to their oppressors. "The Lord bears with the long furrows of the wicked, but he will surely make them cease from their ploughing before he has done with them." (Spurgeon).

*"He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked"* - The Hebrew word (*kaw-tsats*) means to "chop off; cut asunder, in pieces." He has, in the words of Matthew Henry, "cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their ploughing, has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing, has cut the bands of union by which they were combined together, has cut the bands of captivity in which they held God's people (Henry, ESword). When the enemies afflict the righteous, sooner or later God will intervene, and when He does, He will not merely "unfasten," but cut asunder the harness which the ungodly use to bind their yoke upon God's children.

Never has God used a nation to chastise his Israel without destroying that nation when the chastisement has come to a close: he hates those who hurt his people even though he permits their hate to triumph for a while for his own purpose. If any man would have his harness cut, let him begin to plough one of the Lord's fields with the plough of persecution. The shortest way to ruin is to meddle with a saint: the divine warning is, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye (Spurgeon, ESword).

### ***The Petition of the Psalmist*** **Verses 5-8**

- 5 *Let them be put to shame and turned backward, All they that hate Zion.*  
6 *Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, Which withereth before it groweth up;*  
7 *Wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand, Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.*

The Psalm closes with the author's petition that (1) God's enemies be defeated and disgraced, verse 5; that (2) God's enemies be dried up, verses 6-7; and that (3) God's enemies be denied heaven's blessings, verse 8.

**129:5** - *"Let them be put to shame and turned backward"* - Israel's enemies are God's enemies. Here is the Psalmist's request that all of God's enemies be so turned back and defeated that they feel a great sense of shame. When men are caught in their own sins, and their foolishness is exposed for all to observe, it often serves as a deterrent for others who might wish to pursue the same avenue of foolishness. Those who attempt to "confound" God's people should themselves be

confounded. The Psalmist's desire that they be put to shame is the outpouring of righteous indignation rather than personal vengeance. Our age has become so "politically correct" that it would rather let ungodliness reign than seek the shame of the unrighteous. Any zeal for righteousness brands a man as fanatic and "if he hates the powers of evil he is named a bigot" (Spurgeon).

**129:6-7** - *"Let them be as the grass upon the housetops"* - Grass placed upon the housetop to provide covering and to serve as insulation from the burning heat, would not last long. It would wither before it ever took root to grow. The Psalmist prays for such a fate of those who hate Zion. In the east the roofs of the houses were flat, and seeds of various kinds often fell upon them and thus naturally vegetate, though in an imperfect way. Because of the lack of proper nourishment, this grass would dry and wither away.

Grass on the housetop is soon up and soon down.... Persecutors are all sound and fury, flash and flame; but they speedily vanish - more speedily than is common to men. Grass in the field withers, but not as speedily as grass on the housetops. Without a mower the tufts of verdure perish from the roofs, and so do opposers pass away by other deaths than fall to the common lot of men; they are gone, and none is the worse. If they are missed at all, their absence is never regretted. ...One of the fathers said of the apostate emperor Julian, "That little cloud will soon be gone"; and so it was. Every sceptical system of philosophy has much the same history; and the like may be said of each heresy. Poor, rootless things, they are and are not: they come and go, even though no one rises against them. Evil carries the seeds of dissolution within itself. So let it be (Spurgeon).

*"Which withereth before it groweth up"* - Some versions read, *"It withers before it is plucked up"* - The author sets before his readers several illustrations in an attempt to impress upon their minds that whatever persecution or unjust treatment they might receive at the hands of their enemy, such is only temporary and in the overall scheme of things, short of its duration.

*"Wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand, Nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom"* - The phrase "filleth not his hand" seems to be derived from the idea of reaping, where the reaper with one hand takes hold of the grain which he reaps, and cuts it off with the sickle in the other. If grass, the mower cannot make hay of it; if corn, the reaper cannot make a sheaf of it. It is good for nothing, of no use to anybody. A farmer, or reaper, does not harvest the grass upon a



housetop. The idea is that the enemy of Israel would find no prosperity, no fruit so to speak, in his afflictions upon God's people. It must be remembered that the wicked WILL gather a harvest, but not one that is desirable.

When with his sickle the husbandman would cut down the tufts he found nothing to lay hold upon: the grass promised fairly enough, but there was no fulfilment, there was nothing to cut or to carry, nothing for the hand to grasp, nothing for the lap to gather. Easterns carry their corn in their bosoms, but in this case there was nothing to bear home. Thus do the wicked come to nothing. By God's just appointment they prove a disappointment. Their fire ends in smoke: their verdure turns to vanity; their flourishing is but a form of withering. No one profits by them, least of all are they profitable to themselves. Their aim is bad, their work is worse, their end is worst of all (Spurgeon)

*8 Neither do they that go by say, The blessing of Jehovah be upon you; We bless you in the name of Jehovah.*

**129:8** - There is a reference here to the salutations which were given and returned by the reapers in the time of the harvest. We find that it was customary, when the master came to them into the field, to say unto the reapers, "The Lord be with you," and for them to answer, "The Lord bless thee" (cf. Ruth 2:4). When the enemies of God are seeking the destruction of God's people, the church, and all that is good and holy, we dare not extend to them the blessings of God or wish them well in any endeavor they may seek to undertake. To extend God's blessings or to wish them Godspeed is to be partaker in their evil deeds (cf. 2 John 9-11). "Upon a survey of the sinner's life from beginning to end, we feel more inclined to weep than to rejoice, and we feel bound rather to wish him failure than success" (Spurgeon).

## ***Lessons***

1. Persecution and ill treatment are the lot of God's people (2 Tim. 3:12). How far it may go, none can tell, but in this case it was great, it was frequent, and it was prolonged. How far it cannot go is plainly set forth in the word of God. Though it may prevail to *some degree*, it cannot prevail in the *ultimate degree*. When all is said and done it is the unrighteous who shall perish (cf. Ps. 1:6).

2. The promise of victory runs through the Bible like a fine thread, weaving the righteousness of God with His power to assure every child of God that He will "cut asunder the cords of the wicked."
3. It seems that our western world has lost the ability to blush. There is nothing they fear, and nothing that shames them. But the Psalmist assures us that they will be put to shame when the hand of Jehovah renders justice upon the wicked.
4. When you are suffering *for* your faith maintain your faith in He Who is ever faithful.
5. "God had one Son, and but one Son, without sin; but never any without sorrow. We may be God's children, and yet still under persecution; his Israel, and afflicted from our youth up. We may feel God's hand as a Father upon us when he strikes us as well as when he strokes us. When he strokes us, it is lest we faint under his hand; and when he strikes us, it is that we should know his hand" - *Abraham Wright*.

## *“Thank God For His Plentous Redemption”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the eleventh Psalm with the subtitle "A Song of Degrees." Of the Psalm, Barnes points out that "it is commonly supposed that the psalm had reference to the state of the Jews in the Babylonish captivity, but there is no necessity for limiting it to that period, if indeed it has any reference to the people of Israel" (Barnes). There is an obvious reference in the Psalm to an individual who is mourning over his sins, pleading for mercy, and trusting in God that His mercy will be extended. Whereas the previous Psalm was a "backward look," this one is an "inward look." Though there is no specific sin mentioned, the Psalmist cries out from "the depths" (verse 1), suggesting the author's sense of deep need. Of this Psalm G. Campbell Morgan had this interesting note:

If the sense is of the nation's distress, it is distinctly conscious of the connection of that distress with sin. All this is background which flings into bright relief the confidence of the soul in Jehovah as a pardoning and redeeming Lord. Some of the most beautiful things in the Psalter, or indeed, in the Bible, are here. It was a Welshman in the midst of the wonderful Revival of 1905 who rendered verse four: 'There is forgiveness with Thee – enough to frighten us!' It is not accurate translation, but is fine exposition. The deepest note in all true worship is this sense of "plenteous redemption," and the perfection of Jehovah's love as thus manifested. To mark iniquities would be to fill us with despair. To redeem from all iniquities is to inspire us with hope (Morgan, pages 270-271).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm naturally divides itself into two parts, with four verses assigned to each part. In the first part the Psalmist speaks to God; in the second he speaks to Israel. The depth of the Psalmist's anguish is apparent from the first verse. His anguish is tempered by the mercy of Jehovah, and he confidently affirms that "there is forgiveness with

thee.” His plea to God is followed by a plea to Israel. He reaffirms his hope in God’s word, and reminds Israel that, indeed, there is “plenteous redemption” with Jehovah. The Psalm closes with the confident affirmation that God will “redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

Roy Deaver divided the Psalm thus: (1) A Fervent Prayer, 1-4; (2) A wonderful attitude, 5-6; (3) Significant instructions, 7; (4) A confident promise, 8 (Deaver, Vol. II, page 200). Phillips maintains a two point outline with the division coming at verse 7, and titling the two parts “Personal Experience” (130:1-6), and “Public Exhortation” (130:7-8). For study purposes we suggest the following outline:

I. The Psalmist Speaks To God (130:1-4)

II. The Psalmist Speaks About Himself (130:5-6)

III. The Psalmist Speaks in Behalf of Israel (130:7-8)

### ***Commentary***

#### ***The Psalmist Speaks to God***

##### **Verses 1-4**

*1 Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Jehovah.*

*2 Lord, hear my voice: Let thine ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications.*

*3 If thou, Jehovah, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?*

*4 But there is forgiveness with thee, That thou mayest be feared.*

**130:1:** “*Out of the depths*” – The interesting thing about these verses is the complete absence of any mention of personal sin on the part of the Psalmist. It appears to be, rather, a plea for the nation of Israel. His plea is urgent as much as it is earnest. The word rendered “depths” is from a verb which means “to be deep; then to be unsearchable; then to make deep” (Barnes). It could apply to anything that is profound, or as well to a valley or pit. The Hebrew word appears only five times in the Old Testament and three of those are in the Psalms (69:2; 69:14; 130:1). In the context the word is applicable to deep affliction, or distress that evidently arose out of sorrow for sin or consciousness of guilt. The Psalmist had reached the point where his soul was vexed, and anguish had taken hold of his very being. He had never ceased to pray, even when brought into the lowest state of mental anguish. It is the “depths” that often drive us to our knees in prayer. As Spurgeon noted,

Deep places beget deep devotion. Depths of earnestness are stirred by depths of tribulation. Diamonds sparkle amid the darkness...The more distressed we are, the more excellent in the faith which trusts bravely in the Lord, and therefore appeals to him, and to him alone. Good men may be in the depths of temporal and spiritual trouble; but good men in such cases look only to their God, and they stir themselves up to be more instant and earnest in prayer than at other times. The depth of their distress moves the depths of their being; and from the bottom of their hearts an exceeding great and bitter cry rises unto the one living and true God (Spurgeon, ESword).

**130:2:** *"Lord, hear my voice"* - The plea to *"hear my voice"* and *"be attentive to the voice"* does not suggest that God does not, or cannot hear. It is simply a request for a favorable answer to the petition from a contrite heart. We might appreciate the force of these words if we would imagine that we have been treated wrong and we seek justice at the hands of a compassionate and just judge. If we could but *"get a hearing"* we would be content to leave it in the hands of those who are in a position to meet out justice. So it is with the Psalmist. He is but a beggar, seeking the help of his God, in hopes that the Judge of the universe will but lend an ear to his feeble supplications. If God would but turn an ear to his cry, the Psalmist would be content to at least know that the Almighty has listened to his plea.

**130:3:** *"If thou, Jehovah, shouldest mark iniquities"* – Strong tells us that the Hebrew word (*'shamar'*) means to *"hedge about; guard; to protect; to look narrowly, observe, regard, and lay in wait"* (Strong, ESword). The word refers to that kind of vigilance or watchfulness which one is expected to maintain while on guard duty. The idea here is this: If God should look with a scrutinizing eye so as to see all He could see with regard to our iniquities, and suffer none to escape but deal with us exactly as we are, there would be no hope for our salvation. If God should *"mark,"* in that He would remember, and demand accountability, rather than forgive, then who would be able to stand? The answer is obvious, for no man can stand against God. Were it not for His gracious forgiveness, all would be condemned.

**130:4:** *"But there is forgiveness with thee"* – The stark contrast between verses 6 and 7 are summed up with these half-dozen words. There is another passage where six words speak the same wonderful truth expressed here by the Psalmist: *"There is therefore now no*

condemnation” (Rom. 8:1). Interestingly, the apostle Paul zeroes in on the hope we have in Christ in contrast to the utter despair that every soul faces if God should “mark our iniquities.” Perhaps we need to dust off our sermons on God’s great mercy and preach them anew to a generation that is beginning to reap the harvest of sinful and rebellious living. This message needs to be shouted from the highest roof-top: “Our God delights in mercy” (Micah 7:18).

*“That thou mayest be feared”* – As mentioned in our introduction, Welshman (as quoted by Morgan) in the midst of the “revival” of 1905 rendered verse four, “There is forgiveness with Thee – enough to frighten us.” This is not the meaning of the verse, but it expresses a truth that perhaps is as powerful and profound as that which the Psalmist actually seeks to convey. It is not that forgiveness *produces fear or terror*, for the very opposite is true. It is rather that forgiveness, when understood and grasped by the sincere worshipper, produces reverence and awe in the heart of he who has been forgiven. There is another important truth that emerges from this verse. The grateful soul that has received the divine mercy of God, and *knows* the depth of that forgiveness, does not abuse that mercy; he does not go out and sin again, but expresses his appreciation for forgiveness by seeking to serve the Lord; by fearing and reverencing Jehovah with his heart and with his life.

### ***The Psalmist Speaks about Himself*** **Verses 5-6**

*5 I wait for Jehovah, my soul doth wait, And in his word do I hope.*

*6 My soul waiteth for the Lord More than watchmen wait for the morning; Yea, more than watchmen for the morning.*

**130:5:** *“I wait for Jehovah, my soul doth wait”* – The Hebrew word which we translate “wait” (*‘kavah*) signifies the extension of a cord from one point to another. Strong tells us that the word means “to bind together; to collect to expect; to look, patiently, tarry, wait” (Strong, ESword). This makes for a most interesting metaphor. Imagine a cord or a rope, on which one end we find the soul of man, and on the other end Jehovah God. The rope itself suggests that strong tie that binds man to God. The heart of the Psalmist was so joined to the heart of God that there was not the slightest degree of “slack” or “doubt” in the promises of God. Because of that absolute trust, the Psalmist was willing to patiently “wait” for God to direct him and instruct him in the word. No wonder he would follow up the declaration that his soul “doth wait” with the words, “In his word do

I hope.” That word contained the multitude of promises of Jehovah regarding redemption and forgiveness. God's promises are absolute, and they will never fail. We can place our confidence in what He says, and out of this comes “hope.”

**130:6:** *“My soul waiteth for the Lord”* – This is the third time in these two verses wherein the Psalmist tells us that his soul “waiteth for the Lord” – twice in verse 5 and once here in verse 6. This is not vain repetition, but a way to strongly emphasize the point he was trying to make.

*“More than the watchmen wait for the morning, Yea, more than watchmen for the morning”* - Notice the repetition. The translators made an attempt to capture the essence of the original, but fell short of the beauty that a Jew may have appreciated far more than we. The Hebrew is, “more than they that watch for the morning - watch for the morning,” as if the mind dwelt upon the words as better expressing its own anxious state than any other words could do.

This student served in the US Coast Guard, and is familiar with what it means to stand a midnight, or early morning watch. Every watchman who has had to endure the long nights in expectation of the light that dawn brings can appreciate the words of the Psalmist. This is especially true if the night is accompanied by storms that threaten us. The morning brings light, relief from duty, and fresh new opportunities. As a watchman longs for the morning light, and the safety that accompanies it, so the Psalmist longed for the Lord. Until men have that deep longing for association with Jehovah, they will not find Him. Until men hunger and thirst after righteousness, they will not be moved to holy living. The desire is the motivation that moves one to action, and ultimately success.

### **The Psalmist Speaks in behalf of Israel Verses 7-8**

7 *O Israel, hope in Jehovah; For with Jehovah there is lovingkindness, And with him is plenteous redemption.*  
8 *And he will redeem Israel From all his iniquities.*

**130:7:** *“O Israel, hope in Jehovah”* – Literally, “Trust, O Israel, in the Lord.” It would appear that the Psalmist was seeking to persuade others to put their trust in God, something he had already done and would now entreat the people of God to do likewise. He would then

set forth two reasons why it is most fitting to put one's trust in God: "mercy" and "plenteous redemption."

*"With Jehovah there is lovingkindness"* – The KJV reads "mercy." Mercy is withholding the punishment that one deserves for any wrongdoing or offence toward another.

*"And with him is plenteous redemption"* – God is not stingy with His redemption. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son" (John 3:16). "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). Let every servant shout this message from the housetops to a lost and dying world: "With Jehovah...there is plenteous redemption."

As the Psalmist had the longing, and had evidently experienced the lovingkindness of Jehovah, so he encourages his brethren to do the same. The joy of salvation is not something that is to be hoarded, but shared with others. The call of the Psalmist is that they would place their hope in God. All else will fail in the final analysis.

**130:8:** *"And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities"*

What a marvelous promise! If Israel would but turn from her evil ways God would redeem her from *"all...iniquities."* And what a wonderful way to close this Psalm, on a triumphant hope of complete and eternal redemption.

### ***Lessons***

1. Every child of God should be grateful for the wonderful privilege of prayer. We are promised that God will listen. He will listen in times of distress, and in times of joy. He will listen when we are in the valley, or on the mountain top. Yes, there is a God in heaven Who hears our voice!
2. We learn something of the seriousness of sin. If men were to receive a just recompense for their sin, no one could stand. It is because of the wonderful mercy of God that the horrible nature of sin can be overcome and the penalty of sin can be avoided.
3. There is forgiveness with God! In fact, the Old Testament prophet tells us that our God "delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:14). Though



sin may separate us from our God, the Almighty has taken the initiative to provide forgiveness for man. How sad that so many do not take advantage of that forgiveness.

4. From verse 5 we see the Psalmist's hope in the word. All of the promises of God are solid, none will fail, and all will come to pass. If men do not trust in the word of God, what can they trust in?
5. With God there is "*plenteous redemption*." God's mercy is not measured out in small quantities. He does not parcel out His redemption as if there were some limited portion available. Instead, His great redemption is inexhaustible. Like a bank with unlimited resources, the wealth of heaven's gift of redemption far exceeds our ability to comprehend its availability.

## *“A Song of Humility”*

### ***Introduction***

This is a beautiful Psalm, written in a spirit of humility and with a child-like disposition on the part of the author. “Comparing all the Psalms to gems, we should liken this to a pearl. How beautifully it will adorn the neck of patience. It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn. It speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ. Lowliness and humility are here seen in connection with a sanctified heart, a will subdued to the mind of God, and a hope looking to the Lord alone” (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

The subscript attributes the Psalm to David, but the specific occasion is not noted, nor is there anything in the Psalm that would help us determine the circumstances under which it was written. Barnes believes that the Psalm was written “on some occasion when the author had been charged with being of a lofty and proud spirit; with meddling in matters that were above him, or above his condition in life; or with making such suggestions about public affairs as were considered to indicate a self-confident, or an aspiring mind” (Barnes), and very likely when David was a young man. If indeed the Psalm was written during the early years of David’s life then the Psalm is all the more beautiful for it gives us a glimpse of the disposition that would earn him the accolade of “a man after God’s heart.” Though only three verses in length, this song gives us a picturesque illustration of what constitutes humility. But even more, the Psalmist reveals a sense of contentment on the part of the Psalmist that arises out of his humility and child like spirit.

### ***Analysis***

In the Psalm we have (1) an affirmation on the part of David that his “heart is not haughty,” verse 1; (2) this is followed by another affirmation in which the author declares that he does not “exercise himself in great matters,” verse 1b; (3) he likens himself to a “weaned child with his mother,” verse 2; (4) the Psalm closes with a call for Israel to hope in the Lord.

One of the earliest outlines we used for our study of this Psalm was that of Roy Deaver: "Description, verses 1-2; Secret, verse 3" (Deaver, Vol II, page 203). We were particularly impressed with Phillips' outline of this Psalm and will follow his main points for our study of the beautiful song:

I. True Humility (131:1-2)

II. Triumphant Hope (131:3)

### ***Commentary***

#### ***True Humility*** **Verses 1-2**

*131:1 - "Jehovah, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too wonderful for me"*

*131:2 - "Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me"*

**131:1:** There is a wonderful attitude manifested in the words of the Psalmist. He readily admits that his heart is not "haughty," nor his "eyes lofty." Pride did not possess his heart. Pride is a great short coming and will result in destruction (Proverbs 16:18). "What the heart desires the eyes look for. Where the desires run the glances usually follow" (Spurgeon). Notice in this connection Proverbs 30:12-13: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, And yet are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, oh how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up." I have some additional comments on these verses from Proverbs in the section containing "Lessons."

Exactly what is meant by "*great matters*" and "*things too wonderful*" is difficult to determine. It is possible that the Psalmist was speaking of the things of God hidden from man. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it" (Psalms 139:6). Any attempt to attain unto things hidden is a waste of time and forbidden by God. Spurgeon may have captured at least a part of what is included in these "great matters" when he wrote:

As a private man he did not usurp the power of the king or devise plots against him: he minded his own business, and left others to

mind theirs. As a thoughtful man he did not pry into things unrevealed; he was not speculative, self-conceited or opinionated. As a secular person he did not thrust himself into the priesthood as Saul had done before him, and as Uzziah did after him. It is well so to exercise ourselves unto godliness that we know our true sphere, and diligently keep to it. Many through wishing to be great have failed to be good: they were not content to adorn the lowly stations which the Lord appointed them, and so they have rushed at grandeur and power; and found destruction where they looked for honour (Spurgeon).

The idea seems to be that he did not put his trust in things that men esteem as significant; he made God's word his meditation, and did not amuse himself with matters of nice speculation or doubtful disputation, or covet to be wise above what is written in Holy Scripture.

**131:2:** As a result of his humility and his resolve to submit to the will of the Father, the Psalmist could write, *"I have stilled and quieted my soul."* The peace which abides in the heart of the writer is the result of a quiet and calm disposition deep within. We should note here that the secret of contentment is a realization that God is in control, and that He will work things out to the fulfillment of His purpose and our ultimate good. Paul wrote, "I have learned whatever state I am in, therewith to be content" (Phil 4:11). The material ambitions of men, coupled with discontent in life will not produce peace within.

*"Like a weaned child with his mother"* - When a child is "weaned" it is no longer fretting for the mother's breast. When our souls are weaned from the things of this life, we will not be anxious or fearful. Not only will we be crucified to the world, but the world will be crucified to us. "But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). This is the "secret" to such contentment as that noted above. "When we cease to hanker for the world we begin hoping in the Lord" (Spurgeon).

### ***Triumphant Hope*** **Verse 3**

*131:3 - "O Israel, hope in Jehovah from this time forth and for evermore"*

The writer admonishes Israel to place her hope in God. Let it be permanent, beginning at that point and extending far into the future. It is not enough to simply begin the journey; we must run the race from "this time forth and for evermore."

### ***Lessons***

1. The soul is weaned from one thing by giving its attention to another. Our attention is drawn away from worldly things when we "seek the things that are above" (Col. 3:1). We are weaned from self when we turn out attention to others and to God. We are weaned from sin when we strive to perfect holiness in our lives.
2. "Where there is a proud heart, there is commonly a proud look (Pro. 6:17); but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes" (*Matthew Henry*).
3. I wrote the following article a number of years ago:

### **There Is A Generation**

by Tom Wacaster

I suppose that every generation tends to despise the younger. Maybe that's why Paul wrote Timothy these words of encouragement: "Let no man despise thy youth..." (1 Tim. 4:12). Perhaps the same advice could be given to those whose hair is graying and health is fading, "Let no man despise thy age."

Age tends to develop wisdom, something that is often lacking in youth simply because of lack of experience. Of course there are always exceptions. H.L. Mencken concluded, "The older I grow the more I distrust the familiar doctrine that age brings wisdom." The down side of growing older is the temptation to become cynical and hyper critical of the leadership and capability of the next generation. As I near my 60th birthday and the beginning of my 7th decade upon this planet, I am determined not to become overly critical, not because of the foolishness of a generation gone awry, but because I know God is in control.

Someone warned, "In case you're worried about what's going to become of the younger generation, it's going to grow up and start worrying about the younger generation." The "baby boomers" are passing the torch to generation "Y" (or is it "X"?) in preparation for

their social security checks, retirement, and increasing medical bills and ill health. Like the generations now passed into the dust bins of history, these "baby boomers" are anxious about where the next generation will take them. Having aborted more than 45 million babies since 1973, the work force has reached a crisis of precisely how they are going to provide for the aging population. But they need not worry, for the medical and scientific minds that were allowed to come to full term and somehow avoid the knife of the abortionist are now seriously considering euthanasia as a viable means of getting rid of so many unwanted senior citizens (quite ironic isn't it - or perhaps more like poetic justice).

Since every generation needs wisdom, it seems appropriate to seek that wisdom from a source that is reliable - I speak, of course, of the Bible. Most of our readers know that there is a book in the Old Testament called "Proverbs." I have been meditating on some of those pithy sayings this past week, and there was one that struck me as particularly interesting, and motivated me to pen this week's article. Listen to the words of Agur from Proverbs 30:11-14: "There is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men."

"There is a generation" was Agur's assessment of either his present generation or that which was soon to follow. Keep in mind that the Proverbs were written during a time of great affluence in Israel. The temptation of wealth turned the heart of Israel away from God, and plunged that nation into moral corruption, the likes of which are described in these four verses.

There is an amazing similarity between the rich and abundant years of Israel's history, and our generation - whether we are speaking of generation "X," "Y," or the baby boomers. Youth have learned the language of Asdod. Honor for mother and father have fallen upon hard times and in many instances a child is no longer afraid of parents because he knows that society will protect him from discipline. I have pity for a child, any child, who does not honor his or her parents.

This is a generation "pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." We have justified homosexuality, adultery,

drunkenness, lying, embezzlement, cheating, gambling, and every other ungodly act known to men while claiming to be a "Nation under God." Why is it that we become so upset when someone suggests that we should take the words, "In God We Trust" off our currency, but seem so unconcerned about the hundreds of thousands of babies being slaughtered each year?

This is a generation that is "lofty...and their eyelids are lifted up. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom" (Prov 11:2). "In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride: but the lips of the wise shall preserve them" (Pro 14:3). "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov 16:18). Pride will sully the noblest of men, and bring low the mighty. It will render leaders ineffective, and destroy the good influence of all who are caught in its grip. Our generation has produced great strides in science, medicine, technology and education. But our successes and blessings have made us proud so much so that we have lifted up our eyes and declared God dead and religion a non-essential.

This is a generation whose teeth are as swords and their jaw teeth as knives. The violence in the theater has poured out into the streets, and our hatred for fellow man has found vent in the internet and "blog" pages of personal expression. A recent article in the Dallas News pointed out that web sites fostering racial hatred, fascism, neo-Nazi, and anti-Semitic mentality have increased dramatically in the last ten years.

Finally, there is a generation that devours the poor from the earth and the needy from among men. Con artists and shysters prey on the needy and elderly. From the dishonest salesman to the lying televangelist, this generation has its fare share of those whose only aim in life is to make a buck or get ahead, and the needy suffer as a result.

Perhaps this generation will run its course and the pendulum will swing the other way. I like to hope this will happen. But with every passing year, I see little hope for a generation that cares only for itself, with little interest in things eternal. Maybe, just maybe, when this generation is lying in the muck and mire of sin and ungodliness they will look to the God Who created them and long for something better and declare in hope of something better, "There is a generation..."

## ***“God Has Chosen Zion”***

### ***Introduction***

The author and occasion of the Psalm cannot be stated with any degree of certainty. We can ascertain that it was written sometime after the life of David since the opening verse the Psalmist calls upon the Lord to “remember David.” Seeing that the Psalmist speaks of the tabernacle as having been built (verse 8), we can also conclude that it was written at some point removed from the kingship of David, and perhaps as late as the Babylonian captivity. It is probable that it was written by Solomon, to be sung at the dedication of the temple which he had built according to the charge of his father David (cf. 1 Chron. 28:2). Morgan noted:

Whatever were the circumstances of the writing of this song, its placing here is significant. The worshipping people are to be conscious of the true order of their life, and the true meaning of their approach. A spacious conception of the purpose of God is ever necessary to true worship. Lacking this, worship may easily degenerate into selfish formalism. Where it is present, every individual is enabled to contribute to the whole, which makes for the complete realization of the ideal (Morgan, page 271).

The Psalm is another in the "songs of ascents." The amazing thing about this Psalm is the prophetic glimpse of the Kingdom of the Messiah.

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm can be easily divided into two parts. The first ten verses address David's promise to build God a house in Jerusalem. The remaining eight verses speak of God's promise to David to build that house. Albert Barnes likewise sees two divisions in the Psalm, but with different verse divisions: (1) A Statement of the Zeal of David for the Ark, verses 1-8, and (2) A Reference to the Promises made to David and his Posterity, verses 9-18. Phillips provided this homiletic outline: (1) David's oath Recorded by the Lord, 132:1-10; (2) David's



oath Reciprocated by the Lord, 132:11-18. Finally, Willmington's *Outline Bible* picked up on the two-fold division as well: (1) David Desires To Build A House For God, 132:1-10; (2) God Decrees To Build A House For David, 132:11-18. We have adapted this particular outline for our study of the Psalm to come up with the following:

- I. David's Desire to Build A House For the Lord, 132:1-10
  - 1. David's Oath, 132:1-5
  - 2. Divine Order, 132:6-10
- II. God's Decree That God Would Build A House For David, 132:11-18
  - 1. The Lord's Promise, 132:11-12
  - 2. The Lord's Place, 132:13-18

### ***Commentary***

The first ten verses of this Psalm constitute the first major division in the Psalm: David's Desire to Build A House For the Lord, 132:1-10, containing two points with an equal number of verses. We will take these up one at a time.

#### ***David's Oath*** **Verses 1-5**

- 1 *Jehovah, remember for David All his affliction;*
- 2 *How he sware unto Jehovah, And vowed unto the Mighty One of Jacob:*
- 3 *Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, Nor go up into my bed;*
- 4 *I will not give sleep to mine eyes, Or slumber to mine eyelids;*
- 5 *Until I find out a place for Jehovah, A tabernacle for the Mighty One of Jacob.*

**132:1:** The Psalmist does not pray for himself, nor does there appear to be any selfish motive in his prayer. It is "for David." Almost every word in this Psalm is packed with precious jewels of spiritual truth.

*"Jehovah"* - The Psalmist begins with a recognition of the *power* behind his plea. Let God remember and none else matters. It is to Jehovah that the Psalmist turns; to He Who changes not; He Who is faithful to keep His promises, not only because He wills to do so, but because He is able to do so.

*“Remember”* – Here is the *prayer*. The request is that the Lord would *remember*! It is not that God forgets, for His divine nature would not allow such to taint His wonderful and holy nature. But this word “remember” is full of meaning. God *remembered* Noah and dried the waters from the face of the earth. God *remembered* Abraham and brought Lot out of Sodom. God *remembered* Rachel and Hannah, and blessed them with children. Volumes might be written on the times that it is said that God *remembered* those in need, and those seeking the way to God. How blessed we are that God remembers!

*“David”* – Here is the *person* to whom the promise was made. It was with David that the covenant was made, and thus the Psalmist pleads on behalf of his descendants and those who would be the happy recipients of God’s divine promise made to that man “after God’s own heart.”

*“All his affliction”* – In this we see the *pity* of God as the Psalmist viewed it. He was confident that Jehovah was full of pity, “Like as a father pitieth his children, So Jehovah pitieth them that fear him” (Psa. 103:13).

**132:2:** *“How he sware unto Jehovah”* - This verse serves as an introduction to the actual words of David's vow quoted in verses 3-5. It is not wrong to vow to God, but once a vow has been given, it is absolutely necessary to fulfill that vow. It should be observed to Whom David made the vow, namely to the Lord God of Israel. God was not only a witness to the vow of David, but a party in that vow in that the Almighty reciprocated with an oath of His own (second half of this Psalm).

*“And vowed to the Mighty one of Jacob”* - The One to Whom David made his vow is the Mighty One of Jacob, the God of Israel, whose power is engaged for Jacob's defense and deliverance. Jacob is weak, but the God of Jacob is a mighty One. No wonder then that David would make a vow with the true and living God!

**132:3-5:** *“I will not come into the tabernacle of my house; Nor go up into my bed”* - David vowed that he would seek to build the house of God rather than his own. The language is, of course, not literal, but to be taken as an expression of the earnest intention on the part of David to put God first, and himself last. Before his death, David determined to build a house for God in the city of Jerusalem. But it was revealed unto him that he would NOT be the one to build the

house of God because David was a "man of war." It was to be David's son, Solomon, who would build the house of God. It is, however, the humble spirit of servitude and sacrifice of David that shines in this verse. The New Testament equivalent of this can be found in Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." We wonder how many professed Christians would dare repeat the vow of David and determine that they would build the Lord's house (the church) before investing the time and money to build their own?

### ***Divine Order*** **Verses 6-10**

- 6 *Lo, we heard of it in Ephrathah: We found it in the field of the wood.*  
7 *We will go into his tabernacles; We will worship at his footstool.*  
8 *Arise, O Jehovah, into thy resting-place; Thou, and the ark of thy strength.*  
9 *Let thy priest be clothed with righteousness; And let thy saints shout for joy.*  
10 *For thy servant David's sake Turn not away the face of thine anointed*

These verses draw our attention to the worship of God particularly from the viewpoint of David's respect for the divine order that is to characterize that worship. With God's house in place, David and his "seed" were determined to worship at the "footstool" of Jehovah. They were content to sit at the feet of the Almighty and perform the Father's bidding rather than attempt to sit on the throne and determine their own order of worship.

