

Commentary of the Book of Psalms

Insights on Walking with God



by

Brooky R Stockton

Psalms: Insights on Walking with God 1.4



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Preface

“Help lord the godly man ceaseth” (Psalm 112).

This work on psalms represents my quiet times in the Book of Psalms – the joys and trials of walking with God.

It is an imperfect work as it was written at different times in different styles on different computers. It has not been professionally edited. Therefore, I beg your tolerance.

It is, however, a sincere work that highlights what I have learned about walking with God while going through the Valley of Baca and the darkness of our times.

Enjoy and may the Lord Jesus Christ use this work to encourage you on your pilgrim journey to the Celestial City.

Brooky Stockton, Minister of the Gospel

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my marvelous mentors and their wives who taught me to how to walk with God: Dick St. Marie (Chicago), Jim Wright (Colorado Springs), Marion Michaux (Colorado Springs), John Walden (Colorado Springs), Miles Stanford (Colorado Springs), Jean Gibson (California), and William McDonald (Chicago, California).

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This book is not anti-government. It is anti-corruption in government.

Because the present political climate is pro-Zionism, pro-lawlessness, pro-censorship, anti-Christ, and anti-Christian: and, because government employees and government media is more sensitive that a step-mother about criticism, it is necessary to warn government officials of the following:

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Part 1

INTRODUCTION



Introduction to the Psalms

Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue. (Psalm 120:2)



Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Psalms 19:14)

The general title to the Book of Psalms in Hebrew is תהלים (tehilliyim), Psalms, or more fully, ספר תהלים Sépher Tehilliyim, “Book of Psalms?” The word תהלים Tehilliyim is derived from the verb – הלל halal, to praise, as in the word “Hallelujah, Praise

YHWH or “Praise the LORD.” (Barnes).

The word “praise” is a sweeping term that can refer to “speaking well of the Lord,” “obeying Him,” “waiting on Him in silence,” as well as singing and plying the harp to Him.

The psalms tell the truth about history and the vicissitudes life. The inspired poems inform us that we not alone in our struggles to separate from the world and to walk with God.

The Hebrew name for the Book of Psalm is the Book of Praise. It is the longest book in the Bible. The Psalms inspire holiness for the day, and pillow the heart at night.

The Psalms have been called the garden of the Scriptures. Out of 219 quotations of the Old Testament in the New Testament, 116 of them are from the Psalms. Its words are wings that equip to fly above grime and clutter of modern life.

It is divided into five sections and is a collection of 150 psalms. Section 1 (Psalms 1-41) Section 2 (Psalms 42-72) Section 3 (Psalms 73-89) Section 4 (Psalms 90-106) Section 5 (Psalms 107-150). Many see in this division a similarity to the five books of Torah with themes of creation (Genesis), themes of redemption (Exodus); themes of holiness (Leviticus); themes of conflict and war (Numbers); and, themes of law (Deuteronomy).

Psalms is called the Hymnbook of the Bible, which places singing and integrity of God’s people at the very center of the faith. Thus, Psalms IA a book of worship, praise, and prayer.

The Psalms reveal the spiritual life of the true Israel of God. The LORD God is not only the center of history and creation, but also of human life and emotion.

There are seven psalm styles: hymns, laments (sorrow and grief), thanksgiving psalms, psalms of confidence, psalms of remembrance, wisdom psalms, and God is reigning psalms.

David is named as the author of almost half of the Psalms. Other Psalms ascribed to Moses, Solomon, Asaph, the sons of Korah, etc. Many psalms were written during or after the Babylonian captivity.

The book deals with subjects such as God and His creation, sin, evil, justice, judgment, hope, wisdom, war, worship and the coming of the Messiah.

Prophetic imagery of the Messiah is seen in numerous psalms. The book of Psalms reminds God's people of the central importance of worshipping God by recalling his goodness, love, and wondrous deeds on their behalf.

Hebrew poetry does not rhyme sounds, but thoughts and ideas — a form of parallelism. In Hebrew poetry, there is first and second stanza. The first stanza communicates a thought. And the second line will complement the original thought, add to it, or express a contrast.

A complimentary stanza (Psalm 33:2):

First thought: "Praise the Lord with the harp . . ."

Second thought: "make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre."

A contrast stanza (11:5):

First line: "The LORD tests the righteous,

Second line: "but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence."

Don't be fooled by the poetic nature of the Psalms.

Each psalm was written by a real man with real struggles in life. What he learned about God in his conflict became so important, he had to write it down in poetic form and put it to music so the whole nation might never forget the major lesson of the poem. The key to the psalms is "to feel" your way through the experience and purpose of the psalmist. They minister to the heart primarily and secondarily to the head.

A Table of Psalms by Theme

The following was compiled by Book of Hours (Catholic) and we are pleased to publish this here as a consideration for a theme chart for the Book of Psalms.

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God the Creator.	8, 19, 33, 65, 111, 104, 145, 147.
God the Redeemer.	15, 33, 102, 103, 111, 113, 114, 126, 130, 138.

God the Judge.	1, 7, 11, 46, 50, 62, 75, 76, 82, 90, 96, 97, 98.
God's Glory.	18, 29, 99, 36, 46, 148, 150.
God's Sovereignty.	24, 46, 47, 72, 89, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 112, 146, 145.
God's Wisdom.	33, 104, 111, 113, 139, 145, 147.
God's Law.	19, 50, 62, 111, 119, 147. 23, 33, 34, 37, 89, 121, 124, 139, 145, 146, 147.
God's Mercy.	23, 32, 57, 61, 62, 63, 73, 77, 85, 86, 100, 103, 118, 130, 145.
The Incarnation.	2, 8, 85, 89, 102, 110, 111, 113, 132.
The Passion.	22, 40, 42, 54, 69, 88, 116, 130.
The Church.	46, 48, 84, 111, 122, 133, 147.
Worship.	5, 26, 43, 63, 65, 66, 67, 84, 96, 100, 102, 116, 122, 138.
Thanksgiving.	30, 65, 67, 92, 98, 100, 111, 103, 107, 116, 134, 138, 145, 147, 148, 150.
Prayer.	4, 5, 17, 20, 28, 31, 54, 61, 84, 86, 102, 141, 142.
Trust in God.	27, 31, 57, 62, 63, 71, 73, 77, 91, 118, 121, 123, 124, 125, 143, 146.
God our Refuge.	4, 17, 20, 37, 46, 49, 54, 61, 71, 91, 103, 121, 146.
Divine Guidance.	25, 43, 80, 85, 111, 112.
In Time of Trouble.	3, 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 30, 40, 46, 49, 57, 62, 63, 80, 85, 86, 90, 107, 118, 144, 146.
Righteousness.	1, 11, 12, 15, 18, 19, 26, 34, 40, 92, 111, 112.
Peace.	29, 46, 76, 85, 98, 100, 124, 125, 126.
The Transitoriness of Life.	39, 49, 90, 102.
The Hope of Immortality.	16, 30, 42, 49, 66, 73, 103, 116, 121, 139, 146.

Morning.	3, 5, 20, 63, 90, 143.
Evening.	4, 13, 16, 17, 31, 77, 91, 121, 134.
Penitential Psalms.	6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.
Preparation for Holy Communion.	23, 25, 26, 36, 41, 43, 63, 84, 85, 86, 122, 130, 133, 139.
Thanksgiving after Holy Communion.	8, 15, 18, 19, 27, 29, 30, 34, 100, 103, 110, 118, 145, 150.

Authors of the Psalms

Twelve of the psalms, [Psalm 50](#); [Psalm 73](#); [Psalm 74](#); [Psalm 75:1-10](#); [Psalm 76:1-12](#); [Psalm 77](#); [Psalm 78](#); [Psalm 79:1-13](#); [Psalm 80](#); [Psalm 81](#); [Psalm 82:1-8](#); [Psalm 83](#); are ascribed to Asaph.

Eleven of the psalms, [Psalm 42:1-11](#); [Psalm 44](#); [Psalm 45](#); [Psalm 46:1-11](#); [Psalm 47:1-9](#); [Psalm 48:1-14](#); [Psalm 49](#); [Psalm 84:1-12](#); [Psalm 85:1-13](#); [Psalm 87:1-7](#); [Psalm 88](#); are ascribed to “the sons of Korah,”

Two psalms, [Psalm 88](#); [Psalm 89](#) are ascribed to a person called “The Ezrahite,” a grandson of David / Judah.

Two of the psalms, [Psalm 72](#) and [Psalm 127:1-5](#), are ascribed to Solomon, or were composed “for Solomon.”

Fifteen of the psalms, [Psalm 120-134](#), are entitled “Songs of Degrees.”

And, there is a large collection of psalms for which we do not know the author.

The Overall Design of the Book of Psalms

Psalm 146-150 begin and end with the word “hallelujah.” This structure looks intentional. As we look at other psalms we notice that note the following concluding doxologies causing scholars to conclude the Psalms are intentionally arranged into five Books:

Introduction: (Psalm 1-2)

Book 1 (Psalm 3-41): Psalm 41 ends with ” Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen!”

Book 2 (Psalm 42-72): Psalms 72:19 reads, “And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.”

Book 3 (Psalm 73-89): Psalm 89:52 records, “Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.”

Book 4 (Psalm 90-106): Psalm 106:48 has this final text: “Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.”

Book 5 (Psalm 107-145) Psalm 145:21 concludes with, “My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.” The Hallelujah Psalms are included in Book 5.

Some see each book paralleling themes common to the structure of the Pentateuch.

Furthermore, the psalms have various themes: There are Messianic Themes, Victory Themes, Gospel Themes, Imprecatory Themes, Praise Themes. And, there are morning and evening psalms, psalms for the sick, old age, fathers and mothers, for the temple services, politicians, soldiers, the discouraged, and for the development of holiness.

Types of Psalms

The Royal Psalms focus on the reign of God as King (47, 93, 97, 99), and the on the human King of Israel (2, 20-21, 45, 72, 101, 110, 132).

Praise Psalms: 18, 21, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 57, 66, 68, 92, 106, 111, 116, 135, 138, 150, and more.

About 15 psalms that are strongly Messianic: 2, 8, 16, 22, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 72, 89, 91, 102, 109, 110, and 118.

Imprecatory Psalms: 5, 6, 11, 12, 35, 37, 40, 52, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 69, 79, 83, 94, 109, 137, 139 and 143.

Wisdom Psalms: 8, 14, 53, 25, 34, 39, 49, 73, 90, 112, 127, 131, and 139. Additional psalms fit into this category: 18, 27, 32, 86, 92, 94, 105, 107, 111, 144, and 146.

Penitential Psalms: 6, 31, 32, 37, 38, 50, 51, 101, 102, 129, 130, 142, and 143.

Thanksgiving Psalms: 8, 9, 28, 30, 32, 34, 95, 100, 106, 124, 136, 138, and many more.

Strong Political Psalms: 2, 9-10, 37, 46, 47, 52, 55, 66, 67, 72, 76, 78, 82, 86, 94, 97, 99, 101, 109, 113, 117, 138, 142, 144, and 146

Brooky Stockton, ret. pastor / teacher



Psalm 1 - The Blessed Man

God's Lion



The psalmists were in touch with the issues of life, the character of God, and the tensions that afflict the common man.

In this psalm, we have the synopsis of the issue of the ages . . . the difference between the righteous and the unrighteous, the godly and the ungodly, the well-watered tree and the chaff, the blessedness of God's man and the "unblessedness" (German: *unglock*) of the man of the world.

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

Before us is the first lesson on walking with God – Don't take advice from the ungodly – from ungodly professors, politicians, business men, doctors, lawyers, and friends.

The Hebrew word for "Blessed" (*esher*) means "to be endowed." It is often translated, "happy." A happy man is an enriched man. In this passage, the psalmist views the blessed man as an opulent green tree beside two streams of water. In Psalm 32, the blessed man is a forgiven man. In Psalm 119, the blessed man is one guided by the Word of God.

"Blessed" is a plural noun meaning "blessings to the man" (Ellicott).

The English word "bless" has a grisly history. Its forefather was *bledsian* -- a word that meant *to consecrate with blood*. This, of course, came from the bloody, Jewish sacrificial system: "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of *sins*" (Hebrews 9:22). Like the Israelites were saved from the death angel on Passover evening because of the blood on the door post, people are saved when they believe, and the shed blood of Christ is applied to their life. When we say, "God bless you," we are really saying, "God bathe you in blood!" The OT Israelite obtained God's favor through sacrifice wherein the sinner would bring a sin offering to the Tent of Meeting. Since God sent His Lamb into history, the state of blessedness really begins when one appropriates the death of Christ for himself to obtain forgiveness and cleansing. God's blessed man is man trusting in the accomplishments of the Lamb of God.

The adverb "**not**" negates the main actions of this compound sentence: "walketh," "standeth," and "sitteth" – a progression of compromise.

There are three classes of men progressing from bad to worse: the "ungodly" – those miscreants wanting in manners and self-control; "sinners" – a general reference to wrongdoers and transgressors of law; and the "scornful" – those that mock God and His law (Vulgate "pests).

He does **not** (o) “walk,” “stand,” or “sit” under the counsel of the degenerate. Note the downward recession: “walk,” “stand,” “sit.” “Walking” implies receiving advice (“counsel”). “Standing” refers to receiving instruction. “Sitting” refers to fellowship—the kind of fellowship one has when he dines with a friend.

There are three “hooks” used by the wicked to catch the naive: “counsel,” “standing,” and “sitting” in fellowship with.

In this text the blessed man of God is known by what he does **not** do; that is, the blessed man is a separated man, with an uncontaminated heart, a man that excludes the ungodly from his circle of friendship. He is the opposite of the inclusive, inoffensive, non-judgmental, multicultural, omnistic person that embraces every lifestyle and philosophy with a smile.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

Since the first lesson on walking with God is not to take advice from the ungodly, the second lesson is to hear and heed the Word of God.

The blessed man is also known by what he does. He does have a dynamic relationship with God’s Word.

The word “delight” (chephets) means “to take pleasure in.” The same word is used of Sheckem’s intense desire to marry Dinah, Jacob’s daughter (Genesis 34:19). The text says, “he lost no time” in making a proposal. We all know why! There is probably no human desire more wonderful and more intense than anticipating a wedding night, and, this is the kind of desire one should have day and night for the Word of God.

The word “meditate” is the Hebrew word *yahgah*. The word has an interesting translation in Isaiah 31: 4 --

“For thus hath the LORD spoken unto me: ‘Like as the lion and the young lion **roaring** on his prey . . .’”

Do you see the word “roaring?” That is our word *yahgah*. As a lion roars over his prey, we are to roar over God’s Word as our daily bread. Has your family heard you roaring around the house lately?

When the Word of God is as sweet as honey, the vanities of men are as bitter as gall. When you walk with God above, you will be less enamored with the things below.

And, what is the subject of his meditation? It is the law, the Torah, the Ten Commandments, and Christ, the living Torah—the One who came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17ff). **God’s blessed man roars like a lion over God’s law.** It is modern heresy that holds that the law of God has no meaning and no binding force on men today. Because God’s law is good for all men, it is good for me. The law cannot save men (or society), but it can sanctify men. It is the standard of right and wrong. It is the canon by which all matters can be judged. Modern man is antinomian and relativistic seeing man as the origin of law. Mao Tse-Tung said, “our God is none other than the masses of the Chinese people.”

American paternalism sees government as the source of law. The strength of Christian man is the absoluteness of His God and the absolute devotion of the man to the ambition that “the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Romans 8:2). The purpose of grace is not to set aside law but to fulfill the law and enable man to keep the law. Thus, the Christian man looks to the Word of God as his guide and the standard for all men and all of man’s institutions.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The particle “like” performs like a simile comparing the “blessed” man to a prosperous tree.

Terms like “walketh,” “counsel,” “ungodly,” “scornful,” “delight,” “meditate,” and “law of the LORD” inform us that the psalmist is addressing the spiritual prosperity of a man and **not** his material riches. The Godly man is like a well-watered tree and not a gold mine. He is rich in knowledge of God’s Word, but not necessarily rich in precious metals.

The Biblical mind often compares the righteous to healthy plants – comp. Psalm 3:8 (the olive), Psalm 128:3 (vine); Hosea 14:6 (olive and cedar). In the east the vitality of a plant is often determined by its relationship to water. The word “waters” is plural. In this case, the man is planted between two rivers: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

“Whatsoever he doeth . . .” is better translated, “all that he doeth he maketh to prosper.” The community is better off with him in it.

4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Jesus compared pretenders to “tares,” “thorns,” and “goats.” But, the psalmist compares the ungodly to chaff.

The “blessed man” is a godly man like a tree planted by the waters. In contrast to a well-watered tree, the psalmist uses the metaphor “chaff” to describe the wicked: worthless, shunned, rejected by man for good use, and easily driven by the winds of the age.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

The “ungodly” have no standing in God’s chambers . . . no hope of acquittal or of a commuted sentence. Ellicott says the comparison is to a man who “will not rise” or be able to hold up his head in court due to the shame of being found out.

The congregation refers to “people of God,” the true Israel of God, the redeemed. Consider the words of the Apostle Paul: “They are not all Israel that are of Israel.”

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

The poor unknown, rejected saint can find comfort in this verse. The LORD knows, observes, approves, and delights in the one that serves Him from the heart when only God can see and judge. Like a flower in a high, lonely mountain meadow, he is appreciated and loved by God alone.

Oh, the shock, doom, and rigid finality of those words, “shall perish!”

No man is an island,
Entire of itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thine own
Or of thine friend's were.
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.

John Donne

Psalm 2 - Kiss the Son All Ye Nations

Nations in Rebellion Against Christ



We live in times of political chaos where madmen grip the helm of government. Against the surf and foam of political strife is the Source of peace and prosperity. Before us is the reason for all political conflict in the world today, and the solution to every political problem in seed form.

The Psalmist Speaks

Psalm 2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The word “why” is an interrogatory that can be translated “how” or “what” or “how much.” It is a question asked for our benefit. The word “heathen” should be translated “nations.” The word “go'em” is translated “people” and “nations” in Genesis 10:5. In Jewry, the term *goy* is a derogatory term for non-Jews, but that is not the case here. Jews are part of the rebellion.

The verb “rage” (*raqash*) is only used here, and it means to be in “tumult” or “commotion.” The psalmist is asking, “Why are the nations always in a furor, a frenzy, a constant state of irritation, full of madness and hostility?”

The word “imagine” is the imperfect Hebrew verb “hagah.” It is translated “roar” or “moan” or “growl” in Isaiah 31:4 of a lion roaring over its prey. It is translated “plot” in the ESV and “meditate” in Psalm 1:2.

The word “vain” is the Hebrew verb “reek,” used adverbially. It is translated “armed” in the KJV and “led forth” in the ESV in Genesis 14:14. It is translated “the seven empty ears” blasted with east wind which is a reference to the seven years of famine in Genesis 41:27; and, “emptied their sack” in Genesis 42:35. The idea here is of kings “emptying theirs nets” of destruction and mercilessly killing people. We need only look at the madness of the Bolsheviks, Lenin, Stalin and others to grasp the harvest of this rage against God.

Before us is the question of the ages:

Why can't nations live in peace? Why are nations always at war, always in an uproar, always existing in the surf and foam of the sea of conflict?

As we listen to the news, it seems that there is always a regional dispute, a political debate, an infringement, a group of rebels protesting some perceived inequity, a nation in political chaos ravaged by civil war. Some nation somewhere is “emptying his net” aggressively shelling another country for power and wealth and revenge, or defending itself against rocket fire with weapons of mass destruction.

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

The kings have set themselves against the LORD.

The name "LORD" is the Tetragrammaton and clearly refers to God's sovereignty and authority.

The title "anointed" is the Hebrew name for Messiah, *mashiyach*, meaning "anointed"—a reference to Christ, the Son of God. Several facts about the verb "set" needs to be noticed.

First, the verb "set" (*tithyetsebu*) is a Hebrew Hithpael, reflexive verb; that is, the kings of the earth are stirring themselves up. The hostility clearly resides in the kings who are constantly declaring war against the LORD God; that is, they want to be gods among men and the only sovereigns on earth.

Second, the verb "set" is in the emphatic position in the sentence and clearly emphasizes the intense, independent, rebellious nature of kings.

The preposition "against" is properly translated, but could also be worded "upon" or "over" the LORD; that is, the kings of the earth have stationed themselves as masters over men. They claim sovereignty over matters pertaining to the LORD God. The rulers of the earth do not recognize the authority of God and His Law-word over them. They see themselves as the only sovereign.

When Chief Justice Roy Moore placed the Ten Commandments in the corridor of the Alabama courthouse and explained that it represented the need of all Judges to surrender to the authority of the LORD God and His Law-word, the federal judge would have nothing to do with it. The Federal Court declared that, "the state may not acknowledge the sovereignty of the Judeo-Christian God" (morallaw.org).

Before us is a continuation of the question:

"Why have the kings of the earth set themselves up as lords and masters in opposition to the sovereignty of God and His anointed King, the Lord Jesus Christ"?

The Rulers of the Earth Speak

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

Now the kings speak to one another. The Hebrew Piel, plural verb "let us break" is cohortive in form and meaning . . . and it is in the emphatic position. The Piel verb communicates intense determination to break from Puritan Christianity. Being in the emphatic position this verb clearly communicates the excessive vigor and profound madness of political leaders united in a new world order that incites rebellion against the Triune God and His law-order.

The term "their bands" is a feminine plural, a reference to the Trinity.

"Their" would be a reference to the "us" of Genesis 1:26-28.

The words "bands" and "cords" refer to chains or ropes that tether animals. These terms designate the Claim the Creator-God has on all the people of the earth. They are used metaphorically of the sovereignty of the LORD God and the absolute binding authority of His law over mankind.

The new world order encourages rebellion against the authority of Christ and His Law-word, and is hell-bent on initiating dramatic changes to build the utopia of despots — wealth, power, and control of man's destiny.

Are there any rulers who have taken an oath to the LORD God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ to uphold His law? Maybe one, the Queen of England. But, she has so violated her oath. Isn't this treason against God and the British people? At best, kings take oaths to uphold the laws of man—which by the way, are almost always hostile to God's law-order.

Heaven's Response to the Rebellion

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

To an informed Christian the hostility of congressmen and our nation's leaders is like a burr under our saddle. Righteous men are constantly irritated and agitated by the insanity of our political leaders. Rightly so! Thus, we pray, "Hallowed be thy name; thy Kingdom come;"

How does God respond to the sociopathic madness of kings? Well, He certainly isn't threatened by any . . . or all of them! "He laughs!"

The term "laugh" (shachaq) is translated "to make sport of" in Judges 16:25. It is a term of contempt. The word "derision" (la-ag) means "to mock" and is translated "laughed thee to scorn" in 2 Kings 19:21. The temporal power of weak, proud rulers is no threat to the omnipotent power of the eternal God.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

What is the future of the rebel kings? He has a message for them.

The verbs "speak" (Piel) and "vex" (Piel) in Hebrew poetry are complementary terms. Both clearly state intense energetic action.

The word "vex" is translated "troubled" (Genesis 45:3), "dismayed" (Exodus 15:15) and "terrified" (ESV 1 Samuel 28:21). God is not some sweet, indulgent passive Santa Claus type figure. Before us is a reflection of deliberate, controlled, intense action of an angry God.

The word "wrath" and "sore displeasure" are also complementary terms.

The Hebrew word for "wrath" is "nostril" (aph); that is, when a man feels wronged, his nostrils flare.

The Hebrew word for "sore displeasure" means "heat" or "burning anger." The imagery before us is that of an angry dragon with flared nostrils blasting balls of fire upon his adversaries. The sudden stroke and death of Lenin (1924) after his order (1922) to starve five million Russian peasants comes to mind.

To put it bluntly, God is not happy with the rebel nations. Is there any government committed to His law-order? Consequently, He is opposed to the proud, humanistic states. It is not his will that any of them succeed. All will fail. He will vex them in His wrath.

The Father Speaks

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

“I have set” is the Hebrew Qal perfect verb *nacak* which means “to pour out.” The imagery before us is that of a metallurgist heating iron ore in a blast furnace at a smelting plant to pour hot iron into a mold to make steel. The Father emphatically states that He has His king, and He has installed him permanently on His holy hill.

The “holy hill” is a reference to the Heavenly Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the assembly of the saints, the heavenly Jerusalem of which carnal Jerusalem was a type.