**132:6** – "Ephrathah" is the ancient name for David's ancestral home, Bethlehem (cf. Gen. 35:19; Mic. 5:2). It would appear that the Psalmist is saying that the vow of David was well known, even in the little town of Bethlehem. The fame of David's vow to God and his determination to build the temple was wide spread, even in "*the field of the wood.*"

**132:7** – "*We will go into his tabernacle*" – It is as if the Psalmist were saying, "Let us but have a convenient place, and *we will go into his tabernacle*, to pay our homage there; *we will worship at his footstool* as subjects and suppliants, which we neglected to do, for want of such a place, *in the days of Saul.*"

*“We will worship at his footstool”* – Spurgeon’s notes on this verse were worth sharing with our readers:

The best ordered earthly house can be no more than the footstool of so great a King. His ark can only reveal the glories of his feet, according to his promise that he will make the place of his feet glorious: yet thither will we hasten with joy, in glad companionship, and there will we adore him. Where Jehovah is, there shall he be worshipped. It is well not only to go to the Lord’s house, but to *worship* there: We do but profane his tabernacles if we enter them for any other purpose (Spurgeon).

**132:8** – “Arise, O Jehovah, into thy resting place” – The verse contains the same expression which Solomon used when he dedicated the temple (cf. 2 Chron. 6:41), lending support to our conclusion that Solomon is the author of the Psalm. Those who hold to a later date for the Psalm, particularly those who think that it was written during the Babylonian captivity, suggest the meaning of the verse is thus: “We have heard, O Lord, from our fathers, that thy tabernacle was formerly a long time at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim. And our history informs us that it has been also at Kirjath-jearim, the fields of the wood; and afterwards it was brought to Jerusalem, and there established: but Jerusalem is now ruined, the temple destroyed, and thy people in captivity. Arise, O Lord, and reestablish thy dwelling-place in thy holy city!” (Clarke, Esword Notes). Our opinion is that verses 8-10 contain the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple. There appear to be at least four definable points in Solomon’s prayer: (1) That God would take possession of and maintain His residence in this temple which he (Solomon) had built; (2) That God’s ministering servants might be “clothed with righteousness”; (3) That the people of God might “shout for joy” in realization of the presence of their God in the temple; (4) and that Solomon’s prayer might be accepted.

**132:9:** “*Let thy priest be clothed with righteousness*” – The “priest” is singular, and likely has reference to the High priest. It should be noted that nothing is said about the magnificent apparel that would adorn the priest as he went about his daily function of serving in the temple. Solomon prays instead that the priest might be clothed with “righteousness.” “No garment is so resplendent as that of a holy character. In this glorious robe our great High-priest is evermore arrayed, and he would have all his people adorned in the same manner. Then only are priests fit to appear before the Lord, and to minister for the profit of the people, when their lives are dignified with goodness” (Spurgeon, Esword Notes). The New Testament

counterpart must include such passages as Ephesians 4:24, Ephesians 6:14, Colossians 3:12-15, and Revelation 19:8.

*“let thy saints shout for joy”* – The fruit of a life clothed with righteousness is unspeakable joy. While men seek joy, they often fail to look in the right place. Joy is not found in unbelief. Voltaire was one of the most well known infidels of his time and his disbelief produced only despair and sorry. In the closing years of this life he wrote, “I wish I had never been born.” Joy is not found in pleasure, for the famed Lord Byron, after giving himself to self indulgence wrote, “The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone.” Nor is joy found in possessions, money or material accumulations. Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of this world’s goods. Yet, when dying, he is known to have said, “I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth.” Joy cannot be found in fame or fortune. Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: “Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret.” Nations have learned that joy is not found in military might. Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he is reported to have wept in his tent, before he said, “There are no more worlds to conquer.” True joy is found in Christ and His church.

**132:10:** *“For thy servant David's sake”* – Solomon makes his request in view of the promise God had made to David. The mark of a humble heart is less of self and more of God and others. Solomon’s reign began with a sincere heart of humility, with a vision toward fulfilling what his father David had started. Had he only remained loyal to the precepts that guided his father David he would have spared himself much of the heartache that came upon him in his later years.

*“Turn not away the face of thine anointed”* – Barnes’ summation of this verse was quite simple: “The word would be applicable to David himself, as the anointed king; in a higher sense it is applicable to the Messiah, the Christ. The reference here is probably to David himself, as if a failure to carry out his purposes in regard to the sanctuary, or to fulfill the promises made to him, would be a turning away the face from him; would be a mark of the divine displeasure against him. The prayer is, that God would carry out those purposes as if his face was continually turned with benignity and favor toward David” (Barnes, ESword Notes).

## ***God's Decree That God Would Build A House For David*** **Verses 11-18**

This part of the Psalm can be subdivided into two parts, "The Lord's Promise," and "The Lord's Place." We'll take these up one at a time.

### ***The Lord's Promise*** **132:11-12**

- 11 *Jehovah hath sworn unto David in truth; He will not turn from it: Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.*  
12 *If thy children will keep my covenant And my testimony that I shall teach them, Their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore.*

These two verses constitute an elaboration of God's promise made to David in 2 Samuel 7:8-16. If David had remained obedient, his throne would not have been vacated between the fall of Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah. Nevertheless, the Davidic covenant finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ (cf. Jer. 33:14-21; Luke 1:32, 33). These two verses are very similar to 89:3, 4 and doubtless were in the mind of Peter when he preached on the Day of Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:30).

**132:11** – "*Jehovah hath sworn unto David in truth*" – The English Standard Version of this verse reads: "The LORD swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back." God had made a promise to David, and from that promise Jehovah God would not turn back. We have no difficulty with the affirmation that Jehovah God "hath sworn," or that He somehow made an "oath." The language is anthropomorphic. God condescends to man, and utilizes a figure of speech so as to stress the absolute reliability of His promise to David.

*"Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne"* – The promise can be found in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 – "When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." The promise states clearly that one of David's descendants would build the house, someone who was of the "fruit" of his "body."

**132:12:** *"If thy children will keep my covenant And my testimony that I shall teach them"* – The promise to Solomon was conditional, as are many of the divine promises granted to man. Unfortunately the history of Israel following the reign of Solomon was disastrous. Immediately following the death of Solomon the kingdom was divided, and with the Northern Kingdom leading the way, both North and South ran in a galloping trot away from God, with the Southern kingdom lagging behind in their apostasy by only a short period of time.

*"Their children also shall sit upon thy throne for evermore"* – One can only wonder what God's intentions were. Of all the "what-if's," our imagination is tickled with the possibilities had Israel remained faithful to God.

### ***The Lord's Place*** **132:13-18**

- 13 *For Jehovah hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for his habitation.*
- 14 *This is my resting-place for ever: Here will I dwell; For I have desired it.*
- 15 *I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.*
- 16 *Her priests also will I clothe with salvation; And her saints shall shout aloud for joy.*
- 17 *There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.*
- 18 *His enemies will I clothe with shame; But upon himself shall his crown flourish.*

We cannot help but see in these closing verses a prophetic glimpse of the spiritual kingdom of our Lord. If Solomon wrote the Psalm it is unlikely that he was aware of the depth of the spiritual truth contained within these closing words of the Psalm. If the angels in heaven were kept in the dark regarding the salvation that would be brought to man (1 Pet. 1:12), and if the prophets themselves busied themselves in searching what "time or manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto," then Solomon may very well have written the words contained here and then laid down his pen and asked himself, "Of what speaketh the prophet?"

**132:13** - *"For Jehovah hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for his habitation."*

"Zion" refers to much more than the city of Jerusalem or physical tabernacle built by Solomon. The word stands for God's dwelling place in every dispensation. Such a place is characterized by righteousness. Such is God's true dwelling place.

**132:14** - *"This is my resting-place for ever: Here will I dwell; For I have desired it."*

The church is the only dwelling place that God ever intended to be "for ever." It was planned and purposed before the foundations of the earth, and as such the ultimate fulfillment of God's "desire" (Eph. 3:10-12).

**132:15** - *"I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread."*

If these verses are speaking of the church, then here is a reference to the abundant blessings in that church (Eph. 1:3). The "poor" will be satisfied with the "bread of life." Jesus Himself told us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). Those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness...shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).

**132:16** - *"Her priests also will I clothe with salvation; And her saints shall shout aloud for joy."*

The "priests" are the Christians (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). Each one in the Kingdom is clothed with salvation, and can, and should, "shout aloud for joy." It is rather astonishing how many so-called theologians treat this verse as nothing more than a reference to physical Jerusalem and concoct a premillennialistic theory of some earthly rule of our Lord upon some earthly throne, and being worshipped in an earthly temple. How can anyone see in these verses nothing more than a reference to some physical kingdom, city, or temple? No, dear friend, there is more here than the temple that Solomon built; yea, much more!

**132:17** - *"There will I make the horn of David to bud"* - The horn was an emblem of power; and then, of success or prosperity. The Hebrew word here translated *"to bud"* means to grow, or to shoot forth as a plant, or as grass grows; and then it may be applied to anything which shoots forth or grows. The idea is that David's posterity would be endowed with strength and would have the means



of defending themselves against their enemies. The idea of complete victory is in view, something that simply cannot describe Israel since that physical nation was, following the rule of Solomon, characterized by abject defeat and slavery by their enemies.

*"I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed"* – The "lamp" is the word of God (Psa. 119:105). While the world walks in darkness, the "anointed" of God walk in the way that has been brightened by the word of God.

**132:18** - *"His enemies will I clothe with shame; But upon himself shall his crown flourish."*

The victory of the Messiah over His enemies is everywhere spoken of in the Old and New Testaments. His "crown" may have reference to His reign in the Kingdom, the church. Hence, His glory is exalted by means of His body, the church (cf. Eph. 3:21).

### ***Lessons***

1. The immutability of God's promises shines in this Psalm. The Psalmist acknowledges the eternal truth that once "Jehovah hath sworn...in truth He will not turn away from it." Centuries before our Lord came to this earth the God of heaven promised that He would, of the seed of David, set One upon the throne and rule over Israel. Of course that "rule" and "kingdom" are spiritual in nature. That promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2:1-47.
2. God does not dwell in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24). The physical temple in Jerusalem could not contain Him for He is not physical as "though he needeth anything, seeing he himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25).
3. The Old Testament system was symbolic of the greater system that would come with the age of the Messiah. The ark of the covenant symbolized God's presence, as did the city of Jerusalem, and the temple built by Solomon. Today, God's dwelling place is the church of our Lord. It is His "house" (1 Tim. 3:15), as well as His holy "temple" (Eph. 2:21-22). As members of the body of Christ we are privileged to be priests in that temple, and members of His family. What a sacred honor it is, therefore, to serve Him in righteousness and holiness of life.

## *“The Beauty And Blessings of Unity”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the fourteenth of what has been titled “Songs of Ascents.” Commentators are divided as to the occasion for the Psalm. One opinion is that it represents the priests and Levites as they returned from Babylonian captivity and were united in their service to God. The other opinion is that David penned this Psalm upon occasion of the union between the tribes when they all met unanimously to make him king. The subscript attributes the Psalm to David, which, of course, would rule out the later date of the Psalm. As for the authorship, we believe that David wrote the Psalm. We base this on the following reasons: First, the ancient manuscripts attribute it to him in the subscript. Yes, some manuscripts may have omitted that subscript (the Targum and some of LXX), but these uninspired comments do appear in some of our most extant MSS such as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Second, the language is certainly the style of David. He knew by experience the bitterness of division and had he written on the subject we believe his words would have been along the line of the beautiful refrain found in this Psalm. Third, when we take the “occasion” for writing the Psalm that is suggested above, the only logical author is David.

We doubt that any Psalm that consists of three verses or less is as beautiful as this one. In fact, we might be so bold as to state that of all the 150 chapters in the Psalm, the 133rd ranks as one of the most sublime of all. It is sublime in its structure, its theme, and its challenge to those of every generation. Of this Psalm, Albert Barnes wrote:

The psalm is an illustration, in most beautiful language, of brotherly love, particularly in regard to its calm, and gentle, and sweet influence - like the ointment which flowed down from the head of the anointed priest, or like the gentle dew on Hermon or Zion. It is a psalm applicable alike to a church; to family; to a gathering of friends (Barnes, ESword Notes).

The theme of the Psalm is not only true, it is timely. “The unity of brethren – people with a common Father, a common faith and a common calling – is a state the composer extols as something good and pleasant” (Leroy Brownlow).

## ***Analysis***

The Psalm consists of two parts. The Psalmist begins with an affirmation (133:1). This is followed by two examples that are intended to impress the reader with the beauty of the unity affirmed in the first verse (133:2-3). Phillips divides the Psalm into two parts, but with a different verse division: (1) The *Beauty* of Unity, verses 1-3a; (2) The *Blessing* of Unity, 133:3b. Brother Deaver has (1) Proclamation, verse 1; (2) Elaboration, verses 2-3. For our study we will follow Willmington:

I. Exhortation To Unity and Fellowship, 133:1

II. Examples of Unity and Fellowship, 133:2-3

A. It is precious as the anointing oil used on Aaron (133:2)

B. It is as refreshing as the dew falling on Mount Zion (133:3)

## ***Commentary***

### ***Exhortation To Unity and Fellowship***

#### **Verse 1**

1 *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!*

**133:1:** “*Behold*” – It is as if the Psalmist looked upon the gathering of God’s people and saw a manifestation of mutual love and fellowship that impressed him deeply. Though the Hebrew word (*hinnêh*) might express surprise, it can also be used to draw one’s attention to a particular object. Did David observe the mutual love and unity at a particular moment, or was it more abstract; an idea or thought perhaps? We may never know.

“*How good and how pleasant it is*” – There are some things that are “good” but not necessarily pleasant – a visit to a doctor; dental treatment; taking medicine; a stay in the hospital; a rigorous physical workout. Then, there are some things that are “pleasant” but not good for you – a bowl of ice cream for a diabetic; over indulgence in pleasures of the world; the pleasures of sin, to name but a few. The

Psalmist is about to draw our attention to something that is both “good” and “pleasant.”

*“For brethren to dwell together in unity”* – Volumes have been written on unity. Who among us would question the value and importance of unity in the body of Christ? We are called to peace and unity (Phil. 2:1-4). We are to be “knit together” (Eph. 4:16). Our Lord prayed for unity among believers the night before He went to the cross (John 17:20-21). We are encouraged to work together in harmony so as to accomplish the same objectives (1 Cor. 12:12-26; 1 Cor. 1:10-12). Even as I write these lines our brotherhood is racked with division the likes of which this student has never seen in his lifetime. Beyond this is the division that exists in Protestant denominationalism that leaves the impression with the unbelieving world that Christianity is anything *but* united.

Some have suggested that the solution to the problem of division is to somehow “de-emphasize” doctrine. Some have capitulated on doctrinal truths; others have simply relaxed their stand on the necessity of doctrine and have ceased to preach and teach some of the basic fundamental truths that make the church distinct. Those who continue to hold fast to the word and who adamantly contend earnestly for the “faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3) are looked upon as “knuckle heads,” “radicals,” or “legalists.” Alan Highers has noted:

The church cannot be united by compromise. Some apparently believe, “If you cannot beat them, join them.” Jesus said, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31). We cannot forsake our convictions—and more importantly, we cannot forsake the teaching of God’s Word for the sake of unity (Highers, Freed Hardeman University Lectures 2009, page 199).

The Psalmist tells us that unity is “good.” “Unity is good because it brings honor and glory to the One Whom we serve. It enables members of the body of Christ to work together for the spread of the gospel. It sends a message to outsiders that we love and respect each other (Winford Claiborne, FHU Lectures 2009, page 89).

### **Examples of Unity and Fellowship Verses 2-3**

2 *It is like the precious oil upon the head, That ran down upon the beard, Even Aaron's beard; That came down upon the skirt of his garments;*

3 *Like the dew of Hermon, That cometh down upon the mountains of Zion: For there Jehovah commanded the blessing, Even life for evermore.*

**133:2:** “*It is like the precious ointment*” - The Hebrew word means “the good ointment” (cf. the description of this ointment which was used in the consecration of the high priest, and the holy things of the sanctuary, in Exodus 30:22-30).

Anointing with oil was common on festivals and joyous occasions (see the notes at Psa. 23:5), and hence, it became an emblem of anything joyous, happy, beautiful; and the idea seemed to be carried to the highest degree when it was connected with the anointing of a high priest to the sacred duties of his office. There is no other resemblance between the idea of anointing with oil and that of harmony among brethren than this which is derived from the gladness - the joyousness - connected with such an anointing (Barnes, ESword Notes).

*“ran down upon the beard...upon the skirt of his garments”* – The idea is that this oil was in great abundance; there was so much of this oil that it literally ran down Aaron’s beard, falling upon the priestly garments, and then continuing to come down upon the skirt of the garments. Barnes noted, “The word “even” here, introduced by our translators, weakens the force and beauty of the comparison. The psalmist had the simple image of Aaron before his mind, without intending to compare him with any other” (Barnes).

**133:3:** “*Like the dew of Hermon*” – Literally, “Like the dew of Hermon which descends on the mountains of Zion.” It is not the dew of Hermon that descends upon the mountains of Zion, but rather the reference is to the dew that descends upon the mountains of Zion being “like” the dew of Hermon. Again, the idea seems to be that of abundance. The author, in thinking of unity among brethren, thought of the calm and gentle nature in which dew fell upon plants and flowers.

*“For there Jehovah commanded the blessing”* – God appointed Zion as the place where divine blessings would go forth. The specific “blessing” the Psalmist focuses upon is that of “*life for evermore.*” Literally the Hebrew is, “life to eternity.”

Whereas the previous verse focuses our attention upon the abundance and beauty of unity, in this verse the Psalmist draws our attention to the blessings associated with such unity of brethren. It is as the “dew” which brings abundant blessings to those who rely upon it to cool the ground and give moisture to the ground. So also unity does much to promote the cause of Christ and thereby bring salvation to men. “It contributes very much to our fruitfulness in everything that is good; it moistens the heart, and makes it tender and fit to receive the good seed of the word; as, on the contrary, malice and bitterness unfit us to receive it, 1 Pet. 2:1. It is as the dew of Hermon, a common hill (for brotherly love is the beauty and benefit of civil societies), and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion, a holy hill, for it contributes greatly to the fruitfulness of sacred societies” (Matthew Henry).

### ***Lessons***

1. G.Campbell Morgan: “The first matter of importance in individual life is ever to seek fellowship with God. When this is sought and found, there always follows the realization of the fellowship of the saints. All lack of union among ourselves is due to failure to realize our union with God” (Morgan, page 272).
2. An old story tells of a father who had a family of quarrelsome sons. One day he called his sons before him, and picking out the strongest of them, handed him a stick. “Snap it,” he said. The son did so with a gesture of contempt. The man handed him two sticks. “Snap them,” he said. Again the son did so. The old man handed him ever increasing numbers of sticks. “Snap them,” he said – a bundle of four, five, six. Soon the young man was having to strain to snap the sticks and, finally, he had to admit defeat. “Unity is strength,” the old man cautioned his sons. “A house divided cannot stand. Anyone can overthrow you one by one. But stand together, in unity, and your united strength will give your enemies second thought.”
3. Here are some things that contribute to unity among brethren: (1) A knowledge of God’s word on this subject. There are an abundance of passages that stress unity among brethren (1 Cor. 1:10-12; John 17:20-21; Eph. 4:1-6); (2) A determination to strive for unity on the part of every member of the congregation; (3) Love will enhance unity; and (4) A realization of what division will do to the church of the Lord.

5. “Unity does not come from conferences and councils. It comes when each ceases to bend the plumb-line to accommodate his wall and begins to straighten his wall to fit the plumb-line” (Ruel Lemmons, as quoted by James Bales, *The Church in Transition to What?* page 50).
6. N.B. Hardeman: “The greatest curse on this earth tonight is religious division. The greatest hindrance to the cause of Christ is denominational rivalry. The greatest handicap and the greatest discouragement unto faithful, godly men is the fact that people who claim to be members of the body of Christ are torn asunder, riven by human opinions, popular preference, rather than submit to God’s will, all speak the same thing, and be of one mind and one judgment, as the Lord prayed and for which the apostle pleaded” (*Hardeman Tabernacle Sermons, Volume II*, page 178).

## *“Bless Ye The Lord”*

### ***Introduction***

This is the last of the fifteen Psalms entitled "A Song of degree." The author and occasion of the writing is unknown. It seems to have been designed as a call to praise, and is very fitting for the conclusion of this group of Psalms. There is a note of calm repose in this Psalm. It is as if the Psalmist has finally reached the end of his journey. "The atmosphere of the song is rest. The sun has sunk in the west. The activity of the day is over. Quietness pervades the city. The pilgrims have found the hour of peace" (Morgan, page 272).

### ***Analysis***

There appears to be two movements in the Psalm. In the first two verses the pilgrims who have arrived at the city address the servants of the Lord, "that by night stand in the house of Jehovah" (verse 1). The people call upon the priests to "lift up your hands to the sanctuary, and bless ye Jehovah" (verse 2). The second portion of the Psalm seems to be a blessing from the priests to the people: "Jehovah bless thee out of Zion" (verse 3).

The Psalm may have been used as a summons to praise, and it is not at all improbable that it was designed to be sung by alternate choirs - the first two verses representing the *people* as they approach the sanctuary who are calling upon the *priests* who serve God to "lift up their hands in the sanctuary and to praise the Lord" (verse 3). The last verse would be the response on the part of the *priests* to the *people* pronouncing a blessing on the people - a blessing proceeding out of Zion. "Thus in the silence of the night, ere sleep comes, the worshipper blesses Jehovah, and is blessed by Him" (Morgan, page 272). Of the Psalm, Roy Deaver notes, "This Psalm, therefore, would stress that at long last the worshippers have arrived at the place of worship. They address the priests, exhorting them to praise God, and the priests in turn pronounce blessings upon the worshippers" (Deaver, *Volume II*, page 213). He then gives the following analysis:

I. Exclamation, verse 1;



II. Exhortation, verses 1-2;

III. Response, verse 3;

Willmington provides this analysis (*The Outline Bible*, page 289), which we will use for our study of the Psalm:

I. Render A Blessing To The Lord (134:1-2)

A. Who? (134:1): The watchmen of Israel

B. When? (134:1): During the night

C. Where? (134:1): In the Temple

D. How? (134:2): Lifting up hands

II. Receive A Blessing From The Lord (134:3): The Lord blesses from Jerusalem.

This being the last Psalm in the songs of ascent it might be good to look back at these fifteen Psalms and get a mental picture of what has occurred as the servant of God has climbed these steps, arriving now at the very top. But not only has he made the climb *physically*, he has done so *spiritually* as well. He began the journey with a sorrowful moan: "Woe is me" (120:5). Now he stands at the top and can declare, "Bless the Lord" (134:1). We noted when we began our study of these fifteen songs of ascent that they can be divided into three groups of five chapters each. In the first five the Psalmist was at the bottom looking up. He is **beholding** the Lord (chapters 120-124). Having negotiated the first flight of five steps, we come next to the second flight where the Psalmist might be described as **believing** the Lord (chapters 125-129). In the third and final portion of the steps the Psalmist can be seen **blessing** the Lord (chapters 130-134). With this final Psalm he appears to have successfully made the journey; he now stands at the top, the victory is his. While he sang of the pardon from the Lord in chapter 130, the patience of the Lord in chapter 131, the promise of the Lord in 132, and the people of the Lord in chapter 133, here he speaks of the power of the Lord. The victory is granted by the God "that made heaven and earth."

### **Commentary**

#### ***Render A Blessing To The Lord***

##### **Verses 1-2**

1 Behold, bless ye Jehovah, all ye servants of Jehovah, That by night stand in the house of Jehovah.

2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, And bless ye Jehovah

**134:1:** *"Behold, bless ye Jehovah all ye his servants"* – It is the servants of God who are in the position to praise Jehovah. That privilege does not belong to those who are not in fellowship with the Father.

*"That by night stand in the house of Jehovah"* - If we accept the general explanation that this is a description of Israel approaching the temple, it would appear that they have arrived, and are calling for their brethren to observe what is before them.

Those who *"stand in the house of Jehovah"* would be the priests and Levites, called to perform the service of the tabernacle and temple. Barnes points out that "there was a class of singers in the temple who devoted the night, or a part of the night, to praise; and it possible that this service may have been continued during the entire night" (Barnes, ESword Notes).

**134:2** – This verse serves as an exhortation. It is likely the worshippers were beseeching the servants of the temple to lift up their hands and bless God; to render unto Him their service as appointed by the Law of Moses. The footnote in the ASV has "in holiness" so that the verse reads, "Lift up your hands in holiness." The phrase denotes prayer, but may also be applicable to general praise and worship to God.

### ***Receive A Blessing From The Lord*** **Verse 3**

*3 Jehovah bless thee out of Zion; even he that made heaven and earth*

Here is the proper OBJECT of praise and worship, and at least two reasons why He so deserves the praise of His followers. (1) Because He blesses us; (2) Because He created the heavens and the earth.

**134:3** - *"Jehovah bless thee out of Zion"* – The Psalmist first draws our attention to the Lord's abode. Zion is not a physical place. It is, rather, a designation of the spiritual realm in which Jehovah abides. "Zion" came to represent that place where God dwelt; His holy hill. It is typical of the church, God's dwelling place in the Christian dispensation.

*"even he that made heaven and earth"* – Now the author focuses upon the Lord's ability. Volumes could be written, and have been

written, both secular and by divine inspiration, regarding the power and might of Jehovah God. Every star in our solar system, every tree, every mountain, every sea – all of this was made by our God. No wonder the Psalmist calls upon his audience to “bless Jehovah.”

### ***Lessons***

1. The servant of God does not slumber in his duty to God. He stands watch even in the night hours. Like the wise virgins who kept their lamps trimmed at all hours in expectation of the return of the bride groom, so the child of God maintains vigilance at all hours in every situation.
2. Heavenly blessings are for those who dwell in Zion, and all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph 1:3).
3. “Here we see the ever-present danger of becoming unduly familiar with holy things. We can take spiritual privilege for granted, and yawn over a place of privilege which others would covet. We can be guilty of grumbling and complaining because the Lord has given us some more meaningful position to fulfill. Imagine having to exhort any of those who stood ‘in His sanctuary’ to bless Him. Yet how often in our own day and age do we find it necessary to be exhorted to be at our post, in the right spirit, with hearts overflowing with gratitude and praise. How many there are who infrequently attend the house of Lord who serve Him indifferently, carelessly, grudgingly. The word comes ringing down the centuries. ‘Behold! Wake up! Bless ye the Lord!’ (Phillips, page 550).

## *“Praise Ye The Lord For His Marvelous Works”*

### ***Introduction***

The author of the Psalm is not known, nor can the occasion or date for its composition be determined. The language of the Psalm is of such a general nature that it might have been composed at almost any time in Israel's history. It is a call upon the people of God to praise the Lord for His mighty works in creation and history. The Psalmist contrasts the true and living God with the lifeless and powerless idols that were made by their worshippers. Clarke points out: “The conclusion of this Psalm is nearly the same with Psalm 115; and what is said about idols, and the effects of the power of God, seems to be taken from it and the tenth chapter of Jeremiah; and from these and other circumstances it appears the Psalm was written after the captivity; and might have been used at the dedication of the second temple” (Clarke, ESword). This, of course, would date the Psalm sometime after the return from Babylonian Captivity.

Several parts of the Psalm are identical with other chapters that we have already studied. For this reason the Psalm has been called “a mosaic Psalm.” Compare the following

#### **Psalms 135**

Verses 1-2  
Verses 2b-3a  
Verses 4  
Verse 5  
Verse 7  
Verse 13  
Verse 14  
Verses 8-12  
Verses 15-21

#### **References**

Psalms 134:1-3  
Psalms 116:19  
Deuteronomy 7:6  
Psalms 95:3  
Jeremiah 10:13  
Exodus 3:15  
Deuteronomy 32:36  
Psalms 136  
Psalms 115.

Repetition is a good tool for learning and we would do well to meditate once again upon the wonderful truths presented in this

beautiful song though we may have seen those truths in some prior chapter. As Maclaren notes, "The flowers are arranged in a new bouquet, because the poet had long delighted in their fragrance." God does nothing by accident, nor is He wasteful with words. There is something to be gained as we look anew at words which we have already studied, though they be set in new surroundings.

## ***Analysis***

This is a Psalm of praise. Morgan notes, "After the general movement of this book of the Psalter, which has brought us in thought to the ultimate realization of worship, and before the final psalms of perfected praise, we now have a section (135-144) in which are contained songs of experience, the inspiration of which is in the conceptions of Jehovah, and the way of approach to Him, which the former songs have set forth" (Morgan, page 272). We have selected to title this beautiful Psalm, "Praise Ye The Lord For His Marvelous Works." Our English versions translate 'hallelujah' with "Praise Ye The Lord," or "Praise Ye Jehovah." It might be of interest to note that our '*transliterated*' word "Hallelujah" actually comes from 'hallelu' meaning "praise ye," and "yah" for Jehovah.

Willmington divided the Psalm according to *topic*:

- I. The Only True God (135:1-14; 19-21)
  - A. Who should worship him? (135:1-2; 19-21)
  - B. Why should we worship him? (135:3-14)
- II. The Many False Gods (135:15-18)
  - A. They are made by mortals out of silver and gold (135:15)
  - B. They are made like mortals (135:18)
  - C. They have mouths, eyes, ears, and noses, but cannot speak, see, hear, or smell (135:16-17)

Phillips provided a rather detailed homiletic outline of the Psalm.

### ***“Worship”***

- I. Invoked Worship (135:1-2)
  - A. His Person (135:1a)
  - B. Our Position (135:1b-2)
- II. Intelligent Worship (135:3-14)
  - A. For His Goodness (135:3-4)
  - B. For His Greatness (135:5-13)
  - C. For His Government (135:14)
- III. Insensate Worship (135:15-18)

- A. The Foolishness of Idolatry (135:15-17)
- B. The Foolishness of Idolators (135:16-17)
- IV. Insistent Worship (135:19-21)
  - A. Full Participation in Worship (135:19-20)
  - B. Fervent Participation in Worship (135:21)

One writer observed: “This is a song of praise to the Lord for his goodness as the Lord of creation, in seven verses; for his grace as the deliverer of his people, in seven more, and for his unity as the only true and living God, in seven more. - *James G. Murphy* [as quoted by Spurgeon].

Some years ago I entered the following outline into my personal notes. If borrowed, I have long forgotten the source. We will use this outline for our study of this chapter:

- I. The Call To Praise, verses 1-4;
- II. Reasons for Praise, verses 5-18;
  - 1. Because of His creative power, 5-7;
  - 2. Because of His judgment upon Egypt, 8-9;
  - 3. Because of His overthrow of the nations, 10-11;
  - 4. Because of His gracious heritage for Israel, 12;
  - 5. Because of His very name, 13-14;
  - 6. Because He is superior to idols, 15-18

III. An Appeal For Praise To God, 19-21;

### ***Commentary***

#### ***The Call To Praise*** **Verses 1-4**

- 1 *Praise ye Jehovah. Praise ye the name of Jehovah; Praise him, O ye servants of Jehovah,*
- 2 *Ye that stand in the house of Jehovah, In the courts of the house of our God.*
- 3 *Praise ye Jehovah; for Jehovah is good: Sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.*
- 4 *For Jehovah hath chosen Jacob unto himself, And Israel for his own possession.*

**135:1-2:** – “*Praise ye Jehovah*” – Four times in these three verses the Psalmist calls upon his audience to praise the Lord. We praise

Him because of what He has done for us, but we also praise Him for what He is in and of Himself.

*“O ye servants of Jehovah”* – Here we see the *people* who are to praise Him. The “servants” refers to the priests and Levites that “stand in the house of Jehovah” (vs. 2). Those who stand “*in the courts of the house of our God*” are the pious Israelites. Those who stand in the house of God in this dispensation are the Christian, the “priests” of God serving under Christ our High Priest. The ones most likely to praise the Lord are the very people who have been blessed by Him. It is God’s people who have tasted of His gracious gift of salvation, who have been admitted into His fellowship, and who have come to appreciate the wonderful beauty of the Redeemer.

Those who shun his service are sure to neglect his praise; but as grace has made you his own personal servants, let your hearts make you his court-musicians. Here we see the servant of the Lord arousing his fellow-servants by three times calling upon them to praise. Are we then, so slow in such a sweet employ? Or is it that when we do our utmost it is all too little for such a Lord? Both are true. We do not praise enough; we cannot praise too much. We ought to be always at it; answering to the command here given - Praise, Praise, Praise. Let the three-in-one have the praises of our spirit, soul, and body. For the past, the present, and the future, let us render three-fold hallelujahs (Spurgeon, ESword).

**135:3:** *“For Jehovah is good”* – God has made His rain to fall on the just and the unjust; He has showered us with innumerable blessings. It is part of the very nature of our God to be beneficent to His creation. But aside from God’s goodness to us, it is fitting that we should give praises to our Father because to do so is *“pleasant.”*

**135:4:** *“For Jehovah hath chosen Jacob unto himself, And Israel for his own possession”* – The “historical” aspect of the selection of this tiny nation to be God’s people is captured in the dual reference to the patriarch Jacob. He is first referred to by the name conferred upon him by his parents, *Jacob*, and then by the name given by God, *Israel*. But the real value of this verse is seen in the dual reference to the close relationship of Jacob and God. God chose Jacob *“unto himself.”* Israel was God’s *“own possession,”* and that close relationship with God and divine purpose in the life of Jacob is seen the change of that patriarch’s name from “Jacob” (‘supplanter’) to “Israel” (‘prince’). “The love of God gives a new name and imparts a new value; for the comparison to a royal treasure is a most honourable one. As kings have a special regalia, and a selection of the

rarest jewels, so the Lord deigns [condescends, TW] to reckon his chosen nation as his wealth, his delight, his glory" (Spurgeon, ESword). Those of us living in this dispensation enjoy the "new name" that is far above the physical name of Jacob, or even Abraham, for "if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3:29).

### ***Reasons for Praise*** **Verses 5-18**

The Psalmist now sets about providing numerous reasons why God is so deserving of praise. Of course Israel would have been aware of these distinctive traits of Jehovah, and our opinion is that the Psalm was intended to appeal to all men to worship God in view of His wonderful and majestic character noted in these fourteen verses.

*First, because of His creative power, Verses 5-6*

- 5 *For I know that Jehovah is great, And that our Lord is above all gods.*  
6 *Whatsoever Jehovah pleased, that hath he done, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps;*  
7 *Who causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; Who maketh lightnings for the rain; Who bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures;*

**135:5:** "Jehovah is great....above all gods" - There is some connection between God having "chosen" Israel, and His superiority over the numerous heathen "gods." They have no power, but God's power is manifested in His selection, protection, and preservation of Jacob. The growth into a mighty nation, the providential care of the baby nation, and the deliverance from Egypt, etc. are all manifestations of the superiority of our God over the "gods" of Egypt and the unbelieving pagan world.