This is a decree “written in stone!” It is an iron-clad, perpetual, indisputable fact. In contrast to antlers that fall among deer and elk every season, are permanent horns of power like that of a ram. In contrast to the changing winds and the sands of time are the eternal shores; in contrast to the fading grass on the prairie are the mighty rocks and boulders of the earth; in contrast to the fragile tents of man are the pyramids of Almighty God. In contrast to fragile, weak, temporal rulers is God’s eternal, immutable, anointed King. In contrast to the weak, flawed egotists that arise to power out of the sea of politics to ride the wave of temporal power to the sand castles of nations is God’s chosen King, the Lord Jesus Christ, established forever on God’s holy, eternal mountain. God rules, not man!

Before us is the SOLUTION to all political disputes — recognition of and submission to the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the Nations. Oh, that the kings of the earth were humbly submitted to the authority of Christ, under oath to obey His Law-word. How different the evening news!

The Son Speaks

7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

A public notice is given. The term “decree” refers to a resolve, order, or statute.

The first usage of the word “decree” (*choq*) is in reference to land given to the priests by Pharaoh which Joseph, Vice-regent of Egypt, was not permitted to seize or sell (Genesis 47:22); that is, Pharaoh’s decree was set in stone. His decree was absolute and permanent. It is like an executive order, but more firm. Thus, God’s decree to the Son is absolute, permanent, forever, immutable, and unchangeable.

The decree is one of relationship. The Son is the God-man, very God of God, eternal, from the beginning. But, at a point in time, if we dare use the term “time,” the Father declared His relationship to the Second Person of the Triune God as that of a father to a son. He is now “The Son.” The term “begotten” does not refer to an actual birth, but the genesis of a legal relationship.

In the movie “Ben Hur,” Ben Hur wins the affection of a Roman Senator, receives his freedom, and is declared a son. He existed before the declaration. The decree did not initiate his existence; only a new status. The same is true between the Father and the Son. The Second Person of the Triune God was declared a Son.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen 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.

Favored by the Father, the Son is granted special favors. All He has to do is ask, and the nations are His.

This is the Spirit's way of informing us that Christ claims jurisdiction over all men and their institutions. Both the right and power to rule the nations belong to Christ: "Who is the head of all rule and authority" (Colossians 2:10). But, Christ has done more than ask. He has purchased the nations with His own blood, the currency of the spirit world. The iron scepter is in nail pierced hands. The nations are as fragile as pottery. The One who made a whip and cleansed the temple will use His rod of iron to smash the nations. Rebels who will not bow the knee will be broken into hundreds of pieces.

The Spirit Speaks

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

The Spirit of God gives sweet counsel to the rulers of the earth. The objects of instruction are kings, presidents, parliaments, public officials in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. They are exhorted to be wise and receive the following instruction.

Unfortunately, however, the nations seems to be in the hands of fools and madmen.

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

The word "serve" means "to work" or "to labor" or "to obey." The kings of the earth are exhorted to serve the LORD; that is, to obey His Law-word.

The command "rejoice" refers to voluntary service. Holy fear ought to mix with joy and the privilege of serving the LORD God. Ancient Israel found out how great a sin it is to not serve the Lord with joy.

Deuteronomy 28:47 "Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity..."

Governments are in place to serve the interest of Heaven and the law of the LORD God; to protect human rights and freedom; and, to punish those who infringe on the rights of others.

The phrases "with fear" and "with trembling" is a call to careful and precise obedience to His commands and purpose (Deuteronomy 5:29; 6:2, 13, 24; 8:6; 10:12, 20; 13:4; 17:19; 19:20).

The Spirit is calling for allegiance to the Word of God, not allegiance to a political party or the new world order or to the U.S. Constitution. Oh, what a different place the world would be if we had Christian leaders committed to the will of God and served His purposes to the best of their knowledge and ability. Today, however, it seems we have madmen ruling nations who are hell bent on serving their own lust or Marxist program or the agenda of the new Zionist world order to mention a few.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

“Kiss” refers to the ancient tradition of subjects kissing the ring or scepter of a king — of demonstrating devotion and loyalty to the crown. Kings take no pleasure in rebels. To arouse the wrath of a king is to perish like Haman before Xerxes. After the Earl of Essex “half” drew his sword against Queen Elizabeth, she ordered him to be executed.

All the kings of the earth all called to “kiss the Son:”

Kiss Him as the Son of God, the historical Christ who appeared in Bethlehem.

- Kiss Him as the Creator for “by Him all things are Created.”
- Kiss Him as the King of the rulers of the earth.
- Kiss Him as the only Lawgiver, King, Priest, and Prophet.
- Kiss Him as the Savior King Who gave His life to save His people from their sins.
- Kiss Him as the Way, the Truth, and the Life.
- Kiss Him as the Gateway to God.
- Kiss Him as the Mediator between Heaven and Earth.
- Kiss Him as the Lamb of God, the Sin-bearer.
- Kiss Him as the Way of Salvation.
- Kiss Him as the True Israel of God, the fulfillment of all OT promises.
- Kiss Him as the Head of the Church.
- Kiss Him as the risen, ascended Savior and Lord sitting at the Right hand of God.
- Kiss the Son lest He be angry you perish in the way.
- Kiss the Son that you may be truly blessed of God with eternal life and enter His kingdom.

“Kiss the Son” is equivalent to invitation terms like “receive Christ as Lord and Savior,” “believe,” “repent,” “bow the knee to Christ,” and “Confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raise him from the dead” (Romans 10:9). The psalmist is telling us to “look to Christ” and be saved. To reject Christ is to perish, for “whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God” (John 3:18).

The term “blessing” refers to salvation. To “kiss the Son” is to be reconciled to God and to possess eternal life and the blessings of the age to come.

A blessing is promised to rulers and all those who put their trust in him. Trust here is more than an occasional glance toward heaven, but a genuine commitment to trust and obey. “In God we Trust,” is our nation’s motto. Oh, that it would be more than mere words. Oh, that we might

acknowledge there is only one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

The schism between the United States and Russia or between Hamas and Israel are the result of nations rejecting God's Law-order. The solution between the United States and Russia and between Gaza and Israel is for all parties to "kiss the Son." There is peace at the cross. If Jews and Gentiles can find peace at the cross, so can Arabs and Jews, Americans and Russians.

Before us is the reason for all political conflict in the world today, and the solution to every political problem known to man in seed form. The problems are not political, but spiritual; likewise, the solution is not political diplomacy or war, but confession of and surrender to the Son. Kiss the Son and be reconciled to God.

Source: Stockton, (2015). "Towards Exegetical Eschatology"

BOOK ONE (PSALMS 3-41)

Psalm 41 ends with "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen!"



Psalm 3 - Enemies Rising

A Morning Prayer



If you feel like you are facing impossible odds and that your enemies are stronger than death, you are not alone.

There was a day in David's life he didn't have the strength of a pretzel.

With enemies rising, he could have easily drifted into a sea of despair.

How did he survive the flood of negative reports?

What should we do when we are overwhelmed with adversity and our enemies are stronger than steel?

Before us is a morning prayer that reveals the key to overcoming the spirit of gloom that seeks to rob us of strength for the day.

Historical Background to the Psalm

Psalm 3:1-8 A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his son[1].

The background of this insightful psalm is the civil war between David and his rebel son, Absalom. It was composed during the king's hasty flight from Jerusalem down to the Jordan Valley. His small entourage scrambled to flee the capital city and every face bore witness to the distress. In his flight, David received all kinds of negative reports of Absalom's *coup d'état* and military advancement on the palace. The reports were real and serious.

This is a morning prayer; i. e. it instructs us on how to handle fears that trumpet our doom. Breathing out prayer, David penned this cry for relief that we might know how to pray at the beginning of a day filled with gray clouds and pending disaster.

Multiplication of Adversaries

1:1 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

Overwhelmed with the numerous, hostile forces arrayed against him, David's fears scrambled like rabbits for a place to hide. The sheer numbers of Absalom's loyalists and size of his rebel army knocked the wind out of King David. In a state of shock at how quickly the nation he had fought so hard to save from surrounding nations deserted him, David moaned silent prayers to the LORD.

Issues were complex: David's sin; God's discipline; a struggling nation; and, a rebel son. Not only did David have enemies, the chief enemy was a son whom he loved. Who can understand the twisted grief and fatherly love strangling David's heart during the Absalom Revolt?

Furthermore, the fickle crowds adored the young royal. Like the modern day media, the Jerusalem Journal unleashed its bitter invectives against the aging king while touting the praises of the populist prince.

As David faced internal and external enemies — personal, national, and international, the believer also has many adversaries.

There are times in life when Christians awake to strange bedfellows: a Judas in the form of a traitor, political rivals, narcissistic neighbors, or adversaries in the press . . . miscreant State agencies that have turned loses their minions of injustice to capture the believer in a some legal net . . . or maybe jealous church members who have turned into malicious gossip.

And, if this is not enough, the Christian fights the world, the flesh, and the Devil. At times, the battle seems overwhelming . . . even impossible.

3:2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.[2]

As David was fleeing from Absalom, couriers arrived with many negative reports about the size of the rebel army and popularity of the uprising. The reports exaggerated the strength of the revolt and cast gloom on any political survival. His hair turned gray.

Even his closest advisors felt David's cause was lost. Not only did David feel like God had forsaken him, his friends confirmed the cynical voices screaming within his doubting heart. No miracles should be expected! The nation was hopelessly divided. Hostiles abounded. We're all going to die shouted the voice within. This was psychological warfare as the cannons of hopelessness blasted the fortress of David's soul.

Likewise, we need to realize that being victorious in the midst of so much opposition starts with winning the psychological battle. How often do we wake up and hear the cannon fire of thundering doom announce our defeat?

The enemy uses psyops against us launching propaganda artillery shells to cave our confidence in Christ. There are days when duty tastes like chalk, and the base drum of disaster rattles our faith.

When these storm clouds of hopelessness rain despair on our soul, we need to realize the psychological warfare is part of the enemies' strategy to defeat us.

“God has not given us the Spirit of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7).

We dare not look at circumstances or listen to the inner voices of melancholy, but look to God and listen ONLY to His Word.

Meeting with the Lord

3:3-4 But thou, O LORD, art a shield[3] for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill[4]. Selah.

The term “but thou” (atah) is emphatic in Hebrew. In the midst of the spurious rumors that prophesied David's doom, he reminded himself with vigorous faith that God is his shield and glory — the One who infuses steel strength into his soul. In David's core, he believed God is his Protector and Provider. So, he prayed . . . oh, how he must have prayed!

While fleeing, David muttered out a prayer the best he could. It wasn't long or poetic, but it was genuine. The answer did not come immediately. He learned later, after the crisis, that God had

answered his plea on the day of his prayer. The answer came from His holy hill. Both David's throne and God's throne were in Jerusalem. And, while David had lost his throne, *God had not lost His!!* He was at work restraining the powers of the coup d'etat.

We need to keep in mind, in the midst of the upheavals in life, God never ceases to be sovereign. He can act to help us . . . if we are in touch with him . . . if we believe His Word and not the traitorous voices within!

Much Rest and Safety

3:5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me[5].

Despite being battered emotionally from all the negative reports about revolution, and despite having to feel his way through the darkness during his day of flight, David was able to sleep—and to sleep well.

The confidence that God was in control of his imperfect, flawed, embattled life, enabled him to commit his defense to God and to sleep through the first terrible night. David was not a perfect man with a perfect walk, but he served a gracious, supporting, perfect God.

Mounting Confidence

3:6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. [6]

David now asserts the lesson he learned. He reflected on how his soul had been battered by the barrage of negative reports and how his heart was pierced by arrows of fear. Prayer answered, David resolves to never again let fear invade the fortress of his soul. David, with his talons of faith sunk deep into the character of the LORD, makes a choice: "I will **not** be afraid!"

The battle on the inside is often worse than the battle on the outside. Like David, we need to revisit our faith and to make a choice. *What are we going to believe:* our inner fears or the promises of God?

Rather than give into fear and the inner voices that prophesize defeat, we need to examine the heart of God, pray, and commit what we can't control to the One Who controls all things.

Having prayed, we get off our knees, and restfully go about our day's duties.

Mammoth Certainty

3:7-8 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.[7]

With enemies rising, David blew the trumpet and called God to "Arise"—thus the reason for this psalm. Though David prayed and God answered his prayer, his conflict with Absalom did not end immediately. He continued to pray for deliverance knowing that ultimate deliverance came from the Lord.

“Thou has broken (shabar) the teeth” is a Piel Perfect expressing intensity. Breaking an arm is a horrible fate, but knocking out one’s teeth is the worst possible kind of fortune. In the past tense, David speaks as if the bone-breaking defeat of his enemies is a sure thing.

David ends with a benediction asking the Lord to bless His people. “Yeshua” is the word for “salvation” in this text. The precious name of “Jesus” comes from this Hebrew term. Man’s hope must be weaned from false hope, and properly placed in the One and Only Sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ — the covenant keeping Savior of the Old Testament.

David’s prayer for deliverance was not self-centered. He did not throw himself a pity party with himself as the only guest. He looked outward, not inward. He got off his knees *and determined to be a blessing to others!* His continuance as king was necessary for the benefit of the nation. History proved this to be true. Likewise, all prayer should have as its end a blessing for the people of God.

A note: Depressed people are unbelieving people trapped in a web of self-centeredness with spiders of melancholy sucking out hope in the heart. These folks can’t seem to believe God’s Word nor do they take a genuine interest in others. They are stuck in a web of doubt concentrated on their own daily troubles. They have a unique ability to discount the suffering of others . . . and are completely deficient in concern for other people. David refused to visit this island! He did what he could, even in his suffering, to be a blessing to his people. And, so will every man of God.)

In conclusion, when you see enemies rising, pray this prayer. It is a morning prayer designed to free you from the bondage of fear. Sink your talons into the promises of the Lord. Believe God’s goodness . . . even though you may not feel his goodness.

Once prayed, leave the results with God. Get off your knees and go to work being a blessing to others. Call friends. Serve a neighbor. Help your spouse. Be a blessing to someone, everyday!

[1] Ax^ar>b’B (*Qal, infinitive construct, 3rd, m., s*) “while or in fleeing”

ynEÛP.mi = “from the face of” Absalom his son.

WBâr;-hm’ (*Qal, perfect, 3rd p., s.*) “how increased are yr_c’ my enemies”

~yBi^ar;÷ Adjective plural = “how much” ~ymiîq’ (Qal ptc.) “increased” yl’(l’ “upon me”

[2] ~yBir; “how much” ~yrlám.ao (Qal ptc., m., pl.) “are saying to my soul, no ht’[l’Wvy>) salvation to him in Elohim.” David is surrounded by negativity.

[3] “And you, LORD, *are* a !gEâm’ shield ydI_]B about or upon me, ydI^aAbK my glory/abundance/wealth ~yrlimeW (Hiphil ptc.) raising/exalting yvi(aro my head.” Note David’s positive view of God (a shield), the one who raises him up.

[4] “My voice to the LORD ar’_q.a, (Qal, imperf., 1st, s.) I cry, ynInE“[Y:]w: (Waw conseq., imperf., 3rd, s.) and he heard me Avâd>q’ rh:ßme from his holy mountain. Positive answer to prayer.

[5] “ yTib.k;^av’ laid myself down and hn”v”iyaiñw (Qal, waw conseq., imperf. 1st, s., paragogic or emphatic heh) I slept! ytiAc+yqih (Hiphil, perfect, 1st, s.) I awaken for the LORD ynIkE)m.s.yI (Qal, imperf., 3rd s., 1st suffix) will sustain me.

[6] ar’yaiâ-al{ (Qal, imperfect, 1st s.) I will not be afraid when ten thousand/myriads people which/that bybi^as’÷ around Wtv’ä (Qal, perfect, 3rd, pl.) set themselves/put themselves/ around or upon me. David’s future emotional application—No fear, no matter what!

[7] hm’ÛWq« (Qal, imp. 3rd, s., paragogic heh) Rise up, LORD, save me, Elohim, t’yKiähi-yK (Hiphil, perf., 2nd, m., s.) you smite yxil,_ yb;äy>ao-lK’-ta all my enemies upon the yNEßvi tooth/cheek, ~y[iäv’r> the wicked T’r>B:)vi (Piel, perfect, 2nd, s.) you smash.

Psalm 4 - The Source of Shalom

Enlarged by Distress



Psalm 4:1 To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm of David.

A “Neginoth” is a song intended to be played on a musical instrument.

So glorious was Israel’s joy, they had to continually create new songs to express the melody plying in their heart. The psalm is about the Source of Shalom, or finding peace in the midst of a storm.

His Address to God

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

This song was not created by a psalmist sailing on calm seas or lounging upon beds of ease. He knew the grief of a failed harvest and the sharp criticism of proud and wealthy men. He learned that God used trials not to diminish him, but to develop him. There is something about troubles that can make a man better and not bitter.

“Hear me” is an imperative, the mood of prayer. Of first concern is, “Hear me when I call!”

Prayer is useless if God doesn’t hear, and God does not hear the rebel’s prayer (Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:2). Only righteous men have a hearing in God’s Court.

David knew he had a right to be there, but he also knew that he had no innate qualities that would attract God to himself. God was the Source of his preferential standing. All men are sinners. But, those who believe in Christ gain a right standing before the thrice holy God and are declared “holy and blameless” in his sight (Ephesians 1:3 ,4). Whatever goodness, holiness, or knowledge I possess comes from You, O God.

Believe it, enjoy it, and claim it!

The term “enlarged” is a term of deliverance. It means “to expand” or “to relieve pressure” or “to grow or be enlarged.” At the beginning of his day, David felt an elephant sitting on his chest. At the conclusion of his day, David reflected on his progress. He realized that God was at work relieving the pressure. The trials of the day improved the man. They were given as gift, not to harm him, but to help him.

But, more needed to be done! He pleaded two more causes: have mercy upon me, and hear my evening prayer.

His Address to Men

2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.

The psalmist now has a message for his enemies. Before speaking to men, David first spoke to God. David's stress had its source in the "sons of men." His salvation had its source in the LORD God.

As a king, David had political adversaries. No doubt he felt the deep criticism of his administration from politicians, the aristocracy in the nation. Everyone was an expert on what the king should be doing. Surrounded by godless, self-centered, narcissistic people, David charged them with three violations of God's law:

First, they turned his glory into shame. Possibly, the political critic sought to destroy his reputation; diminish his holdings; and to deface his property.

Second, these men loved vanity; that is, having no heart for God or virtue, they entertained murderous plots, plunder, and the pursuit of pleasure.

Third, the sons of men sought after leasing. The term "leasing" (kazab) refers to envious schemes designed to deprive men of their property in violation of the Tenth Commandment.

David found himself surrounded by a trinity of evil doers: skimmers, schemers, and scammers.

Three commands were broken: slander is a form of murder; love of vanity is idolatry; and, "leasing" includes Machiavellian commercial tactics -- a violation of the Command "Thou shall not covet." "Selah" means to "stop and think about this."

Schemers are on every street corner and in every government office. They are clearly exposed by David's question; that is, the weeds of greed and envy were deeply rooted in the hearts of the shrewd and cunning.

His Address to Himself

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

"Know" is an imperative; that is, "Get to know this!" The LORD distinguishes between the righteous and the unrighteous.

In contrast to the arachnids among men who spin their webs of deceit in order to trap the innocent in their commercial schemes are those whom God has set apart for His special delight. While the Lord is displeased with the opportunists, He takes pleasure in His elect. You are his special treasure, and he who touches you touches God's property. Because of this, God's man expresses confidence that the Lord will hear his prayers.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

David offers his counsel to his people in song.

In the LXX (Septuagint), "stand in awe" is translated, "Be angry and sin not" — quoted by Paul in Ephesians 4:26. The word "stand in awe" means "to tremble, quiver, or be agitated." Too many touch sin and tremble not.

The trouble with the cosmopolitan men is a lack of the fear of God. If men do not contemplate the power of the Almighty, wisdom escapes them. For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. When men are not afraid to sin, trouble lurks around every corner.

David advises men to be silent and to engage in quiet contemplation about the Lord. Apparently, the scarcity of the fear of God was due to busyness and thoughtlessness.

In modern times, the new priest of society are psychologists whose main goal is to train people how to have peace while rebelling against God's law. David's advice is "sin not." Modern secular men do not believe there is any such thing as sin, so they advise youth to be free and to sin without feeling guilt. They tell them they are still a good person even though their acts are despicable – a belief that originated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

David continues his counsel to men and urges them to walk on the narrow, road of righteousness; that is, to take the high road of goodness, and to avoid the low road of lewdness. He wants God-fearing people to trust God, and to obey His law-word.

"There is a way that seems right unto man." (Proverbs 24:12)

Most men attend Sham University majoring in the vice of "MY WAYISM." It is called liberalism and relativism. There is no black and white at SU, all things are gray. In these halls of lower learning there are no absolutes. Everything is relative.

Since there is no consensus on right and wrong, the humanistic man cannot agree upon what is evil or define what is good. Pluralism and confusion mark the culture.

Multiculturalism is touted as a strength instead of a weakness to overcome. Thus, the totalitarian State arises to keep peace among a divided people. Only God can define what is right. David encourages the nation to walk in the revelation of God's righteousness; that is, choose His law and reject man's multi-ethical universe.

"Trust in the Lord" stands in juxtaposition to trust in self or the pompous State (Psalm 118:8-9).

If men would obey the preceding verse, they would realize they are sinners in need of a Savior. When the Hebrews sinned, they brought a lamb to the altar — a righteous sacrifice. Likewise, God has provided a Lamb sufficient to cleanse the greatest sinner. Come to Calvary and behold the Lamb. Trust in Him and the treasures of salvation will be yours. At the end of the day, offer the sacrifice of praise (Psalm 50:23).

His Second Address to God

6 There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

There are many voices that challenge the benefit of being a Christian. Surely, it is easier to walk by sight than by faith; to pursue the material than to seek the spiritual; to believe in man than to believe in God. Man's thoughts are attracted to earth rather than heaven; to the works of men rather than to the works of God.

Men would rather work than believe; build their wealth than to grow in wisdom; to feed their feelings than to feed their faith. To kings, money is the answer to all things (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

But, to God's man the key to life is the sunshine of His favor, "the light of Thy countenance upon us." (See Numbers 6:26).

The smile of God upon us is better than piles of cash around us. Better to have His sunbeams than to have gold hidden in the shadows of a vault.

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

All of man's energies and pleasures are wrapped up in pursuit of the material. There is nothing that brings more happiness to a man than a full harvest, a profitable business, or a burgeoning bank account. Prosperity warms the heart of man like the morning Sun; but, poverty unleashes the terrors of the night.

The psalmist shares a joy that is greater than a farmer's harvest. Many a saint has looked at an empty flour barrel and shouted, "Praise God."

Spurgeon said, "Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn."

A sip of sweet Jesus is better than a jug of honeyed wine. If I owned the world, but have not Christ, I am bankrupt; If my field is fallow, but have the Savior, I have a feast.

The psalmist is not saying his godly ones do not need corn and wine. Rather, he is glorying in the root as well as the fruit. God, not man, is the source of blessings. God's grace, not man's sweat, is the first principle of abundance.

8 I will both lay me down in peace(shalom), and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Men do not sleep well without their wealth. A drop in the stock market; an unexpected expense; and a declining bank account is the cause of many restless nights.

One does not need shekels to have shalom. The Christian knows he can find peace with only pennies in his pocket.

The psalmist sees the Lord as his **only** (badad) source of security. "You alone (badad) make me dwell in safety. " "dwell" is a Hiphil causitive verb. See "alone" in Deuteronomy 32:12.

Thus, the psalmist finds his source of shalom in the LORD. His peace in the midst of his personal storm is anchored to the promises of God.

The pragmatic man finds solace in corn, wine, and wealth; but, the man of faith finds solace in his relationship with the God who enables men to produce corn, wine, and wealth.

Heaven, not earth, is the source of shalom— peace comes by Jesus Christ and not by acts of the State (Acts 10:36).

Acts 10:36 The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:

Psalm 5 - Destroy the Wicked

A Morning Prayer for Deliverance



This is a psalm of David and there is no reason to doubt his authorship.

The Psalmist's Pleading for God to Hear His Prayer.

**Psalm 5:1 To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth, A Psalm of David.
Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.**

“Give ear” is a Hiphil imperative — a plea to the LORD to “bend his ear,” and to cause Himself to hear the voice of the plaintiff. God’s attention is the first concern of this litigant.

The noun “meditations” (hagiyy) refers to the inner groans, whispers, moans, and musings of a man. The noun appears to be related to the verb “meditate” (hagah) in Psalm 1:2 which refers to the “roar of a lion” in Isaiah 31:4.

Hear, distinguish, recognize, and consider my pleas, my moans, and my roaring. Hear my inarticulate groans that I can’t put into words. I know you hear prayers; but Lord, hear my prayer!

If my prayer is right, honor it; if my prayer is deficient, correct it. “Hear me, O Lord, or I die” is the heart cry of every saint.