**135:6-7:** God is to be praised for the very reason that He manifested His great power in bringing into existence the universe as we know it. No idol has ever come close to demonstrating such power and might.

*Second, because of His judgment upon Egypt, Verses 8-9*

- 8 *Who smote the first-born of Egypt, Both of man and beast;*  
9 *Who sent signs and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt,*



*Upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants;*

**135:8-9:** The specific events listed here are by no means an exhaustive account of what God did to Egypt. Only the last of the ten plagues is mentioned specifically, and a brief summary of the other nine are here provided. The marvelous signs and wonders that our God performed in the process of delivering Israel from Egyptian bondage should be enough to convince anyone of His worthiness to be praised.

*Third, because of His overthrow of the nations, Verses 10-11*

*10 Who smote many nations, And slew mighty kings,  
11 Sihon king of the Amorites, And Og king of Bashan, And all the  
kingdoms of Canaan,*

**135:10-11:** Whereas verses 8-9 focused on the exodus, these two verses, in brief summary, speak of the period of the wilderness wanderings. Sihon and Og were two kings of the Transjordan (east of the Jordan) defeated by the Israelites during the wilderness period (cf. Num. 21:21-35). Our author provides us with historical evidence of the might of Jehovah, things which Israel knew full well.

*Fifth, because of His gracious heritage for Israel, Verse 12*

*12 And gave their land for a heritage, A heritage unto Israel his  
people.*

**135:12:** Having focused on the Exodus, and then the wilderness wandering, the Psalmist here, in one verse, sums up the conquest and settlement of the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua. When Israel crossed the Jordan they faced formidable foes. The cities were walled, and the people trained in warfare. But God drove them all out, and delivered into the hands of Israel the promised inheritance. Hence, Israel should worship God for His power and might in fulfilling His promises.

*Sixth, because of His very name, Verses 13-14*

*13 Thy name, O Jehovah, endureth for ever; Thy memorial name, O  
Jehovah, throughout all generations.  
14 For Jehovah will judge his people, And repent himself  
concerning his servants.*

**135:13-14:** The very name of Jehovah is great. The "name" was often used in reference to God Himself.

*Seventh, because He is superior to idols, Verses 15-18*

*15 The idols of the nations are silver and gold, The work of men's hands.*

*16 They have mouths, but they speak not; Eyes have they, but they see not;*

*17 They have ears, but they hear not; Neither is there any breath in their mouths.*

*18 They that make them shall be like unto them; Yea, every one that trusteth in them.*

**135:15-18:** It is an astonishing thing that anyone would ever put his trust in idols. The complete uselessness of such man made 'gods' is described here. Powerless, they deserve no praise or homage whatsoever. By implication, the God that manifests the **opposite** of such worthlessness, is worthy of all praise and honor. It is rather curious that the Psalmist gives his audience a panoramic view of God's dealings with Israel, from the Exodus through the conquest and settlement, and then closes this portion of the Psalm with such a powerful refutation of the foolishness of Idolatry. It may be that these four verses are intended to indict Israel for her participation in idolatrous worship while neglecting the worship of the true and living God Who had manifested Himself in the powerful deeds mentioned in the previous verses. If so, then this portion of the Psalm is a summary of the closing days of Israel's existence as a nation when she indulged in worshipping the "gods" of the heathen nations around her. If our opinion is correct it stands as a stark contrast to the glorious beginning of a nation that eventually became no better than the nations about her.

### **An Appeal For Praise To God Verses 19-21**

*19 O house of Israel, bless ye Jehovah: O house of Aaron, bless ye Jehovah:*

*20 O house of Levi, bless ye Jehovah: Ye that fear Jehovah, bless ye Jehovah.*

*21 Blessed be Jehovah out of Zion, Who dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye Jehovah.*

There is a triune call for Israel to bless God. The first is addressed to the "house of Israel," the second to the "house of Aaron," and the third to the "house of Levi." All persons are called upon to give praises to Jehovah. The *house of Israel* (the nation in general), the *house of Aaron* and the *house of Levi* (the Lord's ministers that attended in his sanctuary), and all others (those "*that fear the Lord*"). In addition, those who may not be of the house of Israel but who "dwelleth at Jerusalem" are also invited to give praise unto the Lord.

We have seen similar language in Psalms 115:9-13, though the admonition in that Psalm was to trust in the Lord, while here it is the praise the Lord.

### ***Lessons***

1. Oh, the futility of idols! They are absolutely powerless. They are the result of man's cunning devise, and his own craftsmanship as it is wrought upon some piece of wood, or molded out of some piece of clay. How utterly astonishing that men would even **think** that such self made structures could possess power to guide and protect. And yet evidently such was the case. Idolatry has not been eradicated; it has simply changed forms. Paul told the Colossians that they were to "put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col 3:5). The unlawful desire for money is idolatry for the simple reason that it puts its trust in that which has no life, nor can it give life. Unfortunately a great number of God's own children seem to ignore this passage, and like the world about them, they seek the worldly trinkets that Satan offers as a substitute for trust and faith in God. No, idolatry has not been eradicated!
2. "Fundamental Lesson: We must always praise Jehovah: because of Who He is, and what He is; because of what He has done, is doing, and will continue to do. We must praise Him because of His power, which is so forcefully declared (1) in creation, (2) in nature, and (3) in history" (Roy Deaver, Volume II, page 216).
3. We should praise the Lord for (1) the excellence of His nature, (2) the revelation of His will, and (3) the pleasantness of worship.
4. We can know that God is great (1) by observing nature, the very handiwork of His hands (Psa. 19:1); (2) by reading His word; (3)

by the blessings provided and the joy that comes from the practical application of His word to our life.

## *“Thanksgiving For God’s Enduring Mercy”*

### ***Introduction***

The 136<sup>th</sup> Psalm is a beautiful tribute to the mercy of Jehovah God. It opens and closes with a call to praise, and the movement of the Psalm sets forth reasons for such praise. One of the interesting features of this Psalm is the fact that in the opening call the three great titles for God are used: Jehovah, Elohim, and Adone’. Morgan notes, “The dominant note is mercy as manifest in all the activities of God. To see the love and compassion of God in creation, in deliverance, in government, in restoration, is ever to be constrained to praise” (Morgan, page 273). Some commentators suggest that the use of the three great names of God may be an allusion to the triune nature of the Godhead.

Psalm 136 is a companion to chapter 135, and both together form an appendix to the songs of degrees contained in chapters 120-134. Whereas Psalm 135 reviews the history of Israel and underlies the folly of worshipping idols, this chapter focuses on Israel’s history with particular emphasis upon the wisdom of worshipping the true God.

This Psalm has no title, and the author cannot be determined. The date of the Psalm would have been some time subsequent to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt and their settling in the land of Canaan. Like the previous Psalm, it is a song of praise for God’s care of Israel with particular emphasis upon His enduring mercy.

Of peculiar notice is the oft repeated refrain, "His mercy endureth for ever." The refrain is so worded as to suggest to the reader that God’s mercy is responsible for all of the blessings listed herein. The word “mercy” (KJV) and/or “lovingkindness” (ASV) translate the Hebrew *‘cheched’* and are synonymous with “kindness, favor, good deeds, fidelity, loyalty, and covenant faithfulness” (Berard, page 388). The Psalm can, therefore, be rightfully entitled, "Thanksgiving For God's Enduring Mercy."

## ***Analysis***

The Psalm begins with an exhortation to “give thanks unto Jehovah” (verses 1-3). This is followed with four reasons why God is so deserving of praise: (1) because of Creation, verses 4-9; (2) because of the Deliverance from Egyptian captivity, verses 10-15; (3) because of the Guidance He provided in settling the Promised Land, verses 16-22; and (4) because of the daily Protection provided Israel, verses 23-25. The Psalm closes as it began with an exhortation to “give thanks unto the God of heaven” (verse 26).

Phillips likewise divided the Psalm into three parts: I. The Call To Thanksgiving (136:1-3); II. The Causes of Thanksgiving (136:4-25), and III. The Conclusion of Thanksgiving (136:26).

Our approach to this Psalm will be a little different than our treatment of other chapters. The events in this chapter would have been very familiar to the original audience. In addition, it was not the events themselves that the author wanted to address, but the fact that they were a manifestation of the wonderful mercy of God. Rather than comment on each verse, I have selected to address each section with some observations that will help the reader to appreciate the relationship of those events to the lovingkindness of our God.

## ***Commentary***

### ***Exhortation Verses 1-3***

- 1 *Oh give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.*
- 2 *Oh give thanks unto the God of gods; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.*
- 3 *Oh give thanks unto the Lord of lords; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*

The only difference between these three verses is the titles the Psalmist uses for God (see introductory notes). Three times in as many verses the audience is exhorted, “Oh give thanks...for he is good...for his lovingkindness endureth forever.” “The exhortation is intensely earnest: the Psalmist pleads with the Lord's people with an “O,” three times repeated” (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

*“for he is good”* – The goodness of God astounds the imagination. Modern man has utterly failed to reflect upon the goodness of God and has, instead, attributed all that he has to his own ingenuity and ability. Meditation upon God’s goodness would benefit all who would take the time to contemplate the magnitude of God’s goodness. “He is good beyond all others; indeed, he alone is good in the highest sense; he is the source of good, the good of all good, the sustainer of good, the perfecter of good, and the rewarder of good. For this he deserves the constant gratitude of his people” (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

The student should notice the three titles used by the author to speak of God: *“Jehovah...God of gods...Lord of lords”* - The first title used to refer to God is *yeh-ho-vaw*, translated in the ASV as “Jehovah” and the KJV as “Lord.” To the Jew this was the most holy title used to refer to the God of heaven. So sacred was this name that the Jew would not even pronounce it. The electronic version of the ISBE provides this interesting bit of information regarding the title:

Characteristic of the Old Testament is its insistence on the possible knowledge of God as a person; and Yahweh is His name as a person. It is illogical, certainly, that the later Hebrews should have shrunk from its pronunciation, in view of the appropriateness of the name and of the Old Testament insistence on the personality of God, who as a person has this name. The American Standard Revised Version quite correctly adopts the transliteration “Yahweh” to emphasize its significance and purpose as a personal name of God revealed (ISBE, ESword Notes).

The second title (verse 2) translates the Hebrew *‘el-o-heem’* This is the first form of the Divine name in the Bible and is usually translated “God.” It is the most frequently used name in the Old Testament, and its equivalent in the New Testament is *‘theos.’* Its form is plural, but the construction is singular, which means it governs a singular verb or action such as that which appears in Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning **God** [plural, TW] **created** [singular, TW] the heavens and the earth” (emphasis mine, TW). To the Hebrew the word came to represent dignity, and included the idea of “might” or “power” associated with God.

The third word, Lord, translates the Hebrew *‘Adone.’* The word, as a name of Deity, emphasizes His sovereignty (cf. Ps. 2:4; Isa. 7:7), and corresponds to the New Testament word *‘Kurios.’* The Hebrew

word is sometimes combined with 'Yahweh' (Gen. 15:8; Isa 7:7), and with 'Elohim' (Psa. 86:12).

*"for his lovingkindness endureth forever"* – This refrain will be repeated in every verse. It is perhaps the sweetest song a man might sing. But alas, only those whose hearts are attuned to the goodness of God can appreciate the depth of the Psalmist's words. The very basis for worship is the goodness of God. The heart in deep gratitude cannot help but express God's greatness, goodness, and worthiness to be praised. We are going to see in this Psalm the oft expressed phrase "his lovingkindness endureth forever." Though repeated twenty-six times, it is not one time too many. The various situations are actually *manifestations* of God's lovingkindness and longsuffering. We will note these as we go through the Psalm. It is important to note that the Old Testament writers were cognizant of God's marvelous grace and mercy. In view of this it is somewhat astonishing that some of our brethren would suggest that there was no mercy in the Old Testament. But if there is no mercy in the Old Testament, how could it be said that Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord? Dear student, the Old Testament is filled from page to page with references to God's great mercy and lovingkindness. Perhaps some are just too blind to see it.

*Give thanks unto the God of gods* – The Psalmist was not suggesting the existence of other "gods," but simply expressing the fact that God is above the various idols of men. His great superiority is yet another manifestation of His lovingkindness. We were particularly impressed with Spurgeon's comments on this verse:

Moreover, for the moment assuming that the deities of the heathen were gods, yet none of them could be compared with our Elohim, who is infinitely beyond what they are fabled to be. Jehovah is our God, to be worshipped and adored, and he is worthy of our reverence to the highest degree. If the heathen cultivate the worship of their gods with zeal, how much more intently should we seek the glory of the God of gods - the only true and real God? Foolish persons have gathered from this verse that the Israelites believed in the existence of many gods, at the same time believing that their Jehovah was the chief among them; but this is an absurd inference, since gods who have a God over them cannot possibly be gods themselves. The words are to be understood after the usual manner of human speech, in which things are often spoken of not as they really are, but as they profess to be (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).



## Explanation Verses 4-25

But why should men give thanks unto God? Why should they bow in adoration to the God of heaven? The Psalmist would set forth four reasons:

### For His **CREATION** Verses 4-9

- 4 *To him who alone doeth great wonders; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*
- 5 *To him that by understanding made the heavens; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*
- 6 *To him that spread forth the earth above the waters; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*
- 7 *To him that made great lights; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*
- 8 *The sun to rule by day; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;*
- 9 *The moon and stars to rule by night; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*

*“To him...alone”* – Unaided by the “gods” of idolatry, the power of Jehovah God is seen in the fact that He alone is capable of the powers of creation. When we consider the creation, the vast expanse of the universe, the sun and moon, and the stars in the heavens, we are awed at what our God has done for us. No wonder the Psalmist cries out, *“For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.”*

The powers here attributed to the God of heaven are His alone. The Bible repeatedly warns of the danger of following idols who have no power, nor can they see or hear or accomplish anything at all.

The heavens were created "by understanding" of Jehovah God. No, these things are not the result of accident, but of logical, intelligent Mind. The sheer order and magnitude of this universe is astonishing. What if our God had created a universe that existed in chaos? We could not depend upon the laws of nature to act and react with any degree of expectation or order. How thankful we should be that God, in His lovingkindness, gave us an orderly universe in which to dwell. Let them explain, if they will, how such orderliness came out of random chance.

It was God Who “*made the heavens.*” It was not until man invented the telescope and could gaze into the vastness of space that the depth of this expression could be fully appreciated. It is not just the air we breathe, nor the atmosphere to which we are so tied, but it includes all that lies beyond this world that astounds us. If the Psalmist could praise God for what he could see with the physical eye, how much more should we praise Him for what lies beyond our limited vision! Here is the God Who “*spread forth the earth above the waters*” (cf. Isa. 42:5; 44:24; Ps. 24:2). The earth, man's dwelling place, is “spread forth...above the waters.” From the coast line inward there is a rise in elevation. Were this not the case, the whole of man would be consumed in an instant as were those wicked men and women in the flood. God inquired of Job (38:8), “Or who shut up the sea with doors, When it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb.” Yes, the lovingkindness of God has placed doors upon the sea, and has said to the mighty waves, “You shall come no further.” For this we are indeed grateful.

A part of the creative works of God was the “*great lights*” designed and placed into position for our benefit; the **sun** by day, and the **moon** and **stars** by night. What a horrible place this would be had our loving God not provided us with light! As Spurgeon noted:

This also is a creating miracle worthy of our loudest thanks. What could men have done without light? Though they had the heavens above them, and dry land to move upon, yet what could they see, and where could they go without light? Thanks be to the Lord, who has not consigned us to darkness. In great mercy he has not left us to an uncertain, indistinct light, floating about fitfully, and without order; but he has concentrated light upon two grand luminaries, which, as far as we are concerned, are to us “great lights” (Spurgeon, ESword Notes, Ps. 136:7).

In addition to the light there are numerous blessings we receive from each of these “great lights.” For example, the sun provides us with heat and energy. The “stars” provide us with navigational tools, not to mention the sheer beauty of a star lit night. The “moon” regulates the tides that clean the beaches of the debris that might collect each day.

### For His **DELIVERANCE** Verses 10-15

10 To him that smote Egypt in their first-born; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;

- 11 *And brought out Israel from among them; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;*
- 12 *With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*
- 13 *To him that divided the Red Sea in sunder; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;*
- 14 *And made Israel to pass through the midst of it; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;*
- 15 *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*

The power of God to deliver is manifested in the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. There is no greater example of the mercy of God combined with His awesome power than the one which the Psalmist now sets before our minds. In six short verses we are reminded of the mighty arm of Jehovah which wrought vengeance upon Egypt and brought Israel out of captivity with a strong hand. These verses need little, if any, comments. The historical events are well known, but the impact of those ten plagues upon Egypt forever changed the world. Perhaps the most astonishing and dramatic events in that series of miracles which Moses and Aaron brought upon Egypt are the death of the first-born, the crossing of the Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the sea. The strongest army upon the face of the earth was no match for our God. But what is interesting about the Psalmist's reference to these events is the fact that they are a manifestation of God's lovingkindness. God never forgot Israel, even in the depths of their captivity and the apparent loss of hope they had experienced since shortly after their arrival in Egypt at the invitation of Pharaoh.

### For His **GUIDANCE**

Verses 16-22

- 16 *To him that led his people through the wilderness; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*
- 17 *To him that smote great kings; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;*
- 18 *And slew famous kings; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*
- 19 *Sihon king of the Amorites; For his lovingkindness endureth forever;*
- 20 *And Og king of Bashan; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;*
- 21 *And gave their land for a heritage; For his lovingkindness*

*endureth for ever;*

22 *Even a heritage unto Israel his servant; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*

The Psalmist takes a look at God's mercy during the wanderings in the wilderness. Having delivered, God will nourish. The "wilderness" is no place for sensible men to dwell. But with our God leading the way, the impossible becomes possible, and the wilderness can become a table of abundant provisions.

Who can stand against the Almighty? Some of the greatest kings, with the greatest might, were no match for our God. His promises are sure, His inheritance certain.

For His **RESTORING** His people  
Verses 23-25

23 *Who remembered us in our low estate; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever;*

24 *And hath delivered us from our adversaries; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever:*

25 *Who giveth food to all flesh; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.*

The God Who can create, deliver, and guide, is capable of restoring His people, and providing them with abundant blessings. The Psalmist says our God (1) remembers, (2) redeems, and (3) restores His people. He will **not** forget, as men forget. So when it is said that God remembers us, it means that He is aware of our needs, and supplies in due time. In addition, He will redeem us from our enemies, and provide us with the promised victory. Food shall be ours in time of want; strength in time of need; and restoration in time of weakness. Indeed, "his mercy endureth for ever."

### **Exhortation** **Verse 26**

26 *Oh give thanks unto the God of heaven; For his lovingkindness endureth for ever.*

This verse provides a most fitting conclusion to a most wonderful Psalm. It ends as it began. But the reasons here provided for the due praise that belongs to our God are only a small representation of all

that God has done for us in His great lovingkindness. In the words of the Hebrew writer, “For the time will fail me if I tell of....”

### ***Lessons***

Were we to attempt an exhaustive treatise on the lovingkindness of God time would fail, and the whole of our energies would be depleted before we could touch the proverbial “hem of the garment.” God’s goodness is a fountain; ever flowing and never dry. Our Lord demonstrated His grace from the world’s beginning, and when He returns in judgment His grace will be poured out upon His people without any lack or stinginess on His part. From Abel to Malachi, and from John the Baptist to the last saint who shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at our Savior’s second coming, the goodness of God shines like a bright star in a world of darkness and hopelessness. The lovingkindness of God leaps off every single page of the Bible. Every word, every verse, every paragraph, every chapter, and every book bespeaks God’s grace. Those who would suggest there is no grace in the Old Testament do themselves and their hearers a great disservice. God’s goodness was not drowned by the flood, nor smothered by the smoke of Sinai. It did not end with the Captivity in Babylon, or fade with the cessation of the prophets of Old. The Psalmist reminds us that the “lovingkindness of the Lord endureth forever.” May we never forget it!

## *“By The Rivers of Babylon”*

### ***Introduction***

The author of the Psalm cannot be determined. The occasion, however, is most certainly a lament over captivity in Babylon. Try to imagine yourself in a foreign land, not as a traveler, or a vacationer, but as a captive. The customs are different; the food is different; and all of your liberties have been taken from you. In addition, the captors mock and ridicule you, and in the depth of your despair they demand, yes demand, that you sing a song for them. This is something of the situation in which the author found himself and his people. The writer and his fellow captives were asked by their captors to sing a song of joy, but they refused because of their extreme sadness due to the harsh treatment they were receiving at the hands of their captors. Spurgeon’s introduction to the Psalm was striking:

Let those find fault with it who have never seen their temple burned, their city ruined, their wives ravished, and their children slain; they might not, perhaps, be quite so velvet-mouthed if they had suffered after this fashion. It is one thing to talk of the bitter feeling which moved captive Israelites in Babylon, and quite another thing to be captives ourselves under a savage and remorseless power, which knew not how to show mercy, but delighted in barbarities to the defenseless. The song is such as might fitly be sung in the Jews' wailing-place. It is a fruit of the Captivity in Babylon, and often has it furnished expression for sorrows which else had been unutterable. It is an odalisque Psalm within whose mild radiance there glows a fire which strikes the beholder with wonder (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

We also found Barnes’ introduction to this chapter worth passing along to our readers:

The writer was a Jew to the heart's core; an “Hebrew of the Hebrews;” embodying and expressing in this short psalm all that there was which was special in Hebrew feeling, patriotism, devotion. Nowhere else in a short compass is so much Judaism - so much Jewish piety - to be found concentrated as in this psalm.

There is grief at their lonely and desolate condition in Babylon; profound and submissive silence in the midst of their troubles; indignation that they should be taunted and derided by their captors; a strong - earnest - supreme love for their native land; deep resentment at the remembrance of the many wrongs done to Jerusalem when it was destroyed; and an earliest invocation to God that he would remember those wrongs alike in relation to Edom and Babylon, and treat those wrong-doers as they deserved (Albert Barnes, ESword Notes).

## ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains the sad plight of the Jewish captives in Babylon. Here is what we have in this Psalm: While in that land far from home they could not enjoy themselves (verses 1-2), they could not humor their proud oppressors (verses 3-4), they could not forget their homeland (verses 5-6) and they could not forgive Edom and Babylon for their treachery and cruelty (verses 7-9). We found a number of outlines helpful, and most of them followed generally the same breakdown, with slight variations.

The desolate and afflicted state of the captives in Babylon, verses 1-2; how they were insulted by their enemies, verses 3-4; their attachment to their country, verses 5-6; and judgments denounced against their enemies, verses 7-9 (Clarke, ESword Notes).

We do not recall the source of the following outline, which we will use in our study of the Psalm:

- I. Remorse of the Captives, 1-2;
- II. Requirements of the Babylon Captors, 3;
- III. Remembrance of Jerusalem, 4-6;
- IV. Retribution Upon the Enemies, 7-9;

We have selected to use the introductory words to the Psalm itself as our title of this chapter: "By The Rivers of Babylon."

## ***Commentary***

### ***Remorse of the Captives Verses 1-2***

- 1 *By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept, When we remembered Zion.*
- 2 *Upon the willows in the midst thereof We hanged up our harps.*

**137:1** – “*By the rivers of Babylon*” – The streams or rivers probably referred to the various water-courses and/or canals that flowed from the main river, the Euphrates. But in spite of the calm waters that flowed past the banks, these captives could not find peace or comfort. The surroundings of Babylon, and the beauty of the Euphrates would have calmed any soul except that soul whose homeland lay hundreds of miles away.

Water-courses were abundant in Babylon, wherein were not only natural streams but artificial canals: it was a place of broad rivers and streams. Glad to be away from the noisy streets, the captives sought the river side, where the flow of the waters seemed to be in sympathy with their tears. It was some slight comfort to be out of the crowd, and to have a little breathing room, and therefore they sat down, as if to rest a while and solace themselves in their sorrow. In little groups they sat down and made common lamentation, mingling their memories and their tears. The rivers were well enough, but, alas, they were the rivers of Babylon, and the ground whereon the sons of Israel sat was foreign soil, and therefore they wept. Those who came to interrupt their quiet were citizens of the destroying city, and their company was not desired. Everything reminded Israel of her banishment from the holy city, her servitude beneath the shadow of the temple of Bel, her helplessness under a cruel enemy; and therefore her sons and daughters sat down in sorrow (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

The Psalmist is in a strange land, held captive in Babylon, far from his homeland. There is no joy; only *remorse* and sadness. The writer was expressing the sentiments of the whole of Israel, a nation held captive because of her sins against God.

“*When we remembered Zion*” – The memory of home only heightened their sorrow and deepened their despondency. “The remembrance of the temple of their God, the palace of their king, and the centre of their national life, quite broke them down. Destruction had swept down all their delights, and therefore they wept - the strong men wept, the sweet singers wept! They did not weep when they remembered the cruelties of Babylon; the memory of fierce oppression dried their tears and made their hearts burn with wrath: but when the beloved city of their solemnities came into their minds they could not refrain from floods of tears” (Spurgeon). Thoughts of Zion brought tears to their eyes. Theirs was not a weeping brought on by the sudden shock of bad news, but what Matthew Henry calls “deliberate tears.” The mournful state of these captives produced naught but sadness in the heart, and a tear in the eye.



**137:2:** They wept in the "midst" of Babylon; while captives in the land. The language would suggest a purposeful intention on the part of the captives to refuse to sing songs of merriment. They actually *"hung up their harps."*

### ***Requirements of the Babylon Captors*** **Verse 3**

3 *For there they that led us captive required of us songs, and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion*

**137:3:** Exactly what songs the captors may have had in mind is not known. Neither are we told exactly WHY the captors would "require" songs of the captives. The refusal on the part of Israel to sing is certainly understandable. How can one sing songs of joy and mirth when they are heartbroken? Song is the outpouring of a heart full of joy (Jas. 5:12-13). There may have even been a note of sarcasm and ridicule in the voices of those who demanded that the captives sing.

### ***Remembrance of Jerusalem*** **Verses 4-6**

4 *How shall we sing Jehovah's song In a foreign land?*

5 *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, Let my right hand forget her skill.*

6 *Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, If I remember thee not; If I prefer not Jerusalem Above my chief joy.*

**137:4:** "*How shall we sing*" - How could they muster up the inner feelings that accompany singing Jehovah's song? The sadness and suffering of being captives in a foreign land had robbed them of any desire to sing.

**137:5:** "*If I forget thee...let my right hand forget her skill*" - The words express desire and intent. So determined was the Psalmist to keep Jerusalem in the recesses of his mind, that any forgetfulness on his part would be as likely as his right hand forgetting how to stroke the strings of the harp in sweet melody.

There is a point here that must be addressed before we leave this verse. There is an English idiom that states, "Use it or lose it." My wife recently had to have her wrist operated on to replace cartilage destroyed by arthritis. Following the surgery she had to keep her

hand in a cast for four weeks, and then in a soft cast for another two weeks. During that time any use of her elbow and shoulder was quite restricted. When the casts came off, she had to go through extensive therapy to regain the use of her wrist, arm and shoulder. The soul is affected in like manner. When a person neglects the assembly of the saints he soon loses the “skill” [if I might be permitted to use that word] of worshipping God. His heart is no longer attuned to that which is spiritual, and he soon loses what ability he may have had to participate in meaningful worship.

**137:6:** *“Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth”* - Not only would his hand refuse to play upon the harp, but his tongue would be forever silenced should he fail to remember Jerusalem, or Jehovah his God. It would appear from the language that the Psalmist was expressing the idea that he **WOULD** remember Jehovah, and Jerusalem. It would be more likely that his hand would forget to play and his tongue forget to sing than that he should forget his homeland, and the God of his salvation.

### ***Retribution*** **Verses 7-9**

- 7 *Remember, O Jehovah, against the children of Edom The day of Jerusalem; Who said, Rase it, rase it, Even to the foundation thereof.*
- 8 *O daughter of Babylon, that art to be destroyed, Happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee As thou hast served us.*
- 9 *Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones Against the rock.*

This section is an imprecation against the Edomites, i.e., the descendants of Esau, for their atrocious crimes against Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 34:5-15; Jer. 49:7-22; Ezek. 35:1-15; Amos 1:11, 12; Obad. 5-21). God's divine wrath will be poured out upon those who persecute His people. Saul of Tarsus learned quickly that any persecution of God's people is the same as persecution of Christ.

**137:8:** *“Babylon, that art to be destroyed”* - Babylon would receive upon themselves that which they had rendered unto Israel. This is so often the case regarding nations. Wickedness will be repaid in full, and that nation which forgets God will receive unto themselves retribution.

**137:9:** “Happy shall he be that...dasheth thy little ones against the rock” - The imprecatory statements such as this have given critics a great deal of trouble and no little discomfort. We must ever remember that divine wrath is not the result of some emotional and subjective reaction to wrong, but the judicial response to sin. The Psalmist was simply seeking Divine justice.

### ***Lessons***

1. Any nation that forgets God will find itself the object of God's wrath and divine judgment. This was true for Israel, and within a few short years Babylon would find itself on the receiving end of God's judgment. We fear that America has trod the same path as ancient Israel (and Babylon). I came across the following items some years ago that we thought worth sharing with our readers:

"If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures, to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, undecided, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there be an eternal state of retribution beyond the grave; or whether there be any such being as God; you have broken down the barriers of moral virtue, and hoisted the flood gates of immorality and crime. I need not say that when a people have once done this, they can no longer exist as a tranquil and happy people...Avarice, perjury, ambition, and revenge would walk through the land, and render it more like the dwelling of savage beasts than the tranquil abode of civilized and Christianized men."

2. The Israelites found it difficult, if not impossible to have joy in the midst of tragedy. But those living this side of the cross realize that we can have joy *in spite* of sorrow, and even in the face of tragedy. Some of you may not know the background to one of the more popular songs in our hymnals, "It Is Well With My Soul." Horatio G. Spafford was already grieving over the loss of his son when the Chicago Fire of 1871 destroyed a significant real estate investment that he had made on the shore of Lake Michigan. Desiring a rest for his wife and four daughters, Spafford planned a European trip for his family in 1873. When the time arrived for the family to depart on the voyage, Spafford had to remain in Chicago due to unexpected business developments. He sent his wife and daughters on ahead as scheduled on the S.S. Ville du Havre, with the intention of following them a few days later. On November 22 the Ville du Havre was struck by the Lochearn, an

English vessel, and sank in twelve minutes. Several days later, the survivors were finally brought to land at Cardiff, Wales. Mrs. Spafford cabled a message to her husband with the words: "Saved Alone." Mr. Spafford boarded a ship to join his bereaved wife. As the ship passed near the area where it was thought that his four daughters had drowned, Spafford wrote down some words that described both the intensity of his grief and his hope in God:

*"When peace, like a river,  
Attendeth my way  
When sorrows like sea billows roll,  
Whatever my lot,  
Thou hast taught me to say,  
"It is well, it is well, with my soul."*

*Refrain*

*It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.  
Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.*

*Refrain*

*My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

*Refrain*

*For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.*

*Refrain*

*But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;*

*Oh trump of the angel! Oh voice of the Lord!  
Blessèd hope, blessèd rest of my soul!*

*Refrain*

*And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

Kenneth Osbeck noted: ""Humanly speaking, it is amazing that one could experience such personal tragedies and sorrows as did Horatio Spafford and still be able to say with such convincing clarity, "It is well with my soul."

## ***“Jehovah Has Respect Unto The Lowly”***

### ***Introduction***

This beautiful Psalm is a tribute to the heart of a man who never lost sight of the role that God played in his life. Though it was his lot to “walk in the midst of trouble” (verse 7), the Psalmist’s trust in his God was fixed and firm. The faith of the sweet singer of Israel allows him to envision a time when “all the kings of the earth” would give thanks, a time when God’s right hand would save him from the wrath of his enemies. No wonder some commentators have viewed this as one of David’s greatest songs.

This is the first in a group of eight Psalms (138-145) which constitute what appears to be a “supplement” to the Book of Psalms. The collection is composed of Psalms which may have been unknown to the original collector and arranger of the book, and subsequently added at a later date. The subtitles attribute these chapters to David. A similar grouping of Psalms is contained in chapters 108-110. Why these appear in two different groups is not known, nor do we have any suggestion as to why they were added at a later date.

This Psalm exhibits all the fidelity and courage of David. It appears to have been written in a time of trouble, with the expectation that God would intervene and deliver. It would fit any number of situations in which David found himself, and any attempt to assign it a specific moment in David’s life is guess work at best.

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm the author looks back with thankfulness upon the experiences he had concerning God’s goodness to him (verses 1-3). He then looks forward with comfort, in hopes that (a) others would praise God like him (verses 4-5), and (b) God would continue to do good to him (verses 6-8). Morgan noted two movements in the Psalm: “It opens with consecration to the sacred duty of praise [and]

the final movement tells of the singer's confidence in the future" (Morgan, page 273). A fitting title would be, "Praise And Confidence." We have combined some points from various outlines and come up with the following outline for our study of this chapter:

- I. Gladness, 1-2 - in which the Psalmist expresses his intent to worship and instructions for worship;
- II. Grace, 3 - here the author focuses upon God's gracious response to his prayer;
- III. Glory, 4-6 - the glory of Jehovah would be the basis for praise by "the kings of the earth";
- IV. Guidance, 7-8 - the Psalm closes with an expression of the Psalmist's trust in Jehovah that the Almighty would revive him, reward him, and redeem him.

### **Commentary**

#### **Gladness Verses 1-2**

- 1 *I will give thee thanks with my whole heart: Before the gods will I sing praises unto thee.*
- 2 *I will worship toward thy holy temple, And give thanks unto thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.*

**138:1:** *"I will give thee thanks with my whole heart"* - Note in verses 1 and 2 the depth of the Psalmist's devotion. There was no divided allegiance in his praise to Jehovah. The Psalmist would offer thanks to God with the "whole heart" - with that which is within, with uprightness of intention and fervency of affection. Second, he would praise with boldness and courage. *"Before the gods will I sing praises unto thee."* If David was speaking of the idolatrous "gods," then the last part of this verse does not mean in the PRESENCE of the gods, but in PREFERENCE to them. "He would use no language, and cherish no feeling, which implied a belief that there was any other God; he would indulge in no attachment which would be inconsistent with supreme attachment to God, or which would tend to draw away his affections from him" (Barnes, ESword). Our opinion is that the "gods" are princes and judges, mighty men who might visit David upon his throne; perhaps even the officials who served under David. It should be noted that great leaders are not ashamed to confess their faith in God.

**138:2:** *"I will worship toward thy holy temple"* - This suggests that he would praise God in the way God has appointed. The "temple" is a reference to the tabernacle, since the former had not been built in the time of David. The KJV renders this, "I will worship toward thy holy hill."

Having set forth how he would praise God, the Psalmist next speaks of why he would praise God: *"for thy lovingkindness...for thy truth"* (verse 2); for *answered prayer* (verse 3); for *"strength"* in his soul (verse 3b).

*"for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name"* - The last part of this verse gives emphasis to the word of God. God Himself has magnified the word, even above His own name. This was simply a way of saying that God places tremendous importance upon His word. Those who make light of the Bible, or who ridicule the inspired word, would do well to meditate upon this verse. One of the most difficult tasks in bringing people to the knowledge of God's will is to get them to see the importance of relying completely on the word, without addition or subtraction. Consider such passages as 2 Peter 1:3, Psalms 119:105, Ephesians 3:3-5, Jude 3, 1 Corinthians 4:6, 2 John 9, John 20:30-31, etc.

### **Grace Verse 3**

3 *In the day that I called thou answeredst me, Thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul.*

**138:3:** David reflected upon the past. Experience had taught him that God answers prayer, and based upon that past experience the author was confident that God would therefore hear his praise and thanksgiving at this time. It is to be noted that God evidently answered David's prayer straightway, *"in the day that I called thou answerest me."* While it is possible that the word "day" may have reference to the specific occasion that prompted the prayer, it is not beyond possibility that God did, indeed, quickly answer David's prayer; possibly that very same day.

*"thou didst encourage me with strength in my soul"* - It was not physical strength that David needed in his hour of trial; it was spiritual strength - strength to withstand the discouraging remarks and slander that poured forth from the mouth of his enemies. David realized that God is the source of all strength, and the only source



thereof. Before we leave this point it should be noted that David gave thanks for "thy truth" and "thy word" in verse 2, and acknowledges that he was "encouraged" with strength. The order is no accident. Before one can expect spiritual strength he must give heed to the word. "Thy word have I laid up in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11).

### ***Glory*** **Verses 4-6**

- 4 *All the kings of the earth shall give thee thanks, O Jehovah, For they have heard the words of thy mouth.*
- 5 *Yea, they shall sing of the ways of Jehovah; For great is the glory of Jehovah.*
- 6 *For though Jehovah is high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; But the haughty he knoweth from afar.*

**138:4:** *"All the kings of the earth shall give thee thanks"* - There is no hint here of some future millennial reign wherein all the kings of this earthly sphere will all of a sudden bow down in thanksgiving and praise to Jehovah. That will never happen. The key to understanding the Psalmist's affirmation here is found in verse 6: *"he hath respect unto the lowly."*

This verse, thru verse 6, is anticipation of the praise that all nations would give unto Jehovah. The words refer to "a time, of which frequent prophetic mention is made in the Scriptures" (Barnes, Esword Notes). Notice the condition under which these kings would offer thanks to God. It is when they *"have heard the words of thy mouth."* The same is true today. Only when men hear the word is faith produced (Rom. 10:17), and praise and thanksgiving originate in a heart of faith.

**138:5:** *"For they shall sing the ways of Jehovah"* – The Bible is filled with examples of men and women who, upon learning of God's nature, sang praises to the name of Jehovah.

**138:6:** *"For though Jehovah is high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly; But the haughty he knoweth from afar"* – This verse focuses upon a fundamental truth that runs like a fine thread through the pages of the Bible. There are two classes of humanity, here designated as "the lowly" and "the haughty." Other passages speak of the "sheep" and the "goats"; the "lost" and the "saved." It is unto the lowly that God has great respect, despite the fact that God is high

and holy in His very nature. God is "high" in the sense of honor and majesty (cf. Deut. 10:14; 1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6). In addition to the truth that there are two distinct classes of humanity, there is the sobering reality that only one group is near to God. As for the haughty, "he knoweth [them] from afar." The phrase "*he knoweth from afar*" is another way of saying the haughty stand, as it were, away from God. When men choose to exalt themselves, they at one and the same time choose to stand separate from God.

### ***Guidance*** **Verses 7-8**

- 7 *Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me; Thou wilt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies, And thy right hand will save me*
- 8 *Jehovah will perfect that which concerneth me: Thy lovingkindness, O Jehovah, endureth for ever; Forsake not the works of thine own hands.*

**138:7:** "*Though I walk in the midst of trouble*" – Fellowship with God is a daily "walk." The Psalmist was not stagnant; his feet marched ever forward, moving closer to his God and the reward that would someday be his. Now even in the midst of trouble the Psalmist plods on, confident that God would "revive" him. No doubt he was discouraged, perhaps his faith somewhat shaken. Yet even in the midst of this "trouble," his walk moves steadily forward.

"*thou wilt revive me*" – The Hebrew (châyâh) here translated "revive," means "to live" (Strong). It could also mean "to restore" or "repair." The language implies that this "trouble" was life threatening. It would seem that the author was on the brink of dying and God somehow "revived" him.

"*Thou wilt stretch forth thy hand against the wrath of mine enemies*" – When our God stretches forth His hand, the enemies of God's people flee.

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" (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

*"Thy right hand will save me"* – The confidence of the Psalmist shines. For even in the midst of troubles, he was confident that salvation would eventually be his. The Psalm thus ends on a most positive note.

### ***Lessons***

1. Verse 1 – *"I will praise thee with the whole heart"* – There are some wonderful features of a good man presented here. The resolve of a good man is that he will praise God with his whole heart. He thus serves God *entirely* – there is no room for divided allegiance; such a man does not offer praise lightly, nor does he worship his God with a half-hearted spirit of devotion.
2. Verse 2 – *"Thou hast magnified the word"* – The word of God is magnified in (a) the manner in which it has been revealed; (b) in the enlightenment it provides lost humanity; (c) by making it the power of God unto salvation; (d) in the hope it holds out for those who will follow its precepts.
3. Verse 6 – *"For though Jehovah is high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly"* – Any attempt to express the majesty of God would do injustice to the exalted position He deserves and holds. And yet the Psalmist encourages us with the realization that, though higher than the highest of men, and though exalted above the heavenly host, our God has "respect unto the lowly." He does not chide us when we pray, nor does He ignore us in our time of need.

## *“God’s All Seeing Eye”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is ascribed to David in the subtitle. Though some question David as the author, the acceptance of the Davidic authorship has ancient support. It is the internal evidence, however, that convinces us that it was written by David. One author noted, “His foot prints can be seen in every verse.” The occasion or date of the Psalm cannot be determined with any degree of certainty. It is such that it could fit any number of occasions when David thought to meditate upon the great strength and comfort that comes from knowing that God sees our travail and is an ever present God in times of trouble. Phillips suggests that David may have written the Psalm after receiving word from Nathan the prophet that David would not be the one to build a house for God, but rather that it would be his son Solomon. Meditating upon the magnificence of God and all those character traits that make God Who He is, David may have slipped into his room, or walked out into a quiet meadow to write this beautiful tribute to the God of heaven, a God Who cannot be contained in material and physical structures. Throughout the Psalm there is a very personal touch of intimacy the writer sustained to the God of heaven. It is this intimate personal relationship between God and man that surfaces in this chapter, perhaps more than any other in collection of the songs and devotions of David. The beauty of the Psalm has captured the admiration of many a saint so much so that “some of the Jewish doctors are of opinion that this is the most excellent of all the psalms of David; and a very pious devout meditation it is upon the doctrine of God's omniscience, which we should therefore have our hearts fixed upon and filled with in singing this psalm” (Matthew Henry, ESword Notes).

There is no doubt that this Psalm stands alone in its magnificent praise of the character and nature of God. One commentator, when contemplating this chapter, admitted:

Language utterly fails me in the exposition of this psalm...Where does one begin? What does one include? The psalm is so full, intricate, detailed, grand in concept, and thrilling in its statements

and stanzas. It seems a crime to leave any word unexplored. Yet, obviously, to do it justice would call for more space than be given here (Phillips, page 591-592).

## ***Analysis***

This Psalm deals with the great characteristics of God as they relate to the individual life of the Psalmist. He recognizes God's omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. God is familiar with every motion of man, even to the point of knowing our very down-sitting and our uprising. He knows every thought even while it is in the process of its making. From this God there is no escape, for it is impossible for man to hide from his Creator. Distance is a human term and no man has the ability to separate himself from the all seeing eye of the God in Whom we "live move and have our being." In view of God's great power and magnificence, the writer expresses personal consecration and the desire to be searched by He Who knows all.

Any one may feel, and must feel, that after all which he knows of himself...there are depths there which his eye cannot penetrate, and that there may be sins of thought and feeling there which he has not detected; but it is only from the consciousness of sincerity, and a true desire to honour God, that one can pray that God would search him, and that he would detect and bring out every form of sin which he may see concealed and lurking in the soul. He who can sincerely offer this prayer is a pious man (Albert Barnes, ESword Notes).

Matthew Henry considers the Psalm a treatise on God's omniscience and divides the chapter into three parts:

- I. The Doctrine Asserted, 139:1-6;
- II. The Doctrine Confirmed, 139:7-16;
  - 1. God is everywhere present and therefore knows all things, 7-12;
  - 2. He made us and therefore He knows us, 13-16;
- III. Some Inferences Drawn From This Doctrine, 139:17-24;
  - 1. It may fill us with admiration of God, 17-18;
  - 2. It may fill us with a holy dread and detestation of sin and sinners, 19-22;
  - 3. It may fill us with a holy satisfaction in our own integrity, concerning which we may appeal to God, 23-24;

We have selected to use Phillips' outline with slight modification on some of the minor points for our study:

- I. What the Psalmist realized, verses 1-18
- II. What the Psalmist requested, verses 19-24.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***What The Psalmist Realized*** **Verses 1-18**

There are three truths that emerge from this section of the Psalm; three earth-shattering statements about the God to Whom the author so desired to pay homage – (1) the truth about God's omniscience, verses 1-6; (2) the truth about God's omnipresence, verses 7-12; and (3) the truth about God's omnipotence, verses 13-18. We are not aware of any passage that sets forth such a detailed description of these three attributes of God in one single passage. We will take a closer look at each of these.

#### ***God's Omniscience*** **Verses 1-6**

- 1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. O Jehovah, thou hast searched me, and known me.*
- 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising; Thou understandest my thought afar off.*
- 3 Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, And art acquainted with all my ways.*
- 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, But, lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether.*
- 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, And laid thy hand upon me.*
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

The first five verses focus on the truth, while the sixth verse is the Psalmist's exclamation of the impact that truth had upon his heart and mind.

**139:1:** *"Thou hast searched me, and known me"* - To search something is to investigate; to examine the intricate details. The Psalmist acknowledges that God has thoroughly examined him, and as a result, has known him. There is nothing about our inner self that

God does not know. This thought alone causes one to stand in awe of the God Who made us.

**139:2:** Having stated the truth of God's omniscience, the Psalmist sets forth four amazing examples of this marvelous trait of Jehovah. In this verse he acknowledges that God sees his every move. *"Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising."* Our God knows when we get up, when we go to sleep. There is absolutely nothing that escapes the knowledge of our God. He knows our every move, and He is interested in us.

Next, the Psalmist acknowledges that God knows his very mind. *"Thou understandest my thought afar off."* No matter how deep might be the meditations of our hearts, God is aware of those inner thoughts. He knows every single thought that has ever crossed our minds.

**139:3:** *"Thou searchest out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways."* The Psalmist acknowledges that God knows every motive. He is aware of our "ways" and what motivates us to walk in a certain path and follow through on our intentions. Wherever the Psalmist might go, God would be there, taking note, observing, searching our actions and thoughts. The various plans that the Psalmist might have had were known by God.

**139:4:** The Psalmist next acknowledges that God knows our mouth. *"For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Jehovah, thou knowest it altogether."* The writer mounts up descriptive terms which emphasize the fact that God knows everything about us. There is not a word which our tongue can speak that God does not hear, regardless of where we might be. If men would only recognize this all knowing aspect of our God, they would think twice before doing or saying things they ought not. Any word that is spoken; any thought that might come forth in utterance, or held in secret - God knows it altogether; whether truthful or false, whether good or bad.

**139:5:** Finally, the Psalmist acknowledges that God is involved in our maneuvering. *"Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me."* It is as if God has surrounded us. He has "beset" me, closed me in; He is round about; He is before us; He is behind us. Awareness of the constant presence of God and His knowledge of our actions and thoughts is sobering.

**139:6:** No wonder the Psalmist was driven to exclaim: "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.*" How can any human being even begin to comprehend such knowledge? We have difficulty knowing ourselves, much less the movements and mind of our fellow humans. But God is not restricted by fleshly limitations; indeed, "such IS too wonderful" to understand!

### **God's Omnipresence** **Verses 7-12**

- 7 *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*
- 8 *If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there.*
- 9 *If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;*
- 10 *Even there shall thy hand lead me, And thy right hand shall hold me.*
- 11 *If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, And the light about me shall be night;*
- 12 *Even the darkness hideth not from thee, But the night shineth as the day: The darkness and the light are both alike to thee.*

In these half dozen verses the Psalmist will provide us with three illustrations to show that we cannot hide from God: (1) death does not hide us, verses 7-8; (2) distance does not hide us, verses 9-10; and (3) darkness does not hide us, verses 11-12. David focuses us on the truth he desires to get before us. He puts this in the form of a question: "*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?*" He will then proceed to answer the question(s):

*Death does not hide us, 7-8*

**139:8:** "*If I ascend into heaven...make my bed in Sheol*" - Where CAN man go to get away from God? At what place in this great universe can it be said, "God is not here"? To ask is but to answer. Surely we know that God is "in heaven." Were it possible for man to ascend into heaven by his own power and volition, God would be there. But what if we could enter into "Sheol," or the grave, to that realm of the disembodied spirits - would we thus be able to escape God? Suicide is not the way to get away from everything, for one cannot escape the presence of God by taking his own life. Indeed,



“the thought should send a shudder through the sinner’s soul: death does not hide us from God” (Phillips, page 595).

*Distance does not hide us from God, 9-10*

**139:9-10:** *"If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea"* - Jonah attempted to escape the presence of God by purchasing passage on a ship going to Tarshish. He soon learned, however, that not only was God upon the waves of the sea, the Almighty was with this fleeing preacher in the depth of the sea, even in the belly of the great fish!

*"even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me"* - There is a note of confidence in these words. The Psalmist recognized the need for God's guidance, and he was confident that wherever he might go, God would be there as his companion and protector.

*Darkness does not hide us from God, 11-12*

**139:11:** *"If I say, Surely the darkness shall overwhelm me, And the light about me shall be night"* – Men revel in the night. Wicked deeds are not as easily seen, and their acts are hid from men. But unlike man, our God can see in the day or night. They are "both alike" to Jehovah. Some of our readers may remember that hot July night in 1977 when the power went out in New York City. Almost immediately thousands of people poured into the streets to rob and plunder. More than 2,000 stores were plundered or damaged at a cost of more than \$1 billion. Phillips relates this interesting bit of information regarding that most unfortunate night:

Thieves even robbed each other. One teenage girl complained to friends that some boys had offered to help her carry some clothes and radios she had stolen and had then made off with them. "That's not right," she said. "They shouldn't have done that." Only a fraction of the looters were arrested....Most of those arrested thought society owed them this windfall and showed no regret except at having been caught. One young woman told a reporter: "It's really sort of beautiful. Everybody is out on the streets together. It's like being at a party." One boy said, "This is better than going to Macy's." All this because it was dark (Phillips, page 597).

*"Even the darkness hideth not from thee, But the night shineth as the day: The darkness and the light are both alike to thee"* – Men

may hide from men in times of darkness; and criminals may come out of the proverbial woodwork when the sun sets. But to our God, “the night shineth as the day,” and men cannot hide from God in times of darkness.

### ***God's Omnipotence*** **Verses 13-18**

- 13 *For thou didst form my inward parts: Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb.*  
14 *I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Wonderful are thy works; And that my soul knoweth right well.*  
15 *My frame was not hidden from thee, When I was made in secret, And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.*  
16 *Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance; And in thy book they were all written, Even the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was none of them.*  
17 *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!*  
18 *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: When I awake, I am still with thee.*

It has been said on numerous occasions that if wombs had windows, abortions would forever cease. Here is the inspired writer's window into the womb. The Psalmist focuses on two important features of our relationship with the Father: (1) He created me, and (2) He cares for me.

#### *He Created Me, 13-16*

**139:13:** *"For thou didst form my inward parts"* – Although the “inward parts” were produced by the natural process, David still acknowledged that it was God’s creative power that brought about his marvelous development. There are at least three important truths that emerge from this one verse: (1) It is God Who formed me. We are not the result of random chance, but the product of God’s amazing creative power. (2) The “inward parts” suggests immense intricate details that go into making up the various parts of the human body: the circulatory system, the respiratory system, the neurological system, et al. Each cell is so small that the letter “o” could contain between 30 and 40 thousand of them; and yet so amazingly dependent upon each other and so intricately related that the complexity of our human body stands as a witness to the creative

power of our God. (3) David's acknowledgement that God "*didst cover me in my mother's womb*" is a reference to the bodily tabernacle that was given to the soul. At conception, not only does a human body begin the process of development, but the soul is created as well, and it is *covered* with the body "in my mother's womb." If someone wants to know when life begins let him meditate upon the force of this one verse.

On a side note, I penned the following article more than a decade ago:

I suppose any old newspaper would do. It so happens that I occasionally stop and buy a copy of the Dallas Morning News on my way to work. I feel like I get more for the money - more ads, more editorials, more inserts, and more news items that have absolutely nothing to do with daily living in East Texas. For example: How important is it for me to know that Gary Chapman recently married Jennifer Pittman? And I suppose that my week has been made complete in knowing that Julie Nixon Eisenhower turned 52 last Wednesday. How new is it to learn that there is a "vast gap between rebels, and government" in Colombia? Most rebels rebel because there IS a gap between them and the government. So what's new? All sarcasm aside, the paper does provide a source of information, and editorials occasionally encourage those of us who are still seeking some semblance of order in a society that is becoming more and more disorderly. William Murchison, columnist for the *Dallas Morning News* is, in my estimation, one of the more balanced writers in the Dallas based paper. This past week he had an excellent article addressing the ongoing battle over abortion. After reviewing the historical Roe vs. Wade decision, he addresses the intolerable state of affairs that our society finds itself in regarding the issue of abortion on demand. Quoting Justice Sandra Day O' Connor, he reminds us that abortion is "one of the most contentious and controversial [issues] in contemporary American society." In his estimation, the Supreme Court says to the pro-life advocates, "Get over it!" I like his response: "Well, the fact is, leave aside what five justices may assert - pro-life Americans never are going to get over it. They'll suit up again and again, as often as it requires, and hit that line." Then referring to the Supreme Court itself, he adds: "Amid the crash and crunch, politicians will position themselves; the media will conduct grave interviews or wave fists on the talk shows; and abortion doctors, in their operating rooms, will carry on with everyday aplomb...It is among the worst features of modern life, this judge dependency we have developed - this resort to non-legislators who claim a competency, if not an entitlement, to legislate...One needn't oppose abortion in order to fret when tenured judges force a 'policy judgment couched as law' (Justice

Antonin Scalia's words, in dissent) down our collective throats, pitting American against American, the born against the unborn." His conclusion is right on target: "The court's Roe/abortion jurisprudence is a mess - a national disgrace. And though George W. Bush may find it impolitic to say so, I'll do the honors: Vote for Mr. Bush, our best chance, when all's said and done, for straightening out a court desperately, profoundly in need of straightening." I could not have stated it any better.

**139:14:** *"I will give thanks unto thee; For I am fearfully and wonderfully made"* – David was aware of this creative power of God, and though the sweet singer of Israel was not able to look into the human body and know of the amazing and complex systems that make up the human body, there was one thing his *"soul knoweth right well"* – and that is he was *"fearfully and wonderfully made."*

**139:15:** *"My frame was not hidden from thee, When I was made in secret, And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."*

The fact that he said he was "made in secret" is due to the inability of the human eye to observe the development of the embryo within the womb. Note the contrast: while men cannot, with the naked eye, observe the process of development within the womb, the process is not hidden from God. Today we have the ability to look into the womb, and yet still we remain "curious" as to that process. How much more was the development of the human body "curiously wrought" to David and those of his generation? Who can understand the process by which the various systems of the human body are developed and produced during those nine months when one is in the *"lowest parts of the earth."*

**139:16:** *"Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance"* – We like one author's summation of this verse: "While as yet the vessel was upon the wheel the Potter saw it all. The Lord knows not only our shape, but our substance: this is substantial knowledge indeed" (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

*"And in thy book they were all written, Even the days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was none of them"* - While man cannot, without the aid of modern technology, observe the various changes and stages of development within the womb, such things are not hidden from the eyes of God. The embryo is referred to as *"mine unformed substance."* No, the embryo is **not** the inner most being, but simply a tabernacle in which the soul would dwell upon entering the world.

**139:17-18:** *"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: When I awake, I am still with thee"* – The thoughts of God are far above those of man. And while there are some things that remain a "secret," we are grateful that God has made many of His thoughts known unto us. Otherwise, how could the Psalmist know that they were "precious"? The **sum** of those thoughts of Jehovah God are beyond our comprehension. The Psalmist admits that any attempt to "count" the blessings would prove to be an exercise in futility. One might just as well attempt to count the grains of sand on the seashore or in the desert.

### ***What The Psalmist Requested*** **Verses 19-24**

- 19 *Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.*
- 20 *For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.*
- 21 *Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?*
- 22 *I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.*
- 23 *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:*
- 24 *And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Matthew Henry thinks these last six verses contain the Psalmist's conclusion with particular emphasis upon the "end of sinners" in view of the characteristic traits of God listed in the previous verses. Our opinion is that it is a request on the part of the Psalmist in view of those divine traits of the One Who would and could deliver him. This request consists of two parts: (1) That God would *save* him, vss. 19-22; and (2) That God would *search* him and try him, vss. 23-24.

#### ***That God Would Save Him, 19-22***

**139:19:** *"Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God"* – David had his enemies at the time he wrote this Psalm. But he was confident that God would overcome and provide him with the deliverance he sought. Of particular interest here is intent of David to remain aloof from those who might seek to form some kind of alliance with David and have him join them in their wicked schemes. *"Depart from*

*me...ye bloody men.*” David wanted no part with such wicked and evil men. After Joab murdered Abner, David began to put distance between himself and Joab, and eventually turned the man over to Solomon to be executed. The lesson is powerful: We should be careful with whom we keep company. Those who are God’s enemies are our enemies.

**139:20:** *“For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain”* – These haters of God are base in their character, wicked in heart, and evil in their opposition to their Maker. They speak against God wickedly; they take the name of God in vain.

They are his *enemies*, and declare their enmity by *taking his name in vain*, as we show our contempt of a man if we make a by-word of his name, and never mention him but in a way of jest and banter. Those that profane the sacred forms of swearing or praying by using them in an impertinent irreverent manner take God’s name in vain, and thereby show themselves enemies to him (Matthew Henry, ESword Notes).

No wonder the Psalmist refused to keep company with such a sorry lot of rebels.

**139:21-22:** *“Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies”* - David not only defies these wicked men (*“depart from me...ye bloody men”*), he also detests them. He hates their ways with a “perfect hatred.” Such imprecatory language must be kept within its proper context. David’s hatred, like God’s, was a judicial hatred rather than an emotional outburst. Quite often men let their emotions get the better of them and they harbor a deep hatred within the heart against those who have done them wrong. This was not the case with David. His was a judicial hatred; a hatred for what is wrong; for the act itself.

He was a good hater, for he hated only those who hated good. Of this hatred he is not ashamed, but he sets it forth as a virtue to which he would have the Lord bear testimony. To love all men with benevolence is our duty; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God

the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." Truly, "jealousy is cruel as the grave." The loyal subject must not be friendly to the traitor (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

### *That God Would Search Him, 23-24*

**139:23-24:** *"Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting"* - The last two verses uphold the Psalmist's integrity and faithfulness to God. He asks God (1) to search him, (2) to know his heart, (3) to try him, (4) to know his thoughts, and (5) to lead him in the everlasting way. Here is what made David a man after God's heart. His humility kept his heart attune with God, and he was always anxious and ready to have the searchlight of God's word reveal anything and everything that might stand between him and his God.

*"Try me and know my thoughts"* – Can we be as open with God? Would we be willing, yea do we pray that God might search the depths of our hearts and know our very thoughts? But, whether we would be willing to present our life to God's all searching and all knowing eye, or whether we attempt to hide our lives from His presence, in the final analysis, He DOES know our thoughts, and he DOES know our heart.

## ***Lessons***

### ***"Googlemaps"***

by Tom Wacaster

For those who are not familiar with the wonderful capabilities of the internet in general, and "Googlemaps" specifically, the word "Googlemaps" might seem to be nothing more than "gibberish." Before the days of personal computers, internet service, and the world-wide-web we relied on printed material to help us navigate the highways, city streets, and locate folks we wanted to visit. A good Rand McNally map was an essential tool to those wishing to make a long road trip. For those needing to locate a particular city street one could obtain a "key map" to help navigate about larger cities like Houston or Dallas. In the small country towns one need only stop and ask directions; most residents were not only willing, but even anxious to help you out. Then there were the Yellow Pages, White Pages, and 'cross-reference' address books provided by 'Ma-bell that

would provide the specifics of someone's address, phone, etc. With these three tools one could be fairly certain that he could get from one destination to another without too much hassle, or locate a specific individual or family.

We move now to the 21st Century. With the personal computer, we can "log-on" and, using any good search tool, we can find any number of "helps" in our search for an address, person, directions, et al. My favorite is "Googlemaps." With a few "point and click" maneuvers, proper "data-in," and the punch of a button or click of a mouse, "Googlemaps" will give you the directions from your address to the front door of your desired destiny. There are other tools to help you find people, vacation spots, email addresses, or phone numbers. The list is endless. The bottom line is this: if someone wants to find you, you cannot hide.

Before the days of computers, the internet, and the world wide web; before ever a Rand McNally map was printed; before the existence of key-maps, telephone books, or social security numbers, it might have been possible to find some little isolated spot on the globe and become a hermit. But despite all the efforts of an individual, he could not, and cannot, hide from God. The Psalmist wrote, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psa. 139:7-12).

There might yet remain a remote possibility that you could hide yourself from men. But no matter where you go, God still knows where you are; and He does not need "Googlemaps" to find you!



## *“Grant Not The Desires Of The Wicked”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David, and the contents and style of the Psalm support that authorship. The exact occasion of the Psalm is not known. Barnes suggests that "the contents of the psalm leave no room to doubt that it was written at an early period of his life, in the time when he was subjected to persecution" (Barnes, ESword Notes). It would seem, however, that the chapter could as easily have been written during the time of Absalom's rebellion. In fact, there are a number of occasions when David might have penned the Psalm and any attempt to restrict it to any particular moment might be a little presumptuous. It would appear that Psalms 140-143 are bound together by a common thread, having as their background a common circumstance, and containing common characteristics. For example, there are several Hebrew words that appear only in these four Psalms.

### ***Analysis***

The division of the chapter is not easy. The thoughts are mixed together as the author describes his attitude toward the enemy, and requests action against them. Morgan has these interesting comments: "The previous five psalms have dealt with the absolute sufficiency of Jehovah. In the four which follow a different note is struck. They reveal the need of man and his utter helplessness...The appeal of all of them is made out of dire necessity to absolute Sufficiency" (Morgan, page 274). He then gives the following outline: "The song begins on a low level and rises as it proceeds. The first movement (verses 1-5), describes the malice of the enemies, and ends with prayer for preservation. The second (verses 6-10) commences with earnest prayer, the confidence of which is based on past experiences of deliverance; and it ends with a definite request for the discomfiture of his foes. The final movement (verses 11-13) is an affirmation that in the government of Jehovah evil men cannot continue" (Morgan, page 274). Roy Deaver entitles the Psalm, "A

Fervent Prayer For Deliverance." He divides the chapter into four parts:

- I. Prayer, verse 1 - in which the Psalmist prays for deliverance from evil men;
- II. Description, verses 2-5 - in which the Psalmist describes the evil men;
- III. Prayer, verses 6-11 - in which the Psalmist further prays for deliverance;
- IV. Confidence, verses 12-13 - in which the Psalmist expresses confidence that God will always uphold the cause of the righteous and will condemn the cause of the wicked;

Phillips divides the Psalm into two parts: (1) Asking for Deliverance, 140:1-11; and (2) Assurance of Deliverance, 140:12-13. Willmington also divides the Psalm into two parts with the same verse divisions: (1) David's Petition Regarding the Godless, 140:1-11; and (2) David's Petition Regarding the Godly, 140:12-13.

I developed this outline while preparing these notes on this chapter:

- I. The **Petition** of the Psalmist, 140:1;
- II. The **Prating** of the Wicked, 140:2-3;
- III. The **Plans** of the Wicked, 140:4-5;
- IV. The **Praise** from the Psalmist, 140:6-7;
- V. The **Punishment** of the Wicked, 140:8-11;
- VI. The **Protection** of the Godly, 140:12-13.

We will use this outline in our study of the chapter.

## **Commentary**

### ***Petition of the Psalmist*** **Verse 1**

*1 Deliver me, O Jehovah, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man*

**140:1** - The Psalmist immediately sets forth his problem along with a sincere petition that God would deliver him. The complete dependence of the writer upon Jehovah is apparent. The devices and schemes of the "evil" and "violent" man were too much for the Psalmist to overcome. He was driven to the Rock that could deliver.

It would appear that the writer had some specific adversary in mind, although it is not possible to determine who this might have been. Barnes suggests that "all the circumstances agree with the supposition that Saul is intended" (Barnes, ESword Notes). The marginal note has "man of violence." Here was a man who had committed so much violence that it was considered a characteristic of the man. This could apply to any number of David's enemies.

### ***The Prating of the Wicked*** **Verses 2-3**

- 2 *Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war.*  
3 *They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.*

**140:2-3:** What begins "in their heart" soon passes the lips and then into overt wicked deeds. This verse begins a description of the enemy. Notice that this man devises "mischiefs" – plural rather than singular. It is also important to note that there were several involved in this effort to destroy David. While there may have been one man in the mind of the writer, it would appear that others had joined this violent man in an attempt to destroy David. It would appear from the later part of this verse that David was under continual pressure from the enemy; there was no occasion for rest as his enemies pressed upon him in warlike fashion.

The power of a wicked tongue can be seen in these verses. The tongue of the wicked had been "*sharpened*" like a "*serpent*." Like the poison of an adder, the venomous poison of this enemy is emphasized.

They are very spiteful, as full of malice as Satan himself: They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent, that infuses his venom with his tongue; and there is so much malignity in all they say that one would think there was nothing under their lips but adders' poison. With their calumnies, and with their counsels, they aimed to destroy David, but secretly, as a man is stung with a serpent, or a snake in the grass. And they endeavored likewise to infuse their malice into others, and to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. A malignant tongue makes men like the old serpent; and poison in the lips is a certain sign of poison in the heart (Matthew Henry, ESword Notes).

The verbal abuse which David received from the enemy suggests a vile and wicked character of those violent men.

### ***The Plans of the Wicked*** **Verses 4-5**

- 4 *Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.*
- 5 *The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah*

**140:4:** - "*Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked*" - The attack from the enemy was not limited to verbal abuse; it had progressed to physical harm as well. The "hands" are often representative of wicked actions. Once again the writer describes his enemy as a "violent man." What an evil heart must have controlled this enemy, whoever he may have been. Plans had been made to bring David to destruction, plans devised in the heart and carried out in action.

*"the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings"* – One can scarcely imagine someone who plans his evil deeds well in advance of the actual crime. But such was the case here.

**140:5:** "*The proud have laid a snare for me*" - Like one seeking to trap a bird, the enemy sought to snare David in their "net." The enemy was haughty, proud, and insolent. Not only had the enemy made open war with David, but they would seek to set traps, to catch him as a hunter might catch his prey.

*"they have set gins for me"* – "Gins" refers to something akin to a "noose (for catching animals), (literally or figuratively); by implication a *hook* (for the nose)" (Strong, ESword Notes). The tools of destruction were prepared well in advance. What the heart premeditated the mind purposed.

### ***The Praise from the Psalmist*** **Verses 6-7**

- 6 *I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.*
- 7 *O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle*

**140:6:** Three times in two verses the Psalmist calls upon his God. Only once does he refer to his “supplication,” but three times he praises God for the protection received at the hand of a merciful God.

*“Thou art my God”* – While it may be said that God is the God of all the living, it is the personal relationship to each individual soul wherein strength and confidence come. In times of trouble the Psalmist relied upon God. Here is the strongest poetic language possible which suggests that God would listen to his pleas yet again as the enemy sought to destroy him.

**140:7:** *“the strength of my salvation...thou hast covered my head in the day of battle”* – David could look back on his life and count the many times God had providentially, and even miraculously delivered him from the hand of Saul. Perhaps there was more hurt and a greater need for strength when David learned of his own son’s rebellion. But in all of his battles, God had provided him a better “helmet” for his head than the armor of Goliath, and kept him safe in the day of battle. Indeed, “God is as able to preserve his people from secret fraud as from open force; and the experience we have had of his power and care, in dangers of one kind, may encourage us to trust in him and depend upon him in dangers of another nature; for nothing can shorten the Lord’s right hand” (Henry, ESword Notes).