He calls this prayer his “meditation” to convey that it was not his wordsmithing, but the burdens and the affections of his soul that will come before to the throne.

The spirit of prayer is better than the ritual of prayer. The spirit of the prayer is better than the words of prayer. It is not one’s eloquence in prayer, but the genuineness of prayer that is of chief concern.

2 Harken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

Again, the concern is that the Judge will honor his prayer . . . not to his uttered words, but to his incoherent cry — that deep, heartfelt sense of anxiety that men often feel — a desperation so entangle with self-concern and the glory of God that one cannot unravel the painful knots into intelligible strings of thought.

David isn’t looking to men or to his own abilities for assistance, but to God alone. God, not man; God, not government is his object of worship. As long as he breathes, he will present his needs to his Protector and Provider.

Because God is David’s Creator, King, Master, and Lord, he has a legal right to come into the throne room to present his petition.

3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

David will not be silent; he will not be too busy; he will not be lazy; He will not be mute. Vigilant, he wills to reach God with his morning prayer. Before the duties of the day begin, he talks to God before he talks to men.

David wants the dew of heaven to fall upon his field before the harsh Sun bleaches his crops. He wants the morning showers of grace to settle on him before the mid-day heat saps his strength. He wants personal peace before engaging in public battles. He wants shalom with God before he faces conflicts with man; he wants provision from His Provider before men make their demands upon him. He looks up before he looks outward. He looks up, not inward.

Like a farmer, he plants his seed and expects a harvest. What he expects, he inspects.

Spurgeon said prayer without expectation is like hunting with a dead dog, and prayer without preparation is like hawking with a blind falcon.

What kind of farmer plants his grain, and then fails to return to check the growth of the kernel? Let us not be like turtles that leave their eggs on the beach to hatch. Look up. Look around. Look for evidence of God at work.

His Pleading Against His Enemies

4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

David is not naïve. He realizes his day will be filled with conflict — turmoil caused by personal enemies — clashes with men who are also enemies of God — strife within that is contrary to the law of the LORD God.

Jesus called them “tares” and “goats” (Mt. 13; 25) Paul called them “Jews” (1 Thess. 2:14); we call them “liberals,” “democrats,” “Zionists,” and “globalists.”

David advanced his most powerful argument to His Commander. My enemies are also Your enemies — enemies who take pleasure in wickedness — enemies to whom you have issued a death warrant.

When I pray against my adversaries, I pray against the sinful energies which you also hate. The things I pray against are the very things that offend Your holiness. If You, Lord, have no pleasure in wickedness, how can I be content to be controlled by evil at work in others? Men may kneel before tyrants and strike a peace accord with agents of the Devil, but I will make no peace with evil . . . or evil men!

5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

The word “stand” is a Piel verb implying intense, certain action.

The word “workers” means “makers” of iniquity; that is, God hates all those who manufacture evil . . . deception . . . lies . . . and, schemes to defraud. He is probably referring to the politicians and the wealthy elite of his day.

He does not say here that he hates iniquity. Rather, the Spirit says **God hates the workers of iniquity**. Yes, there are men that God hates. Hate is a virtue of the LORD God. Praise the Lord!

Spurgeon said, "A little sin is great folly, and the greatest of all folly is great sin."

Fools are small men with great sins . . . and often in high places in positions of power. Believing there is no god, they know little restraint in their folly.

Fools may gain the affection of men, but they have lost affiliation with God.

The sophist that thinks God is all sugar and no salt and doesn't have both oars in the water.

Modern apostates teach that God is love and that he loves everybody—even idolaters, murderers, pimps, baby butchers, sodomites, schemers, blasphemers, and thieves. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Four errors are hereby exposed:

- God loves everyone
- God loves everyone equally
- God hates the sin but loves the sinner
- God does not hate anyone.

To correct errors, consider the following: God hates at least one person (Esau: Malachi 1:2, 3; Romans 9:13) and God hates wicked deeds (Deuteronomy 32:19; Psalm 7:11; 10:3.; Proverbs 6:16; 22:14; Jeremiah 44:4; Zechariah 8:17).

The theology that God loves all men equally, and that all are going to heaven is as naive of as possessing a pet rattlesnake. While God generally loves the whole world and offers his love to sinners, He does not love all men specifically, nor does he offer the rebellious a place in His house. God forbid!

It would be better to eat at a Hindu steakhouse than be in a church that believes in love and not hate; that has exchanged truth for tolerance.

Could a righteous man tolerate a heaven populated with the likes of Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, Pol Pot, Billy the Kid, and Black Bart?

That Christians are to love the sinner and hate the sin is a misguided pundit.

Sin is not like the wind existing outside of man. Evil is not in the environment, it is in men. Sin is in the sinner and sin does not exist apart from the sinner.

The capacity to hate properly is an attribute of God! But, His ability to hate does not diminish His power to love.

While the Holy God hates those who manufacture evil, He also condemns frivolous, fleshly, petty, causeless hatred, of which many need to be redeemed (Titus 3:3).

God loves what is good and He hates what is evil. He also calls us to love what is good and hate what is evil. But, is it possible to love what is good without hating what is evil? It is not desirable or even possible to hate sin and not hate a person bound to it.

While we are called to love our personal enemies, we are not commanded to love criminals. Hating God's enemies and sponsors of evil (professional crooks, con-artists, and cheats that work in government) is Biblical.

Something is wrong with us if we do not hate sin, wickedness, the Devil, and those who defy God and His law. Otherwise, our soul shrivels to be "two-sizes too small."

Billy Sunday punched it:

"Listen, I'm against sin. I'll kick it as long as I've got a foot, I'll fight it as long as I've got a fist, I've butt it as long as I've got a head, and I'll bite it as long as I've got a tooth. And when I'm old, fistless, footless, and toothless, I'll gum it till I go home to glory and it goes home to perdition."

6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing; the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

The term "leasing" (kazab) refers to falsehood, lies, and deception. The modern day media that spins every story so that it conforms to the leftist agenda comes to mind.

Targeted for destruction are liars and schemers (speak leasing), bloody men (murderers, assassins), and defrauders (deceitful, covetous men).

These are men who violate the First-Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, and Tenth Commandment.

The verb "will abhor" is a Piel verb adding an emphatic emphasis that God has an intense plan of destruction in store for these professional lawbreakers.

He reasons God must protect him from his enemies, because his enemies are also God's enemies.

The men David resists were professional schemers—those who rebelled against God's law . . . exploited fellow citizens . . . and defrauded neighbors of their property.

"You will destroy" them, reasons David. Why not act now by delivering me from their snares? Your deliverance will be consistent with your intention to destroy "all the workers of iniquity."

7 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

Having described the fate of the wicked, David now articulates the fate of the righteous. Because God has favored David, conviction that he shares the destiny of the sons of God fill his heart.

David announced, "I will come into your house." Not because of his own worthiness, but because of the greatness of God's mercies.

David knows he is not better than other men. His place in God's House is due to the grace of His Host, and not to the grace at work in his own heart. David possesses a multitude of sins, but God possesses a multitude of mercy. David is a great sinner, but he has a great Savior.

"In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple" -- The temple, not the military, was the hope of Israel!

The term "worship" (shachah) means "to bow down" to one who has authority. David is not referring to singing in a choir, but surrendering to the rule and reign of the LORD God as a soldier of Christ.

If David's faith was the mercy of God, David's fear was an offended God.

A provoked God was a greater threat to peace than standing armies. The fear of offending his LORD caused David to live conservatively. He knew he was one of God's children, but as God's child, he did not presume upon that love . . . upon His forgiveness . . . "turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness" (Jude 1:4).

His Pleading for Guidance

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

The term "lead" (nachah) is first used in connection with Eliezar who traveled hundreds of miles through foreign lands in search of a bride for Isaac among Abraham's relatives. Having found the daughter of Bethuel on his journey, he immediately attributed the success to the hand of God: "I being in the way, the LORD led (nachah) me to the house of my master's brethren" (Genesis 24:27).

David pleads his cause: "Lead me, O LORD." The verb "lead" is an imperative . . . a command . . . the voice of prayer. The subject of the verb "lead" (na'tah) is "You," and the object is "me." His concern is not that he would make good choices, but that God would guide him through his day of conflict.

The phrase "in thy righteousness" would include law, ethics, goodness, truth, and prosperity.

The word "straight" (yasar) in Hebrew parallelism extends the meaning of "righteousness:" that is, make my way clear, smooth, level, without the twists and bends that lead to confusion.

You led Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, lead me! As a Good Shepherd who "restoreth my soul . . . lead me in the paths of righteousness for Thy name's sake." Don't be silent. Don't be aloof. Don't leave me to my own reasoning. Life is too complicated, and I am not that talented: "Lead me!"

Show me the way through this corrupt wasteland we call "life." The road is crooked and filled with pot holes. It is a briar patch loaded with thorns. Clouds block the sun. Darkness rules the day. Cold shivers the bones. Robbers abound. Liars are perched on every corner hawking their

wares. Men hell-bent on controlling the world want to control me . . . register me . . . manipulate me . . . steal from me . . . and even to kill me.

My eyes are weak and I am frail. "Make thy way straight before my face," prays the psalmist. Make it level. Make it smooth. Make it right. Make it balanced and fruitful and good. Make my way straight.

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.

David now introduces the characters on this road: the shysters, chisellers, scammers, flaw-yers, pimps, perverts, and politicians.

The word "faithfulness" (kuwn) is negated by the adverb "no." The word (faithfulness "refers to stability, fixed principles, steadfastness, firmness, trustworthiness, and that which is stable. A modern synonym for "faithfulness" is conservatism. The opposite of "faithfulness" is liberal, progressive, relative, revolution, and the promotion of "change."

"A great democracy has got to be conservative or it will cease to be reliable and trustworthy." (A corrective to Teddy Roosevelt's progressive philosophy).

"A country that abandons God's law-order will prove itself untrustworthy and promote distrust among the nations."

"A nation that promotes change / liberalism becomes unpredictable and unreliable."

"A society that forsakes God's law will change for the worse and end up in the graveyard of the nations."

"Promote moral change and fools will love you."

"Practice faithfulness to God's law-order and you will earn the respect and trust of people."

I need to be delivered from neighborly liars, religious liars, business liars, educated liars, media liars, Hollywood liars, medical liars, and political liars. "Lead me, O LORD!"

Three of the four descriptions refer to their lips.

First, their mouth is described as unfaithful. The word faithful means "fixed" or "firm." It refers to pillars upon which a house is built (Jud. 16:29); that is, their words are **not** "faithful," but are founded on fraud, fickleness, and faithlessness.

Second, the term "wicked" refers to men with evil desires and selfish ambitions. Wickedness bubbles like a witch's brew in a kettle at the core of their being.

Third, their throat as an open sepulcher full of outhouse rot. Every time they open their mouth the foul odors of profanity and perversions burst forth to disturb, defile, and deceive the listener.

Fourth, when they speak, they cast a spell . . . a spin on facts . . . an attractive lie. They “flatter” with their tongue; that is, they are experts at telling you what you want to hear, but the outcome is always death (Proverbs 8:36). Life is hard enough without covetous monsters eyeing the righteous as a meal upon which to feast. But, it is even harder when truth is covered under a table of lies.

We need to be delivered from neighborly liars, religious liars, business liars, educated liars, media liars, Hollywood liars, medical liars, and political liars.

10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

The verb “destroy” is a Hiphil (causative) imperative verb in the emphatic position. It refers to “guilt” and the punishment rebels deserve; that is, punish them as their sin deserves, O God.

David is not addressing the flaws, mistakes, or peccadillos of men, but of political leaders who willfully, maliciously, and callously violate God’s law-order; that injure their fellow men; that steal property and divide families.

David is asking God to pronounce them guilty and to punish them accordingly . . . that is, to apply the death penalty to these political outlaws.

In modern times, it has become posh to think of love as the answer to all things. It is not. Love is only part of the answer. When love is not guided by law, love loses its discrimination of the intelligent use of things. True love forgives a multitude of sins, but it cannot tolerate the viral spread of evil.

Justice is the other half of the answer to corruption at work in a nation.

In this case, David pleads that God would remove His enemies. The removal, and, or death of the wicked ends a political crisis and restores health to society.

David was once a prince in training and then an appointed king. His enemies were political: politicians . . . wealthy nobles . . . judges . . . lawmakers . . . media pundits . . . elders . . . governors . . . and rulers.

Because God’s enemies sold themselves to the Devil, David does not pray for their conversion.

The answer to corruption is not conversion but condemnation followed by execution.

David prays that the Lord would raise His gavel and sentence his enemies¹ to death—now, in this life. Why? Because David is hateful? No! But, because He wants to restore health and integrity to the nation.

¹ Spurgeon: “Against thee:” not against me. If they were my enemies I would forgive them, but I cannot forgive Thine. We are to forgive our enemies, but God’s enemies it is not in our power to forgive.

His Pleading for God's People

11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

David has a prayer for the wicked, but he also has a plea for the righteous -- a prayer for the protection, preservation, and prosperity of God's people.

While David prays for condemnation of the wicked in his nation, he also prays for the commendation of the righteous in the nation — misery for the corrupt; but music (joy) for the upright.

The wicked often rise to power. Their laws and selfish ambitions often prevail in political affairs—and the godly suffer.

David prayed that joy might be restored to those trusting² in the Lord. The righteous are not smart enough to avoid all the clever schemes that wicked politicians plot against men. The sheep need a Shepherd to defend and to protect them. Joy comes when the humble recognize the hand of God in their daily affairs.

When the wicked are destroyed, the righteous are delighted. When the wicked groan, the righteous are glad. When madmen die, melodies strike a chord in the hearts of good men.

12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless (Piel) the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass (Piel) him as with a shield.

He ends this psalm with a promise: The Lord will bless the righteous—sometimes in this life, but surely in the life to come.

His confidence is astounding. The psalmist employs two Piel verbs: “He will,” and “He will bless” the righteous. His blessing knows no limits, no depths, and no fetters. The godly are the crown jewels over which he sets a jealous guard.

More accurately, the text says He crowns the righteous with a helmet that not only adorns, but protects. Forensic righteousness is available to all who trust Christ as their Savior (Romans 3:21).

“Thou compass him” is also a Piel verb implying intense protection: the Lord not only helmets his soldier, but armors the whole man. Nothing shall come into the life of the righteous that cannot work for good (Romans 8:28).

Not all that comes into the life of a righteous man is good, but God is at work, even in the midst of corruption, to work good for His people.

² The word “trust” in this text means “to take refuge in.” The idea is that of a little bird seeking shelter from the storm in a vast tree.

Psalm 6 - A Prayer for the Sick

Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak



Here is a wonderful psalm to consider when one is physically and spiritually ill.

Every word in the hymn is a powerful anti-oxidant that restores health to the soul.

We are being lied to. If you are looking for reality, you won't find it at parties and parades. Reality is found on battlefields, hospitals, and old folks homes. The truth is that we live in a world stalked by angels of death. There are no safe places, safe spaces, or safe ages.

"Be safe" is a utopian myth . . . an ideal of the snowflake generation. People get sick and they suffer. Some survive to live another day; others die by the hands of the Grim Reaper.

The joy of this psalm is that we are permitted to gaze into the heart of a sick saint, and see him rise from his bed of tears a new man with a renewed commitment to fight the Lord's battles.

Psalm 6:1 <To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,

Though there is a placement issue regarding the inscription of this psalm, we believe that it was delivered to the chief Musician to compose a melody fitting with the themes of grief, repentance, and assurance of answered prayer.

According to Albert Barnes, the phrase "upon Sheminith" occurs here for the first time, and modifies the meaning of the title. The word Sheminith – שמינית *shemînyîth* – means properly "the eighth," and corresponds exactly to our word "octave," the eighth. It appears the psalms began in the minor key on the lower notes on the scale to enhance the gravity of the theme and the triumphant chorus at the end of the psalm (8-10).

This is the first penitential psalm which fits into the family of Penitential Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143.

Before us is a frail man burdened down with his sins. Frail in body and soul, the psalmist cries out to God for mercy and relief from the rod of His chastisement.

In the first seven verses, we hear the groans of a troubled and grieved heart. In verses 8-10, the psalmist lifts his head with confidence that his penitent prayer has been heard.

The key changes from the minor key to a major key; from a funeral hymn with soft tones and long notes to a military march with in-step sounds of triumph and glory.

In the first seven verses we are attracted to a master violinist drawing us in emotionally to feel the pain of the psalmist's crisis; in verses 8-10, we hear an army marching band, blazing trumpets, and the shouts of soldiers marching off to war.

A Plea for God to Hear his Prayer

A Psalm of David.> O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

David cries out to the LORD, the covenant-keeping God, who was pleased to tabernacle among men.

The personal name of God, the Tetragrammaton (LORD), is used seven times in this hymn. The LORD is David's God, and David is His troubled child.

The Lord Jesus taught us to pray "Our Father Who art in heaven . . ." Who disciplines all His children with words and sometimes with a whip (Hebrews 12).

Conscious of his sins, the psalmist feels like he deserves the rod of reproof—not for punishment, but for instruction and sanctification. Pots and pans are cleansed by wool and brush; the soul by the washing of the blood (salvation) and with the water of the Word (sanctification); and, the body by fasting, detoxification, rest, and restoring balance.

The petitioner did not rebel against the rod of God's correction (Micah 6:9); nor does he plead that God should abandon His fatherly duty to discipline His children. He understood the LORD's greatest saints are forged on His anvil by hammer and heat.

Rather, he prays for tenderness — that the rod would not turn into a sword that severs and slays; that God would remember mercy in the mess and misery of His discipline. He wants to be corrected, but not crushed; improved, but not impoverished; better, but not bitter. If God rebukes us because of our sins, this is good; but, if He shames and humiliates us because of our foolishness, we cower in despair.

Thus, we pray that if God's rebukes **cannot** be removed, that at least they would be delivered in tender love and not in terrifying anger.

"A lark! A spree! It's very clear to see that. A Spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.

The medicine go down-wown." (Mary Poppins lyric)

A Portrait of his Suffering

2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

The psalmist knows he deserves a thrashing, but he prays for a magnanimous measure of mercy. This is the right way to pray. All saints clothe themselves in humility knowing they are less than what they ought to be.

This is a prayer for tender warmth because he feels terribly cold. He describes his crisis as vexed. “vexed” means “feeble,” “alarmed,” and “terrified.”

He needed *rapha* (healing) from *Jehovah-Rapha* because a health challenge chilled him to the bones.

Possibly, the psalmist was old and his frailty reached the skeleton on which the whole of his being depended. He feared being cracked and crippled by the chastisement he deserved.

Spurgeon noted that David did not seek God’s left hand of justice, but his right hand of mercy.

“Oh, Lord, correct me, but crush me not. Help me, but don’t hurt me! Steer this ship away from the rocks and reefs. Trim this tree, but not to a stump; shear this lamb, but carefully; weed this field, but leave the wheat; launder this garment, but not with lye; belt this child if You must, but bruise me not. “

Calvin’s favorite exclamation in Latin was, “*Domine usquequo*” — “*O Lord, how long?*” This is the cry of all the saints under the altar where minutes seem like hours; hours like days; and days like weeks: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:10).

Thus, we pray, “O, Lord, how long must I be sick; be poor; or, be on a broken vessel without a mast on a windy sea?”

3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

The reader should notice the two pressing evils that afflicted the psalmist.

First, David was physically ill and spiritually infirm. The weight of his own sins and his physical malady weighed heavy upon him.

Second, the spirit of the age and the sins of his contemporaries rubbed his soul raw (6:7).

The psalmist prays for personal healing, not just the removal of the symptoms, but for a total cure of his spirit, soul, and body. His troubled bones affected his soul. Likewise, a health crisis awakens our deepest fears where faith is the only antiseptic.

Quite possibly the seriousness of his sins alarmed his soul, but not only his soul, his spiritual infirmity touched the core of his being—even to the bones. When our bones are shaken, our humanity, our manhood, our total existence is threatened.

A frail body is one concern, a frail soul is quite another. A man can endure shaking bones, but not a shattered soul. There are circumstances that can wear a man down and shred him into bits and pieces. And, this fear that caused the psalmist to cry out, “Oh, LORD, how long?”

When physically ill, people will take off work to see a doctor; but, the somber truth is that when people are soul sick, they will ignore the malady and delay seeking a remedy for their spiritual infirmity. They go weeks and months without prayer, reflection, and soul searching. What we call mental illness is really the failure of men to seek God’s remedy for soul-sickness in the early stages of stress.

To the child of God, God's delays chill the soul to the core of one's being. This poor saint waited for the sun to rise and worried that he might not live to see the light of day. He longed for the warm touch of God's tender hand, but the bitter cold of night caused his bones to shiver and shudder.

His prayer reveals a whisper of hope. "Oh, Lord, how long till sunrise, till you heal, till you speak, till you guide and lead?" Though afflicted, the psalmist looks to God alone for help and healing.

4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

This saint feels like God's Dove departed from him; that the absence of God's Spirit was the cause of all his problems. The eclipse of the Son painted his life black. Ravens stalked all hope. He knew not where to look. "Return, O, Dove. Roost on my shoulder. Come back and make your home with me again," cries the psalmist.

Why should the LORD heal him and return to him? David gives two reasons: (1) the character of God, and (2) the silence of the grave.

No doubt this psalmist had days of victory and spurts of growth in holiness, but he pleads none of it. The answer is within God and His character. **It is His nature to show mercy to the contrite**: "As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy to those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:11).

The name of the LORD is mentioned seven times in this prayer. His hope is not in fickle creatures, but in his faithful Creator, the Master of the Universe. He rests his head on three pillows: (1) the pillow of God's omniscience (He knows his troubles); (2) the pillow of God's omnipotence (He is able to heal); (3) and the pillow of God's love and goodness (God will do what is best for him):

"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls *to him* in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Peter 4:19).

5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

Hearing the footsteps of the Grim Reaper with sickle in hand searching for its next victim, David trembled in fear of death.

The psalmist offered **a second reason** God should help and heal him — **the silence of the grave**. If he dies, there will be one less singer in God's choir on earth (the church militant) giving praise to the LORD — one less witness testifying to the jury of the world of the greatness of God. There are no choirs in church graveyards. An eerie silence rules the night as well as the day.

David argues, "LORD, preserve me and I will praise thee. Save me, and I will sing to thee." He reasoned with the LORD, "that if I perish, my earthly praise will cease with my passing. If I survive, I will "lift up my hands" to thee. If I live, songs of praise will flow out my grateful soul to my precious Savior.

How can God resist an argument like this?

6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

This terrified saint swims in a salty sea of tears due to his troubles. He tried to pray, but out came groans . . . and sobbing. Spurgeon called these “liquid prayers” — rivers of weeping flowing uphill to the throne of grace.

Focused on a God solution, David would not retreat from his dependence on God until He answered his prayer. “I water my couch in tears” is a future tense — a hyperbole — more of an expression of what it might be if God delayed rather than of what actually happened.

God’s people may pray, but not pout; groan, but not grumble; weep, but not whine.

7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

The psalmist describes the results of his long ordeal — “consumed with grief.” Under the chastening hand of God, He was old before his time. Wearied with weeping, his grief cut wrinkles and black circles around his eyes. His hair twisted gray; the stars and moon turned dark; the clouds returned after the rain; the keepers of the house trembled; and his strong men stooped (Ecclesiastes 12 — an allegory of old age).

One of the griefs that weighed down his soul was the work of his enemies — evil men, thieves, liars, defrauders and murderers in high places of government recruiting assassins for their cause and spreading lawlessness among men. Toxic feminists, abortionists, Sodomites, shifty politicians, corrupt judges, bully cops, lying reporters, gender-bender propagandists with tax-and-spend liberals come to mind.

Oh, that more Christians were afflicted with grief because of the sins of the age!

A Protest Against the Workers of Iniquity

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

The song changes from the minor key to the major key; from a dirge to a battle hymn.

Tears are a universal language. God heard the “eloquence of sorrow” in the psalmist’s liquid prayers. Now, he arises from his knees with a new attitude. Committed to holiness, he marches to the battlefield with commanding authority warning all his enemies, “Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity!”

Up until this verse, David pined away due to the distance between him and God. There are times to pray, and a time to practice faith; a time to weep, and a time to work. If you must offer to God liquid prayers, let them be in thimbles and not cattle tanks. Get off your bed! Walk out of your tomb! Unravel the grave clothes! Put off the sackcloth! Clean the cellar! Drive out the money changers! Adorn yourself with holy garments! Trust God anew! Face your enemies with sword in hand and chin up.

Q: How do you know when you are healthy? Answer: When you are back on the battlefield charging the enemies of the Christian faith with your sword swinging and guns blazing!