### ***The Punishment of the Wicked*** **Verses 8-11**

- 8 *Grant not, O Jehovah, the desires of the wicked; Further not his evil device, lest they exalt themselves. Selah.*
- 9 *As for the head of those that compass me about, Let the mischief of their own lips cover them.*
- 10 *Let burning coals fall upon them: Let them be cast into the fire, Into deep pits, whence they shall not rise.*
- 11 *An evil speaker shall not be established in the earth: Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.*

With the eye of faith David envisions the shame and confusion of his persecutors. This would be followed by his anticipation of the deliverance and comfort of the persecuted.

**140:8:** *“Grant not, O Jehovah, the desires of the wicked”* – David knew that the wicked could do no more than God allowed. Though men may scheme against God’s anointed, their plans and purposes

will never overthrow the Divine purpose. The Lord may allow success to attend the policy of the wicked for a time for wise reasons unknown to us. We must never forget, however, that their success is only limited to this life. There will come a judgment when they shall be “cast into fire, into deep pits, whence they shall not rise” (verse 10).

**140:9:** *“Let the mischief of their own lips cover them”* – Do not forget that David sought justice – not vengeance. The quickest way for the wicked to be brought to shame is to have their own devices turn against them. There are a number of Biblical examples where the schemes of the wicked against the righteous were actually turned against them, and they eventually brought upon themselves their own destruction. Haaman is one example, having eventually been hanged upon the very gallows he had built in order to destroy Mordecai. “The *lex talionis*, or law of retaliation, often brings down upon violent men the evil which they planned and spoke of for others: their arrows fall upon themselves. When a man's lips vent curses they will probably, like chickens, come home to roost. A stone hurled upward into the air is apt to fall upon the thrower's head” (Spurgeon).

*“Further not his evil device”* - While his enemy may have surrounded him, encompassing him about, David was confident they would not succeed in their evil devices. Here David prays that the plans and devices of the wicked would not be advanced.

*“lest they exalt themselves. Selah”* – The plea is based upon the realization that proud men, when they prosper, are made prouder, grow more impudent against God and insolent against his people. We have witnessed the increasing antagonism against God even in our own country, and it seems with every court decision made in favor of the ungodly in our country, the wicked become emboldened. In their new found courage, coupled with their deep seated arrogance the enemies attempt to silence and ridicule those who believe in God and who seek to live by the Divine standard.

### ***The Protection of the Godly*** **Verses 12-13**

- 12 *I know that Jehovah will maintain the cause of the afflicted, And justice for the needy.*  
13 *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: The upright shall dwell in thy presence.*

Here David envisions the deliverance and comfort of those *persecuted*. He believed that God would eventually do justice in delivering those who, having been wronged, would continue to commit themselves to God.

**140:12:** *“I know that Jehovah will maintain the cause of the afflicted”* – The confidence of David shines in this verse. “I know” expresses the faith of this great man who was granted the accolade of being a “man after God’s heart.” In an age when the skeptics might ridicule our faith and tell us we cannot know anything for certain, the man who walks in the steps of David confidently affirms that there are some things we can know.

*“maintain the cause of the afflicted”* – God has always maintained the cause of those who could not otherwise help themselves. The fatherless and the widows, burdened by the oppression of the wicked, will be uplifted by the Omniscient and Omnipotent One.

“I will maintain it” is the motto of the great Defender of the rights of the needy. What confidence this should create within the bosoms of the persecuted and poverty-stricken! The prosperous and wealthy can maintain their own cause, but those who are otherwise shall find that God helps those who cannot help themselves (Spurgeon).

**140:13:** *“the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name”* - They will do Him justice in ascribing the glory of their deliverance to Him. The truly righteous are quick to give thanks to the Father. His very “name” bespeaks His great power and concern for those who have suffered affliction.

*“The upright shall dwell in thy presence”* - These closing words denote God's favor to the righteous by allowing them to dwell in the very presence of their God. There may be occasions when we feel that the "cause" of God is on the losing side, and the cause of wickedness is on the throne. When the battles have been fought, and we lay our armor at Jesus' feet, we shall "dwell" in the "presence" of Jehovah. What a glorious occasion that will be.

## ***Lessons***

1. Our generation faces an increasing antagonism toward God. It may be our lot to suffer persecution for our faith. If such should occur, let us pray that God will grant us strength to endure. May our faith never lose sight of the fact that God has promised to deliver us from evil men.
2. Should it be our lot to suffer at the hands of wicked men let us (1) resort to God as did David, with a two-fold request that God would “deliver me” and “preserve me,” (2) let us maintain our integrity and uprightness, and (3) should the mischievous ones succeed may we still trust in God, who can make their mischief lead to our profit, and make His goodness outwit their devices.



## *“Faith In The Face of Temptation”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David. Barnes believes that the language of the Psalm might suggest the time of David's persecution by Saul, especially as David was tempted to do some wrong in order to gain advantage over Saul. Our opinion is that David was facing a different kind of threat – the temptation to compromise his faith and be drawn into the ranks of the wicked. Morgan's introduction to this chapter develops this thought quite well:

In this song the influence of the external troubles on the inner life of the singer is revealed. Throughout it breathes the spirit of fear, lest the soul be seduced from the attitude of whole-hearted loyalty to God. The peril most evidently threatening arises from the enticements of the ungodly, and the psalmist earnestly prays that he may be protected by Jehovah in speech and thought and action. Without in so many words declaring so, the song clearly reveals that the singer has been sorely tempted to turn aside to ways of ungodly men, to share their hospitality and so escape their hostility. This peril is more subtle than the active opposition of these men, and in this distress he turns to God. This...is a revelation of the fact that his anchor still holds, not only against the fierce onslaught of enemies, but also against the insidious temptation to turn aside from the path of rectitude in order to escape the vindictive opposition of his enemies. If the former psalm reveals the perils of foes without, this no less clearly deals with the danger of fears within (Morgan, page 275).

David is facing more than an outward threat to his physical safety. In this Psalm there is the danger that he may fall away, and be absorbed into the company of the wicked. The spirit of the Psalm is similar to the 73<sup>rd</sup> wherein Asaph acknowledged that his “steps had nearly slipped” (73:2). In that Psalm the author admits that the prosperity of the wicked had so discouraged him that he was ready to give himself wholly to the ways of the wicked. No doubt this Psalm breathes the same spirit of discouragement on the part of the author.

But like Asaph, David drew strength from the Lord, and the Psalm closes on a positive note. “But my eyes are toward you, O GOD, my Lord; in you I seek refuge; leave me not defenseless!” (141:8).

### ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains the following: The author first asks God to accept his prayer (141:1-2). He then seeks God’s assistance in the face of temptation (141:3-4). He quickly affirms that (a) he will remain steadfast in his prayers even in the face of persecution (141:5); (b) that he will be avenged by those who occupied the position of “judges” and who would hear his words (141:6-7). Lastly, he prays that God might avenge him against his enemies (141:8-10). From this brief analysis we derive the following outline for our study:

- I. Acceptance, verses 1-2
- II. Assistance, verses 3-4
- III. Affirmation, verses 5-6
- IV. Avenging, verses 7-10

We have entitled this chapter, “Faith In The Face of Temptation.”

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Acceptance*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 *Jehovah, I have called upon thee; make haste unto me: Give ear unto my voice, when I call unto thee.*
- 2 *Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee; The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice*

Although David trusted in God and believed in the power of prayer, he would ask God first to listen to him; to “make haste” and “give ear to my voice.” The “sweet singer of Israel” understood the proper protocol for approaching the God of Israel; always in humility and with a sincere heart of faith.

**141:1:** *“I have called upon thee; make haste”* - There is a sense of urgency in the Psalmist’s words; it is as if the danger was presently upon the Psalmist; as if he were seeking an immediate answer to his request.

**141:2:** *“Let my prayer be set forth as incense before thee”* – Like the burning of incense, David desired that the “aroma” of his prayer might be sweet in the sight of God. Prayer is also likened unto the burning of incense (cf. Rev. 5:8, 8:3-4).

*“The lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice”* – Likely David was referring here to the posture he struck in prayer. Turning his face toward the heavens, he held forth his hands as a symbolic gesture that God might pour forth blessings that he could then embrace and receive.

### ***Assistance*** **Verses 3-4**

- 3 *Set a watch, O Jehovah, before my mouth; Keep the door of my lips.*  
4 *Incline not my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness With men that work iniquity: And let me not eat of their dainties.*

In these verses the Psalmist prays that God will help him to be pure. He earnestly wants to be acceptable before God. It appears that David may have been tempted to say something, or do something that he would later regret. He asks God to guard his mouth, keep him from sin, and help him avoid association with those who sought to do him harm. Let’s take a closer look.

**141:3:** - *“Set a watch...before my mouth, Keep the door of my lips”* – It should not surprise us that David begins his prayer with the desire that he might manifest a proper control of his tongue. James tells us that “If any stumbleth not in word, the same is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body also” (Jas. 3:2). Words spoken in anger can come back to haunt us later. David knew that an unruly tongue could taint his character and bring dishonor to his God, as well as to himself.

**141:4:** *“Incline not my heart to any evil thing, To practice deeds of wickedness”* – Was there a strong temptation to take vengeance? Was David tempted to do Saul wrong, or to lash out against Absalom? We might be able to understand the meaning of his words if we knew the precise occasion of this Psalm. The point, however, is well taken: we should pray that God keep us from temptation, and when it is our lot to “fall into manifold temptation” we should pray for wisdom to handle it accordingly (Jas. 1:2-6).

*“And let me not eat of their dainties”* – Was David tempted to align himself with those who were his enemies; to negotiate, or compromise his principles for the sake of peace? Perhaps the invitation was there to “negotiate” with the enemy; to call a truce; to make peace. How easy it would be to find a common ground with error and stop opposing the wrong; to negotiate some middle ground. The Bible teaches us, however, that such compromise is not possible. David recognized this important principle and prayed that he might not find himself at the table of the enemy, eating their dainties, and compromising the truth.

### ***Affirmation*** **Verses 5-6**

- 5 *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; And let him reprove me, it shall be as oil upon the head; Let not my head refuse it: For even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue.*
- 6 *Their judges are thrown down by the sides of the rock; And they shall hear my words; For they are sweet.*

**141:5:** *“Let the righteous smite me”* – There are two ways this verse might be taken. First, it is possible that David speaks of the “righteous” with a hint of sarcasm. Those who sought to destroy David thought their “cause” was just; that they were the righteous, and David the enemy. If we take the verse this way, then David was saying that should he suffer defeat at the hand of the enemy he would consider it *“as oil upon the head.”*

Another possibility is that David was speaking of his willingness to be rebuked by those who were truly righteous in the sight of God, something his enemy was not willing to do. If this is what David was referring to then the humility of David shines in this verse. He manifested that humble heart when Nathan approached him, and in great love for the David and concern for the King’s soul, he convicted David of his sin and wrong doing in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah. David submitted to that rebuke, and acknowledges here that all such reproof would be taken as a kindness to him; as *“oil upon the head.”* It should be our desire that, when reproved by our brethren, we consider it an act of kindness. We should never refuse the chastening when we are in the wrong and in danger of going astray.

*"For even in their wickedness shall my prayer continue"* – Should it be his lot to suffer at the hands of the wicked; should God choose not to deliver him, he would still maintain his faith in God and his prayer would continue.

**141:6** - We are not certain as to what is meant by this reference to "their judges," or the fact that they "are thrown down by the sides of the rock." Some opinions include the following:

Calamity opens the heart to receive instruction. The "judges" — i.e. the leaders — among David's enemies are visited with a grievous calamity, expressed metaphorically by their being dashed upon rocks. This disposes them to listen to David's words, which are well worth listening to, since they are sweet (Pulpit Commentary, AGES Electronic Software).

David surely means that when their leaders fell never to rise again, they would then turn to him and take delight in listening to his voice. And so they did: the death of Saul made all the best of the nation look to the son of Jesse as the Lord's anointed; his words became sweet to them (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

Or we may take it more generally: even judges, great as they are, may come to be overthrown. Those that make the greatest figure in this world do not always meet with level smooth ways through it. And those that slighted the word of God before will relish it, and be glad of it, when they are in affliction, for that opens the ear to instruction. When the world is bitter the word is sweet. Oppressed innocency cannot gain a hearing with those that live in pomp and pleasure, but when they come to be overthrown themselves they will have more compassionate thoughts of the afflicted (Matthew Henry, ESword Notes).

The following renditions and/or paraphrases of verses 5-7 may provide the student with some help. But, as Coffman noted, "These examples are enough to demonstrate that the translators simply do not know what these verses mean. Some of the proposed renditions have merit in themselves, but the proposition that any of these renditions is what is stated in the word of the Lord is impossible of any confident acceptance" (Coffman, Volume II, page 506).

When good men wound us and reprove us, 'tis a kindness. I would pray ever to have their good will...They are given over to their tyrants – to teach them that the Eternal's threats are true. Their bones lie scattered for the grave to swallow, like stones splintered and crushed upon the road (Moffatt, as quoted by Coffman, page 505).

A good man may punish me and rebuke me in kindness, but I will never accept honor from evil men because I am always praying against their evil deeds. When their rulers are thrown down from rocky cliffs, The people will admit that my words are true. Like wood that is split and chopped into bits, So their bones are scattered at the edge of the grave (as quoted by Coffman, page 505).

It seems that the most plausible interpretation of the passage is that it refers to the state of things as recorded in 1 Samuel 24:1-7. Saul, in his pursuit of David, had temporarily turned aside into a cave to lie down and rest. Unknown to him, David and his men were in the sides of the cave. David saw that Saul was in his power and that it would be an easy thing to take the life of Saul. Though urged by his men to kill Saul, David instead cut off the skirt of Saul's robe to demonstrate to the King his utmost respect for God's anointed. He did not take the life of Saul, and even regretted what he had done, as implying a want of due respect for the anointed of the Lord (24:11). The result of David's action was a kinder attitude toward David on the part of Saul, if only temporarily.

### ***Avenging Verses 7-10***

- 7 *As when one ploweth and cleaveth the earth, Our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol.*
- 8 *For mine eyes are unto thee, O Jehovah the Lord: In thee do I take refuge; leave not my soul destitute.*
- 9 *Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, And from the gins of the workers of iniquity.*
- 10 *Let the wicked fall into their own nets, Whilst that I withal escape.*

In these verses the Psalmist pleads for deliverance, and affirms (1) that his eyes are unto God, (2) that he trusts in Jehovah. He pleases (1) that God will not leave him destitute, (2) that God would keep him from the snares which might have been laid for him, (3) and that he might escape.

**141:7:** David points out that his "*bones are scattered at the grave's mouth...*" At the time David penned this song, things seemed hopeless; the cause of God in Israel was as broken bones, laid at the mouth of the grave to return to the dust of the earth.

There seemed to be no life, no cohesion, no form, order, or headship among the godly party in Israel: Saul had demolished it, and scattered all its parts, so that it did not exist as an organized whole. David himself was like one of these dried bones, and the rest of the godly were in much the same condition. There seemed to be no vitality or union among the holy seed; but their cause lay at death's door (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

**141:8:** *"My eyes are unto thee"* -- It is the eye of faith of which the Psalmist speaks. Those eyes are fixed on Jehovah, and like the ancients before him, he looked to the "city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God" (Heb 11:10).

He looked upward and kept eyes fixed there. He regarded duty more than circumstances; he considered his promise rather than the external providence; and he expected from God rather than from men. He did not shut his eyes in indifference or despair, neither did he turn them to the creature in vain confidence, but he gave his eyes to his God, and saw nothing to fear (Spurgeon).

The wicked are not so. Their eyes are fixed upon the here and now. The eye of their soul can see no further than the eyes within the sockets of their head. Their vision is myopic; limited to this world.

*"leave not my soul destitute"* – The Hebrew word (*‘arah*) here translated “destitute” means “empty, to pour out; demolish; make naked” (Strong). The depth of David’s despair is captured in these words. He knew that to be destitute in circumstances is bad, but to be destitute in soul is far worse. He might well cope with the desertion by his earthly friends, but to be abandoned by God would be unbearable.

**141:9:** *"the snare which they have laid..."* The wicked sought to entrap and destroy the Psalmist. The “snare which they have laid” and the “gins of the workers of iniquity” represent the traps and secret plans devised by the enemies of David in order to destroy him.

**141:10:** *"Let the wicked fall into their own nets..."* Rather than be caught in their traps, the Psalmist prays that they may fall into their own nets. It has often been the case that the wicked devices of men have been turned back upon them to their own destruction. Such was the case with Haaman, who built a gallows for Mordacai, and was eventually hung thereon himself.

## ***Lessons***

1. *"Set a watch, O Jehovah, before my mouth; Keep the door of my lips"* – This prayer should be in the heart of every saint. The tremendous power of the tongue to do harm warrants a safeguard be placed at the door of our lips.
2. The following illustration might help us maintain a tight control over the tongue: "As Terry Mikel was speeding toward Tucson, he passed a car, an unmarked Arizona Highway Patrol car. The officer pulled Terry over. When Terry explained that he was late for a class he as teaching at the University of Arizona, the officer took pity on him and let him off with a warning. Before he went back to his car he said, 'Slow down and drive safe.' Terry felt obligated to correct him. 'Excuse me, Sir, but it should be 'Slow down and drive safely.' You said, 'Drive safe.' The officer walked back to his car and wrote him a \$72 speeding ticket."
3. From verse 8: "If you would keep your mind fixed in prayer, keep your *eye* fixed. Much vanity comes in at the eye. When the eyes wander in prayer the heart wanders. To think to keep the heart fixed in prayer, and yet let the eyes gaze abroad, is as if one should think to keep his house safe, yet let the windows be open. - *Thomas Watson*."



## *“No Man Cares For My Soul”*

### ***Introduction***

The subtitle attributes the Psalm to David. Some indication as to the occasion is given as well, being a "prayer when he was in the cave." The reference may be to either (1) the cave of Adullam (as recorded in 1 Samuel 22) or (2) the cave of Engedi (as recorded in 1 Samuel 24). Our opinion is that it was the cave of Adullam because on that occasion David was alone, his fellow outcasts had not yet heard of his escape from Gath in the land of the Philistines, and he had not, at that time, gathered a garrison of men about him to form his small army that would later come to fight and eventually defeat Saul. It is evident that when David penned this song that his spirits were at their lowest, his reputation in disarray, and his fortunes and prospects of a bright future somewhat questionable. And yet, in the midst of his troubles he never lost sight of God and the trust and faith he manifests in this beautiful song are characteristic of this great man of faith. The Psalm closes on a positive note: "For thou wilt deal bountifully with me."

### ***Analysis***

We see in this Psalm a realization of the writer's need for God. The enemy was overwhelming his spirit. "Two notes run side by side throughout the song. The first is this terrible sense of helplessness and hopelessness so far as man is concerned. The other is the determined application of the helpless soul to Jehovah...The psalm ends with an earnest cry for deliverance, and an affirmation of confidence that the cry will be heard and answered" (Morgan, page 275). We found the following outlines helpful in our study of the Psalm:

Willmington: First, there is David's Desperation (142:1-4), with two sub-points: (a) The abundance of foes (142:1-3), and (b) the absence of friends (142:4). Second, we have David's Realization (142:5-7), with four sub-points: (a) God alone is his refuge (142:5); (b) God alone is his strength (142:6); (c) God alone is all he wants in life (142:6); and (d) God alone is his rescuer (142:6-7).

Phillips' outline was quite good. He entitled the chapter, "Down In The Valley" and provided a four point outline (Phillips, page 620):

- I. The Distressed Man (142:1-2)
- II. The Desperate Man (142:3-4)
- III. The Discerning Man (142:5-6)
- IV. The Delivered Man (142:7).

The Psalm has, on more than one occasion, been entitled "No Man Cares For My Soul." I do not recall when I first placed this outline in the margin of my ASV Bible. We shall use it for our study of this chapter:

- I. Despondency (142:1-4)
- II. Deliverance (142:5-7)

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Despondency*** **Verses 1-4**

- 1 *I cry with my voice unto Jehovah; With my voice unto Jehovah do I make supplication.*
- 2 *I pour out my complaint before him; I show before him my trouble.*
- 3 *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, Thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walk Have they hidden a snare for me.*
- 4 *Look on my right hand, and see; For there is no man that knoweth me: Refuge hath failed me; No man careth for my soul.*

**142:1:** "*I cry with my voice*" - The Psalmist made verbal supplication; his situation demanded strong cries unto Jehovah God. Since David was a type of Christ we are not surprised to learn that our Lord "in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death" (Heb. 5:7). The Hebrew word rendered "*do I make supplication*" means to implore favor or mercy. This is a petition rather than a demand. The language indicates that the writer recognized his absolute helplessness, and sought help from his God. In the loneliness of the cave, David cried to God in audible

tones of deep distress. Twice in this one verse, he specifically points out that he spoke aloud in prayer.

**142:2:** *"I pour out my complaint"* - The word *complaint* might better be rendered "meditation." The idea is not that he complained to God, but rather than he meditated on his condition, and brought his need before God. It is proper to tell God of our troubles, and seek His help in deliverance. A pleading heart God will hear, but to those who would bicker and complain He will turn a deaf ear. David's intention was not to show his trouble to God in order that God might see, for God was aware of his plight. "It is for our relief, and not for His information that we make plain statements concerning our woes: it does us much good to set out our sorrow in order, for much of it vanishes in the process" (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

**142:3:** *"my spirit was overwhelmed"* - The Hebrew word rendered "*overwhelmed*" means "to cover as with a garment" (Barnes). His spirit was completely overcome by his troubles; there was no life in him. How refreshing to know that God was aware of his trouble. While the enemy may have tricked David, leading him into their trap, God was aware, and providentially delivered him. Though David was a great man of faith, there were those times when he felt completely overwhelmed by the enemy. Instead of turning to his own strength, he turned to God. Of particular interest here is the fact that God knew of the pitfalls that the enemy had laid for David and delivered him on a number of occasions out of the hand of Saul. It is comforting to know that God knows what we ourselves do not know. God never closes His eyes to the suffering of His saints.

**142:4:** *"There is no man that knoweth me...No man careth for my soul"* - Who was there to help? What man could David turn to in his time of need? David was an outcast; there were none of his friends who came to his rescue; no one to render aid. What loneliness must have filled his soul, seeing that he had no one to turn to in his time of need. There was no one that would stand with him, or come to his defense. No one cared for his soul; no one came to the rescue. "This is dire calamity. It is better to be opposed by foes than to be forsaken by friends...The fact is that in times of desertion it is not true that no man did know us, but no man *would* know us" (Spurgeon).

## ***Deliverance***

### **Verses 5-7**

- 5 *I cried unto thee, O Jehovah; I said, Thou art my refuge, My portion in the land of the living.*
- 6 *Attend unto my cry; For I am brought very low: Deliver me from my persecutors; For they are stronger than I.*
- 7 *Bring my soul out of prison, That I may give thanks unto thy name: The righteous shall compass me about; For thou wilt deal bountifully with me*

**142:5:** While men may forsake us, God will always be near. He is our refuge in time of trouble; what great source of comfort that is to a troubled soul. There was hope in God; in man was only despair.

A few years ago the psychology department of Duke University carried on an interesting experiment. They wanted to see how long rats could swim. In one container they placed a rat for which there was no possibility of escape. The rat swam a few moments and then ducked his head to drown. In the other container they made the hope of escape possible for the rat. The rat swam for several hours before finally drowning. The conclusion of the experiment was just the opposite of our common conclusion. We usually say, "As long as there is life, there is hope." The Duke experiment proved, "As long as there is hope, there is life."

**142:6:** "*Attend unto my cry*" - David beseeches God's attention to his most urgent need.

"*brought very low*" is language that is sometimes applied to one in poverty. His "persecutors" were likely Saul and company. They were "stronger" only in the sense that they were better armed and greater in number.

**142:7:** "*Prison*" denotes the confinement experienced by David during his flight from Saul. The writer was in prison only in the sense that his present condition was such AS IF he were in prison. He was surrounded by foes, his freedom restricted. Deliverance would provide occasion for thanksgiving to God. Notice the confidence of the Psalmist. He believed that God would, indeed, deal with him graciously, and grant his requests.

A story is told of a child who had to walk each evening past a dark, spooky house. Some adults sought to give him courage. One handed

him a good luck charm to ward off the ghosts. Another had a light put on the dreaded corner. Still another said earnestly, "It is sinful to be afraid. Trust God and be brave!" The advice was good, but he offered nothing more. Then someone said with compassion, "I know what it is to be afraid. I will walk with you past the house." He did nothing to remove the fear - except to lift it from the child's shoulders and place it on his own. So it is with our God. He has promised to walk with us, never failing or forsaking His children (cf. Heb. 13:5).

### ***Lessons***

1. Verse 4: "*No man careth for my soul*" – While David may have used these words in regard to his personal situation, these half dozen words carry a powerful message concerning our mission efforts, whether at home or abroad. Think of the multiplied millions who have still never heard the gospel of Christ. In my travels to India I have witnessed first hand the sorrowful plight of the Hindus who, with their multitude of "gods" have robbed themselves of the peace and joy that comes with knowing the God of the Bible. They pray to elephants, snakes, and reptiles. Some refuse to kill a malarial mosquito because it might be some reincarnated loved one. When these lost souls stand before God on the Judgment Day their only plea will be, "No man cared for my soul." The same could be said for the billions of lost souls who have never heard the name of Jehovah, or whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world, whether living in distant lands, or just across the street from us. "No man careth for my soul."
2. Verse 5: "*Thou art my refuge, My portion in the land of the living*" - Consider, for a moment, what it is about our God that qualifies Him to be our "refuge." He is a God of infinite mercy. He is infallible in wisdom and limitless in power. He is omniscient and omnipresent. He never changes, and His love never diminishes.

## ***“God Our Helper In Times of Trouble”***

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm breathes of the din of battle. There is no doubt that David wrote this Psalm at some point during his life when the persecutions were the heaviest and the possibility of his complete destruction seemed a distinct possibility. In the Vulgate and the Septuagint "it is said to have been written when Absalom his son persecuted him" (Barnes). The Psalm is of the same general character as the previous. It is one of great distress coupled with confident faith, for while the author pours out his heart to God, he never loses sight of the fact that God will deliver him from his distress. This is the last of four Psalms in which the author expresses his helplessness. Yet, of the four, it expresses assurance in God perhaps more vividly than any of the other three. The Psalm is a cry of despair, as suggested by the fourth verse: "Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate." Morgan points out that this "word 'desolate' has in it the sob of an unilluminated sea" (Morgan, page 275). But in spite of the writer's complete despair, the Psalm opens with a sincere cry unto God. The confidence and trust that the writer places in Jehovah is worthy of imitation by the true children of God.

### ***Analysis***

The chapter starts out with a plea in which the Psalmist asks God to hear his prayer (verses 1-2). This is followed by a description of his plight. He was being persecuted and his spirit was "overwhelmed" (verses 3-4). In an effort to encourage himself David gives consideration of the past, in the "days of old" when God had delivered him from his enemies, and he meditates thereon (verses 5-7). We are then provided the particulars of his prayer (verses 8-12a): namely that God would (a) cause him to hear, vs. 8; (b) deliver him from his enemies, vs. 9; (c) teach him "thy will," vs. 10; (d) lead him in the land of uprightness, vs. 10b; (e) quicken him, vs. 11; (f)

bring his soul out of trouble, vs. 11b; (g) cut off his enemies, vs. 12a. The Psalm closes with a proclamation that David remains a servant of God (verse 12b). “Crushed by his enemies, David longs for time alone with God. He prays for victory (as in times of old), deliverance, spiritual guidance, and revival” (Willmington, page 294). Hence, our outline for the study of this chapter:

- I. Plea (verses 1-2);
- II. Plight (verses 3-4);
- III. Past (verses 5-7);
- IV. Particulars (verses 8-12a);
- V. Proclamation (verse 12b).

We have entitled this Psalm, "God Our Helper in Times of Trouble."

## **Commentary**

### ***Plea*** **Verses 1-2**

- 1 Hear my prayer, O Jehovah; give ear to my supplications: In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.*
- 2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant; For in thy sight no man living is righteous*

**143:1:** “*Hear my prayer...give ear*” – As an appellant before his persecutors, he begs that his case might be heard and brought before the God of heaven for judgment. There are two positive characteristics upon which the Psalmist relies: (1) God's faithfulness, and (2) God's righteousness. There must have been some reflection in the mind of David upon the promises that God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and eventually to himself. It should be noted that David based his plea, not upon achievements that might be attributed to him, but rather upon the faithfulness and righteousness of God. As the Psalm unfolds we will see that the writer was confident that God would be faithful in carrying out that promise. In addition, David was so confident of the rightness of his cause, that God's righteousness would eventually deliver him from the enemy.

**143:2:** “*in thy sight no man living is righteous*” – David was cognizant of his horrible sin against Bathsheba, Uriah, and most of all, against God. He recognized his own sinfulness, and was willing to admit that to the Almighty. Though none are righteous in and of themselves, this does not mean that man cannot attain unto a

righteous status with God. It is said of Zacharias and Elizibeth that they were "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6). David is implying that his desire is that God not deal with him as he deserves, for should God do so, then judgment would most certainly go against him.

### ***Plight*** **Verses 3-4**

- 3 *For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; He hath smitten my life down to the ground: He hath made me to dwell in dark places, as those that have been long dead.*
- 4 *Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; My heart within me is desolate*

David presents his case to God. His plight is desperate. "Persecuted," "smitten down," and made to "dwell in dark places" are words used to describe a man so "overwhelmed" that even his "heart within...is desolate."

**143:3:** "*For the enemy hath persecuted my soul...smitten my life...make me to dwell in darkness*" - Evidently the enemy had caused David to go into hiding; such hiding that it was AS IF he had died. It was as if he had never ruled, and had long since passed away leaving his throne to another. Matthew Henry's paraphrase of this verse is to the point:

Saul, that great enemy, *has persecuted my soul*, sought my life, with a restless malice, and has carried the persecution so far that he has already *smitten it down to the ground*. Though I am not yet under ground, I am struck to the ground, and that is next door to it; he has forced me to *dwell in darkness*, not only in dark caves, but in dark thoughts and apprehensions, in the clouds of melancholy, as helpless and hopeless as *those that have been long dead*. Lord, let me find mercy with thee, for I find no mercy with men. They condemn me; but, Lord, do not thou condemn me. Am not I an object of thy compassion, fit to be appeared for; and is not my enemy an object of thy displeasure, fit to be appeared against? (Henry, ESword Notes).

**143:4:** "*Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me*" – David found himself plunged into despair. Without were the enemies seeking to overthrow his God-given throne; within were the fears.



No wonder David was in the grip of despair. David was a great man of faith; but even he was prone to faint in the day of adversity.

**Past  
Verses 5-7**

- 5 *I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy doings; I muse on the work of thy hands.*  
6 *I spread forth my hands unto thee: My soul thirsteth after thee, as a weary land. Selah.*  
7 *Make haste to answer me, O Jehovah; my spirit faileth: Hide not thy face from me, Lest I become like them that go down into the pit*

**143:5:** *"I remember the days of old"* - Memory is a great blessing. David could recall the days of old when God seemed more in control. Remembering the great power and providence of God, he would turn to his Refuge. As a land deprived of water, so David longed for God's care and protection.

*"I meditate on all thy doings...I muse on the work of thy hands"* - David must have been fond of meditating on the wonders and works of God. "Many see them, but do not see the footsteps of God's wisdom, power, and goodness in them, and do not receive the benefit they might by them because they do not meditate upon them; they do not dwell on that copious curious subject, but soon quit it, as if they had exhausted it, when they have scarcely touched upon it" (Henry, ESword Notes). In the hour of despair, David sought refuge in remembering, yea meditating on God's wonderful works.

My mother wrote the following many years ago:

***And In Our Sorrow***

By Mary Wacaster

Count the joys that are ours  
That flows through life's vein,  
And lingers in our twilight  
Where memories' shadows remain.  
As photographs of a love --  
The brightness of the heart --  
Keeps the memory glowing  
When the dearest ones depart.  
The wisdom within God's words

That flows down through the ages,  
Written on our life's memories,  
Becomes the strength of the sages.  
God holds the crushed heart tenderly,  
That quakes from loss and fears,  
And with His hoary crown of hair,  
Dries the flowing tears.  
And when the pain besets us,  
God's heart does surely break,  
For it was His only Son  
He gave up for our sake.  
So in our sorrow count the joys  
Flowing through our life's vein,  
For when we walk in the shadows  
The sweetest memories will remain.

**143:6:** *"I spread forth my hands unto thee"* – As one expecting to receive alms, or as a child who seeks to be lifted up by a caring father or mother, David spread forth his hands to his heavenly Father.

*"My soul thirsteth after thee, as a weary land"* – Like dry and parched land that longs for the refreshing rain, David looked to God for the living water that quenches the thirst of the soul.

**143:7:** There are a number of things for which the Psalmist pleads in these next few verses. He begins with an earnest request that God not "hide" His face from him. David knew the joy of fellowship. Let others turn against him and he could bear the pain; but should God turn away, all hope would be lost and he would be *"like them that go down into the pit."*

### ***Particulars*** **Verses 8-12a**

8 *Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; For in thee do I trust: Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; For I lift up my soul unto thee.*

9 *Deliver me, O Jehovah, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.*

10 *Teach me to do thy will; For thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; Lead me in the land of uprightness.*

11 *Quicken me, O Jehovah, for thy name's sake: In thy righteousness bring my soul out of trouble.*

12a *And in thy lovingkindness cut off mine enemies, And destroy all*

*them that afflict my soul;*

**143:8:** *“Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning”* – Today may have brought bad news; but “in the morning” things would be better. David was confident that God would bestow some mercy upon him; that perhaps some good news would come to him, and he would be encouraged by that word. Or it might be that David were asking: *“Cause me to hear it in the morning*, every morning; let my waking thoughts be of God's lovingkindness, that the sweet relish of that may abide upon my spirits all the day long.”

A sense of divine love is to the soul both dawn and dew; the end of the night of weeping, the beginning of the morning of joy. Only God can take away from our weary ears the din of our care, and charm them with the sweet notes of his love. Our plea with the Lord is our faith; if we are relying upon him, he cannot disappoint us “in thee do I trust” is a sound and solid argument with God. He who made the ear will cause us to hear, he who is love itself will have the kindness to bring his lovingkindness before our minds (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

*“Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk”* – The “way” in which we should walk is not always the most pleasant way; nor is it always the easiest way. Hence, “A good man does not ask what is the way in which he must walk, or in which is the most pleasant walking, but what is the right way, the way in which he should walk” (Matthew Henry). Without God's instructions we would be no better off than a blind man seeking to find his way, with no one to help and no idea of what stumbling block might be in our path.

*“I lift up my soul unto thee”* – Connected with the previous requests it appears that David is offering up his soul to God to be used as God sees fit.

**143:9:** *“Deliver me...from mine enemies”* – One cannot read these verses without becoming aware of the tender heart of David and his complete dependence upon God in regard to the uncertainties of life. Though David was a man of war he knew that it was God Who provided the victory from the enemy.

*“I flee unto thee to hide me”* – Persecutions, trials, and tribulations often serve the purpose of driving us to God. In that sense David's persecution was beneficial. “That which makes us flee to God may be an ill wind, but it blows good. There is no cowardice in such a flight, but much holy courage” (Matthew Henry).

**143:10:** *“Teach me to do thy will”* – The soul that is willing to be taught will be granted the request that God *“lead me in the land of uprightness.”* It should also be noted that the only way one will ever arrive at the eternal home of the soul is if he is submissive to the word of God.

**143:11:** *“Quicken me...for thy name’s sake”* - Life is to be found only in Jehovah. Jesus claimed that He is the “way, the truth, and the life,” thereby laying claim to His divine nature. Here the Psalmist sought release from his trouble. This would be accomplished only by the destruction of his enemy. David thus prayed that God might “destroy all them that afflict” his soul. He closes by acknowledging that he is God’s servant.

Let men see that thou art on the side of the right, and that thou wilt not allow the wicked to ride rough-shod over those who trust in thee. Thou hast promised to succor thy people; thou art not unrighteous to forget their work of faith; thou art, on the contrary, righteous in answering sincere prayer, and in comforting thy people. David was heavily afflicted. Not only was there trouble in his soul, but his soul was in trouble; plunged in it as in a sea, shut up in it as in a prison. God could bring him out of it, and especially he could at once lift up his soul or spirit out of the ditch. The prayer is an eager one, and the appeal a bold one. We may be sure that trouble was soon over when the Lord heard such supplications (Spurgeon).

**143:12:** *“Cut off mine enemies”* – The intent of David’s prayer was such “that I may be no longer in fear of them.”

*“destroy all them that afflict my soul”* – Some have objected to the imprecatory tone of the Psalm and concluded that it was not characteristic of David. Critics fail to realize that David’s words here (as well as other imprecatory passages) are to be better understood as a petition that seeks justice and not personal vengeance.

### ***Proclamation*** **Verse 12b**

*12b For I am thy servant*

The Psalm closes with the author’s proclamation that he is the Lord’s servant. His desire was that God would protect him in view of the relationship he sustained to his Master.

## ***Lessons***

1. "It is not without some use to observe in this Psalm how the heart of its devout composer turned alternately from spiritual to temporal, and again from temporal to spiritual subjects. He first complains of his sins, and begs for mercy; then of his enemies, and prays for deliverance. Then he laments his darkness and pleads for the light of God's countenance, and for wisdom, and understanding. After this, the thought of his enemies rushes in again upon his soul, and he flees to God for protection. Lastly, he again puts up his prayer for wisdom and holiness: "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God, thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." This is a peculiarly important petition: before he had prayed to know the way in which he should walk, he now prays that he may walk in it" - *John Fawcett*, 1769-1851.
2. "*My soul thirsteth after thee*" – I once read that Socrates was approached by one of his disciples asking for wisdom. Socrates took the man into a stream close by, and when in position, the teacher took the disciple by the head and plunged his head under water, holding him long enough until the student struggled for his breath. Socrates then told him, "When you desire wisdom as much as you desired the air you breathe, you will be in a position to learn." The French have a proverb that states, "A good meal ought to begin with hunger." It is hard to enjoy a meal when you are not yet hungry. As we approach things spiritual we must do so with a hunger for those things. For example, when we come to worship filled up with our own sufficiency or full of preoccupied thoughts, we won't give meaningful worship to our God. The same is true with regard to our approach to a study of God's word. Unless we hunger and thirst, we will never be filled.
3. Among other things, this Psalm teaches us the importance of keeping our ears attuned to the things of God. Two friends were walking near Times Square in Manhattan. It was during the noon lunch hour and the streets were filled with people. Cars were honking their horns, taxicabs were squealing around corners, sirens were wailing, and the sounds of the city were almost deafening. Suddenly, one of them said, "What an interesting place to hear a cricket." His friend said, "What? You must be crazy. You couldn't possibly hear a cricket in all of this noise!" "No, I'm sure

of it," his friend said, "I heard a cricket." "That's crazy," said his friend. The man, who thought he had heard a cricket, listened carefully for a moment, and then walked across the street to a big cement planter where some shrubs were growing. He looked into the bushes, beneath the branches, and sure enough, he located a small cricket. His friend was utterly amazed. "That's incredible," said his friend. "You must have superhuman ears!" "No," said the man who heard the cricket. "My ears are no different from yours. It all depends on what you're listening for." "But that can't be!" said the friend. "I could never hear a cricket in this noise." "Yes, it's true," came the reply. "It depends on what is really important to you. Here, let me show you." He reached into his pocket, pulled out a few coins, and discreetly dropped them on the sidewalk. And then, with the noise of the crowded street still blaring in their ears, they noticed every head within twenty feet turn and look to see if the money that tinkled on the pavement was theirs. "See what I mean?" asked the man who heard the cricket. "It all depends on what's important to you."

## *“God Will Deliver”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is ascribed to David in the ancient subscript and contains portions of some of the other Psalms written by him (cf. Psalms 18). While there may be some critics who deny the Davidic authorship, we agree with Coffman that “nothing but the disease that closes the eyes to the fact and opens them to fancy could have led learned critics to ascribe this psalm to anyone except David” (Coffman, page 517). The Psalm consists of a number of passages that appear in other chapters. Was it “copied” or “compiled” by someone other than David? Spurgeon addressed the charge: “Albeit that this Psalm is in some measure very similar to Psalm 18, yet it is a new song, and in its latter portion it is strikingly so. Let the reader accept it as a new Psalm, and not as a mere variation of an old one, or as two compositions roughly joined together” (Spurgeon).

There may have been a remembrance of former mercies bestowed by the hand of God in view of some present danger facing the Psalmist. The exact occasion, however, cannot be determined. While the four preceding Psalms appear to have been penned by David *before* his ascension to the throne, this song seems to have been penned following the defeat of Absalom. It also appears from the context that David was still troubled by surrounding nations that were disturbing David’s newly acquired kingdom.

It seems to us to be highly probable that the Psalmist, remembering that he had trodden some of the same ground before, felt his mind moved to fresh thought, and that the Holy Spirit used this mood for his own high purposes. Assuredly the addendum is worthy of the greatest Hebrew poet, and it is so admirable in language, and so full of beautiful imagery, that persons of taste who were by no means overloaded with reverence have quoted it times without number, thus confessing its singular poetical excellence. To us the whole Psalm appears to be perfect as it stands, and to exhibit such unity throughout that it would be a literary Vandalism, as well as a spiritual crime, to rend away one part from the other (Spurgeon).

Roy Deaver noted, "Psalms 135 through 139 emphasize the power and the sufficiency of God. Psalms 140 through 143 stress the helplessness of man. Then, as a beautiful summary, THIS Psalm combines both these thoughts. Without God, man is helpless. With God, man can accomplish great and wonderful good" (Roy Deaver, Volume II, page 261). So also Morgan:

This is a song of triumphant assurance. Its place in the book at this point suggests the invincible experience of trusting souls. In order to appreciate its value the nine psalms immediately preceding must be borne in mind. Five of them celebrate the sufficiency of God. These are followed by four which declare the utter helplessness of man. The present one immediately follows, and in it the two facts are present; but the divine sufficiency is seen encompassing the human helplessness until it is so lost sight of as hardly to be discernable (Morgan, page 275).

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm we have the following: (1) The Psalmist acknowledges, with triumph and thankfulness, the great goodness of God; (2) He then prays to God to help him against the enemies who threatened him; (3) He rejoices in the assurance of victory over those enemies; (4) The chapter closes with a prayer for the prosperity of his kingdom and confident hope that it would be so. Brother Deaver divided the Psalm into six parts: (1) PRAISE (1-2) in which the Psalmist praises Jehovah as the source of strength, deliverance, and security; (2) PROBLEM (3-4) in which the Psalmist asks why God would be concerned about man who is like a shadow; (3) PRAYER (5-8) in which the Psalmist prays for God to demonstrate His power and to deliver His servant; (4) PEACE (9-10) in which the Psalmist speaks in confidence that peace and prosperity will be given; (5) PRAYER (11-14) in which the Psalmist continues his prayer; and (6) PRONOUNCEMENT (15) in which the Psalmist pronounces happiness to those who experience the great blessings described.

Willmington's outline was brief. We will borrow from him for our study of the Psalm:

- I. David's Source of Victory (144:1-8): Victory comes from God, not people;
- II. David's Song of Victory (144:9-15).



## ***Commentary***

### ***David's Source of Victory*** **Verses 1-8**

In these verses David (1) acknowledges his dependence upon God and his obligations to Him, verses 1-2; (2) admires God's condescension to man in general and to himself in particular, verses 3-4; (3) beseeches God to strengthen him and give him strength against the enemies, verses 5-8. In all of this David never loses sight of the power and providence of God. We will take a closer look at each of these.

*David acknowledges his dependence upon God and his obligation to Him, verses 1-2:*

- 1 *Blessed be Jehovah my rock, Who teacheth my hands to war, And my fingers to fight:*
- 2 *My lovingkindness, and my fortress, My high tower, and my deliverer; My shield, and he in whom I take refuge; Who subdueth my people under me.*

In these two verses there are a number of things that David says about his relationship to God.

**144:1:** "*Blessed be Jehovah my rock*" - There is the matter of his trust in God and his triumph over his enemies. We are awed at David's respect for God. David says God is "*my rock*," thus admitting to the strength found in Jehovah and the refuge available to those who trust in the Almighty.

*"Who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight"* - *Strength* combined with *skill* was a formula for certain success. The Christian soldier finds his strength in God (Phil. 4:13) but he must allow himself to be taught in the ways of his Lord.

**144:2:** "*My lovingkindness*" - David was aware that God is the source of every good and perfect gift. The past defeat of his enemies, his ascent to the throne in Jerusalem and all other good blessings were the product of God's goodness.

*"my fortress, my high tower, my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I take refuge"* - David mounts up words to express his gratitude for the military victories God had granted. But it was much

more than the military might for which David was thankful; it was the spiritual strength granted to him as well. It has been noted that the words "my deliverer" are emphatic in the original and might better be translated, "My deliverer to me." God was his shield to guard against all the malignant darts that the enemy might fling at David.

The various terms in these verses that refer to God demonstrate a complete dependence on the part of the Psalmist upon Jehovah God. The writer placed his trust in God, not in man. It is God that gave unto David the ability of a noble warrior; and back of it all, God is the One Who subdued the people. From whence does the child of God draw his strength? "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might" (Eph. 6:10). God often works His will, and provides us strength, in our weakness. Paul said, "When I am weak, then am I strong." The following is attributed to Max Cleland, but the source could not be determined:

I asked God for strength that I might achieve; I was made weak, that I might learn humbly to obey. I asked for health, that I might do greater things; I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches, that I might be happy; I was given poverty, that I might be wise. I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men; I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God. I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life; I was given life, that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing that I asked for - but everything I had hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am among all men, most richly blessed.

*David admires God's condescension to man in general and to himself in particular, verses 3-4*

*3 Jehovah, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?*

*4 Man is like to vanity: His days are as a shadow that passeth away.*

**144:3:** "What is man, that thou takest knowledge of him?" What is it about man that causes God to condescend to our level; to visit us and give unto this weak creature such wonderful consideration? The honors bestowed upon man by Jehovah put man into a peculiar category far above any other part of creation. While these words are

used in the eighth Psalm to emphasize the seeming insignificance of man in comparison to the heavens that surround him, the idea here is somewhat different. The context is addressing the great power of God as our refuge and our deliverer. Although the Psalmist recognizes the great power of God, he stands amazed that an Almighty God would thus give consideration to man, to offer him such deliverance and refuge. The Psalmist was saying, "God DOES take knowledge of man; God DOES consider this frail creature, that is here today, and gone tomorrow. We can be assured that God is concerned about the well being of His children, and we can, therefore, call upon Him boldly."

**144:4:** *"Man is like to vanity: his days...as a shadow that passeth away"* – Feeble man! There is no permanence, for no sooner is one born into this world than he quickly passes from it; like a shadow that quickly vanishes with the rising sun. The vain and fleeting life of man was captured in a humorous way by an unknown author: "Man's life is made up of 20 years of his mother asking him where he is going, 40 years of his wife asking him where he has been and one hour at his funeral when everyone wonders where he is going."

*David beseeches God to strengthen him and give him strength against the enemies, verses 5-8*

- 5 *Bow thy heavens, O Jehovah, and come down: Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.*
- 6 *Cast forth lightning, and scatter them; Send out thine arrows, and discomfit them.*
- 7 *Stretch forth thy hand from above; Rescue me, and deliver me out of great waters, Out of the hand of aliens;*
- 8 *Whose mouth speaketh deceit, And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*

In these four verses the Psalmist prays for God to demonstrate His power and to deliver His servant. He first calls for God to "come down" and manifest His greatness against his enemies. He then seeks deliverance from an enemy most vicious in character.

**144:5:** *"Come down...touch the mountains"* – In poetic language, the author looks to his God for deliverance from the enemies that threatened. It is as if David were saying, "Touch the mountains as you did at Sinai; let men know that there is a God in heaven!"

**144:6:** *“Cast forth lightening, and scatter them...discomfit them”* – United the enemy posed a great threat; but “scattered” they would be weakened. The “arrows” of God would serve as a mighty weapon against the foolish darts of the evil one.

**144:7:** *“Stretch forth thy hand from above...rescue me”* – Imagine someone floundering in a body of water that threatens to overwhelm him. “Extend a helping hand, O God, and pluck me from the great waters.”

**144:8:** *“Whose mouth speaketh deceit...falsehood”* - The “right hand” when extended is a gesture of friendship and warm greeting. But in this case the “right hand” of this enemy was naught but deceit and falsehood. Open rebellion was bad enough; but treachery and treason hurt all the more.

### ***David’s Song of Victory*** **Verses 9-15**

- 9 *I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: Upon a psaltery of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.*
- 10 *Thou art he that giveth salvation unto kings; Who rescueth David his servant from the hurtful sword.*
- 11 *Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hand of aliens, Whose mouth speaketh deceit, And whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood.*
- 12 *When our sons shall be as plants grown up in their youth, And our daughters as corner-stones hewn after the fashion of a palace;*
- 13 *When our garners are full, affording all manner of store, And our sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields;*
- 14 *When our oxen are well laden; When there is no breaking in, and no going forth, And no outcry in our streets:*
- 15 *Happy is the people that is in such a case; Yea, happy is the people whose God is Jehovah.*

**144:9:** On David’s part, he would “sing a new song” unto his God. Deliverance demanded a song in the heart. “Is any among you cheerful, let him sing praise” (Jas. 5:13). In spite of his troubles, the Psalmist would, with great confidence, declare his victory in a song of praise.

**144:10:** Having made the promise that he would sing a new song, he now gives us the content; if not the very words, at least the theme of his song is presented for our consideration. And what a song! It is a “song of salvation” and “redemption.” It is a song whose message produces genuine peace in the heart of the soul that can sing its contents.

The First Stanza: *“Thou art he that giveth salvation unto kings; Who rescueth David his servant from the hurtful sword.”* Kings who do not have God on their side face certain defeat. David knew that his victories were attributed to Jehovah, the God Who gives salvation to princes and paupers alike.

**144:11:** The Second Stanza is a reminder of the fierce enemy from which David had been delivered. Their mouth speaks deceit. Though they might extend the right hand in a gesture of friendship, the gesture is false.

**144:12-14:** The Third Stanza looks to the future with the eye of faith. Unlike many of the despotic and tyrannical leaders who keep the people in poverty while living in comfort and extravagance, David was desirous of the people over whom he served. There are three parts to his request [borrowing from Matthew Henry]:

First, he desired a hopeful progeny, that the “sons and daughters” might grow up strong and take their place as the corner stone of future generations. Matthew Henry’s comments on this particular verse were quite good:

He means not those only of his own family, but those of his subjects, that are the seed of the next generation. It adds much to the comfort and happiness of parents in this world to see their children promising and likely to do well. First, It is pleasant to see our sons as plants grown up in their youth, as olive-plants (Psa 128:1-6), the planting of the Lord (Isa 61:3), - to see them as plants, not as weeds, not as thorns, - to see them as plants growing great, not withered and blasted, - to see them of a healthful constitution, a quick capacity, a towardly disposition, and especially of a pious inclination, likely to bring forth fruit unto God in their day, - to see them in their youth, their growing time, increasing in everything that is good, growing wiser and better, till they grow strong in spirit. Secondly, It is no less desirable to see our daughters as corner-stones, or corner-pillars, polished after the similitude of a palace, or temple. By daughters families are united and connected, to their mutual strength, as the parts of a building are by the corner-stones; and when they are graceful and beautiful

both in body and mind they are then polished after the similitude of a nice and curious structure. When we see our daughters well-established and stayed with wisdom and discretion, as corner-stones are fastened in the building, - when we see them by faith united to Christ, as the chief corner-stone, adorned with the graces of God's Spirit, which are the polishing of that which is naturally rough, and become women professing godliness, - when we see them purified and consecrated to God as living temples, we think ourselves happy in them.

Second, he desired great plenty for Israel. He prays that their “garners” be full, and that the “sheep” bring forth not only thousands, but tens of thousands that the herds and wealth of each family might increase. He prays that their “beasts” might be able to bear the loads and strong to labor at the plow. Finally, he desired that there might be peace rather than war, no “breaking in” or need to “go forth” to face the enemy.

**144:15:** This verse contains the Final Stanza of David’s song of victory. In these verses the Psalmist pronounces happiness to those who experience the great blessings described above. The language suggests that it is the “people whose God is Jehovah” that shall enjoy the blessings noted.

*“Yea, happy is the people whose God is Jehovah”* – Happiness is not to be found in the abundance of the things that a man might possess, but in a proper relationship to God.

### ***Lessons***

1. Even when we are weak, we may be strong in the power of God’s might. God was the true source of David’s strength. And our God is, and can be our source of strength *if* (1) we refuse to trust in ourselves, (2) we will not be lacking in courage, (3) we will but anticipate victory, and (4) we give the glory to God for all our victories.
2. Verse 1: “A prayer for further mercy is fitly begun with a thanksgiving for former mercy; and when we are waiting upon God to bless us, we should stir up ourselves to bless him” - *Matthew Henry*
3. Regarding this Psalm, Roy Deaver noted: “This Psalm beautifully emphasizes God’s majestic power. He can touch the mountains, and the mountains smoke. His arrows of lightning can be so

terribly destructive. His mighty power, in the spiritual realm, is extended to men in His word. This word from God is 'Living and active, and sharper than any two edged sword' (Heb. 4:12). This miraculous, inspired, Word of God is all sufficient: (1) to tell us how to become God's children; (2) to lead us, and direct us in our work and worship in this life, and (3) to take us to glory when this life is over" (Deaver, Vol. II, page 264).

4. Verse 4: "*Man is like to vanity: His days are as a shadow that passeth away.*" In view of the brevity of life, it behooves us to take advantage of each day and hour. I wrote the following article in early 2008.

### ***A Lot Of Empty Yesterdays***

by Tom Wacaster

An incident from the American Revolution illustrates what tragedy can result from procrastination. It is reported that Colonel Rahl, commander of the British troops in Trenton, New Jersey, was playing cards when a courier brought an urgent message stating that General George Washington was crossing the Delaware River. Rahl put the letter in his pocket and didn't bother to read it until the game was finished. Then, realizing the seriousness of the situation, he hurriedly tried to rally his men to meet the coming attack, but his procrastination was his undoing. He and many of his men were killed and the rest of the regiment was captured. Nolbert Quayle said, "Only a few minutes' delay cost him his life, his honor, and the liberty of his soldiers. Earth's history is strewn with the wrecks of half-finished plans and unexecuted resolutions. 'Tomorrow' is the excuse of the lazy and refuge of the incompetent."

Unfortunately the above scenario could be repeated dozens, if not hundreds of times throughout the history of mankind. Battles have been lost, business opportunities squandered, and personal relationships neglected for the simple reason that someone thought they had plenty of time. The most tragic consequence of procrastination, however, is the loss of one's soul. Perhaps the one parable that so illustrates the tragedy of procrastination is that of the foolish virgins as set forth in Matthew 25:1-13. In contrast to the five wise virgins who kept their wicks trimmed and their flasks filled with oil, the five foolish virgins evidently thought they could, at the last moment, borrow from others in preparation for the coming of the bridegroom. Their negligence

forever barred them from the wedding feast. So serious was their neglect that the bridegroom confessed, "Verity I say unto you, I know you not."

Can you imagine the regret that will be ours should we find ourselves on that last day being turned away from that eternal home, not because of some immoral character, or because we were vile or horrible; rather because we simply neglected the opportunities that came our way? The Holy Spirit reminds us in the Sacred Record that "Today" is the day of salvation. "Tomorrow" is not on heaven's calendar, and "yesterday" is a page in every man's spiritual log book that reflects how he treated "today."

In Meredith Wilson's "Music Man," Robert Preston plays the part of a con-artist who comes to River City, Iowa to form a "boy's band" for his own financial gain. As the story develops Harold Hill (played by Preston) unexpectedly falls in love with the local librarian Marian Paroo (played by Shirley Jones) and asks her to go out with him. He invites her to meet him at the footbridge that crosses the stream running through the park. She responds, "Please, some other time. Maybe tomorrow." He continues to press her to meet with him; she continues to refuse. Finally, in exasperation Professor Hill says, "Pile up enough tomorrows and you'll find that you've collected nothing but a lot of empty yesterdays."



## *“Worthy Art Thou”*

### ***Introduction***

The Psalm is ascribed to David, but the occasion cannot be determined. It is definitely a song of praise, and serves as a fitting conclusion to the previous Psalms, as well as an introduction to the remaining chapters. This Psalm is pure praise. It is, in fact, the only chapter entitled "A Psalm of Praise" in the attached subscripts of the Psalms. "Praise" will be the dominant theme of Psalms 145-150; more so, in fact, than in any other section of the Psalter. Indeed the word "praise" occurs 46 times in these six Psalms. It is a fitting conclusion to the entire 150 chapters of the book. This particular chapter is an acrostic poem, each verse beginning with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter 'nun' being the exception and thus being omitted.

### ***Analysis***

Commentators have, in their efforts to provide a title for this chapter, focused upon God as the object of praise. Brother Deaver titled this chapter, "Jehovah, The Object Of Perfect Praise." Phillips titled it, "A Wonderful God." Hightower: "The Lord, Righteous In All His Ways." Finally, Coffman had this title: "Jehovah Extolled For His Goodness and Power." We have selected to use the title, "Worthy Art Thou."

We found G. Campbell Morgan's analysis of the chapter quite helpful:

[This Psalm] has three movements: an introduction (verses 1-4), a statement of theme (verses 5-9), and the full exercise of thanksgiving (verses 10-21)...The introduction speaks of determination to praise (verse 1), of continuity in praise (verse 2), of reason for praise (verse 3), and of fellowship in praise (verse 4)...The theme is a threefold one: first, the majesty of the divine honor and works (verse 5); second, the might of the acts of God (verses 6, 7); thirdly, Some might be skeptical, but David would meditate on the mighty and supremely, the mercy of God (verses 8, 9)...Then follows the exercise. First the chorus of the works of

Jehovah, and of His saints. This chorus celebrates His glory, His power, His mighty acts, and the majesty of His kingdom...The rest of the psalm is a song carrying out the thoughts suggested in the statement of the theme. The majesty of Jehovah is celebrated (verse 13). His might as operating in the uplifting of the fallen is declared (verse 14). Finally, the activity of His mercy is delighted in (verses 15-20) (Morgan, page 276).

We have adapted Willmington's outline for our study with only slight modification, giving the following four point outline:

- I. God's Greatness, verses 1-6;
- II. God's Goodness, verses 7-10;
- III. God's Government, verses 11-13;
- IV. God's Grace, verses 14-21.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***God's Greatness Verses 1-6***

- 1 I will extol thee, my God, O King; And I will bless thy name for ever and ever.*
- 2 Every day will I bless thee; And I will praise thy name for ever and ever.*
- 3 Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised; And his greatness is unsearchable.*
- 4 One generation shall laud thy works to another, And shall declare thy mighty acts.*
- 5 Of the glorious majesty of thine honor, And of thy wondrous works, will I meditate.*
- 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts; And I will declare thy greatness.*

**145:1:** "*I will extol thee, my God, O King*" – David begins with an expression of his determination to praise God. "David as God's king adores God as his king" (Spurgeon), and is determined to extol the greatness of Jehovah. To "extol" is to lift high; to honor, to revere. We learn that (1) a truly religious man will praise God every day; (2) and that the INTENT of a religious man will be faithfulness in that praise, even into eternity.

**145:2:** "*Every day will I bless thee*" – Here is continuity in praise. God must be a part of our daily lives; we must give our all unto Him, lest our service be vain and without value. "No day must pass,

though ever so busy a day, though ever so sorrowful a day, without praising God. We ought to reckon it the most needful of our daily employments, and the most delightful of our daily comforts. God is every day blessing us, doing well for us; there is therefore reason that we should be every day blessing him, speaking well of him" (Matthew Henry, ESword Notes).

**145:3:** *"Great is Jehovah...his greatness is unsearchable"* – Here is the reason for praise. The power of God is beyond description; it astounds the imagination! The great "I Am," the God of Abraham and Isaac, the God Who met Moses at the burning bush – this God is so "unsearchable" that mortal men are simply incapable of comprehending Him. Note that the word "great" or a derivative of the word is used three times in this verse ("great," "greatly," "greatness").

**145:4:** *"One generation shall laud thy works to another...and declare thy mighty acts"* – The New Testament equivalent of this verse is found in 2 Timothy 2:2: "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." When the torch is dropped, the next generation is in great danger of going into apostasy. So it was with Israel; so it is presently with New Testament Israel, the church. Here, then, is the fellowship of praise.

**145:5:** *"Of the glorious majesty of thine honor...will I meditate"* – There are three stages involved in the assimilation of knowledge into the mind of those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. The first of these is reading. Reading is looking at the text; it is allowing the eyes to take in what has been placed upon the paper. Study involves taking the time to look up facts, seek the definition of words, and go about trying to determine the relationship of the words to the immediate and remote context. Meditation is thinking upon the application of those words to one's life. It is one thing to casually read; it is quite another to study; it is still another to meditate upon those truths that we discover. Great benefit will come to those to take the time to meditate upon the "wondrous works" of God.

The first thing the Psalmist would meditate upon was the *"glorious majesty of thine honor."* The majesty of God in the heavenly realm is so great that even the angels have to cover their faces because of the brightness of that glory.

*“thy wondrous works”* – Some might be skeptical, but David would meditate on the mighty and wondrous works of God. One can almost imagine David the shepherd boy gazing at the stars as he tended the sheep over which he had been given charge and meditating on the record of God’s creation in Genesis chapter one. Move to the New Testament and the wondrous works of God performed by the incarnate Son astound the imagination: healing of the lamed and maimed, giving of sight to the blind, the resurrection of Lazarus, and feeding of the 5,000, just to name a few. Serious and sobering meditation upon any one of the hundreds of mighty works of God as recorded in the pages of the Bible will drive us to praise and adoration of He Who sits in the heavens and rules over the affairs of men.

**145:6:** *“And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts”* - In Old Testament times God’s “terrible acts” were manifested in judgment upon the antediluvian world, the confusion at the tower of Babel, the destruction of Sodom and the destruction of 180,000 soldiers in Sennacherib’s army.

### **God’s Goodness Verses 7-10**

- 7 *They shall utter the memory of thy great goodness, And shall sing of thy righteousness.*  
8 *Jehovah is gracious, and merciful; Slow to anger, and of great lovingkindness.*  
9 *Jehovah is good to all; And his tender mercies are over all his works.*  
10 *All thy works shall give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah; And thy saints shall bless thee*

Willmington sees two parts to this section of the Psalm:

- A. *He is slow to anger (145:8): He is kind, merciful, and full of love.*  
B. *He is good to all (145:7, 9-10): He showers compassion on all creation.*

There are in these verses what Phillips calls a “fourfold emphasis” on the goodness of God: (1) The moral goodness of God, verse 7; (2) the merciful goodness of God, verse 8; (3) the manifold goodness of God, verse 9; and (4) the meaningful goodness of God, verse 10 (Phillips, pages 653-654).

**145:7:** *“They shall utter the memory of thy great goodness...and sing of thy righteousness”* – Ancient stories that circulate among heathen nations regarding great works of God often resemble the Biblical record in a number of ways. The story of the universal flood recorded in Genesis 6-9 can be found in a number of ancient societies. Such are, without doubt, distortions of the truth, but they demonstrate the truth of the Psalmist's statement in this verse. While the previous verses focused upon the mighty and wondrous works, this portion of the Psalm gives consideration to the “goodness” of God.

David links the goodness of God and the righteousness of God together. Were it not for the righteousness of God, there would be no goodness. Because of His righteousness He is inherently good, absolutely good, and eternally good. “Because He is good, God has to punish sin. But because He is good, He never does so vindictively or capriciously. He is good and righteous. Therefore He always does what is right” (Phillips, page 653).

**145:8:** *“Jehovah is gracious, and merciful; Slow to anger, and of great lovingkindness”* – This verse speaks of the merciful goodness of God. The New Testament equivalent of this verse can be found in such passages as 2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Every single child of God should be grateful to God that He does not give us what we deserve. “His goodness is not just a cold, impassive rectitude. It is a goodness that reaches out warmly in mercy and compassion to the lost, the erring, and the fallen. It is a goodness that holds back God's righteous anger as long as it may” (Phillips, page 653). David knew the mercy of God well (Psalms 51:1-19). But in addition to God's mercy bestowed upon David, this man after God's heart saw God's mercy upon others, even his enemies. All the years that David fled from Saul he must have wondered why God allowed Saul to trouble him. He learned that God was being merciful to Saul, giving him opportunity after opportunity to repent.

**145:9:** *“Jehovah is good to all; And his tender mercies are over all his works”* – God makes His sun to shine upon the just and the unjust alike; indeed He is good to all. He loves the vilest sinner as much as He loves the virtuous saint, and He provides equal opportunity to all men to hear His word and observe His works. The tragedy of it all is that men fail to recognize Jehovah's goodness.

**145:10:** “*All thy works shall give thanks unto thee, O Jehovah; And thy saints shall bless thee*” - The “*works...give thanks*” is a poetic expression in which the cause for praise is put in place of those who give the praise. This is seen in the second half of the verse in which it is then stated that God's saints shall bless Him.

### **God's Government Verses 11-13**

- 11 *They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, And talk of thy power;*
- 12 *To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, And the glory of the majesty of his kingdom.*
- 13 *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.*

There are four things that David focuses upon regarding the kingdom of God: (1) There is the glory of God's kingdom; (2) the power of God's kingdom; (3) the majesty of God's kingdom; and (4) the everlasting nature of God's kingdom.

**145:11:** “*They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom*” – The author continues a discussion of those things of which the saints would speak, namely Jehovah's kingdom and His power. Men may extol the power and might of earthly kingdoms, but God's children are citizens of a nobler kingdom.

Of particular interest in this verse is our English word “glory.” Our English translates the Hebrew ‘*kaw-bode*.’ Strong defines the word as “properly *weight*; but only figuratively in a good sense, *splendor* or *copiousness*” (Strong, ESword Notes). “The courts of Solomon and Ahasuerus were magnificent; but, compared with the glorious majesty of God's kingdom, they were but as glow-worms to the sun. The consideration of this should strike an awe upon us in all our approaches to God” (Matthew Henry). We were also impressed with Spurgeon's comments on this verse:

It is their high pleasure to tell of the glory of his kingdom in its justice, kindness, eternity, and so forth. Kingdoms of earth are glorious for riches, for extent of territory, for victories, for liberty, for commerce, and other matters; but in all true glories the kingdom of Jehovah excels them. We have seen a palace dedicated “to all the glories of France”; but time, eternity, and all space are filled with the glories of God (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

**145:12:** *“To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, And the glory of the majesty of his kingdom”* – The “mighty acts” of God and “the majesty of his kingdom” round out those things of which the saints would speak. We cannot help but see in these verses a glimpse at the Kingdom of the Messiah that, at the time at which these words were written, was yet future. The important truth that appears throughout this Psalm is the responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of every child of God to teach the next generation the word of God.

[Men may] inscribe the deeds of their heroes upon brass, but the glorious acts of Jehovah are written upon the sand, and the tide of time washes them from present memory; therefore we must repeat the lesson, and yet again repeat it. The saints are the religious instructors of the race; they ought to be not only the historians of the past, but the bards of the present, whose duty it is to keep the sons of men in memory of the great deeds which the Lord did in the days of their fathers and in the old time before them (Spurgeon).

**145:13:** *“Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom”* - The Psalmist then speaks of that Kingdom, and God's dominion. It is certainly comforting to know that in such an unstable world that God maintains control over all things.

The Lord's kingdom is without beginning, without break, without bound, and without end. He never abdicates his throne, neither does he call in a second to share his empire. None can overthrow his power, or break away from his rule. Neither this age, nor the age to come, nor ages of ages shall cause his sovereignty to fail. Herein is rest for faith (Spurgeon).

Of course the only kingdom that was ever destined to be everlasting is that spiritual kingdom, the church. No doubt those men of faith saw beyond the mere physical kingdom to the greater kingdom of God which was everlasting, and whose dominion was throughout all generations.