The workers of iniquity are lawless men in society encouraging the growth of big government, the capture of men under the umbrella of state control, and the spread of every vice known to man. The obstacles in the path of Christians are liars and deceivers. Know them. Confront them. Expose them. Rebuke them.

Every generation must learn war or accept chains of slavery (Judges 3:1-3). Healthy saints enter the contest to winnow the wicked and to win souls.

You will never be a victim fighting the Lord's battles. Dr. Bill Bright said he never met a discouraged witnessing Christian. "If you are not fishing, you are not following" (Marion Michaux, personal evangelist). If you are not contending, you are surrendering. If you are not protesting, you are promoting. If you are not fighting, you are retreating.

"If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or your arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen" (Samuel Adams).

9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

Knowing that he'd poured out his heart to the LORD, the psalmist arises from his knees with a confidence that God heard his prayer. If God hears your prayers, you are successful indeed.

10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

Healed and off his sick-bed, David straps on his sword and rides his mount to the battlefield eager to spill blood. Healed, he is now God's killing machine. When the giant slayer arrived on the killing fields, fear pierced the hearts of Israel's enemies.

David did not fight the air or joust with windmills. His enemies were not merely phantom spirits and vapors in the distant landscape, but flesh and blood human beings feasting under the Poisonous Tree and spreading lawlessness across the land.

Notice what health looks like when you see it. Healthy Christians have steel in their soul and garlic on their breath. They are beacons of light, ministers of mercy, bloodthirsty as vampires, abrasive as sandpaper, unyielding as an anvil, soldiers enduring hardship, warriors for the gospel, combat veterans, front-line marines protecting their families, the church, and their nation with words of truth against the evils of the age: fraud, lies, propaganda, liberalism, Sodomy, lesbianism, toxic feminism, pride, arrogance, slander, gender neutrality, theft in the name of taxation, and the total subjugation of the total man to total government (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Romans 1:21ff).

Notice the **authority** of David. He **commands** his enemies to be ashamed and vexed. His enemies are God's enemies. They are plural in number. Because of their lawlessness and naked deeds, they should be red with blush and crippled with shame.

The word “ashamed” is used twice in this verse. The first time the word “ashamed” is used in Scripture is in relation to the nakedness of Adam and Eve after they ate the fruit from the Poisonous Tree (Genesis 2:25).

Now healthy, David sought to denude his enemies, strip them of their pride, and expose their lawless deeds. Not only did David want to humiliate his enemies, he sought to vex and terrify them with his terrible swift sword (Psalm 149:6).

The words “ashamed” and “vexed” are in the emphatic position in the sentence. The hammer of David’s determination sounded doom and defeat to God’s enemies.

When Christians confess their sins and are fully healed, promiscuous and lawless men tremble like skeletons on a snowy day. See Psalm 38 where David appears to be on his deathbed.

O, that all Christians were healthy and armed for the gospel. O, that the world might “tremble” when preachers come to town as in the days of David and Samuel (1 Samuel 16:4)!

Arise, and be God’s attack lamb. When evil comes your way fight, snort, kick, bite, and show some grit.

Psalm 7 - The Song of the Slandered Saint

My Defense is of God



Before us is a king accused of treason by his political opponent.

The criticism was so close to the core of David that he had to wrestle with the accusation before the throne of God. Sometimes a trusted friend can cause more hurt than clear enemies.

If you have been slandered by a fellow employee, you know the pain that aspersions can cause. If you have never felt the sting of character smears, you will.

The problem with criticism is that the critic may be partly correct. Thus, how to manage deprivations becomes a spiritual challenge. David leads the way.

1 (Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the LORD, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.)

The occasion for this psalm is the bitter invectives hurled at David by a Benjamite — words that shredded the silk fabric of his tender soul.

That “sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me” ought to be thrown into the myth bin.

“Shiggaion: A plaintive song.” The word denotes a lyrical poem composed under strong mental emotion; a song of impassioned imagination accompanied with suitable music; a dithyrambic ode.

A Prayer for Deliverance

O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

This is not a “Hail Mary” prayer to a nameless god, but a prayer of right grounded on a long-established relationship with the LORD his God. The foundation of prayer and confidence rests on David’s covenant bond. “I have put my trust in thee” is in the emphatic position).

Faith and prayer are David’s only defenses against this kind of criticism.

“Save me” and rescue me from the potential negative effects of slander — the most used weapon in Satan’s arsenal.

2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

We don’t know what the accuser said, but it must have really hurt.

David compares his words to a lion ripping a little lamb to pieces with his sharp claws and teeth.

The Condition for Answered Prayer

3 O LORD 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 is mine enemy:)

David is not so naive to think that he is totally innocent and that the Benjamite is insane. The conjunction “if” holds out the possibility that his own sin may be the cause for the hurtful accusations — that God may be using the Benjamite’s slander to correct David.

5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.

The term “persecute” (radish) means “to pursue,” and “to hunt” (Psalm 10:2.)

The word “tread” (ramas) is used of a potter treading the clay (Isaiah 41:25); of the trampling of horses (Ezekiel 26:11); of a herd trampling down their pasture (Ezekiel 34:28).

The word “dust” (khabod) refers to the “dust of death” (Psalm 22:15).

David recognizes the possibility there may be serious moral defects in own administration . . . and, if so, he knows he deserves a lot worse than the curses of the Benjamite: “persecute,” “tread down,” “and lay mine honor in the dust.”

“to lay one’s honor in the dust” is a common figure of speech. Shakespeare, K. Hen. VI., i. 5, “Now, France, thy glory droopeth to the dust,” and Coriol. iii. 1, “And throw their power in the dust” (Ellicott).

“Selah” is musical note. Some think it means “to stop and think about this” – a good thing to do with all Scripture. In music, it meant “to strike up the band with forte.”

A Prayer for Intervention

6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

Having considered the possibility that the reason for the Benjamite’s hostility might be because of some failure in David’s own life his introspection comes up negative. He brings out the “balances” and weighs Himself on God’s “scales of justice.”

He concludes that he has harmed no man and that the fault lies with his slanderous adversary. But, it’s more than this. David realizes this Benjamite has been consorting with the Prince of Lies; that his remarks were not helpful criticism, but slashes of a sharp tongue aimed at the jugular.

Therefore, David vigorously approaches the bench, “Arise, O LORD . . .”

The term “enemy” changes to plural: “enemies.” David realizes the Benjamite is merely a front man to a conspiracy to impeach David and destroy his administration.

The imperative “arise” (qum) means “to stand up.” But, the use of the term “in thine anger” (thy rage) shows us that David’s view of God is one of intense involvement . . . that He too was furious over the Benjamite’s invectives.

David calls upon the LORD to “lift up” or exalt himself (reflexive) by making an end to the choler of his political opponents. The Syriac Version translates this, “Be thou lifted up upon the necks of my enemies.”

“awake for me to the judgment” is a phrase asking God “to prepare,” “unleash,” “pound the gavel and to execute “Thy judgment” upon these adversaries. In Psalm 3:7, the psalmist prays, “strike all my enemies on the jaw.”

The term “awake” (*oor*) is a stronger term than “arise” (*qum*). The Hebrew imperative *oor* means to “wake up” out of one’s sleep.” Apparently, David is concerned about God’s delay and inactivity. Appearing asleep and idyl, David shouts, “Wake up, LORD!”

7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

“for their sakes” -- David realizes the Benjamite’s slander not only threatened David, but the whole nation. His prayer enlarges to include not only himself, but the wellbeing of the people of God (the church).

“the people compass thee” is a Piel verb exposing the reality and intensity of the people that God is obligated to protect. David reasons that God’s display of justice could end up causing all the people to praise God and rejoice in Him.

8 The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.

David acknowledges the truth that the LORD shall judge His people in His own time and own way. But, he also knows that God will judge him according to his own deeds.

The use of the phrase “according to my righteousness” causes us to think of Christ the true King. Though guiltless in the present matter, David could not ground his prayer strictly on his own righteousness. But, Messiah can. Thus, we pray knowing that our status and presence before the BAR is secured, not by our own goodness, but by the doing and dying of Christ.

9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

This is the heart cry of every believer: “Let the LORD try the hearts and tie the hands of men so that wickedness might stop (everywhere).”

God is portrayed as the trier of hearts and minds. We have no authority or competence to put God on trial for the way He runs the Universe; but, this righteous God has the authority and competence to try the secrets of men.

The Assurance of Prayer

10 My defence is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

David did not consider an answer to the criticism. He absorbed it while trusting God to defend him.

The word “defense” (tssinah) is the word for “shield.” Unashamedly, David proclaims God as his Defender and Protector.

Though wrongly criticized and blamed for the nation’s problems, David remained positive about the LORD. To him, God ordained blessing for the people. Nothing could rob them of their inheritance: “All things are working together for good to them that love God . . .” (Romans 8:28).

11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

Literally, “God is just!”

Anger is an attribute of God, and this attribute is at work every day. His anger is not directed at the unintentional sins of the saints, but at the intentional sins of the wicked. By wicked, David is not referring to careless sinners, but to evil men like Ahab who “sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord” (1 Kings 21:15-27).

In His love for holiness, God may test and perfect the saints, but His nature, laws, and government is arrayed against lawbreakers. While the righteous escape punishment, the wicked will never escape the sword of justice.

Confidence God will Frustrate His Enemies

12 If he turn not, he will whet (hone) his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

There is mercy for sinners who change their course, but . . . if they do not repent, God will sharpen his sword and use it to stop evil. He not only has a sharp sword for hand-to-hand combat, he has a bow with arrows in His quiver to rain death upon the wicked.

God’s delay should not be interpreted as tolerance or neglect of duty. The plotting of evil politicians to do mischief will serve his glory (Psalm 76:10).

13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

“Instruments of death” refers to the numerous weapons in God’s armory at His disposal to stop evil men. The psalmist does not want us to misinterpret the patience of God for apathy. He is ready and willing to unlock the doors of His arsenal and rain death upon the wicked.

Literally, “His arrows he makes into fiery arrows” — i.e. tips them with fire, by wrapping them in burning tar so they become missiles of destruction.

14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

Now the psalmist describes the objects of wrath and the dark, diabolical, deformed forces they released on society.

The products of the wicked are listed:

(1) Iniquity: The term “iniquity” is introduced by a verb meaning “he brings forth.” It is a Piel intensive verb meaning “to bind” or “pledge.” That is, God’s judgment comes on men who

have pledged themselves to evil; that is, the miscreant sow lawlessness in society resulting in violence and death.

The term “conceive” (har’ah) is translated “travail” or “become pregnant.” These people are not only pregnant with evil, they are in hard labor eager to birth greenish, red-eyed snake-babies in society.

(2) The word “mischief” (a’mal) refers to the evil symphony composed by the wicked; that is, the wicked spread grief and injury to their fellowman.

“We are Borg. Resistance is futile” or “We are Legion” or the recent “The way I see it, We can do whatever We want” and “What the hell are you? We are Venom”. (Star Trek)

(3) The word “falsehood” refers to lies and deceptions. Lies are worse than murder. While murder destroys the life of one man, lies poison all of society. Lies hurt, but an institution built on lies multiplies misery.

15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.

The psalmist uses the metaphor of “a pit” to describe how the wicked fall into a trap laid for others.

16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate (crown).

“All the world agrees to acknowledge the equity of that sentence which inflicts upon the guilty the punishment intended by them for the innocent. No one pities the fate of a man buried in that pit which he had dug to receive his neighbour; or of him who owes his death wound to the return of an arrow shot against heaven.” (Benson)

17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

The Hebrew word for “praise” (yadah) means “to throw up the hands” either in praise or an oath of allegiance to the LORD.

While the psalmist begins this psalm with a trouble heart and a wringing of the hands, he ends his spiritual journey in a sweet melody of praise with his hands lifted to God in “victory.”

The subject of his song is not his own righteousness, but the righteous of another!

Sola Christo, sola gloria.

Psalm 8 - What is Man?

Thou Has Set Thy Glory above the Heavens



This is a psalm of David and it has the smell of the outdoors all over it.

In looking at the stars and moon, David perceived the greatness of the transcendent Creator. Because He also saw God at work providing for man and beast, he marveled at God's intense concern for men. Perhaps, he asks the most important question a person can ask, "What is man that

Thou, O Glorious God, art concerned about him? Why did You make man a king and give him stewardship over the earth and over all creatures that fly above, that walk on the earth, and swim in the waters of this world?

We have a crisis in anthropology! Because modern man sees men as masses of protoplasm crawling out of some antediluvian swamp who needs to be exterminated to achieve "sustainable development," the truth of this psalm becomes of ultimate importance.

The Greatness of God

Psalm 8:1 <To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of David.> O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

Barnes notes that "Gittith" refers either to a musical instrument played by the Gittites, the people at Gath, or tunes on an instrument sung by those stomping grapes at the wine presses (gath) in Israel.

"O LORD our Lord" — O LORD (YHWH) our Lord (Adonai). The name "LORD" is Elohim's personal Name that separates him from all the alleged gods — a reference to His eternal nature — "I Am that I Am" -- a contrast to gods that do not exist.

The title "Lord" (Adonai) implies a relationship between the Creator and His creatures . . . as one of Master and Commander, Ruler and Owner, Governor and Overseer.

The idea behind "excellent" is greatness, majesty, and glory.

"in all the earth" implies the universality of God; that is, He is not a local deity, but the God of all mankind. Yes, He is the God of Israel, but He is also God of the Nations (Isaiah 13:1-20:6).

"Who hast set thy glory above the heavens" — "hath set" is in the imperative mood; "Set Thou Thy glory . . ." The idea being that God's Name should be exalted to the highest degree above the Sun, Moon, and stars. The application is to men — that men should reverence His Name in such a way that it is void of profanity, vanity, casualness, and the pedestrian — that men use the name of the LORD God carefully with honor, reverence, and dignity.

The Smallness of Man

2 Out of the mouth of babes and suckling's hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

“babes” and “sucklings” is a metaphor for the people of Israel. It does *not* refer to literal babies or children. Babies are the smallest human creatures among us. Thus, the greatness and grandness of God is contrasted with tiny infants. Oh, that all men would see themselves as they are — humble, perishable, vulnerable little-children created by the LORD.

“Out of the mouth of babes” appears to be a reference to the adult children of Israel singing praises to God – “Hosanna to the Son of David,” against the objections of the Pharisees and Scribes, and is perhaps alluded to by him in Matthew 11:25” (Barnes).

“Hast thou ordained (yasad) strength” – The word “ordained” means to lay a foundation as in a stone building (Ezra 3:12; Isaiah 54:11).

“strength” refers to the power that God gives to pious men who serve Him. The best pastors among us are little children endowed with power from on-high.

“because of thine enemies” — The idea here is that God uses humble people devoted to Him to confront political giants standing on soapboxes of arrogance and haughtiness.

“still” (shabat) = desist, still, or rest. We get the word “Sabbath” from this word. As a Hiphil verb it means “to cause to rest.”

“that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger” — God is pleased to use humble men, women, and children to “silence” His enemies. And, His enemies are our enemies.

“avenger” refers to violent, cruel, angry men . . . men who abuse political power.

Praise is to God is what complaining is to the Devil. God loves it, the Devil hates it. Praising God brings out the roar in corrupt men of political power.

The Grounds of the Greatness of God

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

“fingers” — David personifies God. The use of the term “fingers” seems to imply skill and dexterity rather than raw power.

The original draft of this psalm may have been composed at night when David was observing the starry sky.

The word “ordained ” refers to something built, constituted, or appointed. The accuracy of these traveling stars is nothing short of stunning. We set clocks by their precision. In fixing these stars in their course across the heavens shows His astounding glory: power, accuracy, skills, engineering precision, and kingly majesty.

4-8 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory

and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

This may be the most important question that man can ever ask. It is also asked in Psalm 144.

What is it about tiny, finite man that is of such interest to Heaven? Why has God endowed him with so much honor and subjected earth to his control? We could go on: Why does God look at him? Listen to him? Answer him? Why does God want to save men? Why did He send His Son to redeem men? The answer of course is that “God is love.” He loves, not because who we are, but because of Who He is — a God of love!

“mindful of him” implies that God thinks about man, loves man, and attends to his needs in innumerable ways.

“son of man” refers to any descendants of Adam.

“visits him” informs us that He is an all-caring Creator — a personal God Who knows, thinks, considers, and attends to the needs and wants of men.

“lower than the angels” not only refers to man’s spatial limitations, but to the fact that man does not have the agility and powers of an angel; that is, in his capacities, man is inferior to angels. He saves men, but not fallen angels. Why?

“crowned him with glory and honor” refers to the fact that the triune God made man in His image and gave him kingly dominion over the earth; that he shares the Lord’s transient attributes: mind, emotions, volition, and sentient conscience that reflects the holiness of God; that He put “all things under his feet” addresses man’s authority; his given authority over animals, plants, birds, fish, and earth. God made man to be a prince, not a peasant; a sovereign not a subject; a ruler, not a slave (Genesis 1:26-28).

The animal list of “sheep,” “oxen,” “beasts of the field,” “fish,” and “birds” inform us with particularity that man has authority over the animal kingdom in the sky, earth, and seas — a slap in the face to strict vegetarian “Mother Earth” religious fanatics (Genesis 1:26-28).

Note: that at the fall Eve and then Adam subjected themselves to the serpent, to nature, to animals, and to the spirit behind the serpent.

Man’s inability to answer the question, “What is man?” has created a crisis in anthropology. Modern men in their anger see people as a “fungus on the surface of one of the minor planets” (Daphne Du Maurier); as a “cancer on the earth” (Julian Huxley) or as a “hairless ape” (Arnold Schoenberg). It’s a lot easier to kill a bug or a cancer or an “unwanted fetus” than men made in the image of God.

9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

“What words can reach his praises, who has a right to our obedience as our Redeemer?” (Matthew Henry).

Like a good composer, the psalmist returns to his key note (Spurgeon)

“O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name . . . ” repeats the thought expressed in verse one. The difference being we are able to see the foundation of the psalmist’s reasoning in verses 2-8. These words are a good way to end our thoughts about God during the day . . . our prayers at night . . . and our benedictions at church. May they be the first and last words on our lips.

Psalm 9 - When My Enemies Are Turned Back

Put Them in Fear, O Lord!



This psalm could just as easily be titled, "At the Gates of Death," or "Praise in the Gates," or "The Snare of the Wicked," or "Fear God, Oh Ye Nations," or "God Never Forgets," or "Let Not Man Prevail."

This is called an "Alphabet Psalm" because every clause of the first stanza begins with the Hebrew letter Aleph. Psalms 9 and 10 comprise a continuous acrostic psalm. Every other line begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

It is a psalm for people who are concerned about the lack of justice in this world, and Psalm 9 must be read with Psalm 10.

Credited to David, this royal psalm beams with kingly concerns about the frictions caused by warmongering nations.

To the chief Musician upon Muthlabben, A Psalm of David."

"To the chief musician upon Muth-labben" is the title of (Psalm 9:1) which has given rise to infinite conjecture. "Muthlabben" is a title meaning "to die for the son." "To the chief musician upon Muth-labben" is a title which has given rise to infinite conjecture.

"It may be either upon the death (muth) of the fool (labben), as an anagram on Nabal or as Gesenius, "to be chanted by boys with virgins voices," i.e. in the soprano" (Bible Study Tools).

The Psalmist's Address to the LORD

(Aleph) 1 I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.

"praise" (yadah) means to "throw up the hands" as in a victory celebration. Healthy souls praise a big God; suffering souls groan over big problems. Strong souls sing with a whole heart; diseased souls sound like a sound track for a sunset.

The word "marvellous works" is one word in Hebrew (pala) which means "surpassing," or "extraordinary" — a reference for God doing difficult things.

"Is anything too hard (pala) for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14).

2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

"glad" -- The Hebrew word *samach* means to rejoice.

"rejoice" -- The Hebrew word *alats* means to rejoice or exalt as in a victory celebration.

Gladness, rejoicing, and singing are evidence of spiritual health.

The object of David's praise is "O Most High." The term was first used by Melchizedek in when he blessed Abraham (Genesis 14:19 - 20) — a title that proclaims the solitary, absolute authority of the LORD above man's idols and institutions. The LORD is higher in rank, in title and beauty, in position and intelligence than any man or officer in an institution of government.

(Bet) 3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.

There are reasons for the sunshine in David's soul.

First reason for praise: Seeing with the eye of faith the conquest of his enemies by acts of God, David praises the LORD. David did not credit victory to his military might or to his brave army, but to "Thy Presence" (*panim* or the face of God).

"The triumphs of the Redeemer ought to be the triumphs of the redeemed."
(Matthew Henry).

The word "face" (*panim*) is first translated "moving upon the face of the waters" in Genesis 1:2.

The principle of "know your enemy" was true in David's day as it is our time. David fought enemies foreign and domestic. In modern times, our enemies are primarily domestic; that is, the government that is supposed to protect our rights has forsaken its duty in order to plunder the people and pirate their property.

Christians have adversaries because men have made themselves enemies of Christ. Governments are often led by regimes that are made up of secret-anti-Christ.

One look at the angry *panim* of God is sufficient to strike fear into the enemies of the gospel.

4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

Second reason to praise: The Judge not only granted him a hearing in His chambers, but sustained his cause over the objections of his adversaries. The LORD sustained his cause because his cause was God's cause.

God is not neutral in conflict. The Lord does not take sides. His side is the right side. He is the incorruptible-arbitrator of all the events of history. Because God is always right and His law is always right, let us find God's side and stand with Him.

5 Thou hast rebuked (ga'ar) the heathen (gowy), thou hast destroyed the wicked (rasha'm), thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.

Third reason to praise: God took judicial action against Israel's enemies — particular enemies of the psalmist. The words "rebuked," "destroyed," and "put out" their name are terms related to summary judgment rulings by the Supreme Court of Heaven.

The word "rebuke" (*ga'ar*) refers to a death-sentence issued by the Judge from His chambers in heaven.

The Hebrew word "destroyed" (*'abad*) means to "perish, vanish, go astray or to kill."

The Hebrew word “put out” (machah) is translated “blotted out” in Deuteronomy 9:14.

The Psalmist’s Address to Enemy Nations

6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.

“O thou enemy” represents a change in address. It is a vocative or apostrophe — a literary technique where the author addresses someone that is not present and can’t respond to the immediate pronouncement. In this case, David has a message of doom for his enemy.

Terms like “destruction” (dried up), “perpetual end,” “destroyed cities,” and “perished” refers to Divine judgment on David’s adversaries.

“memorial” -- literally means their very memory is perished: “the name of the wicked shall rot” (Proverbs 10:7). For this reason, David does not list his defeated enemies by name.

7 But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.

In contrast to temporal, vulnerable nature of human civilizations, David announces the permanent, unmovable, eternal character of the Lord and the fixed position of God’s throne (authority). God’s court is open and active throughout history 24/7.

The contrast in this verse is **not** between David and his enemies, or the righteous and the unrighteous, but between mortal man and the everlasting God.

8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

The term “world” refers to the “habitable earth” where all “the people,” regardless of their status, are subject to Divine jurisdiction. The pronoun “he” is in the emphatic position in the sentence. Simply stated, the “Most High” will judge pompous, puny man in righteousness.

“Righteousness” and “uprightness” describes the character of God’s throne. Unlike modern judicial forums, God’s Court is not blind, corrupt, crooked, twisted, prejudiced, perverted, or lured by money. Because Court decisions are based on His law and His character, matters before the Court are guided by the strictest principles of justice.

Because God crushed his enemies, David infers that God will continue to judge the enemies of righteousness throughout history.

A millennium later the Apostle Paul confidently declared to the Athenians, “He shall judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31).

9 The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

David announces another truth about this Court; i.e. another reason to praise God. The Judge is not only guided by strict principles of justice, but by compassion for those crushed by the rich and powerful.

The word “trouble” says Maclaren is used only here. It means “to be cut off” from justice among men; that is, when justice fails in the court, there is a Judge who understands the victim’s frustration.

This Court cares about the oppressed and troubled; i.e. He feels their pain. Therefore, his mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23).

10 And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

“know thy name” infers a personal relationship between the Creator and the creature. David did not see himself as superior to other men. Aware of his own weaknesses, he reasons to the conclusion that God acted against his enemies not because he (David) was faultless, but because the Most High was faithful to His covenant; that is, God is reliable to reward His people for their trust in Him.

To know the name of God is to know him in the context of His revelation and historical manifestations to men; that is, “they” that know thy name are students of the Holy Scripture. These are God-fearing people. When they hear the name of the Lord, they call to remembrance His great acts in history.

David continues his proclamation to his enemies. The word “seek” (darash) means “to inquire, petition, and consult.” A reference to a litigant seeking justice for injuries incurred by lawlessly men.