### ***God's Grace*** **Verses 14-21**

- 14 *Jehovah upholdeth all that fall, And raiseth up all those that are bowed down.*  
15 *The eyes of all wait for thee; And thou givest them their food in due season.*

- 16 *Thou openest thy hand, And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*
- 17 *Jehovah is righteous in all his ways, And gracious in all his works.*
- 18 *Jehovah is nigh unto all them that call upon him, To all that call upon him in truth.*
- 19 *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him; He also will hear their cry and will save them.*
- 20 *Jehovah preserveth all them that love him; But all the wicked will he destroy.*
- 21 *My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah; And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.*

In these verses we have a reference to the beneficent nature of God so far as concerns all men (verses 14-17). This is followed by the special care He provides His children (verses 18-20). The twenty-first verse serves as a conclusion to this section as well as the Psalm as a whole in which the Psalmist calls for “all flesh” to “bless his holy name forever and ever.”

**145:14:** *“Jehovah upholdeth all that fall”* – The idea is that the Lord “sustains” those that fall. This seems to be alluding to those who may have no power to face the trials of life; who sink under the burdens of life. Our God is a “sustainer” to such despondent souls.

*“raiseth up all those that are bowed down”* - The reference is to those who are bent and bowed under the burdens of life. God is able to strengthen them so that they need not be crushed under the trials they face. Here is a reference to the wonderful beneficent nature of our God. He sees those that fall, and He lifts them up. For those who are bowed down, He provides strength. Oh, the compassion of our God! Such compassion was manifested while Jesus walked upon the face of the earth. “In these three verses (14-16) Jehovah is adored for his gracious providence towards men and all other creatures; this fitly follows the proclamation of his royalty, for we here see how he rules his kingdom, and provides for his subjects” (Spurgeon).

**145:15:** *“thou givest them their food in due season”* - The amazing thing is that God gives humanity their food *in spite* of the fact that so many never once look to God for their food nor give any thought to the idea that it is Jehovah Who provides them with every good gift.



**145:16:** The "hand" of Jehovah suggests His ability to supply. In fact, His is an inexhaustible supply. And He "satisfies the desire" of every living thing. This does not mean that God will give unto us every desire, and fulfill every whim, that we may request of Him. It simply means that the needs of life will be provided. The skeptic might respond that there are multitudes who are poor and starving. That being the case, the God of the Bible is anything but beneficent. What the skeptic forgets is that God supplies the means of sustenance but man must work to appropriate those blessings.

**145:17:** Here we have a reference to the righteousness of God. The KJV has "holy" rather than gracious, with reference to His works. In all that God does with regard to supplying our needs, He maintains justice and equity. It is His to give. When Job was faced with the inexplicable tragedies of life, he acknowledged that the "Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away."

**145:18-19:** In these two verses there is a four-fold condition set forth for those who would draw near unto God. **First**, they must call upon Him. This includes, but is not limited to, the plea from the soul that mourns over his sins. **Second**, they must call upon God "in truth," or as God directs. To deny or reject even one precept contained in the truth of God's word will rob a man of entrance into that heavenly home. We never cease to be amazed at human efforts to remove baptism from God's plan for man's salvation. It is amazing that men fail to understand that baptism is just as much a part of calling upon God as is faith, or repentance. If we are to call upon Him in "truth," it must be as God directs, and not as man desires. **Third**, men must "fear" Him. Reverence and awe are due to the Almighty. **Finally**, they must "desire" salvation. God will not coerce men to accept and obey. Until men desire fellowship with God more than life itself, they will not be suitable for a place in His courts.

**145:20:** All men find themselves in one of two categories. The one loves Jehovah, the other hates Him. The one is wicked, the other righteous. The one will be preserved and saved, the other lost and destroyed.

And what shall we say of our God's preservation? Consider Paul's words to the Romans: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; We were accounted as sheep for the

slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39). Contrary to the Calvinist position which says God will preserve the elect regardless of whether they love Him or not, here we learn that He will preserve those who love Him. Obedience is the acid test of love for God (John 14:15, 1 John 2:1-2, 5:1-2, etc). If we choose to no longer love Him, He will allow us to go our separate way.

**145:21:** A more fitting close to this wonderful Psalm cannot be imagined. A heart that is thankful will express it with a mouth that "*shall speak the praise of Jehovah.*" As with the writer, so may it be with "all flesh," that they might bless God's holy name forever." Though men may refuse to bow the knee now, the time will come when all flesh shall bow, and shall bless His holy name. For some, however, this will be too late so far as their eternal destiny is concerned.

### ***Lessons***

1. John Greenleaf Whittier may have had this Psalm in mind when he penned these words:

#### *The Eternal Goodness*

I see the wrong that round me lies,  
I felt the guilt within  
I hear, with groan and travail-cries,  
The world confess its sin

Yet in the maddening maze of things,  
And tossed by storm and flood,  
To one fixed trust my spirit clings:  
I know that God is good!

2. Consider the character traits of our God presented in this Psalm: His greatness is unsearchable (verse 3); He is a God of "wondrous works" (verse 5); He is righteous (verse 7); He is gracious and merciful (verse 8); He is slow to anger (verse 8); He is good to all (verse 9); His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom (verse 13); He is a compassionate God (verse 14); He is a generous God (verses 15-

16); He is near to those who call upon Him (verse 18); He is our Redeemer (verse 19).

3. "God is so great, that till Christ revealed the Father, Deity was lost in its own infinity to the perception of men. He who attempts to navigate an infinite ocean must come back to his starting point, never being able to cross. So the ancient philosophers, disputing as to the Divine Nature, were baffled by their own ingenuity, they had to confess that they comprehended nothing of God except that he was incomprehensible. Without Christ, men can only find out about God that they can never find him" - *Thomas Le Blanc*

## *“Happy Is The Man Who Trusts in God”*

### ***Introduction***

Psalms 146-150 all begin and end with the Hebrew *‘Hallelujah,’* translated with our English words, “praise ye the Lord” (KJV and ASV). The five Psalms are a fitting conclusion to the Psalter as a whole. It would appear that they all belong to one group, and seem to pertain to the same occasion. The Syriac and Latin Vulgate attribute this Psalm to Haggai and Zechariah the prophets, after they came out of the Babylonian captivity (Barnes). We are more prone to agree with Matthew Henry that the Psalm was written by David when he brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem with dancing and singing. There is nothing, however, in the subscript or the Psalm itself that would help us establish with any degree of certainty the author or the occasion so we simply cannot be dogmatic in regard to either.

This first Psalm in the group has many points of similarity with the 145<sup>th</sup> Psalm leading commentators to view the previous chapter as an introduction to the “praise” Psalms (compare 145:2 with 146:2; 145:15 with 146:5; 145:15 with 146:7; 145:13 with 146:10). Each of these remaining Psalms is pure praise offered from the heart and lips of godly men who had a deep love and appreciation for the goodness of the God of heaven. “The rest of our journey lies through the Delectable Mountains. All is praise to the close of the book. The key is high-pitched: the music is upon the high-sounding cymbals. O for a heart full of joyful gratitude that we may run, and leap, and glorify God, even as these Psalms do” (Spurgeon).

### ***Analysis***

The idea in this Psalm is that of the blessedness of trusting in God rather than man. Those who do so obtain security, confidence, and peace. Phillips divides the Psalm into three parts: Triumph (verses 1-2), Trust (verses 3-7), and Truth (verses 8-10). Willmington has a two part outline: The Basis for Trusting God (verses 1-4, and 10), and

the Blessings of Trusting God (verses 5-9). My notes in the margin of my Dickson Bible are from those chapel sessions at Brown Trail in which we outlined the Psalms. We will use that outline here with slight modification from my original notes:

- I. Promise (1-2), in which the Psalmist mentions his intention and determination to praise God. "Praise the Lord" appears three times in these two verses.
- II. A Plea (verse 3-4), in which he advises his audience not to put trust in man;
- III. A Pronouncement (verse 5) with regard to the man who has God for his help and hope;
- IV. The Person of Jehovah (verses 6-9), in which various character traits of God are set forth;
- V. A Closing Proclamation (verse 10) that the Lord shall reign for ever as sufficient reason to praise Him.

### ***Commentary***

#### ***Promise*** **Verses 1-2**

*1 Praise ye Jehovah. Praise Jehovah, O my soul.*

*2 While I live will I praise Jehovah: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being*

**146:1:** "*Praise Jehovah, O my soul*" - The Psalmist calls for his audience to join him in praise unto God. The depth of that praise is indicated by the involvement of the "soul" and not just the physical body. Lip service has never been acceptable to God. We must love and serve God with our heart, soul, and mind; or as one author has suggested, "from the center to the circumference."

**146:2:** "*While I live...while I have any being*" - There is a need to serve God while in this life; afterwards it will be too late. The dedication of the writer is manifested in his intent to praise while yet there remains within him "any being." "That which is the great end of our being ought to be our great employment and delight while we have any being" (Matthew Henry). It is "appointed unto men once to die, and after that cometh the judgment" (Heb 9:27). May we take advantage of the opportunity while it is still called "today."

***Plea***  
**Verses 3-4**

- 3 *Put not your trust in princes, Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.*  
4 *His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; In that very day his thoughts perish*

**146:3:** “*Put not your trust in...man, in whom there is no help*” – God is eternal; man is temporal. How futile it is to place our trust in mere mortal man.

Men are always far too apt to depend upon the great ones of earth, and forget the Great One above; and this habit is the fruitful source of disappointment. Princes are only men, and men with greater needs than others; why, then, should we look to them for aid? They are in greater danger, are burdened with greater cares, and are more likely to be misled than other men; therefore, it is folly to select them for our confidence. Probably no order of men have been so false to their promises and treaties as men of royal blood. So live as to deserve their trust, but not burden them with your trust (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

**146:4:** “*His breath goeth forth...in that very day his thoughts perish*” – The guidance of men, with their counsel and limited wisdom, can only endure as long as that man might live. In the very day that he perishes he will no longer have power to help or comfort. Better then, to place our confidence in Jehovah, Who abideth continually. David’s plea would serve as a warning of the fickle nature of man: “Do not put your trust in any princes; not in me, not in any other; do not repose your confidence in them; do not raise your expectations from them. Be not too sure of their sincerity; some have thought they knew better how to reign by knowing how to dissemble. Be not too sure of their constancy and fidelity; it is possible they may both change their minds and break their words.”

***Pronouncement***  
**Verse 5**

- 5 *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in Jehovah his God*

Having cautioned us not to trust in princes (because, if we do, we shall be miserably disappointed), here the Psalmist encourages us to put our confidence in God. If we do, “*Happy is he that has the God*

of Jacob for his help.” This encouragement will be followed by a number of reasons why God can provide happiness and is thus deserving of our trust. This verse introduces the ultimate happiness of that man who looks to God for guidance; the basis for that happiness and hope is summed up in the personal traits of our God. Happiness is sought by many but found by few. It is only in a right relationship with one's God that true happiness will ever be realized.

O how blessed a thing it is to know that God is our present help,  
and our eternal hope. Full assurance is more than heaven in the  
bud, the flower has begun to open. We would not exchange with  
Caesar; his sceptre is a bauble, but our bliss is true treasure  
(Spurgeon).

### ***The Person of God*** **Verses 6-9**

- 6 *Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that in them is;  
Who keepeth truth for ever;*  
7 *Who executeth justice for the oppressed; Who giveth food to the  
hungry. Jehovah looseth the prisoners;*  
8 *Jehovah openeth the eyes of the blind; Jehovah raiseth up them  
that are bowed down; Jehovah loveth the righteous;*  
9 *Jehovah preserveth the sojourners; He upholdeth the fatherless  
and widow; But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down*

Here the Psalmist sets forth the basis for our hope and happiness. The very person of God serves as the foundation for praise and adoration. Let us take a view of the great encouragements here given us to hope in *the Lord our God*

**146:6:** We trust in Jehovah God because (1) He is maker of all things, and (2) He cannot lie. His promises are trustworthy. Unlike man who may, and often do disappoint us, God "keepeth truth for ever." "He is a God of inviolable fidelity. We may venture to take God's word, for he *keepeth truth for ever*, and therefore no word of his shall fall to the ground; it is true *from the beginning*, and therefore true *to the end*" (Matthew Henry).

**146:7:** Here are three more reasons why we trust in God: We trust in Him because (3) He executes justice for the oppressed, (4) He is benevolent, and (5) He provides true freedom. These traits speak of the ability of God to control the universe.

**146:8:** Next, we trust in God because (6) He gives sight to the blind, (7) He gives strength to those overcome with their burdens, and (8) He loves those who thus place their confidence in Him and attain unto righteousness. Here the Psalmist addresses what Phillips calls God's *infinite mercy* and *inflexible morality*.

**146:9:** And finally, we trust in God because (9) He watches over those who sojourn in strange lands, (10) He cares for those bereft and mourning, i.e. the widows and orphans, and (11) He provides victory over the wicked.

Certainly these verses are not an exhaustive treatment of all the reasons why we should put our trust in Jehovah, but they are certainly representative of the greatness of our God. When men learn to trust God they secure for themselves a great reward.

### ***“My Faith”***

by Harold F. Mohn

My faith in God surpasses  
All feelings in my heart.  
My life is but a hollow shell  
If He is not a part.  
I look to Him for guidance  
And ask His helping hand.  
I know He is my best Friend,  
The One to understand.  
For He is always with me  
At any hour of day,  
To help me in my troubles,  
Lest I fall by the way.  
My faith in God is steadfast,  
Deep as the rolling sea,  
And nothing will destroy it,  
Eternal it will be.  
Without this faith I surely know  
My life is lived in vain,  
And I can never enter in,  
Or to His kingdom gain.



## ***Proclamation***

### **Verse 10**

*10 Jehovah will reign for ever, Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye Jehovah*

Here the Psalmist focuses on God's *invincible majesty*. Our God will "*reign forever*." There is no force upon the face of this earth that can dethrone our God. As the Psalmist brings his song of praise to a close he focuses once again on the majesty of God and calls upon his audience to "*Praise ye Jehovah*." It is fitting and proper to praise the God of Jacob; to offer unto Him honor and majesty unto the endless ages. Indeed it is!

## ***Lessons***

1. Verses 3-4: "*The son of man*" – While the Psalmist admonishes us not to put our trust in the son of man, spiritually speaking there is a "Son of man" in Whom we must put our trust and confidence. That Son of man is Christ our Lord, in Whom there is salvation and Who will not fail those who trust in Him.
2. Consider the power of influence. In verse 2 David vowed that he would praise God "every day," yea "forever." He did this by song, as well as a godly life, both of which declared the praises of God. The New Testament equivalent of this verse can be found in Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me."
3. Some years ago I filed the following illustration on trusting God in all matters:

The sole survivor of a shipwreck was cast upon an uninhabited island. After a while he managed to build a crude hut in which he placed his "necessities" that he had salvaged from the sinking ship. He prayed to God for deliverance, and anxiously scanned the horizon each day, ready to hail any ship that might chance to pass. The man had gathered all the wood he could find to be used as a signal fire to catch the attention of any ship he might see. One day, upon returning from a hunt for food, he was horrified to find that his hut was in flames. Everything he had was gone! To his limited vision, it was the worst thing that could happen and he

became very depressed. Yet, before long a ship arrived to rescue him. "We saw your smoke signal," the captain said. What a strange turn of events. The occurrence of the worst thing that could happen resulted in his rescue!

## *“Exhortations To Praise Jehovah”*

### ***Introduction***

This is a beautiful Psalm of praise. It extols the greatness and goodness of the Lord and sets forth the Almighty as One Who cares for those in sorrow. It is a Psalm that might have been used on any number of occasions by a devout Israelite in his praise and devotion to God. It is not possible to determine the author or occasion of the Psalm with any degree of certainty. Internally, the song appears to have been composed sometime following the Babylonian captivity, and if so, then the author(s) may have been Haggai and/or Zechariah.

### ***Analysis***

This is the second of the “praise Psalms,” and is also the longest of the group of five (146-150). The Psalm “moves in three segments: (1) praise to Jehovah for His restoring Israel to His favor, verses 1-6; (2) praise to Jehovah for His marvelous provisions for His creatures, provisions both physical and spiritual, verses 7-11; and (3) praise to Jehovah for His government in the world, and for His revelation of His word, verses 12-20” (Deaver, Volume II, page 276). A closer look at this chapter reveals the following: In verses 1-6 the author deals with the restoration of Israel. In it we see what Morgan calls “the pitying power of God” (Morgan, page 277). There is manifest power and wisdom in the Divine “discrimination in upholding the meek and abasing the wicked” (Morgan, page 277). In the second part of the Psalm (verses 7-11) there is a clear reference to God’s providence in supplying the material needs of His creation. In the last section (verses 12-20) the Psalmist seems to turn his attention to the special care God provides for His people. Literally, He gives His people the “finest of the wheat” along with His commandments for the orderly conduct of His children and His judgments for life.

Willmington approached the Psalm from a topical arrangement (page 296-297):

- I. What Israel Should Do (147:1, 7, 12)
  - A. Praise God with your mouth (147:1, 12)
  - B. Praise God with you music (147:7)
- II. Why Israel Should Do It (147:2-6, 8-11, 13-20): The Psalmist gives four reasons why God should be praised.
  - A. For his work with Israel (147:2, 13-14, 19-20)
  - B. For his work with nature (147:8-10), 15-18)
  - C. For his work with the heavens (147:4-5)
  - D. For his work with the redeemed (147:3, 6, 11)

We were particularly impressed with Phillips' outline (Phillips, page 667) and will use it in our study of this chapter:

- I. God and His Praise (147:1)
- II. God and His Pity (147:2-3)
- III. God and His Power (147:4-6)
- IV. God and His Providence (147:7-9)
- V. God and His Pleasure (147:10-11)
- VI. God and His Protection (147:12-14)
- VII. God and His Purposes (147:15-18)
- VIII. God and His Precepts (147:19-20)

### ***Commentary***

#### ***God and His Praise Verse 1***

*1 Praise ye Jehovah; For it is good to sing praises unto our God;  
For it is pleasant, and praise is comely.*

**147:1:** The Psalm begins with a call to praise. This is immediately followed by three reasons why the saint should offer praise to his Creator: It is good, it is pleasant, it is comely. Let's consider each of these.

First, it is "good." The Hebrew (*tobe*) means that it is good "in the widest sense. When the same word is used as an adverb it describes that which is bountiful, cheerful, at ease (Strong).

Second, the Psalmist tells us that praise to God is "pleasant." The Hebrew word was used to describe that which is sweet and pleasant. In life there are some things that are good for us, but not pleasant; as

there are things that might be pleasant but not good for us. Praise to Jehovah is both good and pleasant.

Third, praise to Jehovah is “*comely*,” meaning it is fitting and suitable that men should offer praise to their Creator. Exactly why such praise is fitting will be set forth as we move through the chapter.

### ***God and His Pity*** **Verses 2-3**

- 2 *Jehovah doth build up Jerusalem; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.*  
3 *He healeth the broken in heart, And bindeth up their wounds.*

In these two verses we see God’s pity manifested in the restoration of Israel’s home and heart.

**147:2:** “*Jehovah doth build up Jerusalem*” – God had pity on Israel and following the seventy years of captivity in Babylon, sent them home to build the city. The “*outcasts of Israel*” were granted freedom at the hand of Cyrus and allowed to build the city and the temple destroyed almost seven decades earlier.

**147:3:** “*He healeth the broken in heart*” – It has been said that home is where the heart is. Israel had learned humility and with the healing of the heart, the nation was ready to go “home” to rebuild the city.

### ***God and His Power*** **Verses 4-6**

- 4 *He counteth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names.*  
5 *Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite.*  
6 *Jehovah upholdeth the meek: He bringeth the wicked down to the ground.*

**147:4-5:** There are at least two things that stand out in these three verses, each expressing a certain aspect of God’s power. First, there is God’s amazing comprehension of the vast universe He has created. Consider, for example, the stars of heaven. Astronomers tell us there are billions of stars in our universe. Men have attempted to name at

least a portion of these, though they cannot begin to number them. Our God, however, *numbers* and *names* the stars of heaven. No wonder the Psalmist acknowledged the undeniable fact, “Great is our Lord.”

**147:6:** Powerful though God be, the full extent of that power is captured in His wonderful compassion. “Jehovah upholdeth the meek: He bringeth the wicked down to the ground.” God’s heart goes out to the meek and humble. “He reverses the evil order of things. The meek are down, and he lifts them up; the wicked are exalted, and he hurls them down to the dust” (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

Those who abase themselves before the Almighty often find themselves trampled upon by the wicked. But God has promised to lift up those who humble themselves before Him while casting down to the ground those who would, in their pride and folly, seek to do harm to God’s people.

In this verse we see the practical outcome of that character of Jehovah, which leads him to count and call the stars as if they were little things, while he deals tenderly with sorrowful men, as if they were precious in his esteem. He is so great that nothing is great to him, and he is so condescending that nothing is little to him: his infinite majesty thus naturally brings low the lofty and exalts the lowly (Spurgeon).

### ***God and His Providence*** **Verses 7-9**

- 7 *Sing unto Jehovah with thanksgiving; Sing praises upon the harp unto our God,*
- 8 *Who covereth the heavens with clouds, Who prepareth rain for the earth, Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.*
- 9 *He giveth to the beast his food, And to the young ravens which cry.*

**147:7:** “*Sing unto Jehovah with thanksgiving*” - Once again the Psalmist calls for his audience to give praise to the Lord. The basis for praise in this section is God’s great providence. “Though he is so great as to command the stars, he is so good as not to forget even the fowls” (Matthew Henry).

**147:8:** *“Who covereth the heavens with the clouds...prepareth rain...maketh the grass to grow”* – Observe here the method God uses to feed man and beast. First He provides the clouds. Though clouds may sometimes look dark and threatening, without those clouds we would not have the rain. From the clouds come the needed rains to nourish and replenish the earth with the life giving moisture that makes the grass to grow upon the mountains.

**147:9:** *“He giveth to the beast...to the young ravens”* – If God doeth so clothe the beasts of the field, and feed the birds of the heavens, will He not also feed us? Indeed He will!

### ***God and His Pleasure*** **Verses 10-11**

- 10 *He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: He taketh no pleasure in the legs of a man.*  
11 *Jehovah taketh pleasure in them that fear him, In those that hope in his lovingkindness.*

Phillips points out that these two verses address *“What Disinterests God”* and what *“Delights God.”*

**147:10:** God takes no delight in those things wherein men place their trust and from which they derive their military power. It makes no difference to our God how much strength a man might possess when that man has no interest in his Creator. “That which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

**147:11:** Phillips sums up the contrast between verses 10 and 11 thus:

The Lord would rather sit down with a small company of His own and listen to a handful of people singing a psalm, however untunefully, than assemble with the princes of this world in their banqueting halls and listen to their boasts of the playing of their bands” (Phillips, page 673).

It is a curious but wonderful trait of our God that He would condescend to man and find pleasure in association with those who fear Him and who place their hope in His lovingkindness.

### ***God and His Protection*** **Verses 12-14**

- 12 *Praise Jehovah, O Jerusalem; Praise thy God, O Zion.*

- 13 *For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee.*  
14 *He maketh peace in thy borders; He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.*

**147:12:** *“Praise Jehovah, O Jerusalem...For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates”* – God’s protection would provide Israel with a four-fold blessing. Before enumerating these, the Psalmist calls upon the inhabitants of the city to praise the Lord.

**147:13:** *“For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates”* – The first blessing was the prosperity and protection of the city itself. If this Psalm was written upon the return from Babylonian captivity and at the dedication of the temple, then the walls of Jerusalem were still in disarray. So the temple would have been standing amid the ruins of the city. “God Himself was Israel’s protector. He threw Himself as a rampart around His own, around the city where He had put His name. Better than walls of stone were the encircling arms of the living God. His hand, held up at the fallen gates, would keep out any foe better than bars of iron” (Phillips, page 673). No wonder the Psalmist calls for the city to render praise to their God, the God Who protects them.

*“He hath blessed thy children within thee”* – The second blessing was the increase of their people. It is noteworthy that when one generation remains faithful to their God, the next is usually blessed with a rich heritage. When Israel returned from Babylon, their sins now behind them and a new generation having arisen, their children would likewise be blessed of God.

**147:14:** *“He maketh peace in thy boarders”* - The third blessing upon Israel would be public tranquility. Peace would be theirs to enjoy; wars would cease and the people would not be attacked by their bordering enemies.

*“He filleth thee with the finest of the wheat”* – The fourth blessing would be one of plenty. God would give them the “finest of the wheat” – the fat and the fullness thereof. Canaan abounded with wheat (Deut. 32:14), and throughout their history exported it to the countries abroad (Eze. 27:17).



## **God and His Purposes**

### **Verses 15-18**

- 15 *He sendeth out his commandment upon earth; His word runneth very swiftly.*
- 16 *He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes.*
- 17 *He casteth forth his ice like morsels: Who can stand before his cold?*
- 18 *He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.*

God is in control of nature. The focus here is upon how God uses the very things of nature to accomplish His purposes. “He that protects Zion and Jerusalem is that God of power from whom all the powers of nature are derived and on whom they depend, and who produces all the changes of the seasons, which, if they were not common, would astonish us” (Matthew Henry).

**147:15:** In general, “*He sendeth out his commandment upon the earth*” as One possesses such authority and power over this world. Just as the God of heaven *created* this world, so now He *controls* that world. “He upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb. 1:3b). It would appear from the verses that follow that our God uses even the forces of nature to accomplish His will.

**147:16-18:** These three verses provide us with specific examples of exactly what the Psalmist had in mind.

“*He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoar-frost like ashes*” – Within the snow are the “treasures of the earth” (Job 38:22-23), and out of these “treasures” our God draws as He pleases. The snow is compared with wool for its whiteness and its softness.

“*He casteth forth his ice like morsels*” – This might refer to hail stones. The fact that the Psalmist asks, “Who can stand before his cold?” suggests that the author had in mind some punitive action against the enemies of Israel. “And let us also infer from it, If we cannot stand before the cold of his frosts, how can we stand before the heat of his wrath?” (Matthew Henry).

“*He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow*” – All of the forces of nature are under God’s control. God may use these to His discretion.

Before leaving this section it might be good to address a supposed “objection” from the critic. The winds, the floods, and the snow and hail often bring ruin upon men and their possessions. God allows such to happen to remind us that this world is not permanent. These things, to some degree, are a result of the curse upon this world as a consequence of Adam’s sin. The Psalmist was focusing upon the undeniable truth that God can, and does, use the very forces of nature to accomplish His purpose; from inflicting judgment upon disobedient men to providing blessings for His people and protection from the enemies of God.

### ***God and His Precepts*** **Verses 19-20**

- 19 *He showeth his word unto Jacob, His statutes and his ordinances unto Israel.*  
20 *He hath not dealt so with any nation; And as for his ordinances, they have not known them. Praise ye Jehovah.*

The Psalmist closes the Psalm with a reminder that God “hath not dealt so with any nation.” “*He showeth his word unto Jacob,*” something other nations did not enjoy. “Intrusted with the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2), Israel was granted light far beyond that of other nations. “*As for his ordinances, they* [other nations, TW] *have not known them.*”

“*Praise ye Jehovah*” – The chapter closes as it began. A sobering and serious reflection upon the blessings granted Israel was designed to drive Israel to her knees in adoration for their chosen and privileged status in the eyes of God.

### ***Lessons***

1. God is worthy of praise because of (1) His great love for men, (2) His compassion and care for us, (3) What He has done in the past and what He will do throughout eternity, and (4) because of His very nature.
2. Take note of God’s wonderful forgiveness and mercy. In verse 3 it is said God “healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” When the Prodigal Son returned to his father, he received mercy. When a sinner comes back to God he enjoys

reconciliation, he is healed of his broken and battered heart, and the wound of sin is closed.

3. Verses 13 and 14 have much to say about national righteousness:

***“He hath blessed thy children within thee”***

*by Tom Wacaster*

The Psalms contain some wonderful lessons for every generation of mankind. Though written more than 3,000 years ago, these songs and devotions of David provide insight into the nature of God and the very nature of man. The 147<sup>th</sup> Psalm is no exception. Israel has returned from a long night of Babylonian Captivity. It has been seven decades since they left their homeland. Now they have come home with thanksgiving in their hearts and praise on their lips. Would you focus on Psalms 147:13-14 for a moment? Note four blessings that Israel would enjoy as a result of their restoration to God, and to their homeland.

First, God had “strengthened the bars of thy gates.” A nation is secure so long as they trust in God for their guidance and protection. If armament and military power provide security, then the former United Soviet Socialist Republic would still be standing. While we would not discount the importance of a strong military, we dare not ignore the importance of godly principles as a guide for those who lead that army.

Second, God had “blessed thy children within thee.” Our generation has enjoyed the benefits and blessings of God’s gracious lovingkindness. As the “children,” “grandchildren,” “great-grandchildren,” and even unto “great-great-grandchildren” of our forefathers, we have enjoyed the benefits of the seeds of righteousness and godliness planted by our forefathers in the early years of this nation. Don’t let anyone tell you that this nation was established as a “secular” nation – it was founded upon Biblical principles. To deny this truth is to ignore history. The horn of plenty has been turned upside down on America, and we reap the benefits of peace, joy, and happiness because of the seeds planted by our forefathers. It has been observed on more than one occasion that America is rooted in a deep respect for God and His word. Our founding fathers believed that the great experiment of democracy and the establishment of this nation would not succeed without divine blessings. Men were given the freedom to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. But that life and liberty they held so dear was not a

pursuit of fleshly lusts or materialistic gain. It was the pursuit of God and His purpose in our lives. And so, for more than two centuries God opened up the windows of heaven and gave to this nation unparalleled opportunities and abundant wealth.

Third, God “maketh peace in thy borders.” Until that infamous September day almost eight years ago now, this nation had never been attacked on its homeland by an outside enemy. It is no accident that our boarders remained secure from the intrusion of those who would overthrow our way of life and rob us of our determination to seek God’s blessings on us as a nation. This generation has enjoyed unparalleled peace and tranquility that has been the envy of the world around us. Even during those stressful days of the cold war, we enjoyed peace within our borders, and a sense of deep contentment within our hearts.

Fourth, God has “filled thee with the finest of the wheat.” Who would argue that our nation has enjoyed the best of the best? Who would dare deny that our standard of living has been the envy of the world? Millions have sought to come to America to enjoy the prosperity this nation has had to offer to her citizens and those who would seek to become a part of that great American dream. Our generation has enjoyed the best that America has had to offer. Whereas previous generations had to struggle through economic crises such as the Great Depression, we have had at our disposal abundant and unparalleled prosperity. Walmart Super Centers provide every good imaginable; all we need to do is pick up a cart, move up and down the aisles and pick off the shelf anything we might desire. And if we don’t have the cash to pay for our basketfull of goodies, we can pull out a plastic card and, zip zip, no questions asked – we can walk out the store with our baskets overflowing. From necessities, to luxuries and entertainment, it seems as if there is nothing we cannot get our hands on.

But now there has arisen a generation that does not know God. The pursuit of life, liberty and happiness has become a pursuit of the gratification of the flesh. God has been “expelled” from almost every institute of higher learning. The word of God has been banned in the halls of our public schools. Now the humanists and God-haters have pushed the throttle to full speed in an effort to rid us of every vestige and display of the name of God from our coins, strip it from our halls of justice, and eradicate it from our monuments. God has been left out of the lives of our citizens, the Bible has been banned from our institutes of learning, and the only mention that Jesus receives in

Hollywood is in another movie that seeks to shock our sensitivity and display our Lord as nothing more than a homosexual pervert or radical cult leader. Unless things change drastically, our generation will not be able to pass along to the next generation the things we have too often taken for granted. What does this generation have to offer the next? This generation no longer studies the Bible; this generation has fed on the husks of humanism, and drank deeply from the well of Charles Darwin; this generation has capitulated to the demands of the liberal left; this generation has grown fat and lazy, irresponsible, and irrational. Oh, there may be a few exceptions, and perhaps the silent majority has remained silent for too long, but for the most part, I do not see anything on the horizon that holds out a lot of hope for the future of our country and the next generation.

Read the Psalm again. Learn what Israel learned. God blessed her children only when Israel turned back to God. If we would have something to give to those generations yet in the distant future, let us like Israel, begin our journey home to God. Therein lies our hope; only then can it be said of unborn generations, "He hath blessed thy children within thee."

## *“Hallelujah, Praise Jehovah”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is one of the most beautiful in the Psalter. It consists of a call for all the creation to praise the Lord: the angels and visible heavens (vss 1-6), the earth and the sea (vs. 7), the meteors and mountains, hills and trees (vss. 8-9), the beasts, reptiles and fowls (vs. 10). This is followed by a call for all men to praise God, including kings and princes (vs. 11), men and women and children (vss. 12-13), and the people of Israel (vs. 14). The Psalm then closes as it began with the words, “Praise ye Jehovah.” Charles Spurgeon’s introduction to this Psalm is worth putting into our notes:

The song is one and indivisible. It seems almost impossible to expound it in detail, for a living poem is not to be dissected verse by verse. It is a song of nature and of grace. As a flash of lightning flames through space, and enwraps both heaven and earth in one vestment of glory, so doth the adoration of the Lord in this Psalm light up all the universe and cause it to glow with a radiance of praise. The song begins in the heavens, sweeps downward to dragons and all deeps, and then ascends again, till the people near unto Jehovah take up the strain. For its exposition the chief requisite is a heart on fire with reverent love to the Lord over all, who is to be blessed for ever (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

The message of the Psalm was captured in a beautiful song by Wm. J. Kirkpatrick, and has appeared in almost every hymnal printed since that song first appeared in printed form. The song has captured the message, utilizing almost the very words from our English translation of this Psalm of praise:

“Hallelujah, praise Jehovah!  
From the heavens praise His name  
Praise Jehovah in the highest;  
All His angels praise proclaim.  
All His hosts together praise Him,  
Sun and moon and stars on high;

Praise Him, O ye heav'n of heavens,  
And ye floods above the sky.

Let them praises give Jehovah!  
They were made at His command;  
Them forever He established;  
His decree shall ever stand.  
From the earth, O praise Jehovah,  
All ye floods, ye dragons all,  
Fire and hail and snow and vapors,  
Stormy winds that hear Him call.

All ye fruitful trees and cedars,  
All ye hills and mountains high.  
Creeping things and beasts and cattle,  
Birds that in the heaven fly.  
Kings of earth, and all ye people,  
Princes earth, great judges all;  
Praise His name, young men and maidens,  
Aged men, and children small.