The promise: God never abandons His people even though negative circumstances may provoke feelings of being forsaken.

The Psalmist’s Address to the People of God

11 Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

Because a healthy nation is theocentric, and a disordered nation is anthropocentric, David exhorts the people to sing praises to the Lord and to declare the works of Providence.

“Sing” and “declare” (preaching) as means of glorifying God are joined together, and it is remarkable that, connected with all revivals of gospel ministry, there has been a sudden outburst of the spirit of song. Luther’s Psalms and Hymns were in all men’s mouths, and in the modern revival under Wesley and Whitfield, the strains of Charles Wesley, Cennick, Berridge, Toplady, Hart, Newton, and many others, were the outgrowth of restored piety.” (Spurgeon)

12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

The phrase “inquisition for blood” refers to “the avenger of blood.” It is an allusion to the *goel*, the nearest relative of a murdered man responsible, according to Oriental custom, to avenge death of a near relative.

The “them” refers to the victims of oppression – “the humble.” God’s remembers the weak and forgotten who are crushed under the claws of greed and injustice in man’s courts. The blood of Abel spoke to God (Genesis 4:10), and the blood of Nabal was seen by God (2 Kings 9:26) (Spurgeon).

The Psalmist’s Address to the Lord for Himself

13 Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

Wisely, David does not seek justice but mercy. Even at his best, David needed grace.

The word “trouble” (only) refers to oppression, affliction, and poverty. Think of Hagar’s affliction in the desert after fleeing the maltreatment of Sarah (Genesis 16:11). In her trouble, Hagar learned “Thou God seest me.”

At “the gates of death” (verge of the grave), King David painfully feels his humanity. Petitioning the Lord to overlook his faults and deficiencies, he motions the court to consider his claim against his adversaries. David was flawed, but not dissolute; weak, but not wicked; a sinner, but not a rebel.

He prays the Judge would “consider” his trouble; i.e. that the Lord would be pleased to investigate the facts regarding the injuries he received from social predators, in this case, enemies foreign and domestic.

14 That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

“gates” refer to public knowledge as city gates were the place where people assembled to hear news and to adjudicate legal matters between residents in the city.

While his motion for injunctive relief is personal, his petition is far from being boorish and self-centered. If the nation was to be God-centered and God-focused, the people had to have a basis of trust. Military victories over warring tyrants added reasons for the “daughter of Zion” to rejoice in “thy salvation.” Remembering “all” victories supplies inexhaustible themes for praise.

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

The word “pit” is a metaphor for the Luciferian traps set up by imperialistic regimes to snare innocent people, steal their wealth, and make them slaves.

David’s proclaims his ground for confidence. His enemies, who thought themselves to be invincible, actually imploded from the troubles they sought to inflict on others. Setting snares for the innocent, they stepped in their own longstring trap.

16 The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgsion. Selah.

The term “Higgsion” refers to a thought that is so important it had to be put to music so people can meditate upon it. The word “Selah” has come to infer “to stop and think about this.”

David proclaims a paramount truth: As Judge of all the earth, the Lord does what is right. He executes judgment upon the wicked in history. Study it. Look for it. Wait for it. Recognize it when it comes.

“By this it is known, there is a God who judgeth in the earth: that he is a righteous God, and one that hates and will punish sin; by this the ‘wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.’” (Benson).

“The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands” proclaims the fact that advocates of totalitarianism are the most frustrated people on earth because they are trapped by lack of resources, detailed entanglements, and uncooperative populations.

The one who sells his soul to the Prince of Darkness faces a black future.

17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

David continues his Higgsaion:

The “wicked” (*rasha’ m’*) are seasoned criminals, trespassers, and lawbreakers who show contempt for God’s law-order. This professional class of perverts will be defeated and destroyed.

The word “hell” refers to *Sheol* or the grave; that is, these lawbreakers bring about their own ruin setting up traps to defraud others of their rights to life, liberty, and property.

18 For the needy (poor) shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

In this life, sophisticated legislators enact “laws for thee, but not for me;” and corrupt magistrates provide “justice for the rich, but not for the poor.” And, sometimes vice-a-versa.

This text teaches us that the ground of hope for those suffering under the heavy hand of tyrants will be realized . . . their cause righted . . . their motion heard.

It may appear that God forgets the poor and denies their pleas, but delay is not a denial. A promise is provided: their hope of receiving help from God will **not** perish forever. Though men may forget God, God does not forget the needy or their plight.

19 Arise, O Lord; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

While it appears that the plans of men in high office dominate the ethical minority, we have a soldier’s plea, “let not man prevail.”

“Arise, O Lord” is a priestly-military order / prayer calling upon God to go before Israel’s armies to give them victory over the enemy (Numbers 10:35; Psalm 3:7; 7:6; 10:12; 68:1).

Because delayed justice pains the soul, David prays: Lord, wake up, sit up, stand up, consult your honor and let not the conspiracies of the arrogant prevail against your kingdom plans.

20 Put them in fear, O Lord: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.

Every inter-relational problem can be reduced to the pride of men; and, every international crisis can be traced to a lack of fear . . . a lack of God consciousness . . . a lack of holy-respect for God's law-order by miscreants in positions of power.

Therefore, we have this power-prayer: "Put them in fear, O Lord" . . . humble them . . . knock the wind out of their arrogance . . . make them afraid of standing before your holiness.

Luke 12:5 "Fear the One who, after you have been killed, has authority to throw you into hell."

The reason for this prayer is that government officials and corporate figures might know they are not God; that prime ministers might know there is a King of kings; that legislators might know they are accountable to the True Lawgiver and His law-order (James 4:12).

Psalm 10 - When God Hides Himself

Why, O LORD, do you stand afar off?



Enter into this imprecatory psalm—a prayer to be prayed when society seems to be overrun with proud men who mock the Christian faith and who subvert good among us. It should be read with Psalm 9.

It is one of the Acrostic Psalms. Taken together, Psalm 9 and 10 form an acrostic psalm sequencing the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Every other line begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Moreover Psalm 10 does not have a heading as other psalms do.

The Psalmist's Complaint About the Lord

Psalm 10:1 *Why, O LORD, do you stand afar off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?*

The mood shifts from one of triumph in Psalm 9 to one of distress over the wicked in Psalm 10.

Every religion, including Christianity, must deal with the hiding of God. Where is God when I need Him?

The delight of the church is that God is with her: “Lo, I am with you even until the end of the age.” But, it is better than this. Each Christian has the Spirit of God living in his soul -1 Peter 3:15.

But, none is so miserable as the doubting child who feels like God has forsaken him and that He is nowhere to be found.

God is supposed to be a “very present help in the time of trouble,” but often more scarce than drinking water in Death Valley. His presence is a great joy for the people of God, but nothing is more troubling than an eclipse of His presence.

“Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?”

It is not the trouble that bothers us, but the sense of being separated from our Father’s love that shakes our soul.

We are sentient beings. Feelings are often interpreted as facts. When we “feel” forsaken, we are tempted to conclude that God has abandoned us.

No answer is given to the Psalmist’s question. Perhaps, the Lord hides Himself to see if we are sunshine patriots or true men (Psalm 11:5).

The Psalmist's Complaint Against the Wicked

The psalmist describes the character of the wicked during his time. What was true then is true now!

The term “wicked” is a Biblical term that refers to autonomous, self-willed men: rebels, fornicators, Sodomites, feminists, thieves, rapists, con-artist, and covenant breakers.

The wicked were powerful, political troublemakers: politicians, judges, magistrates, and rulers.

Regardless of the office they hold, these vile characters devour the helpless. Their programs enrich the elite and impoverish the simple through clever commercial schemes designed to transfer wealth from the pocket of the poor to the treasury of the affluent.

Good people have friends, but wise men know their enemy. If a man does not know his true enemy, he wars in vain. All resistance is futile. Thus, it behooves Christians to study their enemies in politics and the media: liberalism, socialism, Marxism, and the like.

Moreover, it would be folly to merely attribute one’s conflicts to an invisible spirit and not recognize the Devil’s “flesh and blood” agents. Evil is not in the environment, it is in men. Evil is not floating through the air, but residing in the hearts of sinners.

2 In arrogance the wicked hotly pursue the poor; let them be caught in the schemes that they have devised.

It is much too simple to say that everything good comes from God and everything bad comes from the Devil. The discerning recognize evil presents itself as a genial figure feigning to be just. Moreover, goodness from God often arrives in humble packages.

The wicked do not wear a sign on their chest that says, “I am wicked;” rather, they carry signs that read, “Feminists,” “Free love,” “Women’s Rights,” “I LUV LGBT,” “No One is Illegal,” “Pro-Choice,” “Socialism Sign up Here,” “Support the Extinction of Old White Men,” etc.

The Psalmist wishes his antagonists would be exposed, humbled, and trapped in their own snares.

3 For the wicked boasts of the desires of his soul, and the one greedy for gain curse and renounces the LORD.

By “wicked,” we should not assume David is addressing thugs on the street, but faces in the media, individuals in positions of power, and clever hand shakers in high places.

His adversaries are not street urchins, but men (and women) in blue suits. Invisible players lurking in the shadows multiply programs that violate the Tenth Commandment with faces wrinkled with lusts.

Covetous schemers have greed in their hearts and money on their mind. Cash is the power which makes the celebrity relevant. Therefore, money is his god. Thus, in the mind of the world, the lack of money is the root of all evil.

Henry Fielding observed, “Make money your God and it will plague you like the Devil.”

Money is important to all men, but not an end in itself. It is tool to be used for God . . . or the Devil. We can control it, or it can control us.

The worship of cash indicates the man has renounced the Lord as his God. “No man can serve two masters,” said Jesus.

4 In the pride of his face the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, “There is no God.”

Arrogance and theological atheism is another mark of the wicked.

These schemers are anti-Christians who act pragmatically and perversely. Their hearts are so full of pride, it marks their faces like tattoos.

“Seek Him,” is not in the original text, but supplied by the translators . . . and, rightfully so.

The self-centered man has no room for God in His thought life. He does not seek the proofs of God’s existence or evidence of His Providence in history.

Moreover, He has no curiosity about the character of the Creator, His will, or His law. All his thoughts are faithless and Godless. He serves the religion of “none.” The proud man, being the center of his own universe, expects the world to revolve around his utopian dream.

5 His ways prosper at all times; your judgments are on high, out of his sight; as for all his foes, he puffs at them.

Another outstanding characteristics of the wicked is their assertive, unyielding, steel-boot, in-your-face confidence. These people do not suffer from an inferiority complex. They have entered through the gates of self-esteem holding a key, “Yes, we can!” They wear a banner, “I am the Captain of my soul; the Master of my fate.”

“According to Yogic culture, all superiority complexes demand suffering. The person deemed less than in whatever way the others feel superior, must suffer. But the person who feels superior suffers an abundance of confidence while lacking clarity and is therefore more willing to move forward in error for long periods of time.” (Author Unknown- Rumor Mill News).

The phrase “prosper at all times” or “are grievous” (yāchiylû) has been difficult to articulate. The Latin Vulgate and LXX translates it, “His ways are defiled.” Coverdale renders it, “His ways are always filthy.” Others transcribe it, “His ways are confident.”

The original Hebrew word (chul) means “to turn round, to twist, to whirl.” Thus, the word refers to a strong twisted object indicating the character of the evil man — that He is strong, relentless, hard, tireless, unbending, and full of sentiment that his perverted, twisted ways are always right. He cannot admit wrong, but he’s a hootie owl squawking about other people’s faults. He believes he is born good and is one of the lovable in the cult of self-esteem. The liberal media and popular cultural icons come to mind.

David's enemies are God's enemies. God "puffing" or blowing at them communicates contempt and scorn. They roost in an ivory tower for a time, but they can be removed as easily as a maid blows the dust off an attic lamp shade.

6 He says in his heart, "I shall not be moved; throughout all generations I shall not meet adversity."

Another characteristic of the wicked is the invincibility of these people.

"He says," reflects his settled, iron-forged beliefs. The perverse are aggressive. Thinking they are bulletproof and untouchable, they fear neither sickness nor adversity. Though the wicked's foundation is built on the fault lines of fables, myths, and fictions, he is an indomitable rock in own mind.

7 His mouth is filled with cursing and deceit and oppression; under his tongue are mischief and iniquity.

Another way to recognize the wicked is by what they say. The tongue is the pen of the mind. It never tires of complaining. While we fear the chaos of war, nothing compares to the destruction caused by a tongue set on fire by the lies of hell. The humanist has an arrogance and potty mouth about him that spews out blasphemy and profanity like a Cajun whore. But, he may be all polish. Wax covers his cracks while he recruits the malleable for his Devilish purposes.

These are the motor-mouthed reporters who spin the news, publish fake stories, and twist facts to prejudice the public against their political opponents so no one can uncover the truth. (The four year drama where Democrats and Rinos accused President Trump of colluding with Russia comes to mind (2016-2019).)

Put an "s" in front of his "words" and it becomes "swords." Add another "s" to the word gossip and you have the sound of a hissing snake.

8 He sits in ambush in the villages; in hiding places he murders the innocent. His eyes stealthily watch for the helpless; 9 he lurks in ambush like a lion in his thicket; he lurks that he may seize the poor; he seizes the poor when he draws him into his net. 10 The helpless are crushed, sink down, and fall by his might.

Notice the terms "ambush," "hiding places," and "stealthily." The Spirit uses the metaphor of a pouncing lion to instruct the righteous about the ways of the wicked. Their method of crushing their adversaries and overturning God's law in favor of Utopianism comes through the art of deception and surprise. Rogue politicians with the help of the media adopted a covert strategy that accelerates myths and lies.

Murdering political adversaries marks the broadcasting industry. Slander, propaganda, and disinformation are weapons of choice. Their victims are described as a lion's prey, helpless, and poor — like a gazelle caught in a net.

11 He says in his heart, "God has forgotten, he has hidden his face, he will never see it."

The weakness of the wicked is not a lack of knowledge, but willful ignorance; and, the adoption of an ideology that accuses God of willful neglect.

These enemies of righteousness are not lambs, but lions; not worms, but cobras.

If the wicked say, "God has forgotten." Evil is at work in our hearts if we think God has abandoned us. Beware of entertaining thoughts contrary to the promises of God.

The Psalmist's Cry for God to Take Action

Seeing the pride and crushing ways of the depraved upon the innocent, David calls his silent God to stir Himself, to "break the arm" of the villainous, and to remember the plight of the righteous.

It is a graver error to presume God is unaware of their deeds. The God of the Bible knows all things. Just because we suddenly become aware of evil at work in society does not mean that God is ignorant about political corruption.

God calls men to account for their secret sins. Rest your head on three pillows: He sees. He knows. He cares.

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up your hand; forget not the afflicted.

Two imperatives are found in this text and the third verb (forget not, a Jussive) acts like a command. "Arise! Wake up!" cries the psalmist. "Lift up your hand! "Forget not the afflicted."

God appears to be so indifferent to human affairs . . . even asleep at the wheel. Therefore, the struggling psalmist appeals to the God of covenant to intervene in this human drama, and to rescue the afflicted from the snares of these power mongers. Consider the tyranny of the police state, asset forfeiture, clever IRS lien and seizure programs, the banking loan-foreclosure scheme, and debt scams.

"Perhaps a clear sign of Christian maturity is the willingness to worship God when He has determined to be God hidden" – John Rushdoony.

13 Why does the wicked renounce God and say in his heart, "You will not call to account"?

Bad idea; bad theology!

The righteous suffer from a mild case of cognitive dissonance; i.e. because they do not lie or steal from other men, they have a hard time understanding the callous disregard for morals and truth that is so prevalent in the "liberal" mind.

14 But you do see, for you note mischief and vexation, that you may take it into your hands; to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. 15 Break the arm of the wicked and evildoer; call his wickedness to account till you find none.

The psalmist, though sailing his ship in the middle of a political storm, anchors his soul to Biblical theology: God sees, God knows; and God cares for me.

We can confidently pray that God that will break the teeth of the lions preying upon God's lambs. He helps the fatherless, the oppressed, and the abandoned among men. Therefore, the psalmist boldly prays the LORD would lift up his hand, and metaphorically speaking, deliver a heavenly karate chop to the schemers giving them a Monteggia fracture in the forearm. But, it is

more than this. He wants God to give them no quarter, no clemency or mercy . . . even refusing to spare the life of his political opponents.

The difficulty in modern times, however, is that wickedness is not sequestered. Depravity has been institutionalized by corrupt politicians hell-bent on empowering Big Government to crush the rights of man. The problem is not just flawed agents or judges, but corrupt institutions. The cute, little serpent in Genesis has now become a hideous, fire-breathing monster with seven heads coming out of the sea of politics (Revelation 12-13).

“If you are awaiting a finding of “clear and present danger,” then I can only say that the danger has never been more clear and its presence has never been more imminent . . . For we are opposed around the world by a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy that relies primarily on covert means for expanding its sphere of influence--on infiltration instead of invasion, on subversion instead of elections, on intimidation instead of free choice, on guerrillas by night instead of armies by day. It is a system which has conscripted vast human and material resources into the building of a tightly knit, highly efficient machine that combines military, diplomatic, intelligence, economic, scientific and political operations.” (John F. Kennedy – Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City, April 27, 1961).

The Psalmist’s Confidence the King has Heard his Plea

The psalmist progresses in his prayer from one of feeling forsaken to a feeling of confidence that God has heard his prayer; from feeling like his Commander was absent in the battle, to an understanding that God is a competent King actively saving His people from their enemies.

16 The LORD is king forever and ever; the nations perish from his land.

Let us remember that the LORD is King — all heads of state are required to acknowledge His reign. It was the gospel of “another king, Jesus” that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6-7; Psalm 2, 97, 110).

17 O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear 18 to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more.

What spiritual progress!

David begins the psalm as a spiritual pauper blind to God’s work among men. At the end of his spiritual quest, God-confidence reigns over the battlefield of his heart. The Lord actively works among the nations saving the poor and judging the wicked.

Salvation is one means of bettering society; purging out evil is another. We not only pray that God would save souls (execute mercy), we pray the Lord will expose and depose the wicked among us in our time.

Psalm 11 - Faith in the Fight

If the Foundations Be Destroyed?



“We’re all going to die!” Ever heard that omen?

Maybe you’ve heard the shout of defeatism from an enemy, or even a friend or a spouse; or perhaps you’ve heard those little voices in your own mind predicting defeat.

How should we respond to the thunder of doom and gloom blasting hopelessness from the canons of doubt in our ears?

In Psalm 11, David listened to the panic and negative reports coming from his own advisors. Late at night he writes this hymn showing us the way to manage fear.

Facing a fierce military foe and surrounded by trembling soldiers, there was one man in the army who expressed trust in God . . . only one man in the fight that had faith in the LORD!

This psalm is *not* a prayer to God, but an exhortation to jittery commanders. The psalm opens with David’s confidence in God.

Advice from David’s Anxious Advisors

Psalm 11:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> In the LORD put I my trust: how (dare you) say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

Note the singular mixed with a plural, “Flee as a flock of birds to your mountain.”

Psalm 55:6, “Oh that I had wings as a dove!”

“ye” = my friends. “trust” = refuge.

David and his men are near the killing zone. The enemy positioned itself on the high ground and appeared to have a strategic advantage. Ready to attack, shouts of hateur bellowed from the enemy. The smell of death whiffed through the air. Hearts pounded. Knees knocked. Soldiers puked and breath turned foul. Seeking advice from his generals, David respectfully listened to their bleak reports. Each advised David to retreat -- to fly away like a little bird, to live and to fight another day.

David’s nostrils flared. His steel eyes of determination starred back at his generals as he countered the advice of his military staff: “in the Lord, put I my trust . . . why do you advise me to flee like a bird to safety on a high mountain?”

Fight or flight? They advised flight . . . but, this was not the time to flee . . . and David knew it. This was a day to trust God and vigorously wield the sword and spear against the enemies of Israel.

2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

The reconnaissance reports revealed the enemy was ready to attack. David acknowledged the keen observations of seasoned generals. Every word fortified fear and increased despair. The enemy moved its archers into position . . . arrows were cocked in the bow . . . and a sky full of deadly darts were about to fall on David's soldiers . . . suddenly, secretly, with surprise in hopes of spilling the most Hebrew blood among David's lesser forces ("the upright in heart").

3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

The fear among David's generals was not that their army would take some casualties, but that the whole infantry would be slaughtered.

The term "foundation" (hashatot) is translated "seth" nine times, "buttocks" two times (2 Sam. 10:4; Is. 19:10), and the "base of a mountain" in Aramaic -- a reference to the main lines of military troops.

The attack was imminent and the nucleus of David's army appeared extremely vulnerable. If the advancing soldiers defeated David's main force, the battle would be lost.

Possibly, the safety and security of the nation was at risk. It was in lieu of this possibility that David's fearful advisors asked, "What can the righteous do?"

David's Answer to His Fearful Advisors

God Rules

4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne is in heaven:

David assures his generals that though there is confusion on the battlefield, there is no confusion in heaven. The God above rules over the battle, over the threats they faced this day, over the clinking, clanking iron-sounds of death swords.

"In his temple[1]" speaks of God's immanence.

"In heaven" communicates God's transcendence.

"His throne" addresses authority and assured the generals of God's royal sovereignty – His control over the battle. Archers launch their arrows, but God decides where they land.

1 Kings 22:34 But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel (Ahab) between the scale armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded."

God sees

his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men.

This is David's way of saying that God knows! God cares! God sees the plight of His army. Though the enemy uses stealth and concealment, God is not surprised by the tactics of the wicked; that is, God is among the troops as a Shield and Sword protecting and empowering them.

God Tests

5 The LORD trieth the righteous:

David does not underestimate the enemy forces or the seriousness of the battle. Rather, he adds perspective: God uses these conflicts to test the faith and courage of the righteous.

The word "trieth" means "to examine" or "prove" or "refine" His people like a metallurgist purifies silver and gold (Jer. 6:27-30; 9:7; Psalm 7:9).

There was dross in David's army and impurities among David's counselors. Conflict reveals the fractures and flaws in the faith of the church militant. He uses these political conflicts to perfect His army as well as to humiliate and defeat the anti-god forces threatening Christian soldiers.

God hates

but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

The "wicked" refer to the savage foot-soldiers planning their bloody attack on David's defenses. . . the anti-god forces . . . those thieves and murderers that "cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10).

The "wicked" here are not just sinners, but professional criminals and strategists who plot the demise of the righteous. In our day, the wicked may not be carrying an AK-47 and wearing military uniforms. Enemies may be carrying microphones, standing in front of cameras, and wearing blue suits slanting the news in favor of some Satanic agenda while spitting out hate and slander against good and reasonable patriots.

That God is nothing but a powder-puff sugar bear engaged in a slobbering love affair with every vile human being is denied. All Lives don't Matter. Innocent lives matter, but depraved lives do not.

David announces to His men that God hates the wicked. We fight because we are right!! We fight evil men and we will kill many of them.

God don't like ugly and He ain't crazy about pretty. Smart men don't pet rattlesnakes, and a holy God doesn't caress the wicked. He does not love the sinner and just hate the sin. He hates the incorrigible.

While God forbids petty, childish loathing among His people, it is not possible to be a good man without hating evil . . . and hating evil men. God's rancor against the wicked can motivate us to take on a fight we might normally avoid because we know God wants to use us to tear down "strongholds" and humble the proud. God calls us to be salt, not honey-roasted clusters of mango peach passion pecks.

God judges

6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.

David assures his generals that they were going to be God's artillery to inflict holy justice on the invaders. God is holy and "He will by no means clear the guilty" (Exodus 34:7).

"Snares, fire, brimstone, and a horrible tempest" are metaphors for punishment.

"snares" = nooses or bird snare.

David was familiar with animal traps, and he knew what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah. He was familiar with the sirocco winds that sucked every bit of moisture from Levantine fauna. These forces of nature could turn a promising harvest into a dry, parched land overnight. David knew that God appointed judgment upon the wicked . . . and . . . perhaps God might be pleased to use Israel's army to bathe His enemies in blood.

Likewise, He may use some Christians to put an abortion clinic out of business or oppose some law favoring Sodomites. He might use some mission team to win the lost to Christ or oppose godless legislation. He plans to judge the wicked; and perhaps, some believers in civil government might have the privilege of being His instrument to oppose injustice and promote justice.

"But since correction lieth in those hands, Which made the fault that we cannot correct, Put we our quarrel to the will of Heaven, Who, when he sees the hours ripe on earth, Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads." (Shakspeare, Richard II, Act 1, Scene 2).

God is virtuous

7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

David assures his men that God is virtuous and that He sees their predicament. YHWH is righteous—that is, faithful to His covenant. David oozes with confidence that his army and his generals would see the face of God. He is not referring to some theophany, but that they would experience the sunshine of His favor on the hellish battlefield (Psalm 17:15).

Conclusion

In our pilgrimage on earth, we face many conflicts. At times, we are overwhelmed by the power of the opposition. We may be tempted to flee . . . and in some cases, flight is a righteous response to overwhelming force (Matthew 10:23). But, in other cases, God's wants us to engage the conflict; to stand and fight; and not give an inch.

In the heat of the battle, we may hear many voices calling us to retreat, to "flee," to "run," an to "quit" in our own soul.

Never surrender without a fight!!

"Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

“When **you have done all** according to the word of God and it seems like nothing is happening, then **stand**. ... **Stand** firm, hold your ground, and defend your territory against the enemy, by submitting to God and hitting the enemy in the name of Jesus,” says Peter Rahm.

Somehow, someday, we would do well to imitate David’s *confidence* in God and his *courage* on the battlefield. We would do well to rehearse David’s orders and instructions to his fellow generals. We would do well to reflect on Paul’s words to the Romans: “If God be for us, who can be against us?”

Let us remember the words of General Patton, “You are here because you are real men and all real men like to fight” (June 5, 1944).

Therefore, let us have faith in the fight.

[1] The temple is probably a reference to the tabernacle either in Jerusalem or at Shiloh. Solomon’s temple was not yet constructed.

Psalm 12 - Where Have All the Godly Gone?

“Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth”



As David looked around at the degradation in his day, he asked, “Where have all the Godly Gone?” Likewise, the God-fearing men of our time are often bewildered by the shrinking population of the pious.

This psalm is a canticle about the frustration David felt about being surrounded by charlatans and hypocrites, and the hope he had of being delivered from their schemes.

It is a psalm for people who can’t see God’s “little flock” and feel like they are surrounded by miscreants. If you are tired of the promotion of depravity by public “servants,” the media, and political organizations, this psalm is for you.

Psalm 12:1 (To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.)

“Sheminith” – an eight string guitar, a possible reference to an octave.

“A Psalm of David” -- Either David wrote this psalm or another added it to his library of songs. There are no historical references in this chorale to any events in David’s life where we can say with certainty that David penned these lyrics, but the tenor of the psalm definitely chimes with other songs that David composed. Like all psalms, this lyric addresses a conflict in the heart of the psalmist where he loses sight of the remnant.

A Cry for Help

1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

The word “help” (yasha) is an intransitive Hithpael verb with no object. It means “save.” In the emphatic position, David looks around and burst into a prayer because of his grief: “Save, LORD. I am surrounded by profane men!”

Feeling like the last sheep in God’s green pastures, David bleats out: “the godly man ceaseth” and “the faithful” (pious) have vanished — probably because wolves eat lambs, and surviving sheep are in hiding.

This statement is a poetic hyperbole — an expression of David’s loneliness . . . of his longing for spiritual companionship. This is not a fact, but it felt like one. Like sheep, David preferred the company of other sheep. Apparently, David experienced an eclipse in his life where he could not see or feel the warmth of Divine life *ad rem* to children of light. Rather, David feels crowded by impious, alpha-males oozing with depravity and debauchery.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

The “they” refers to the wicked (*rasha'im*) void of purity and piety. There are three marks of godless men in this text; that is, they are easily recognized by their talk and tantrums: swaggering speech, smooth discourse, and double-talk.

First, they speak “vanity” (*shawv*) which refers “to deceitfulness, to overly proud, to emptiness or to nothingness.”

The *rasha'im* are narcissistic. They sermonize only about themselves and the advances of their agenda. Vain people seem to have the capacity to talk for ever about trivia and zero capacity to dialogue about important matters. Shakespeare wrote a play titled, “Much ado about nothing” – a mark of boorish people.

Second, they speak with “flattering” words; that is, their tones and inflections are smoother than butter.

Third, they speak with a double heart. The word “double” is not in the text, but the word heart (*leb*) is used twice: i.e. they speak with *leb leb* or a double heart. Deceivers say one thing and mean another. They have one glossary for church, and another for the tavern; one kind of speech at work and another kind of speech for home. In 1614, Thomas Adams observed, “*A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster.*”

David was surrounded by monsters.

Confidence the LORD Would Help

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

The pious psalmist had no patience for these double-minded, doubled-tongued, sweet-talkin’ drivellers (James 1:8). His theology taught him these tricksters will be severed from society by the sword of the LORD.

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

The noun “our tongues” is in the emphatic position; that is, the main weapon of deceivers is their tongue. These people have a way of twisting the language to sell their enslavement programs. Captions like “Social Security Insurance,” “Federal Reserve,” “Patriot Act,” and “Affordable Care Act” come to mind.

“Our lips are our own” means our mouth; our choice; absolute freedom of speech; at our disposal to say what we please.

“Who is lord over us?” Who has any right to control us; or to call us to “shut up”? These people acknowledge no authority over themselves but their own passions (2 Peter 2).

These schmoozers make ugly look pretty, and bitter taste sweeter. These deceivers have the skills to market arsenic soup as magical-cures; the ability to sell sawdust as oatmeal; the talent to make stinkhead salmon smell like fried shrimp; the means to cook ten day old bread and make it taste like fresh baked pancakes.

In our time, the airwaves are filled with pretense and monkeyshines. Having mastered the art of newspeak and propaganda, the depraved media puts a spin on everything. Sport heroes are covered criminals; news anchors are paid CIA agents; and, entertainment is colored with anti-Christ prostitution.

5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

The LORD speaks this ancient oracle affirming the theology of the psalmist. Seeing the exploitation of oppressors and the sighing of the poor, the LORD arises from his silence to rescue the oppressed.

The word “needy” refers to the poor man with few resources to recover from fraudulent promotions of charlatans. There is no mention of formal prayer here. The needy sigh in secret. But, God hears the pain and inner groaning of the poor (Hagar; Moses at the Red Sea).

“will arise” is a moment of military-like action. The voice is first person — the voice of the LORD. Our God is a God of War who promises the sons of Abraham they will possess the gates of their enemies (Genesis 22:17).

“Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel” – Numbers 10:35-36

The construction “I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him” is a figure of speech that can be construed to mean, “I will set him in safety for the one who pants for it:” “in safety for which he yearns (breathes),” or “I will set him safely from the one who blows upon him.” Ellicott promotes the former, Barnes and Benson advocate the latter.

When promises are broken by smooth talkers, the poor are the ones most likely to suffer. The rich, having many resources, are less likely to feel the pain of broken promises or malice aforethought. “In like manner, the poor would be most likely to “be taken in by the acts of unprincipled men, and to be deceived in their small dealings with them.” (Barnes)

Both positions are true. God delivers those who thirst for salvation, and he sends the north wind against defrauders who huff and puff at the poor.

6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Unlike the promises of shysters, God’s Word can be relied upon. The words of double-minded politicians and government officials are worthless, but the words of the Lord are like refined silver that have been refined seven times. The doubled-hearted (leb, leb) are filled with deceit, but there is no falsehood with the LORD. His Word is infallible and reliable.

Silver addresses the value of God’s Word. Profane men consider the Bible as worthless. Nominal Christians measure its value in pennies. Holy men consider it their greatest treasure.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

“Them” refers to the “godly” in verse one and the poor and needy in verse five.

“Thou shalt keep them” is a direct promise of the LORD — a reference to “I will set them in safety” in verse five.

What God promises, He shall perform! Thou shall keep them from corrupt politicians; from the palm-greasing salesman; from double dealers; from degenerate and depraved schemers with covetousness in their hearts. Thou shall keep them and guard (preserve) them in this generation and in generations to follow.

Confusion Caused by the Wicked

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

This verse should be linked to verse seven, “Thou shall preserve them” even though “the wicked walk on every side, “when the vilest (zuwleth = worthless) men are exalted” to positions of power.

The wicked (rasha'im) are everywhere filling every branch of government, every corporation where money can be made, and every political office where power can be obtained. No wonder David complained about the “foundations” being destroyed in Psalm 11:5 – a reference to the breaking down of the front lines in the infantry.

This psalm ends with a promise of protection for the humble. God’s lambs will be kept and guarded even though surrounded by wolves. The promise is not that God will purge the wicked from the earth, but that He will preserve the Godly man who looks to the Lord as his Protector. The season of separating the chaff from the wheat awaits the end of history.

Psalm 13 - Forget Me Not

Six Tough Verses in the Bible Penned by a Forgotten Saint



The Psalmist's Complaint

<To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.>

Have you ever felt like God has forgotten you? You are not alone. So do many of God's best saints.

In this psalm, we learn that the Christian does not live in Disneyland, but that the real Christian life sometimes bleeds with feelings of abandonment.

Psalm 13:1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

This psalm means nothing to those who are healthy and wealthy. News of cancer in our body, the loss of a job, conflicts in relationships that matter, the death of a loved one triggers speculations that God has forsaken us.

Forgotten by God? What a terrifying thought. We pray for a cure, and our sickness lingers; we ask for money to pay our bills, and our debts increase; we pray for a job, and the local newspaper announces five thousand lay-offs in our city.

Despair shadows every step. Days and weeks turn into months. We pray . . . roar . . . groan, but our prayers taste like chalk. We fast, but our pleas return to us like a canyon echo. Arrows of doubt pierce our soul. We bleed with grief. Sins escape from their coffins. We confess them again and again but the guilt remains like ink stains on a white shirt. Surely, our iniquity piloted His concealment. We are stuck in a tar pit and can't cleanse ourselves.

Why Lord? I gave my life to you. Your people are my delight. I love your Word. I tithe. I give to street people. . . and now You hide Yourself from this poor man. Why is prayer always one way? All I hear are the terrifying sounds of silence. In such straights, how can I conclude anything but "God has abandoned me?"

Ever felt like that? The psalmist did. And, this is our comfort. We are not alone in the valley of despair.

Four times the Psalmist asks, "How long . . .?" The silence lingered like the stench in a fish market until he grew sick with sorrow. It seemed like "forever" (natach).

Forgotten by God and man! Nothing is more frightening to us . . . nothing! We've invested our all in Christ and now we feel bankrupt. We are angry at God . . . afraid of Him. Fear chokes peace.

Psalm 13: 2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

Turned over to our own counsel and twisted thoughts? We feel like we've been down a hundred miles of bad road. The summers of our life are like fleeing doves, but the winters in our lives are like snails slowly crossing the road. Consciousness of our sins causes us to doubt God's forgiveness. Fears steal our joy. Anxiety erupts into anger . . . and doubt . . . and fits of depression. Sorrow leaks from our heart like puss from a wound. Grief lingers like musty perfume. Jacob concluded, "All these things be against me," and we have a lot of Jacob in us. We find his conclusions agreeable to our souls (Genesis 42:26).

Like the psalmist, sorrow's cold winters chill our hearts. Nastiness coats our throats. Our ship has been carried away by the tide, and we are lost at sea. We feel sick, alone, depleted. Will the sun shine again? The howling of jackals in the night confirms our doubts that God has abandoned us. Enemies gloat over us. Our bank account is empty. We are like drift wood lost at sea. What hope do we have?

The Psalmist's Cry for God to Hear Him

Psalm 13:3 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

Three imperatives are sent to the LORD: Look! Hear! Shine!

God, open your eyes and see my plight; Open your ears and hear my petitions; and, remove the clouds and shine your light on my path. If you, O God, do not look and listen and lighten my path, I will die in disgrace.

The psalmist feels the call of sleep. Depressed, he naps upon his bed. Powerless, he lingers. With no oar aboard this ship on his sea of troubles, he can't go forward; he can't go backward. Death feels like a friend — like a way of escape — even a savior.

Psalm 13: 4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

Are our enemies correct when they say that God has forsaken us . . . that we are deceived men . . . that our trust in God is in vain?

"Black as the Pit from pole to pole . . .

How charged the punishments the scroll"

Am I really the master of my fate

And the captain of my soul?

Our enemies boast over our downfall. Our circumstances provide evidence the godless are right and we are wrong. If God does not look, listen, and lighten our path, our enemies will use our demise to slander His name and gloat over their tenets of power.

The Psalmist's Confidence

Psalm 13: 5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

How shall we respond to God's silence? Angry, we feel like rebelling . . . like a volcano ready to explode; but, the psalmist shows us the way: Trust, rejoice, and sing!

During his abandonment, the psalmist postured himself to trust in His mercy, and to rejoice in His salvation. But, we are afraid to trust. It was because we trusted Him that we are in this miserable state to begin with. But, trust again we must. We do not feel like rejoicing. But, we can act it out . . . and do our best to win an Oscar.

Psalm 13:6 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

We find it easier to complain . . . easier to groan than to sing! But, sing we must! Our troubles are many, but the triumphs of Christ are more. There's always something to sing about. Surely, He who has provided a setting for me at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb will not leave me without a song to enjoy.

In conclusion, if we think the Christian life is all about pushing the fun button, then we are enrolled in the wrong class.

For reasons we do not understand, cross-carrying Christians will feel abandoned. Like children in the darkness, we will be frightened when we cannot see His face. We may never know the reason for this eclipse, but the darkness calls for trust . . . and rejoicing . . . and songs in the night.

[1] Genesis 40:23 Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

[2] "Hide Thy face" is a statement about loss of fellowship and communion.

[3] The term *nasach* in Hebrew means "everlasting," "enduring," and "perpetuity."

[4] Counsel (*etsah*) means "advice" – a reference to political "consultation."

[5] The term for "sorrow" is the kind of grief one feels at a funeral (Genesis 42:38)

Psalm 14 - The Perils of Atheism

A Look at a Fool



No God! What a frightful doctrine.

If there is no God, there is no purpose, no meaning, and no hope. Men are merely a product of Time + Chance and the end is a cold grave. Our loved ones are lost forever and we will soon breathe our last.

With no God, we find ourselves on a ghost ship with no captain wandering the stormy seas going to nowhere. No God, no prayer, no afterlife, alone, and soon to perish! Who can endure such a chilling conclusion when there is so much evidence that we are products of Divine creation?

All that is wrong with society can be traced to practical atheism and the doctrine of fools. The path of atheism has a perilous end.

The Fool's Verdict

Psalm 14:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> 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.

This psalm is dedicated to the Chief Musician along with 53 other hymns of faith. This psalm is not a private poem, but a public hymn — a didactic to teach doctrine and admonish the nation to faith.

Paul used this text as the foundation of the gospel (Romans 3:10-21). Theologians use this text to define the doctrine of hamartiology (sin).

A belief in an Elohim is common in all cultures. But the fool proclaims the death of God.

To reach a verdict of “No God” in the light of the abundance of evidence comes from a corrupt jury. Philosophers call the unbeliever an atheist. Psychologists label this juror “hostile, aggressive, and resistant.” Pop culture calls them “insane.” God calls the atheist “a fool” — a stupid man with a corrupt conscience.

In observing the fool, what would a sociological study reveal about those with no conscience toward God?

A criminologist would concur with Scripture: “They are corrupt.”

The verb “are” is a Hiphil stem meaning “they cause corruption.” The fool despises authority, defaces property, and multiplies pain among men. His deeds are abominable. Lies, hostility, strife, slander, cursing, murder, rape, and fraud grow like weeds in the field of the man who neglects God.

All that is wrong in society can be traced to a Christ-less heart.

The reference to foolishness and goodness are an oxymoron in this text. They are like oil and water. They do not mix. Tumbleweeds cannot produce a rose. Fools cannot do wisely. Atheists cannot do good as God defines good. Narcissistic, the fool can't escape the gravitational pull of his own self-interest.

There is not a fool on earth that "doeth good." Theologians call this the sin of omission. Lawyers call it nonfeasance or misfeasance. Fools are paraded into courtrooms in orange jump suits charged with the fruits of atheism on a daily basis. "Every man," says Dickson, "so long as he lieth unrenewed and unreconciled to God is nothing in effect but a madman" (Treasury of David).

While the death of a godly man is a loss to society (Psalm 30:8-12), society loses nothing when a fool dies.

The Judge's Verdict

2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

"Looked down" – Before us is a Farmer gazing at the crop; a General inspecting the recruits; an omniscient Judge examining humanity in search of any who might truly seek Him and do good. He sees. He knows. He inspects. He judges.

Only the redeemed seek Him and all of them have come to realize the truth of Peter's confession, ". . . I am a sinful man, O Lord." Christians as well as atheist have evil at work within – the difference being the Christian has a fire alarm that goes off when sin heats up the inner man. Atheists have no restraint in doing evil except the presence of a visible police force.

3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. {filthy: Heb. stinking}

With the quest concluded, the Bailiff reads the verdict: "Guilty!" or "Filthy."

These transgressors are gone astray. Like a defective arrow, they have missed the mark. Like wayward sheep, they found the hole in the fence. Like wild stallions, they won't accept bridle and saddle. Like a runaway train, their little red choo choo has done jumped the track. This is the psalmists way of teaching us that all men are sinners and have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Mankind as a whole ("together") has become filthy; that is, corrupt, tainted, and morally diseased. Like rotten fruit that is infected with mold and fungi, humanity is spoiled. Like an infected flower, pedals fall. Like puddles in the street, men are stagnate and polluted. The milk has soured. The food is contaminated. Mankind is infected with depravity. Men are sinners!

He repeats his verdict: "there is none that doeth good." Moral contagion spreads. All of humanity is contaminated. There is no vaccination that can prevent the moral decay. All men are indicted. All are guilty. All face a death sentence (Romans 6:23).

Theologically, this text proclaims the doctrine of “total depravity.” Men are **not** born good! They are born with a bent toward evil. They go “astray from the womb” (Psalm 51:3). All are infected with sin and will, without reconciliation to God, become a slave of their lusts and multiply misery among men.

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

Fools are called “workers of iniquity.” Note the plural. There is more than one. They work in pairs to trap and deceive. They are like a raging sea that churns up rot and dirt from the ocean’s floor. They do not perceive the consequences of their wrong doing. With no regret or remorse, they devour God’s people like bread. How do we account for this?

Like wolves, the “workers of iniquity” see God’s sheep as prey. They are not innocent victims. They are vicious predators! Men who do not know God cannot be expected not to injure you. They are not the abused, they are the abusers. They are not the results of poverty; they are the fruit of atheism. They are not products of a difficult childhood, but of a Christless education. They are not victims of bad choices, but trespassers delighting in evil. Their nature is inclined to choose pleasure rather than piety, evil rather than good, deeds of darkness rather than deeds of light.

Why are fools so provocative? The text gives the answer: “They call not upon the LORD.” The want of Theological knowledge is the bitter root that spoils the fruit of a man’s labor. Like a deficiency of vitamins causes scurvy, the neglect of God leads to moral decay. This lack of vitality towards the LORD results in hostility towards others.

Atheism is the root of depravity. More people were killed by atheistic governments in the 20th century than in all the previous wars of history – approximately, 180,000,000.

Those who sit on a lily pad of spiritual lethargy, commit the greatest sin of all—the neglect of God!! And, those who seek to educate our youth apart from Christ commit the greatest wrong of all . . . and their fate is to be cast into an eternal sea with a millstone hung about their neck, said Jesus (Matthew 18:6ff).

5 There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.

The psalmist lets us in on a dirty little secret about godless men. They are “there” (sham) shackled by fear. Nimrod, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Herods of this world suffer from irreversible paranoia. Like little birds, they quail at the thought of a Supreme Judge ruling the universe. These godless Titans are driven by a strange panic. The faith of even a modest saint is like a thorn in the thumb; a spear in the flesh; a knife in the heart to these monsters.

The word “generation” means “present.” God is present among his people. Let scoffers beware, those who injure God’s people and plan mutton for lunch touch the apple of His eye.

6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.

“Ye” – The evil workers (14:4) are godless men; i.e. practical atheists. These would include not only neighborhood delinquents, but miscreants like rulers, bankers, judges, congressmen, and

lawyers. Despite their fear, these cowards fake a lion's growl as they fleece the flock. These money mongrels continually strategize how to steal from the poor; to "transfer" wealth from the private sector to the public sector; from the private citizen to the corporate government.

The phrase "shamed the counsel" of the poor means "to frustrate" the efforts of the poor to break out of poverty and to accumulate wealth. We are not talking about the common thief, but institutional fraud designed to make the rich richer and the poor poorer (10th Commandment). The schemes of the wicked are designed to weaken the family and strengthen the State; that is, to enslave all. God's sheep are no match for these crafty schemers who defraud the common man.

The conjunction "because" should be translated "but." This is a BIG BUT! BUT, the LORD is the poor man's Refuge. But, the LORD is their Shepherd! But, the LORD is their Avenger! But, the LORD sees it all and will bring the "workers of iniquity" into judgment and roast them on a spit at the great round up.

There is no hope for the workers of iniquity. Shallow repentance will not save them. Like cement, their heart is hard. Like iron cannon balls chained to a paper airplane, their prayers return to the earth. Thunder and lightning will strike their camp. In God's timing the profane will be stripped of their earthly medallions. Like a naked man hanging on a rope, the worker of iniquity will be lifted up for public ridicule. The LORD is the victim's Refuge but He is also the fool's worst Nightmare.

Israel's Hope

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

"Oh" – There is a stunning reality God's sheep have to endure – the delay of judgment on the workers of iniquity. Until God acts, His sheep may hear the howling of wolves, the bleating of sheep, the cries of the poor, and the tears of the plundered. In this life, God's people will find themselves the victims of a police state, an overreaching government, taxation schemes, blundered investments, lying politicians, corrupt judges, unscrupulous salesmen, and even rejection by other sheep.

There is good news here – salvation "out of Zion." The psalmist sees a day when God will vigorously act in history to restore the lost fortunes of His people . . . and He began this reparation when Christ was born.

The verb "were come" to Zion should be translated "Salvation shall come from Zion." This victory has come to men in a first fruits way via the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This promise was fulfilled. Yeshua came from Zion. There is a Savior who has brought salvation to his people . . . and we await its consummation. There is a "when" question. Christ will return. His people shall be healed and compensated for their loss. Jacob who saw "all these things be against me" shall rejoice.

Therefore, let the new Israel be glad now! Let all rally faith, and join the glad chorus praising God for his salvation—there is a "Yeshua of Israel" that comes out of Zion to reverse the

captivity of His people. This is God's way of telling us the peril of the wicked is judgment and the destiny of the righteous is salvation — that those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall have eternal life.

Psalm 15 - Description of a Righteous Man

LORD, who shall Abide in Thy Tabernacle?



We have here a description of a righteous man.

Only God has a right to define righteousness. Many feel righteous who are actually wicked. When humanistic men define righteousness, they broaden the definition to include the most despicable behavior.

A Profound Question

Psalm 15:1 <A Psalm of David.> LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

The term “tabernacle” is a reference to the earthly dwelling place of the LORD God of Israel. The term “holy hill” corresponds to the temple mount in Jerusalem. The term “dwell” pertains to God’s acceptance of a man.

We have a profound question: Who is welcome or accepted in the presence of the thrice Holy God of Israel? This is a deep question seeing that angels cover their faces crying out, “holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty” (Isaiah 6).

The answer is “only the righteous!” Thus, we have a description of the righteous.

A Profound Description of a Righteous Man

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

1) A righteous man seeks righteousness. The word “walk” refers to the ways of a man—his conduct, principles, and habits.

The adjective “uprightly” (tamiym) means “whole” or “complete” in regards to God’s law. He is whole in regards to the Ten Commandments. He accepts the authority of Scriptures and does not pick and choose what commands to obey. He is not fractured or divided in his affections.

The words “integrity”, “innocent”, and “unimpaired” complete this description. The Ten Commandments are his moral compass. He is faithful to God’s law, but he may be accused of not keeping the whims and wishes of men or the State. David laid hold of righteousness, yet was considered a fugitive from justice during the early years of his life (Psalm 4:1 & 1 Samuel 20-26).

2) A righteous man works righteousness (sadek); that is, his walk matches his talk; his profession matches his confession. He does not say one thing and do another. He is repulsed by hypocrisy and hates duplicity. He is not one way in public and another way in private. The righteous man lives out his duties to God and his responsibilities before men.

3) A righteous man speaks the truth (emeth); that is, his words are faithful and true. He does what he says. He is reliable because he keeps his promises and fulfills his contracts. He does not say bad things about good people, nor does he say good things about bad people. He says what needs to be said and restrains knowledge. Knowing when to speak the truth, he is often silent.

3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

4) The righteous man is careful about what he says. In politics, slander has become the weapon of choice to murder a candidate. It need not be true, it need only to ruin the opponent.

But, the righteous man is not given to “backbiting”, “gossip”, or “slander” of his neighbors. He does not try to rise up by putting others down. He is not a liar. His speech is governed by God’s Word. He believes in freedom of speech but freedom is not absolutized.