[Chorus]  
Let the praises give Jehovah,  
For His name alone is high.  
And His glory is exalted,  
And His glory is exalted.  
And His glory is exalted  
Far above the earth and sky.

## ***Analysis***

This Psalm is a call for all of the universe to praise Jehovah. Of this Psalm, G. Campbell Morgan points out that there are "two movements indicated by the words 'from the heavens' (verse 1), and 'from the earth' (verse 7). In the first the scale is a descending one...In the second the scale is an ascending one" (Morgan, page 277). Willmington picked up on this two-fold division: I. Praise from Creation (148:1-6); II. Praise from Living Creatures (148:7-14).

The following outline was scribbled into the margin of my old American Standard Version Bible many years ago (likely while studying the Psalms in chapel at Brown Trail). We will use this outline in our study of the chapter:

- I. Praise Jehovah from the heavens, 1-6;
  - 1. Exhortation to praise, 1;
  - 2. Those involved in praise, 2-4;
  - 3. Reasons for the praise, 5-6;
- II. Praise Jehovah from the earth, 7-14;
  - 1. Exhortation to praise, 7a;
  - 2. Those involved in praise, 7b-12;
  - 3. Reasons for praise, 13-14a;
  - 4. Exhortation, 14b;

## **Commentary**

### ***Praise Jehovah from the heavens* Verses 1-6**

- 1 *Praise ye Jehovah. Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens: Praise him in the heights.*
- 2 *Praise ye him, all his angels: Praise ye him, all his host.*
- 3 *Praise ye him, sun and moon: Praise him, all ye stars of light.*
- 4 *Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, And ye waters that are above the heavens.*
- 5 *Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For he commanded, and they were created.*
- 6 *He hath also established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass away*

**148:1:** *Exhortation to Praise* - “*Praise ye Jehovah*” – The chapter begins and ends with the same refrain. Whether it is a command or an invitation, the obligation and privilege granted to all creation to praise the God of the universe is extended to all who would hear the voice of the Psalmist.

“*Praise ye Jehovah from the heavens...in the heights*” – This call for praise begins at the highest order and location, that location invisible to humans, and descends from that heavenly realm to the immediate physical heavens visible by the human eyes. Our opinion is that the “heights” refers to the highest and most lofty place in the heaven of heavens.

**148:2-4:** *Those involved in praise* (verses 2-4) - “*Praise ye him, all his angels...all his host*” - The angelic host of heaven would be included in this call to praise. Of all of God's creation, certainly the heavenly hosts would know how Jehovah deserves praise from His great creation; and yet they are reminded and encouraged to give



honor to Jehovah. The “host” includes that innumerable array of angels, of which our Lord could have called twelve legions to assist Him had He decided to call for their aid.

**148:3:** *"Praise ye him, sun and moon...all ye stars of light"* – Of course the language is hyperbolic, used to describe and emphasize the worth of Jehovah God to receive praise from ALL His creation. The sun, moon and stars are inanimate objects, incapable of giving praise. What we have is poetic exaggeration designed to impress upon our minds the fact that God deserves praise from His creation. Assuming it were possible for such inanimate objects to offer praise, we would have an argument from the lesser to the greater. If such inanimate objects - which can neither reason nor think - should be called to offer praise, how much more man, the crowning aspect of God's creation - that creature which can reason and think – should thus give praise to his Creator!

**148:4:** *"Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, And ye waters that are above the heavens"* - The hyperbolic expressions continue. The expanse of the galaxy, the waters that are above the heavens - were these capable of expressing feelings, they would indeed praise God.

**148:5:** *Reasons for the praise (verses 5-6) - "Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For he commanded, and they were created"* - To praise the name of Jehovah is to praise God Himself. The reason for praising God is expressed: God commanded; He is the Great Creator; the earth is created. As great as man is, he is still a created being, and he owes God a deep gratitude of thanksgiving and praise for his very existence. The blatant lie, that man is the product of random chance, a brute beast of evolutionary processes, has eroded man's respect of God. Humanism perceives of man as the “creator” and the idea of “God” a *created* myth deserving of no place in the society of modern man. Foolish man may think he is the creator and God the created, but the Palmist was right on target with regard to the proper relationship of man to God.

**148:6:** *"He hath also established them for ever and ever: He hath made a decree which shall not pass away"* - God not only made the stars and he heavens, He also set them into their respective positions, and so established the laws that keep them in place. That decree is permanent, and so long as the earth stands, His word shall "not pass away."

The continued existence of celestial beings is due to the supporting might of Jehovah, and to that alone. They do not fail because the Lord does not fail them. Without his will these things cannot alter; he has impressed upon them laws which only he himself can change. Eternally his ordinances are binding upon them. Therefore ought the Lord to be praised because he is Preserver as well as Creator, Ruler as well as Maker (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

### ***Praise Jehovah from the earth*** **Verses 7-14**

- 7 Praise Jehovah from the earth, Ye sea-monsters, and all deeps.  
8 Fire and hail, snow and vapor; Stormy wind, fulfilling his word;  
9 Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars;  
10 Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying birds;  
11 Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth;  
12 Both young men and virgins; Old men and children:  
13 Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For his name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the heavens.  
14 And he hath lifted up the horn of his people, The praise of all his saints; Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him.  
Praise ye Jehovah.*

In these verses the Psalmist follows the same pattern as in the previous six verses. This section opens with an exhortation to praise, followed by a list of those involved in the praise, and reasons for the praise. The last half of verse 14 serves as a close to the Psalm. Thus we have (1) Exhortation to praise, 7a; (2) Those involved in praise, 7b-12; (3) Reasons for praise, 13-14a; and as a conclusion, (4) Exhortation, 14b.

**148:7-12:** *Exhortation to praise* (verse 7a) - "*Praise Jehovah from the earth*" - The writer now turns his attention to the earth and its inhabitants.

*Those involved in praise* (verses 7b-12) - "*Ye sea-monsters, and all deeps...Fire...hail...snow and vapor*" - Again, the sea-monsters are incapable of offering up praise to Jehovah. This is a repetition of the argument from the lesser to the greater, and lays upon the intelligent part of God's creation to offer up praise. If the sea monsters, the stormy wind, mountains and hills, trees, beasts and cattle should be called to offer praise, should not man be willing and ready to respond in praise to the God Who created him? Indeed he should!

**148:8:** *“Fulfilling his word”* – We are reminded that God uses the very forces of nature to fulfill His purpose. The exact means, or on what occasions the weather patterns and even the storms of nature might be specifically commanded by God cannot be known. How much of the stormy blast of winds, snow, and hail are utilized directly to fulfill His purpose may never be known this side of eternity.

**148:11-12:** *“Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; Both young men and virgins; Old men and children”* - The Psalmist has now descended to the human race. As for man, let all ranks, all positions, all walks of life, bow down before the Almighty and praise Him for His majesty and glory. Kings are not exempt from honoring God, both in their professional **and** personal walk of life. Old men and children, regardless of age, have the sacred obligation of honoring their Creator.

**148:13-14:** *Reasons for praise* (verses 13-14a) – There are at least three reasons why all people of the earth should offer their praise to Jehovah: *“His name alone is exalted,” “His glory is above the earth and the heavens,”* and *“He hath lifted up the horn of His people, even the children of Israel.”* We’ll look at each of these a little closer.

*“For his name alone is exalted”* – The New Testament equivalent of this passage would be Acts 4:12: “And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved.” The names of men might be etched on the monuments and memorials of time, and those names might endure for a generation or two. With but few exceptions, the names of mortal men who made their mark on past history have been forgotten. Walk through any cemetery and you will find grave marker after grave marker of men and women, young and old, who have passed from this life into eternity. None of them – not a single one – can be credited with any achievement the magnitude of which comes anywhere close to the great things done by our God. What man has ever “created” *ex nihilo* a world, a universe, or life? None! Some may have in a rare moment of heroic self denial saved the physical life of others. But there is no man who has ever given his life as a satisfactory atonement for the soul of another. It is the name of Jehovah alone that is exalted above the heavens and earth! It is He alone Whom has accomplished such great things.

*“His glory is above the earth and heavens”* – As one author noted, “There is more glory in Him personally than in all His works united” (Spurgeon). Words simply fail us when we attempt to describe the glory of our God.

*“And he hath lifted up the horn of his people, The praise of all his saints; Even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him”* – Here is the third reason why our God is deserving of the praise of His creatures. If the inhabitants of the earth owe God praise, what shall we say of His chosen people? Consider the terminology used to describe God’s people.

First, they are called “the horn of his people.” The Hebrew word (*‘keh-ren’*) was variously used to refer to an elephant’s tooth, the *peak* of a mountain, a *ray* of light, or simply *power*. The idea seems to be that God has given His people power and prosperity (cf. Psa. 89:17, 92:10 and 112:9).

Second, they are called *“his saints.”* Set aside for a particular and peculiar purpose, it is the “saints” who declare God’s glory to a sinful and rebellious world. If the saints fail or refuse to give glory to the God of heaven, there will be none to exalt Jehovah.

Third, they are referred to as those who are *“near to him.”* There is something tender about these words. Israel alone was given the accolade of being “the apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8; Deut. 32:10; Psa. 17:8). Israel alone was called God’s “chosen people” (Deut 7:6; 14:2; 1 Sam. 10:24). Spurgeon summed up the wonderful blessings enjoyed by the “seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”:

His goodness to all his creatures does not prevent his having a special favour to his chosen nation: he is good to all, but he is God to his people. He lifts up the down-trodden, but he in a peculiar manner lifts up his people. When they are brought low he raises up a horn for them by sending them a deliverer; when they are in conflict he gives them courage and strength, so that they lift up their horn amid the fray; and when all is peaceful around them, he fills their horn with plenty, and they lift it up with delight...He is their glory: to him they render praise; and he by his mercy to them evermore gives them further reasons for praise, and higher motives for adoration. He lifts up their horn, and they lift up his praise. He exalts them, and they exalt him. The Holy One is praised by holy ones. He is their God, and they are his saints; he makes them blessed, and they bless him in return (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

The Psalmist has not exhausted the reasons for praising God; he has only provided us with a small portion of the innumerable traits of our God that make the Almighty deserving of unending praise and adoration on the part of His people. May it ever be so!

**148:14b:** “*Praise ye Jehovah*” – The Psalm closes as it began. It is as if the Psalmist has simply run out of words; his vocabulary exhausted; his energy expended. What else is there to say, except to repeat the words with which he began this beautiful song: “Praise ye Jehovah.”

### ***Lessons***

1. We could have easily titled this Psalm, “Worthy Art Thou!,” for indeed our God is worthy of praise. Everything about Him demands that every being “praise ye Jehovah.” The Psalmist recognized the majesty of God, and in this Psalm he pours out his heart in adoration and invites all creation to join him in praising his God.
2. Were only the angelic host called upon to praise Jehovah such would produce a chorus of worship and adoration far beyond our imagination - thousands upon thousands of angelic hosts lifting up their voices to God. But in addition to the heavenly host, those who are upon the earth are called upon to join in the chorus. Oh what a glorious day that will be when you and I are privileged to join in that host and lift up our voices and sing a new song in honor of our God. It will be a song of victory, a song of joy, and a song of pure praise to our God.
3. The love of God reaches down from heaven to save mortal man. Praise reaches up from the earth to pay tribute to the One Who loved sinful man and was willing to make the effort to save him.
4. “*He hath made a decree which shall not pass away*” – The world may pass, but the word of God will endure for eternity. When God makes a decree none can annul.
5. The glory of God is far above the earth, yea beyond the highest heavens.

## *“A Song and A Sword”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is the fifth in a group of Psalms known as the “Hallelujah” or “Praise” Psalms. Each of these chapters begins and ends with the words, “Praise Ye Jehovah” (ASV) or “Praise Ye the Lord.” The occasion of each of these Psalms is probably the same, and the general consensus among scholars is that they were written upon the return from Babylonian captivity. The author is not known.

The premillennialist completely miss the message in this chapter. They envision some earthly millennium in which the Lord will come with the sword of His might and slay His enemies and rule on the earth for at least a thousand years. The Psalm is Hebrew poetry and all such poetic language must be interpreted in the light of the New Testament wherein we are provided information of the very “age” or “kingdom” of which the prophets spoke in the pages of the Old Testament. Our opinion is that this beautiful song is prophetic of the Messianic age – an age when men and women would praise their God for His wonderful salvation. No, the author did not understand the implications of his song any more than the prophets of old contemplated the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. These were things “angels desired to look into” (1 Pet. 1:12) and hidden from the minds of men until the coming of our Lord.

Of this Psalm, Morgan notes: “As the last song ended by the recognition of the place of the saints in expressing the universal praise of Jehovah, this one enlarges the thought by confining itself wholly to the anthem of the saints” (Morgan, page 277). Barnes adds that the Psalm is an expression of “the joy of the nation and...indicative of what the nation was to do in those circumstances in carrying out the purpose of God, and accomplishing his will” (Barnes, Esword Notes).

### ***Analysis***

In this Psalm the author calls upon Israel to sing a song of praise to Jehovah (verse 1). Joy and rejoicing would characterize the people of

God (verse 2). They would praise the name of Jehovah in “dance,” and with “timbrel and harp” (verse 3). The Psalmist then turns his attention to the blessings God has bestowed upon Israel as a basis for this praise. He reminds Israel that God “taketh pleasure in his people” and that He will “beautify the meek with salvation” (verse 4). Victory is then promised to Israel as they sing praises to God and hold a two-edged sword in their hand (verse 6). The enemies of God would be bound; punishment would be rendered; judgment administered (verses 7-9a). The Psalm closes with a call to praise Jehovah (verse 9b).

Willmington followed his typical topical arrangement of the chapter:

- I. What Israel Should Do (149:2): They are to rejoice in their Maker and exult in their King.
- II. How Israel Should Do It (149:1, 3, 6):
  - A. Praise him with your mouth (149:1, 6)
  - B. Praise him with your music (149:3)
- III. Where Israel Should Do It (149:5): “Let them sing for joy as they lie on their beds”
- IV. Why Israel Should Do It (149:4,6-9)
  - A. Because the Lord delights in his people (149:4)
  - B. Because he crowns the humble with salvation (149:4)
  - C. Because he punishes the enemies of his people (149:6-9)
  - D. Because he is the glory of his people (149:9)

It has been almost four decades since I scribbled the following outline into the margin of my American Standard Version Bible:

- I. The Call for Praise (149:1-3)
- II. The Cause for Praise (149:4-7).

Phillips provided a three point outline (page 687) – one that lends itself to a homiletic presentation of the chapter (**note:** Phillips takes a purely premillennialistic approach to this chapter, and others in the Psalter, but his assessment of this chapter, if allowed to harmonize with the spiritual nature of God’s kingdom, is quite good):

- I The Song (149:1-3)
- II. The Saints (149:4-5)
- III. The Sword (149:6-9)

We will adapt his outline in our study of the chapter.

## ***Commentary***

### ***The Song*** **Verses 1-3**

- 1 *Praise ye Jehovah. Sing unto Jehovah a new song, And his praise in the assembly of the saints.*
- 2 *Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.*
- 3 *Let them praise his name in the dance: Let them sing praises unto him with timbrel and harp*

We can only imagine the exuberant joy of Israel as they were allowed to return to their home land. That joy may very well have reached its apex when the house of the Lord was rebuilt (Ezra 3:10-13):

- 10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of Jehovah, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise Jehovah, after the order of David king of Israel.
- 11 And they sang one to another in praising and giving thanks unto Jehovah, *saying*, For he is good, for his lovingkindness *endureth* for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised Jehovah, because the foundation of the house of Jehovah was laid.
- 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' *houses*, the old men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:
- 13 so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

Foreshadowed is the joy that would be experienced by those living during the age of the church.

**149:1:** *“Praise ye Jehovah. Sing unto Jehovah a new song”* – The very first verse sets the tone for a proper understanding of this Psalm. It is a “new song” that Israel would sing. It would not be the old song, but a new song expressing Israel’s adoration for the God Who has saved them from their enemies. This song would be sung in



the assembly of the saints. The words are a fitting expression of the child of God in this dispensation, freed from the captivity of sin, and now privileged to assemble with the saints and sing the song of redemption.

**149:2:** *"Let Israel rejoice in him that made him...be joyful in their King"* – Did Paul have this passage in mind when he penned those wonderful words to the Philippians? "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). Absolute joy can only be found in Christ. In view of the fact that the faithful patriarchs "apart from us...should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40), we can only conclude that the Psalmist envisioned the Messianic age when the "saints" would fulfill this exhortation to "rejoice" and "be joyful."

*"be joyful in their King"* - Jesus is our King, indeed the King of kings. When we contemplate our Creator, and the power and majesty of our King, it is most natural that we would rejoice. What a joy to know (1) that we indeed HAVE a King; (2) that our King is so powerful and mighty; (3) and that He administers justice and equity in His reign.

**149:3:** *"Let them praise his name in the dance: Let them sing praises unto him with timbrel and harp."*

The expressions of praise are two-fold: (1) dancing, and (2) singing, accompanied by the timbrel and the harp. Does this verse authorize musical instruments in our praise to God in this New Testament dispensation? Any attempt to defend the "harp" or "timbrel" in New Testament worship using this passage as authority falls short for a number of reasons.

First, the Psalmist is merely expressing the "norm" in worship. David had introduced instrumental music into the worship (Amos 6:5). Like polygamy, such innovations were never authorized by God; merely tolerated until the light of the gospel should be given to mankind.

Second, there is no indication that these expressions were carried over into New Testament worship. We think it significant that no New Testament apostle or inspired writer ever quoted any passage in the Psalms wherein the "harp," or "timbrel" or any other instrument was included as a part of worship.

Third, any attempt to bring the “harp” or “timbrel” (or any other musical instrument) into the worship of the church would, by the same passage, authorize “dancing.”

Fourth, the student must keep in mind the poetic nature of the Psalm. The Psalmist was using language that would focus upon the deep intent of the heart and the enthusiasm that would be manifested in his worship to God. More on this thought under Psalms 150.

### ***The Saints*** **Verses 4-5**

*4 For Jehovah taketh pleasure in his people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.*

*5 Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds.*

**149:4:** "*For Jehovah taketh pleasure in his people: He will beautify the meek with salvation*" - The New Testament equivalent of this verse is the beatitude of Christ: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). What great comfort there is in knowing that God takes pleasure in His people. The Hebrew word translated "taketh pleasure" has the idea of satisfaction. God has a great deal of satisfaction in His people. The word for "beautify" means "to adorn, to honour, as the sanctuary...here it means that the salvation which God would bestow upon them would be of the nature of an ornament, as if they were clothed with costly or splendid raiment" (Barnes, page 337).

**149:5:** "*Let the saints exult in glory: Let them sing for joy upon their beds*" - The saints are to triumph in the honor which God bestows upon His people, the church. It is fitting that God's redeemed should offer praise to the Almighty as the day draws to a close.

### ***The Sword*** **Verses 6-9**

*6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand;*

*7 To execute vengeance upon the nations, And punishments upon the peoples;*

*8 To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron;*

9 *To execute upon them the judgment written: This honor have all his saints. Praise ye Jehovah*

**149:6:** *"Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand"* - When Israel returned to build the temple and the city, they had to confront the enemies of God who would have defeated their purposes. Their offensive was to build; their defense was to protect. We are called to the same noble task today. We offer up praises unto God, as we hold up God as a light for all to see. At the same time we hold the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the "two edged" sword (Heb. 4:12), so as to defeat the enemy with sound, Biblical reasoning. Interestingly, we have one tool to accomplish both tasks, for the word of God is our blueprint and hammer, and it serves as our sword to defeat the enemy.

**149:7:** *"To execute vengeance upon the nations, And punishments upon the peoples"* - Israel's battle was very much a physical battle. God often used Israel to inflict punishment upon those Gentile nations whose sins had come to full term. We have been instructed to leave the vengeance to God. But there is a sense in which we bring judgment upon men with God's word. The Holy Spirit was sent to "convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8). He did this with His word, and the saints today exercise His judgment when they take the sword in hand and go forth conquering and to conquer. Preaching the whole counsel of God includes preaching and teaching on the judgment to come, and the everlasting punishment for those who refuse to obey.

**149:8:** *"To bind their kings with chains, And their nobles with fetters of iron"* - The "chain" and "fetters of iron" that we use are the words of God. They enemy has their "kings," and their "nobles." We must bind them, and thus remove their power over the minds of men: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ; and being in readiness to avenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be made full" (2 Cor. 10:4-6).

**149:9:** *"To execute upon them the judgment written: This honor have all his saints. Praise ye Jehovah"* - Is there not a sense in which God's people today execute judgment? Indeed. And it is considered

an "honor" on the part of God's people to do so. But we must not forget that the execution of judgment is not of ourselves, but by the authority of God, through Christ our Lord.

We happen to see in this a foreshadowing of that great Judgment Day when all men will be judged by the God of heaven. Judgment will be exercised and punishment will be meted to those who have rebelled against the God of heaven.

### ***Lessons***

1. Our "two-edged sword" is the word of God (Heb. 4:12). We are to wield that sword in love (Eph. 4:15) with the determination to uphold the truth and uproot the enemy.
2. Those having joy in their heart cannot help but sing. "Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise" (Jas. 5:13). There is great power in singing, and the songs that have been written through the years have influenced the lives of countless men and women, and even affected the course of history. Albert Barnes had this note: "Dr. Johnson once said, that if he were allowed to make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who made the laws. It is true in a more important sense that he who is permitted to make the hymns of a church, need care little who preaches, or who makes the creed. He will more effectually mould the sentiments of a church than they who preach or make creeds and confessions. Hence, it is indispensable, in order to the preservation of the truth, that the sacred songs of a church should be imbued with sound evangelical sentiment" (Barnes, Col. 3:16, ESword Notes).
3. There is a judgment day coming. The reality of that event is clearly set forth in the pages of the New Testament. In this Psalm it is implied, for if there is to be "vengeance upon the nations" and "punishments upon the people," then the reality of that event is certain. While it is not within the authority of God's people to inflict punishment upon the nations, the promise of that occasion is certain. The saints pronounce God's judgment; our Lord will exercise that punishment on that Great Day when He comes to judge the world in righteousness.

## *“The Hallelujah Chorus”*

### ***Introduction***

This Psalm is a fitting conclusion for the section on praise (Psalms 146-150), as well as the book as a whole. It is the "most comprehensive and illuminative illustration of perfect praise in the whole Psalter" (Morgan, page 277). The author is not known, and the occasion appears to be the return from captivity, and the rebuilding of the city and temple. Spurgeon's introduction to this Psalm was concise and to the point:

We have now reached the last summit of the mountain chain of Psalms. It rises high into the clear azure, and its brow is bathed in the sunlight of the eternal world of worship. It is a rapture. The poet-prophet is full of inspiration and enthusiasm. He stays not to argue, to teach, to explain: but cries with burning words, "Praise him, Praise him, Praise ye the Lord" (Spurgeon, ESword Notes).

Phillips paid tribute to this Psalm as a fitting close to the collection of these hymns:

We come finally to the last psalm, the climax of the great doxology, the "Hallelujah Chorus" of the Hebrew hymn book. The sobs and sighs of many a previous psalm are now changed into shouts and songs. The wistful longing, triumphant hopes, and soaring faith of so many of the Hebrew hymns are now caught up in rapture and made to reverberate around the throne of God. We stand now at faith's Niagara, entranced by its resistless flow of praise, dazzled by its rainbow-tinted spray, awestruck by its thundering sound. Nowhere, not even in the fastness of the book of Psalms itself, is there anything to compare with this last resounding doxology of praise (Phillips, page 697).

We began our journey through the "Songs and Devotions of David" with God blessing man; we close the book with man blessing and praising God.

## ***Analysis***

The Psalm contains the following: First, we see the place of praise, “in his sanctuary” and “in the firmament of his power” (verse 1). Second, the Psalmist reminds us of the reason for such praise, “for his mighty acts” (verse 2a). Third, we are given a glimpse of the measure of praise, “according to his excellent greatness” (verse 2b). Fourth, the author sets forth the method of praise (verses 3-5). Finally, there is the audience to be involved in this praise, “everything that hath breath” (verse 6).

Most of the sources we consulted divided the Psalm similarly. Willmington: “The psalmist calls upon God’s people, along with every other living thing, to praise the Lord for his greatness. (1) Where (150:1), What (150:2), How (150:3-5), and Who (150:6)” (Willmington, page 298). My original notes contained the same breakdown with only slight modification: Where (vs. 1), Why (vs. 2), How (vss. 3-5), and By Whom (vs. 6). This simple outline seems to be the best for our study of this chapter.

## ***Commentary***

### ***Where Verse 1***

*1 Praise ye Jehovah. Praise God in his sanctuary: Praise him in the firmament of his power.*

**150:1:** This verse sets forth the *place* and *circumference* of praise unto God. As to the *place*, it is “in his sanctuary.” God has designated the place where man is to meet Him, and we cannot substitute another location for that which is divinely authorized. The blessings that God has to offer us are located *in Christ*, and in *His body*, the *church*. This is where acceptable praise and service is to be offered; not in the institutions devised by man.

“*in the firmament of his power*” - That “firmament” simply means “to spread out, to expand.” Praise is to be offered where ever God’s power is manifest, namely in all the earth. God intends for His glory to be shown unto all the nations, for the purpose of saving all men; all of this to the glory of God.

## ***What*** **Verse 2**

2 *Praise him for his mighty acts: Praise him according to his excellent greatness.*

**150:2:** This verse sets forth the *reason*, and the *measure* of that praise. God is to be praised for "*his mighty acts*." Shall we attempt to enumerate those great acts? Other passages in the Psalms, as well as the whole of the Bible, provide us with reasons to praise our God. Were we to attempt to enumerate them here space would fail us. How great is our God, and truly worthy of praise and honor.

"*according to his excellent greatness*" – The *measure* of that praise is "according to his excellent greatness." The New Testament teaches that we are to render "honor to whom honor is due." How much more true is this of our God! As we contemplate His greatness, and learn of His great power, majesty, love, and compassion, our praise for Him increases.

## ***How*** **Verses 3-5**

- 3 *Praise him with trumpet sound: Praise him with psaltery and harp.*  
4 *Praise him with timbrel and dance: Praise him with stringed instruments and pipe.*  
5 *Praise him with loud cymbals: Praise him with high sounding cymbals.*

**150:3-5:** These verses emphasize the *method* of praise. Although we are not authorized to use instrumental music in our worship and praise to God, it is significant that there is a wide array of items used in praise unto God as noted by the Psalmist. These include (1) trumpet sound, (2) psaltery, (3) harp, (4) timbrel, (5) dance, (6) stringed instrument, (7) pipe, (8) cymbals, and (9) high sounding cymbals. The question we must entertain is whether or not these methods were intended to be perpetual. Were these instruments intended to find a place in worship in the New Testament? I suggest not, for the following reasons:

- 1) These things were introduced by David, and adapted by Israel; there is no indication that God ever authorized these things

Himself, but that He simply ALLOWED them to be brought into the worship, much like He allowed Israel to have a KING;

- 2) There is not even so much as a hint that these things were used in the first century church. Neither scripture nor history gives any indication that they were used as acceptable means of worship. Instead, the New Testament authorized new methods, designed to emphasize the spiritual rather than the physical (i.e. prayer, Lord's supper, preaching, singing of spiritual songs, giving).

What, then, is the living message of this portion of the Psalm? May we suggest the following regarding the mention of each of these "instruments."

*"Praise him with the trumpet of sound"* – The Hebrew word (*'shophar'*) spoke of the curved ram's horn used by the watchman to warn of impending danger as well as the call to come to worship. The Psalmist was suggesting that the sleeper must be aroused from his sleep. The sound of the trumpet would awaken his thoughts so that he would become focused upon the obligation at hand – that of praising Jehovah. Away with sloth and indifference! Praise to God deserves and demands a sober mind focused upon the occasion of the moment. It is unfortunate that many a deluded soul enters the auditorium for worship, and sits down to pass the time, often amusing himself with activities other than worship, and on occasions drifting off into sleep. Such need to be awakened with the trumpet call to worship.

*"praise him with psaltery and harp"* – The "psaltery" (*'nabla'*) was a hollow stringed instrument; perhaps like the guitar or mandolin. The "harp" (*'kinnor'*) was another stringed instrument, but consisted of a somewhat deeper sound than the psaltery. In order to compose and play music on these instruments the worshipper would have to train and prepare himself intensely and with great determination. The point to be emphasized here is the undeniable truth that acceptable worship demands proper preparation prior to our coming into the presence of God. We should take the time to fine tune the "skill" (if I may be permitted to use that word) of worship.

*"timbrel and dance"* – The "timbrel" (*'toph'*) would have been similar to our tambourine. The Psalmist links the timbrel with dance. The idea seems to be that the use of the timbrel naturally flowed down to the beat of the feet in dance. Notice that the music thus involved both the hands and feet, i.e. the whole of the worshipper. When David danced before the ark on its journey back to the Temple he did



so because of the depth of his love for God. Only the best would do, and the intensity of involvement was implied on that occasion as it is clearly taught here.

*“stringed instruments and pipes”* – The “stringed instruments” (*men*) and the “pipes” (*ugab*) the Psalmist focuses the various chords and sounds that could be produced by the strings and wind instruments.

*“loud cymbals...high sounding cymbals”* – The trumpets are sounding, the stringed instruments adding the warm and deep chords of melodic music, and the wind instruments are piped. All that remains is the crescendo that comes with the sounding of the cymbals. The full orchestra is now in place. With the mention of these instruments the Psalmist would draw the worshipper’s attention to the expertise involved in worship. It is not necessary for the saint to understand the advanced techniques of music, but it behooves each and every child of God to at least put forth the effort to develop and use his ability in singing to the best degree possible. It is astonishing how indifferent we sometimes appear to be when it comes to singing a song properly. No, we are not suggesting that God measures our worship by whether or not we are “on key” or in perfect harmony with those in the assembly. But the very fact that we are singing praises unto our God should motivate us to do our best; and our best will be better if we take the time to study at least the basics of music and put forth every effort to make our singing the best possible. We must caution, however, lest the worshipper focus upon his own abilities and his pride render his worship vain. Our worship begins with the trumpet – God’s word calling us to worship in “spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). Our hearts are poured out, the strings of our heart plucked with our love and devotion for God. As we sing our hearts swell with gratitude and appreciation for the God Who has saved us. From the depth of our hearts the “cymbals” crash as our praise to God is poured out to He Who sits on the throne!

### ***By Whom*** **Verse 6**

6 *Let everything that hath breath praise Jehovah. Praise ye Jehovah.*

**150:6:** This final verse emphasizes exactly who it is that is to be involved in this praise, namely *“everything that hath breath.”* The language is emphatic; it is also symbolic. Obviously the lower

animals cannot offer praise, their mind not being attuned to these matters, nor does God demand it. These words are a call for all *mankind* to honor God for Who He is, and for what He has done for His creation! What a fitting close to this chapter, and to the book as a whole. Indeed, the directive from heaven is, "*Praise Ye Jehovah.*" In one-hundred-forty-nine chapters the sweet singer of Israel, along with other men of God have unfolded before our eyes the majesty of our God, His goodness, His unlimited mercy and kindness, and the promises of reward for the faithful and godly saints. Now the author brings all of that together in an orchestrated symphony of praise to our God. May it never be said of the saints that they failed to give God His due! "Praise ye the Lord!"

### ***Lessons***

1. The beauty of this Psalm was captured in the following tributes paid to this closing chapter in the book:

It was manifestly designed, whoever wrote it, to occupy the very place which it does occupy - to complete the volume devoted to praise. Praise is the suitable ending of the book; praise is what the Spirit of inspiration meant to secure in the heart and on the lips. In the review of the whole there is occasion for praise. In view of all that has been disclosed about God, about his religion, about the manifestations of his mercy and grace to his people, there is occasion for praise. After all that has been experienced, observed, and recorded in this book - all of trial, sorrow, temptation, conflict, disappointment, sickness, bereavement, persecution, war, captivity, bondage, exile, tears, pain, darkness, trouble - there is, as the result of the whole, as there will be at the end of our own troubled and chequered lives, occasion for exultation, praise, triumph - songs, rejoicings, raptures, hallelujahs. This psalm, then, made up wholly of expressions of gratitude and praise, is an appropriate close to the entire Book of Psalms. So may our lives close, when its varied scenes are over, with thanksgivings and praises, as a proper expression in view of the past, and as emblematic of the uninterrupted employment that awaits us in the heavens (Barnes, ESword Notes).

We have now reached the last summit of the mountain chain of Psalms. It rises high into the clear azure, and its brow is

bathed in the sunlight of the eternal world of worship. It is a rapture. The poet-prophet is full of inspiration and enthusiasm. He stays not to argue, to teach, to explain: but cries with burning words, "Praise him, Praise him, Praise ye the Lord" (Spurgeon).

2. Our worship to God should involve the whole of our very being. Proper preparation should be made in advance. Enthusiastic involvement in worship should characterize every saint in the assembly. This is what constitutes worship "in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

## *Appendix*

With this volume we bring our work on “The Songs and Devotions of David” to a close. Our journey has been an enjoyable one. But in one sense, the journey has only begun. These notes are not an exhaustive treatment of this wonderful book, for any attempt to draw out all of the lessons contained within each of the 150 chapters of Psalms would be a futile attempt. We hope that you have benefited from a study of this book, or any of the other six in the series. If we have helped you to have a deeper appreciation for Psalms then the time we have spent writing, printing and publishing this seven volume series will have been worthwhile. I am particularly cognizant of the fact that what I have written will continue beyond my life here upon this earth. Writing is a tool that enables the preacher and teacher to expand his influence beyond the confines of his physical life. For this opportunity I am thankful.

Many of you have written me over the years in which I was printing these notes. Your comments have been encouraging. Perhaps it is the kind comments you have made that have kept me steadily moving toward the goal of completing notes on all 150 chapters. Some have asked if I plan to reprint this series in hardback. I am giving that some thought, and I would appreciate hearing from you regarding this matter.

I hope you find yourself returning to these notes for future reference. But if you read this book, or any of the other companion volumes in this series, just once, perhaps my thoughts have helped you better understand the book, the men who wrote these Psalms, and the God Who inspired them for our study and consideration. It is to our Lord we give all the honor and glory for using us to teach others through the written page.

- Tom Wacaster

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