Further, he does not hesitate to tell the truth about a man when the truth must be told; i.e. he does not disguise the truth about an evil person. He will tell the truth, but he may not tell the whole truth all the time. He is a private man and guards secrets. He is not a bootlicker, sycophant, or charmer. He does not over promise, exaggerate, plagiarize, or intentionally make misleading statements. He is believable because he seeks truth.

5) The righteous man injures no one. He is a trustworthy man. Because he is deeply committed to the Ten Commandments, the neighborhood is a safe place. He is careful to injure no man and to protect the property rights of others. He pays for mistakes and makes restitution where necessary. He is guilty of no crime because he has malice toward none.

6) The righteous man does not defame a neighbor. The term “reproach” means “to shame”, “defame,” or “scorn.” Simply put, he does not join a gossip circle where there is a conversational feeding frenzy around a roasted neighbor. He walks away and often eats alone.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

7) The righteous man hates evil men. The word “contemned” means “to despise.” He is known not only by what he loves, but what he hates. He not only hates evil acts, he hates evil men.

Biblically, man is a unit. It is impossible to separate the fruit from the root or the man from his actions. Actions expose the man. While the righteous refuses to slander a good man, he does not refuse to tell the ugly truth about a bad man.

A “vile person” would include the likes of abortionists, homosexuals, liars, deceivers, feminists, drunks, thieves, murderers, drug users, and fornicators. That is, he hates professional criminals.

He does not believe love is the answer to all things because he knows God’s justice is the cure for overt evil.

8) The righteous man loves the fellowship of God’s people. The righteous man goes to church and is keenly aware of the difference between sheep and goats. His friends are genuine, sincere Christian men who love God’s Word and keep His Law-word. He honors true believers and avoids hypocrites. He is tolerant of imperfect men, but intolerant of evil men.

9) The righteous man keeps his promises. Swearing to one's own hurt means that once a man makes a promise, he keeps his word — even though his promise may be difficult to keep! He keeps his word even when it is expensive and time consuming to do so. We have here a man that fulfills his contracts. His word is his bond. Unforeseen circumstances arise in every man's business, but the man of integrity completes his duty even when profits decrease.

Do your duty in all things. You cannot do more, you should never wish to do less- Robert E. Lee

5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent.

10) The righteous man is not a thief. He is not an opportunist who loans money at interest to the needy around him. He is in business to make a profit, but he makes it honestly. He helps his neighbor in a time of need by making loans. But, he does not try to make a profit off other people's misfortune. He is the opposite of a greedy, covetous man. He is the kind of man you want to do business with because you know he is not going to change the contract or scam his customers.

11) The righteous man cannot be bribed. He is in business for a profit, but He is not for sale. His principles, his pride, his reputation come before profit. His vote cannot be bought and he is careful with whom he does business. In political matters, he does not receive "kickbacks" or "funds" from lobbyists in an off shore account. He pays taxes he lawfully owes, but may not pay taxes he does not lawfully owe.

A Profound Outcome

5 "He that doeth these things shall never be moved."

What is the outcome of the righteous? It is very simple: he shall not be moved or shaken. He is not shaken by his circumstances or his adversaries. He is stable, unmovable, resilient, secure, and at peace with God and His law. This does not mean he has no troubles. His afflictions are many, but he has an anchor in heaven and is welcome in God's house.

Ultimately, there is only one righteous man and that is Christ, the second Adam, and all who come to him by faith.

Righteous men know they are sinners. Their hope is in the righteousness of Another. The righteous know they are not saved by their own works, but by the works of Christ. Having obtained a righteous standing by faith, the justified are deeply committed to God's law — not to be accepted, but because they are accepted in His presence they keep His law (Romans 4:5; 5:1, 8:4; 13:8).

Psalm 16 - The LORD Is My Portion Forever

In thee Do I Put My Trust



This psalm has rays of sunshine that burst through the clouds of darkness presenting to us the hope of immortality and the process of becoming a “holy one.”

A Prayer for Preservation

Psalm 16:1 Michtam of David.

That David is the author.

The title “Michtam” is uncertain. Most likely it is a musical term whose meaning has been lost in history. Some think the word comes from the Hebrew word “kethem” which refers to “gold:” that is, the psalm expresses David’s golden thoughts about the Lord.

The strange element about this psalm is its lack of parallelism. Because it lacks repetition and contrasts, it is sometimes difficult to interpret.

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

“trust”: As far as we can tell, David was the first to give the word “trust” (batash) a religious meaning. See Psalm 56. But, here the word “trust” is better translated “refuge.” Because David found refuge in God, He expected God to “preserve” (shamar = guard) him. Apparently, as was often the case with this soldier-prince, he felt like he was in some danger that threatened his life.

A Promise to God

2 O my soul, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;

“O my soul” is not in the text. It appears to be a gloss added by translators to give the text an intelligible reading.

Moreover, the NIV, ESV, and NASB translated the text, “I said unto the Lord” (Adonai, and not YHWH). David acknowledges God has a right to rule over him because He is the sovereign Lord.

Barnes renders the text this way: “Thou art my Lord – Thou hast a right to rule over me; or, I acknowledge thee as my Lord, my sovereign.”

“My goodness extendeth not unto Thee” is another interpretive challenge. What does the psalmist mean by “goodness?” Is he referring to moral character or happiness? Is David saying he has no goodness that benefits God or is he saying he has no happiness without God?

Some think that David is renouncing his own merit.

Ellicott notes the insertion of the word “extendeth.” This word introduces the fine thought that “Merit lives from man to man; and not from man to God.” Others think David is saying that he has no goodness apart from God; or that his happiness is not beside the Lord nor separate and independent of Him; that all his happiness was grounded on his relationship to the Lord.

The Latin Vulgate renders it: “My good is not given unless by thee.”

Barnes puts it this way: “My good is nowhere except in thee; I have no source of good of any kind – happiness, hope, life, safety, salvation – but in thee. My good is not without thee.”

A Passion for the Saints

3 But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

The word “saints” and “the excellent” refer to God’s people.

David appears to be saying that his love for the saints is further evidence of his devotion to the Lord. Since David’s happiness was centered on God, his happiness extended to the company of God’s people. Though his piety did not profit the Shepherd, it did benefit the flock. A man who delights in the Savior will also delight in His saints. The man who is wealthy in Christ enriches the people of God. The one who loves the Lord will also love his people. Thus, the true mark of the Christian man is his attachment to Christ and His church.

A Perspective on Idolaters

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

“Sorrows” (atstsebeth: plural) refers to the miseries and troubles caused by accepting the doctrines of idols. Sorrows (pain, injury) and idols are metonyms.

Verse 4 is a contrast in thought from verse 3. While David was devoted to the saints, he denounced idolatry. He took umbrage against idols and the worship of false gods. A man cannot love truth unless he hates lies. He cannot love God unless he hates evil.

The word “hasten” (maw’ her) refers to the impetuous, thoughtless adoption of the rules and customs belonging to a particular idol-system. It is used of “purchasing a wife” (mother) in 1 Samuel 18:25. Ideas have consequences: that is, those devoted (married, contracted) to other gods multiply their troubles.

The Hebrew word “multiplied” (rajah) means “to become great or numerous.” Those who serve pagan gods multiply their miseries. Those who mine gold in heaven are the richest men on earth. There are no gains to those who secretly worship idols or make up their own religion. Idols would include Baal-paganism, Hindu gods, and modern man’s pursuit of money, fame, and power. “A rich man without God is just a poor man with money.”

The “libations of blood” refers to the hideous rites of Moloch and Chumash, but since David was a good Hebrew he would not even mention the name of Baal. It was forbidden to do so among God’s people.

Christianity is a bloody religion: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” But, pagan religions abused and perverted blood sacrifice, whether by killing beasts or babies or by drinking blood and bathing in it — acts banned by the LORD God.

Uncomfortable in the company of the wicked, David found joy among the community of the saints. He is not only committed to God and His people, he detested idols and pagan rituals. He wouldn't even defile his lips by mentioning their gods and contemptible practices.

David was a man of deep love and deep hate. He loved the Lord and His people, and he hated lies, idols, and their contemptible practices.

5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintains my lot.

The pleasant thoughts in verse 5 & 6 are contrasted to sorrows associate with the practice of idol-worship in verse 4.

The word “portion” (ma'nah) means “lot.” It is an inference to Numbers 18:20 where God said to the Levites: “I am thy portion and thine inheritance.” In contrast to the sorrows associated with adopting the rules and customs of an idolatrous system, David considered his wealth in the Lord.

What does a Christian lack since the Father has given all things into the hands of the Son (3:35). He who owns Christ possesses all things. What a comfort for the disciples who picked up the cross, forsook all, and followed the Lord (Luke 14:33). Moreover, consider the integrity and brevity of the Ten Commandments in contrast to rigid, exhausting, multiplicitous statutes of governmental systems.

The word “cup” is a symbol for the “conditions of life” (Psalm 11:6).

The term “lot ” refers to pebbles (dice) jiggled in a cup and dumped on a table to determine one's fortune.

The participle “maintainest” (tamak) means “to hold, embrace, grasp, or support;” that is, David's destiny was not in the hands of chance . . . or his choices . . . or the gods of chaos, but in the sustaining work of the Lord his Maker.

A Personal Perspective on God's Dealings in His Life

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

The word “lines” refers to boundaries or territories of one's estate.

The word “pleasant” (na'iym) means “sweet, lovely, beautiful, and delightful.”

David was a man blessed with the presence and knowledge of God. As he looked at his place in the Land of Milk and Honey, he considered himself to have been given a pleasant portion. While he wanted more of God, he did not want more than God. Having resolved to live in the Land of Light, Life, and Love, David realized that his lot was considerably greater than the puny allotment of idol worshippers. He was in Immanuel's Land under Immanuel's Love. What more could a man want?

A Positive Persuasion on How to Live Life

7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

“bless” means “to speak well of” and “to adore.”

By “counsel” David refers to God’s choices and guidance in life.

The term “reins” refers to the heart or the mind of the inner man. The word “instruct” includes warnings, rebukes, and hard lessons learned during classes at God’s Night School. “Night” is a metaphor for the difficulties and adversities experienced in the University of Life.

David is saying that in devoting himself to the LORD he was not abandoned to his own idealism and delusions; rather, God disciplined, instructed, and trained him in the way he should go. Under His law, David became a better man — a man fit to be king of Israel.

8 I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

“At thy right hand” is a place of privilege. It is a military term referring to a commander’s chief of staff or “right-hand man.”

David set the LORD before him; that is, he was guided by the counsels of the LORD, and not the passions and pouting of the wicked. Because David built his house near the throne of God, neither wealth, business, sorrows, or the cares of this world could derail him from following his Commander.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

The “therefore” takes us back to how David built his house on the Rock of God’s presence and not on the sand of fake promises made by idols.

The word “rest” can be translated “tabernacled;” that is, David found a home in God’s hope-promises.

“Heart,” “glory” (reins, heart, or bowels) and “flesh” are metonyms for the personal possession of hope. Using all his members, David rejoiced in his Savior and lot in life.

Secure and feeling secure, David’s heart was glad. Because there was joy and hope in his heart, his cup ran over with confidence and a sense of security.

A Positive Perspective on the Future

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One(s) (plural) to see corruption.

The “thou” is the LORD God.

The word “leave” means to commit, abandon, or forsake.

“Hell” refers to sheol, the unseen nether world of the dead (Psalm 6:5).

The appellation “holy one” means chosen one, favored one, and beloved one. It refers to a person separated unto God by a contract:

“Gather *my faithful people to me, those who made a covenant with me by offering a (blood) sacrifice*” (Psalm 50:5).

God deals with men through contracts. All contracts have two parties, consideration, and obligations. The consideration in a contract / covenant with God is blood — the currency of the spirit world.

The Hebrew word “corruption” (shakkath) refers to sinking into a “pit, grave, or abyss.” It refers to utter destruction and not partial corruption. It is used of a lion being trapped into a pit during a winter snow-storm in 2 Samuel 23:20. The meaning of the passage is clearly that the LORD will **not** abandon His beloved to death.

Man’s fundamental problem is that he is going to die. “To be left to Sheol” and “to see the pit” are synonyms for “to die,” and “to never see life” (Ecclesiastes 9:9). This is a sunrise text that breaks through the darkness holding out the hope of immortality – a text which comes with a claim and proof of claim at high noon through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

The text is applied to Jesus since he is “the Holy One” by virtue of His life and resurrection from the dead (Acts 2:27). Since He defeated death and solved man’s fundamental problem, we who have been made “saints” by his work for us and in us. We too will share in the victories of His resurrection from the dead.

*See notes on Psalm 16:8-11 as a type or figure of the resurrection of Christ in the addendum below.

11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

We have in this verse the same thought which dominates the psalm — the thought of happiness and hope for those in covenant with God. Terms like “fulness of joy” and “pleasures evermore” express the joy and peace associated with those dedicated to God . . . those separated from idols and their abominations.

All who know Christ can enjoy the sunrises of hope bursting through the clouds of despair in this dark world. This psalm holds out the hope of immortality and instructs us on the process of obtaining this hope.

Terms like “trust,” “thou art my God,” “not taking the name of other gods upon our lips,” (being instructed by God,” “setting the Lord before” me,” and becoming a “holy one” by covenant express matters of faith that save the soul — the gospel invitation terms in this psalm. Those who have the Lord as their “portion” have the “bread of life” and are the richest people on earth.

Maclaren pleads well: “Oh, my friend, ‘why do ye spend your money for that which is not bread?’ The life of faith on earth is the beginning, and only the beginning, of that life of calm and complete felicity in the heavenly places.”

Addendum Notes:

16:8-11 On the resurrection of Christ:

“Consider Psalm 16:8-11. Here the psalmist sets the Lord before him, as his rock and assurance, his gladness, joy, and security. He takes comfort knowing that God will not abandon his soul to sheol or “let your holy one see corruption.” This psalm, however, not only provides future hope to the Israelite in David’s day, but it also is applied to Christ, even predicting his resurrection.

During Pentecost Peter applied Psalm 16 to God raising Christ from the dead (Acts 2:22-28). Peter points out the obvious, namely, that David is dead in his tomb to this day (2:29). But not so for Christ! “Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he(David) foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses” (2:30-32). The apostle Paul agrees. Proclaiming the gospel at Antioch in Pisidia, he appeals to Christ’s resurrection by quoting Psalm 2 and 16. Like Peter, Paul observes that David is long dead, but God raised Christ up and he did not see corruption (Acts 13:34-37).” (Matthew Barrett, Credo Magazine, “The Resurrection of Christ in the Old Testament,” 3-26-2013).

Psalm 17 - A Prayer for Injunctive Relief

That My Foot Slip Not



This is called “a prayer of David” and we have no reason to doubt it. A man in charge of protecting the nation from pirates and plunderers, David’s life was often on the line in the course of battle.

Consider this a plea to Heaven’s Court for injunctive relief.

A Motion for a Hearing

Psalm 17:1 <A Prayer of David.> Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.

“Hear the right” is a motion for the court to do what is right, fair, and just in His case.

“not out of feigned lips:” This plea comes from a righteous man, and not a duplicitous hypocrite.

2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

“sentence” (misphat) refers to “judgment” — a plea to the court to dispense justice and to do it fairly.

A Notice to the Court that the Cross-examination Revealed Innocence

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

“Proved mine heart” implies that God had already tested David’s motivations, cross-examined his testimony, and found him innocent in regards to his conflicts; that is, he has clean hands.

The tensions that existed were entirely the fault of his opponents.

“At night time” infers thorough investigation.

4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.

“the works of men” -- being sinners, the works of men are evil, vain, and harmful.

“by the word of thy lips” directs out thoughts to the power of God to enable men to keep His law and to live righteously.

“kept me” refers to the power of God at work in the life of David preventing him from falling into the sins so common to man; that is, his righteousness standing in God’s court during the plea was due to God’s strength and not his own self-determination.

A Prayer for Preservation

5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

David depended on God to some success, but here he feels the need for greater guidance and protection.

6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.

David motions the LORD's Court because he exhausted his administrative remedies in diplomacy. Now it was time to call upon the Judge to intervene and grant him injunctive relief.

7 Shew thy marvelous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.

"Shew thy marvelous lovingkindness" is better translated "distinguish the favors" of the court. Think of Jonah who was rightly concerned that God's mercies might overflow its banks and reach Nineveh. The prayer pleads with the Court — a Court known for its mercies — that the Judge would "separate" His mercies; that is, reserve His mercies for the plaintiff whose cause is just; and dispense justice against the guilty defendants whose cause is wicked.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

The eye is the most precious of all senses and the most sensitive part of the body. In using this expression, the psalmist prays for special protection and provision.

"under the shadow of thy wings" is a metaphor derived from a mother bird caring for her chicks.

9 From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.

"oppress me" or *oppress my soul* refers to the work of the wicked seeking to take away his life.

A Claim Against His Adversaries

10 They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

"own fat" refers to financial prosperity.

"enclosed" implies they are imprisoned by their own interest; that is, they are self-absorbed and narcissistic to a glaring fault. Consequently, they speak arrogantly with a foul breath of superiority. With their nose in the air and chin up, they hurl contempt at common people through the slits of their eyes.

11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;

"us" implies the psalmist was not alone — a reference to his army; that the proud acted this way to his friends and associates.

"in our steps" means "where ever they went."

12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

“Like a lion” implies this fellowship of holy ones were being stealthily watched and stalked by predators intent on devouring them at supper time.

Consider the surveillance state during our time where the government engages in pervasive surveillance of large numbers of its citizens and visitors — especially pious men that address the errors of this age (John 7:7).

A Dispositive Motion for Injunctive Relief

13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword:

“Arise” infers the psalmist perceives the Lord as being still and inactive. He calls on the LORD to arise from His rest and become proactive in this battle between the proud and the humble -- to interpose Himself on their behalf.

“disappoint him” means “to come to the front” of the battle and to assist His soldiers in this battle to oppose the enemy.

“cast him down” is a prayer that God would humble his opponents and make them bow down in submission to His god-ordained authority.

Apparently, the psalmist feels his own weakness and vulnerability; that is, the battle was too much for him: “Deliver my soul . . . ”

“thy sword” appears to mean “to save me and defeat the wicked by the power of Thy sword.”

The Petitioner’s Description of his Opponent

14 From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

“From men which are thy hand” is better translated “by thy hand.”

David describes the wicked as “men of the world” with all their hopes and ambitions resident in the cities of men.

“men of the world” literally means, “of time.” There is no fleeing from His hand of judgment, but by fleeing to it one can find mercy.

“They are God’s sword, which cannot move without him, and which he will sheathe when he has done his work with it. They are his hand, by which he chastises his people” (Matthew Henry).

Benson: “Who prosper in, and set their hearts upon, this vain and transitory world, and neither have, nor choose, nor desire, any other portion or felicit . . . ”

“portion in this life” refers to narrowed-minded men whose vision for life is wrapped up in time and material possessions.

“whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure” refers to their success in obtaining the desires of their heart — desires limited to pleasures, power, property, and possessions.

“full of children” means they have enough wealth to satisfy their children . . . an abundance of wealth that is passed on to “babes” or to their young children.

A Personal Expression of Trust in God’s Justice

15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

“As for me” provides a contrast between the psalmist whose portion is in the LORD and His adversaries who have their portion in this life. His home is in heaven, but their home is on earth.

The psalmist seeks the LORD as His inheritance (16:5), and the common man seeks riches to increase his earthly estate. David’s highest ambition was to be declared righteous in His sight and to behold the face of the Lord; but, the men of the world seek pleasure and treasure. He sees God as His Savior and Satisfaction, but the carnal see wealth as their means for gratification and protection.

The ultimate goal of the wicked is to obtain “stuff.” But, the ultimate goal of David was to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Psalm 18 - The Greatest Victory of All

The Floods of Ungodly Men Made Me Afraid



This is an extraordinary victory-psalm composed by David after God delivered him from the assassination orders of Saul.

It is also recorded in 2 Samuel 22 with slight variations.

Pursued by Saul, David had to record the marvels of his deliverance in a poem — a poem which contains the most sublime, grand, and metaphoric imagery in all of Sacred Literature.

It is not only a literary masterpiece; it shines light on the greatness and deliverance of the LORD God toward His servant. Oh, that we could boast the same!

If you have ever wondered what it is like to have God on your side, this is it.

This psalm is **not** for engineers and mathematicians with slide rule in hand eager to tighten down a trigonometric interpretation of Scripture, but for “right-brain” men and women with a capacity “to feel” the grandeur and awesomeness of this mountain-ripping triumph — a victory literally realized in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Description of David’s Gratefulness (18:1-2)

Psalm 18:1 <To the chief Musician, 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: And he said,> I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

He delivers us from trouble that we might grow in the love of God.

2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

Images like “rock,” “fortress,” “buckler,” “horn,” and “high tower” are imposing metaphors for protection.

Eight times he used the pronoun “my”; that is, the LORD is not only a Rock; he became David’s Rock. He is a personal God deeply committed to each of His children . . . and not just an abstract force.

A Description of David’s Terrifying Troubles (18:3-5)

Terms like “enemies,” “death,” “floods of ungodly men,” “afraid,” “sorrows of the grave,” “compassed,” and “snares of death” expose the dangers David faced at this time during his life.

3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

Out of this victory came a commitment to seek God's power and not to rely upon his own competence as a fighting man.

4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

The adversaries ("floods") of godliness are many, and their ambitions deadly. The ungodly in positions of power . . . doing nothing . . . or exercising their power to crush true religion strikes fear into the heart of the pious. The avalanches of the ungodly create a torrent of fear in men — like floods filled with trash gobbling up everything in its torrents.

5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

"hell" refers to death or to the grave.

"prevented me" means "confronted me." "snares" refers to government ploys to deceive and plunder the innocent.

A Description of David's Mighty Deliverance

David compares God's answer to His blistering pleas to the most catastrophic, ground-shaking events known to man: shattering earthquakes; smoking, lava-spewing volcanoes; collapsing heavens and falling stars; black, thick storm-cloud darkness; a cavalry of cherubs galloping with lightening like speed on the wings of the wind; angry, dark, tumultuous, coal-black, cumulous clouds hurling bullets of death and coals of fire upon his enemies; deafening, kettle-drum thunder with bolts of lightning for arrows as precision-guided munitions, crashing lava-like cinders; a ferocious shaking of the foundations of the earth releasing floods of subterranean waters demolishing everything in its path; and, a mighty deliverance by a super-intense, hero God exhaling plumes of smoke like a western locomotive reaching down in perfect timing to rescue his drowning servant.

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

David describes in no uncertain terms that his deliverance was not due to his military prowess, but because God heard the cries of His prayer from His palace.

7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

Note the imagery of thundering, shattering earthquakes with seismic ocean waves, shaking like a bowl of Jell-O that tumble buildings as easily as knocking down stacks of dominos.

8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

Note the imagery of volcanic activity with nostrils spitting out hot gases and molten rock like a snorting, pawing bull facing a matador.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.

Note the imagery of convulsions and celestial catastrophism that bows the heavens with dust clouds of darkness under his feet like a western stampede.

10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

Note the imagery of a carousel of cherubs charging the enemy troops on the wings of the wind with angels of light stretching forth bayonets to strike the enemy.

11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.

Note the imagery of a massive storm with hurricane like forces possessing the raw power of blizzards hurling spears of ice at its target in the darkness of midnight.

12 At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire.

Note the imagery of flashing lightening and black cumulous clouds launching buckets of cold boulder-size hailstones and burning cinders to the earth crushing and incinerating its victims.

13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire.

Note the imagery of a banging, crashing thunderstorm pelting the earth with red-hot lava-like hailstones as violent as a hail of bullets from a Gatling gun.

14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightning's, and discomfited them.

Note how the psalmist compares lightening to an army of archers releasing armor-piercing arrows with deadly accuracy.

15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

Note the imagery of earth-splitting earthquakes that release the subterranean waters producing mountain-moving floods not seen since the days of Noah.

“blast of the breath of thy nostrils” produces images of irritated, snorting bulls and fire-breathing dragons.

16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

Note the imagery of a man drowning in a flash-flood being pulled out of the angry waters by a brave, compassionate boatman.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

The adjective “strong” is used twice to show us the power of the opposing army too numerous to count and the insufficient forces of David.

18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

“prevented” refers to an act of confrontation. “stay” means a “staff” or “crutch.”

A Description of David’s Righteous Cause

Terms like “righteousness,” “clean hands,” “kept the ways of the LORD,” “not wickedly departed,” “judgments before me,” “not put away statutes,” “upright,” “kept myself from iniquity,” “merciful,” and “pure” describes David’s innocence and his basis for a summary judgment motion with prejudice.

19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

“large place” refers to “dry land.”

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

Note the clean hands doctrine. We must have clean hands to pray. Remember the cross! Christ died for our sins. When Christians pray, they do not stand on their own righteousness. Believers claim their position in Christ, their cleansing by blood, and their justification in Christ. For this reason, all our prayers end with, “In Jesus’ name.”

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

Oh, that all Christians would be able to say the same!

22 For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

Note righteousness is defined by adherence to God’s law . . . and not loyalty to man’s freedom-crushing, statutory regulations.

23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

Trespasses refer to violation of law, but “iniquity” refers the intent and malice behind law-breaking.

24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

David’s prayer is based on the fact that he has cleans hands and has injured no one — the foundation of common law.

25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;

Note the principle that God often treats men like they treat others (Matthew 6:12-15). If we tilt the scale of justice towards mercy, God is inclined to show us mercy; if we tilt the scale towards cruelty and abuse of our fellowman, God may mirror his justice accordingly.

26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.

Though two different words for “froward” are used in the Hebrew, both terms mean “twisted” or “crooked.” The last word “froward” (pathal) implies “to twist or to wrestle.” If we spin and twist matters for our own interest, God may be inclined to spin us in circles to chase our own tail.

A Description of David’s Confidence

Verbs like “save,” “bring down,” “light my candle,” “enlighten my darkness,” “run through a troop,” and “leaped over a wall” express the born-again confidence of this soldier-king.

27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

“high looks” refers to people who hold their chin up and sit on pedestals looking down at common people.

28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

A lit “candle” is the imagery of wisdom, clarity, guidance, prosperity, holiness, happiness, and success.

29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

A “troop” refers to a plundering squad of soldiers — seven to fourteen men. David is not running from the enemy, but toward them; that is, he is an advancing, aggressive swordsman taking the fight to enemy combatants.

Note in Ephesians 6, there is no armor for the back . . . no promises for those in retreat. When in doubt, attack.

30 As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

The Christian sword is the sharp word of God. In Revelation 19, our Champion is symbolized by a sharp sword coming out of His mouth. He has no other weapon! Use it and strike a blow, or lay it down and be defeated.

The “buckler” refers to a shield. Here the shield is a metaphor for the Word of God used to defend and smash sophisticated arguments launched at the righteous by squabblers.

A Description of God’s Deliverance for David

Note the metaphors used to describe David’s newly acquired skills and confidence in God: “girdeth with strength,” “maketh perfect,” “maketh like hinds’ feet,” “teaches my hands to war,” “bow of steel broken,” “given me a shield,” “thy right hand holds me up,” “thy gentleness made me great,” “enlarged my step . . . my feet did not slip,” “pursued my enemies . . . overtaken them,” “consumed,” “not able to rise,” “fallen under my feet,” “wounded them,” “girded me with strength,” “subdued under me,” “given me the necks,” “none to save them,” “beat them as dust . . . dirt in the street,” “delivered me,” “made me the head over the people.” These dynamic, active verbs describe God’s marvelous work to save David with his complete and utter victory over his enemies.

31 For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God?

The solitariness of the living God is one of the great themes in Scripture. YHWH is the one and only God.

32 It is 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.

hinds" refers to deer.

34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

War is part of the will of God. David learned how to fight and defend himself. Likewise, the church ought to learn how to wage war at the gates of hell . . . including individuals to physically learn the art of self-defense.

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.

A better translation for "thy gentleness hath made me great" might be "with thy meekness thou hast multiplied me." It was God's gentleness and self-restraint towards David and his flaws that made him great.

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

Grounding is everything. Build your house on the rock . . . on the Holy Scriptures and not on the sand of woke ideology.

37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

The strategy in war is not to defend ground, but to search and destroy; i.e. search out the enemy and destroy them. Get off the defensive and go on the offensive.

38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

This is the imagery of defeat.

39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

This is the imagery of victory.

40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

A marvelous metaphor for total conquest.

41 They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

. . . the language of total defeat.

42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

More imagery of utter defeat.

43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.

This is the language of political popularity and the full support of an undivided nation.

44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

This text describes the international ramifications of this military triumph.

A Description of David's Newfound Truth and Commitment

Notice David's refreshed insight into his enemies, the LORED, and himself — a powerful perceptions that made him the most thankful man on earth at that time.

45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

46 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47 It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.

48 He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

49 Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

50 Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

God had David on his side because David was on His side keeping his law and following his calling as a soldier-king.

There are only a few other occasion in Scripture where this kind of dynamic victory occurs: During the time of Asa, Jehoshaphat, Elijah and Elisha, Hezekiah, the rebuilding of the Second Temple, the Maccabees, the short term mission of the disciples where they saw Satan fall from heaven, the resurrection of Christ, the missionary accomplishment of the early church in the Book of Acts, and the salvation of each individual Christian man.

Let us never forget that at Calvary all the dark storm clouds from God's armory of wrath with blasts of dagger-like lightning, claps of ear-splitting thunder, and fiery, skull-crushing hailstones were released on Christ so that we might be delivered from Satan, sin, and eternal death.

Psalm 19 - Two Revelations

The Revelation of Creation and the Revelation of Scripture



Where does a man go to learn about God?

This text informs us that God has revealed Himself in creation (or “nature”) and the Holy Scriptures.

Creation reveals His infinite attributes, and the Word of God reveals the personality of our Creator God.

Creation testifies to the general character of the LORD God, and Scripture testifies to specific truth about God that a man cannot discover by looking only at creation. The ultimate revelation about what God is like is found in our Lord Jesus Christ — the subjective representation of the Father.

The Spirit was the Agent that breathed life into the original creation and the One Who breathed over the original authors to pen each word — a process known as verbal-pleinary inspiration of the original text in order to safeguard the perfection of the Word of God.

This “inspiration” process does not apply to copying or to the work of translations. Do not look at translations as perfect instruments, but as witnesses to the original text — a process of the work of thousands of copyists and translators.

The Revelation Through Creation



God cannot be found in His creation because He is separate from it. But, His footprints are everywhere.

Psalm 19:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.>

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

The “heavens” reveal God’s created order above the earth; that is, the sun, moon, and stars.

The verb “declare” means to announce, speak, and make known.

The “glory of God” refers to the transient and intransient attribute of the one, true, infinite, personal, virtuous, triune Spirit who created all this complexity ex nihilo by the power of His word.

Psalm 33:6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

The word “firmament” (ra’qiya) refers to the “expanse” or to the spreading of the sun, moon, and stars across the sky — a fixed substantial concave house for the heavens that can be rolled up like a scroll (Isaiah 34:4). The heavens do not refer to “infinite” space because infinite space does not exist. Only God is infinite.

“handiwork” refers to the skills of a weaver or pottery maker. In this case, the psalmist personifies the Lord as a Master Craftsman using His hands to shape the heavens.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

The psalmist personifies days and nights as preachers providing around the clock instruction about the Creator. These instructors never sleep. They work day and night teaching all who are willing to learn about His handiwork in the six days of creation.

3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

It does not matter where you travel on earth — to the north, south, east, or west instructors are there providing lessons about the LORD God from creation. These instructors are multi-linguists providing classes in every language known to man; that is, language is not a barrier for a divine education about the origins of the cosmos.

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,

“Their line” or “cord” represents a stringed instrument . . . a sound . . . a note . . . a word expressing truth about the Creator; that is, these sweet musical sounds vibrate to the ends of the earth so all can be blessed by the composition testifying to the wonders of His works . . . from the rising of the sun to the setting of the sun, from the polar regions of the north to the frozen tundra in Antarctica.

“tabernacle for the Sun” informs us that the heavens are contained under “the dome” and that this fixed, concave structure performs like a tent for the Sun to make its rounds over the earth: “The sun and moon stood still in their habitation ” (Habakkuk 3:11).

5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

The rising sun is compared to an eastern bridegroom coming out of his chamber in royal raiment with a red velvet mantle, sporting a sword in a scabbard, and, brandishing multi-colored, military regalia. “Fit as a fiddle” and looking like a model athlete, he charms the wedding guests.

6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

The sun in all its shining glory parades across the sky on a world tour exhibiting his kingly stature to the wonder and amazement of gazing eyes. He is not only on display, he charms and

warms the hearts of all. Having gained the trust of men, He generously blesses all nations with sunlight necessary for life.

Revelation of God through Inspiration

The LORD reveals Himself in and through the Word of God.

The Word of God is Perfect

Psalm 19:7 The law (torah) of the LORD is perfect (taw-meem), converting (shuwv) the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The word "law" is the Hebrew word "torah." "Torah" is the word the Hebrew community uses to refer to the first five books of the Tanach (Tanakh).

The word "torah" is a general word that refers to God's laws – the objective revelation of God's character. "Torah" also refers to the Ten Commandments" (Exodus 24:12) as well as specific instructions on various ceremonies and rituals (Leviticus 6:2). Jesus is the living Torah, the subjective reflection of God's character.

Christendom believed itself to be God's realm because it was governed by the law of God as set forth in the Scriptures. Moreover, it saw itself as the new Israel of God and no less subject to the moral teachings in Torah.

It is a modern heresy that holds that the law of God has no meaning and no binding force on men today. Those who keep the Torah are blessed (Psalm 119:10). It takes understanding to keep God's Torah (Psalm 119:34). It is "wicked" to depart from the Torah (Psalm 119:53; Isaiah 30:9). Embodied in the word *Torah* is the whole concept of the authority of God (Is. 2:3). Unlike humanistic, man-made "laws" which are spurious and often frivolous, the Torah is fully sanctioned by YHWH. Every nation is responsible to the *torahs* of God (Isaiah 1:10; 24:5; 42:4).

YHWH is the Great Lawgiver, and to depart from Torah is to depart from righteousness.

Isaiah 33:22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.

The word "perfect" means "whole or complete or wholesome." The Bible is the complete revelation of God to man. It began with God speaking to Adam and was completed during the apostolic age. Nothing more needs to be added. It is the completed, finished, perfect work of inspiration (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

Law cannot save the soul, but it can warn sinners of error and turn a sinner to Christ. The word "converting" comes from the Hebrew word *shuwv*, a Hiphil participle, which means "to turn," "to bring back," or "to refresh." It is translated "turn" 185 times.

In Genesis 42:5, *shuwv* is translated "restored" in the story of Joseph where Joseph predicted that the chief butler in Pharaoh's court would be restored to his former position in Pharaoh's court. In Exodus 4:7, Moses' leprous flesh was turned (*shuwv*) back to normal. In 2 Samuel 14:3 *shuwv* is translated "fetch home again." David called for Absalom, his estranged son, and

brought him home again. In Proverbs 25:13, *shuwv* is translated “refresh” where the text says a good servant refreshes his master. In Ezekiel 14:6 *shuwv* is translated “repent.” When a person repents, he turns from his sin back to God. David is telling us that the Word of God has the power to convert the soul. A sinner who will read the Word of God can experience the “new birth” (regeneration). A straying Christian who reads the Word of God can be turned back to Christ because the Word of God can restore the heart.

The Word of God is Sure

Psalm 19:7b The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

The word “testimony” refers to the Torah, particularly to the Ten Commandments because the Ten Commandments are a witness to the character of God. The Torah is about God’s law. Because the law is based on God’s eternal character and comes as a direct reflection of the character of God, the law is absolute, unchanging, and immutable (Psalm 119: 137, 138, 142, 144).

“I, the Lord, change not” (Malachi 3:6). God’s character is the basis of law, of ethics, of right and wrong. To study law is to study theology; to study theology is to study law. The practice of law is none other than applied theology. Men are not saved by keeping the law, but God saves men and empowers them to keep His law (Romans 8:4). The law does not save men, but when properly applied it purges evil men from society.

The word “sure” (*aman*) is a Niphal verb implying that the law of God has been acted upon so that it is made “sure.” The word “sure” means “faithful” or “trustworthy” or “reliable.” The Bible is reliable and is the canon of truth; i.e. it is a ruler which one can use to measure the truth of a thing.

The word *aman* is translated “believe” (Genesis 15:6), “verified” (Genesis 42:20), “amen” (Numbers 5:22, under an oath), “nursing father” (Numbers 11:12), and “faithful” (Numbers 12:7). The Bible can be trusted because it is inspired by the Holy Spirit. This cannot be said of sources grounded in psychology and humanistic law.

The word “wise” (*chakam*) is the word for wisdom. It is translated “cunning” ten times (See I Chronicles 22:15 and 2 Chronicles 2:7,14). The word “subtle” and is used to describe Jonadab’s plot to rape Tamar. *Chakam* is translated “wise” 102 times in the OT. The psalmist is saying that the Word of God can make its reader sharp, intelligent, wise, and discerning. Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord, not a master’s degree in psychology, or a juris doctor’s degree by the BAR association (Proverbs 1:7).

The Word of God is Righteous

Psalm 19:8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes

The word “statutes” (*paqad*) refers to the legal regulations by God established in Israel. Statutes are specific prohibitions against certain acts. The term “right” (*yashar*) is the word “righteousness” or “straight” in Hebrew. It is translated “please” in 2 Chronicles 30:4, “straight”

in 2 Chronicles 32:30), “upright” in Job 1:1, and “righteous” in our present text. It means straight or true. The analogy before us is that of a plumb line used to construct a wall. The law (Bible) is our plumb line for what is equitable and proper. It is God’s tape measure for evaluating right and wrong. It is not only accurate on what it speaks; it is the sufficient guide for morals, ethics, integrity, virtue, and the way to heaven. Only God can define right and wrong, goodness, and evil. When man seeks to define morals, he tolerates evil and condemns truth.

The word “rejoicing” is the Hebrew word “*samach*” -- a Piel participle implying intense joyfulness. It is translated “be glad” 34 times in Scripture. It is used of Jonah’s glad heart over the relief he found under the shade of a gourd. In Exodus 4:14, the term is used of Aaron’s joy in seeing Moses after a forty day separation. It is translated “be merry” one time in I Kings 4:20. In the wonderful prosperous times of Solomon’s reign, the people were eating and drinking and making merry. Want to be happy? Then plunge into the Word of God.

The Word of God is Pure

Psalm 19:8b “the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.”

The word “commandment” is the Hebrew word *mitzvah* which refers to a code or law given by God. In Leviticus 4:2, a *mitzvah* is a prohibition to do a thing; that is, when a person does a “thou shall not” he breaks a *mitzvah*. He injures God and, or his neighbor.

The word “pure” (*bar*) is the word for clean or clear. It is translated “cleanness” in 2 Samuel 22:21 when David talked about clean hands. In law, a person who has clean hands is a person who has not injured another by his actions. The idea here is that God’s Word is like water that cleanses the eye so a man can see clearly (Ephesians 5:25-26).

Too often people say, “Well, the Bible is just too hard to understand.” But, this criticism is skewed. The Bible does not address all man’s questions, but it is clear on what it speaks and what it means. If there is a haze surrounding the Bible, it is in the dark mind of man.

Because the Bible is pure we should beware of those who want to integrate humanism with Christianity, psychology with theology, and Greek philosophy with the gospel.

A teacher asked this question, “What do you get when you cross a chicken with a cow? Answer: eggnog. Well, “What do you get when you cross theology with psychology?” Answer: psychoheresy. The Bible is pure and God’s man will not pollute his ministry with the teachings of man.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

The word “enlightening” (*ore*) means to light up as in when God lit up the universe on the day He set the lights in the sky (Psalm 97:4). It is translated “clear day” in Amos 8:19. It is translated “shine,” “break of day” (2 Samuel 2:32), “kindle,” and “set on fire.” All these words refer to the giving of light enabling man to see. The Bible is like water in that it cleanses the eyes. It is like a lamp in that it gives light so the eye can see.

The Word of God is Clean

Psalm 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever:

The word “fear of the Lord” (yavah) is another title for God’s Word. Fear is the effect of reading the Torah . A man should be afraid to disobey His commandments—to offend God or injure one’s neighbor or his property. Fear is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7).

The word “clean” (tawhowr) means pure and unpolluted. It is translated “clean,” “pure,” and “fair.” It is pure because God’s Word is uncontaminated by the sin of man – of not of human origin says Peter (2 Peter 1:19-20). Though His Word came through flawed men, He superintended its inscription in such a way as to protect its purity. Because it is pure, it has a cleansing effect on those who read it. David could say, “Create in me a clean heart” (Psalm 51:10). A man can be clean by taking the soap of God’s Word and scrubbing his soul (Psalm 119:9-11).

Further, God’s Word “endures forever.” Because the Torah is a reflection of God’s character and because God’s character is unchanging and immutable, God’s Word is permanent. Because it “endures forever” it is absolute. Because it is absolute, it perpetuates moral absolutes and cleanses men of the moral relativism that infects this age.

The Word of God is True

Psalm 19:9 . . .the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

The Bible is called “the judgments of the LORD.” The Hebrew word for “judgments” is *misphat*. The Bible is called the *Misphat* of the Lord because the Bible is a record of God’s judicial decisions on what is right and what is wrong. Like a court recorder keeps a record of the judge’s decisions, the Spirit created the judicial record of God’s decisions.

The word “true” (‘emeth) refers to something that is firm or faithful – something that conforms to reality. In this case, “true” refers to the faithfulness of God’s Word. In other words, when the Bible speaks on fornication, family, marriage, abortion, feminism, or homosexuality, you are engaging truth and righteousness. When Paul addressed Felix on “righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come” he pierced the congested conscience of the governor by using God’s Word.

God’s Word is Righteous

Psalm 19:9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

The Hebrew word for “righteous” is *tsadaq*, and it is different than the word “right” in the previous verse. *Tsadaq* means “just;” that is, it is balanced. Because it is symmetrically weighted it can meet the needs of every person. No matter what you need, the Bible addresses your concerns. If you need hope, encouragement, comfort, strength, wisdom, correction, or discernment, the Bible can minister to you.

The Value of God’s Word

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Having given a sevenfold description of God's Word, the psalmist now estimates its value. It is more treasured than a pot of gold.

Throughout history all cultures have esteemed this golden metal as a precious commodity. Terms like "gold fever," "gold rush," "good as gold," "golden anniversary," "The golden years," and "go for the gold" clue us in to the historical lust men have for this shiny metal. It is a symbol of power, wealth, and success. It has provoked greed and lust. It has been hoarded and unspent, and it has been spent and dispersed as a man's greatest expression of love. Man's desire for gold and relentless pursuit of this precious metal is well founded in history. Brides have been won, and wars have been fought over gold.

The Effect of Scripture on His Servants

11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

"thy servant" represents the author of the psalm speaking from his own experience.

The word "warned" (zahar) means "to shine" or "to make bright" – a vivid symbol indicating "to instruct" and "to warn."

The idea is to shed such light on a subject so that its duty is made plain. The word is rendered "admonished" in Ecclesiastes 4:13; 12:12; "warn, and warned," in Psalm 19:11; 2 Kings 6:10; 2 Chronicles 19:10; Ezekiel 3:17-21; Ezekiel 33:3-9; "teach," in Exodus 18:20; and "shine," in Daniel 12:3. Keeping His Word not only protects the man, but enriches him with happiness and security.

"great reward" – regular instruction in the Word of God not only exposes danger in life it provides benefits to one's life.

12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

The word "error" means to wander or miss the target much like a stray arrow; i.e. departures from following the law.

In view of the holy demands and far reaching requirements of the law which asserts its jurisdiction over the mind, words, and actions, who can recall the number of times that he has departed from this law? Who can count his own sins and mark his own failures? (Barnes)

In view of a law so pure, so holy, so strict in its demands, and so extended in its requirements – asserting jurisdiction over the thoughts, the words, and the whole life, who can recall the number of times that he has underperformed or over reached his liberties?

The word "secret" means "hidden or concealed." Gazing at the pure Word of God with demands touching every nook and cranny of the soul, the psalmist felt compelled to pray that God would cleanse him from those unknown violations of law that mar the man and offend the holiness of God. Because he feels dirty under the fingernails of his soul, he prays that God

would protect him from the pollution of sin working in the inner man of which he was not fully aware.

An Appropriate Prayer in Light of Revelation

13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me; then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

“Keep” (chase) means “to restrain” or “to prevent.” “Thy servant” refers to the author.

The Hebrew word for “presumptuous” (za’de) refers to something boiling, swelling, or inflated. It is most commonly reconfigured as “proud” in English (Psalm 86:14; Psalm 119:21, Psalm 119:51).

Presumptuous sins are acts done without consulting God’s Law-Book . . . without consideration as to its effect or authority . . . things done out of pride . . . or anger . . . or carelessness. The psalmist is not discussing rebellion, but that which proceeds from pride . . . self-confidence . . . and energies of an untrained will.

The psalmist has a healthy distrust of himself; and, therefore prays that God would intervene and deliver him from sin lurking in every corner of the inner man.

The English word “presumptuous” means “failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate;” that is, acting without thinking; leaping before you look; talking before you think; believing something is benign when it is actually harmful.

“Let them not have dominion over me”; that is, don’t let sin reign over me; don’t let me be a slave to sin at work within my being. I am no match for sin. I am weak. I fail too often. Don’t let these forces commit mutiny and become captain of my ship. Liberate me from my sin. See John 8:32, John 8:36; Galatians 5:1.

14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

This is a prayer of a pious man . . . a man who follows the Lord in private as well as in public, in the darkness and in the light; on Sunday and Monday through Saturday.

This prayer can infer “guide my works . . . put a reign on my tongue . . . instruct me on how to speak carefully and accurately. Lead my mind. Shape my thoughts. Let my meditation and musings be approved by you.”

The author ends with a true confession. “O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.” This man built his house on the rock. He knew he was a sinner and that he needed to be saved from the power of sin forcing its way into every closet of his life. He looked to God, not self, for power over sin.

O, that we might do the same!

Psalm 20 - The God of Jacob Defend Thee

Some Trust in Chariots



This psalm purports to be a psalm of David. It appears to be a psalm written for the people to sing as the king went off to war.

First Stanza

This is the language of the people praying for their king.

Psalm 20:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

"trouble" appears to refer to political conflicts and international disputes.

"The God of Jacob" is the title of grace . . . of God working to save the weak . . . found 14 times in the Tanakh. No one had Jacob's best interest at heart -- not his mother, father, brother, uncle, wives, or sons. But, God loved the man and protected him all the days of his life.

2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

The "sanctuary" is the temple, the Holy of Holies, the throne of God. The Lord has the authority, power, and caring love to intervene and to help His own.

3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

"offering" covered the sins of the king and the people; and, "burnt sacrifices" were free will offerings that depicted devotion to the Lord. These well-wishes and prayers were grounded in mercy and not the merits of the people or the king.

4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfil all thy counsel.

Kings planned for war and worked out a strategy for victory. This is a prayer that God would grant success to the king's plans and purpose – an objective that benefited the people.

Second Stanza

5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfil all thy petitions.

War is a terrible event, but the "joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). These people rejoiced in victory before the battle.

Every king should have a good cause before going to war. These people raised banners in the name of the LORD God, fought for Him, and depended upon Him. This war was not about wealth accumulation or controlling other nations, but protecting Israel from thugs and thieves.

6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

This is the response of the king. He is not negative or gloomy. He expresses confidence that God is on his side and that he, as God's servant, will prevail.

God is always for His people and will help them prevail . . . unless, they are hiding sin in their heart (Psalm 66:18-20)

The Chorus

7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

"Some" means "these" -- a general reference to those that don't trust the LORD God. Kings believe in big armies and big armories. But, this king and these people did not have chariots or a cavalry of horses. Rather, they placed their confidence in God; that is, they utterly, totally, and completely trusted the LORD.

"we will remember" reflects their reliance on the LORD. Regardless of the character of the enemy or their military resources, the people looked to God and not their military prowess to save them.

8 They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.

"They are brought down and fallen" refers to adversaries who trust their chariots.

"We are risen" is a perfect tense; that is, the people speak of victory with certainty . . . as a fact . . . not a wish.

9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

"the king" is YHWH. This is an invocation where the people invoke the name of their King (the LORD God) to hear and deliver the nation from the troubles of war.

They were not naive about the power of the enemy, but in the face of war, hearts prayed.

"LORD, save us" was the cry of the people. This is not wishful thinking or a presumptuous prayer. God ordered the people to call upon Him "in the day of trouble" (Psalm 50).

Oh, that we might have the same confidence, the same intensity in prayer, and the same reliance on God in times of trouble as these people had. Our hope is not in wealth, swords, or chariots, but in the living God. But, saying this and standing on this maxim is a different matter.

"Lord, help us!"

Psalm 21 - The Joyful King

"The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD"



This psalm is credited to King David, and there is no reason to doubt the claim.

Overflowing with gratefulness, David penned his thankfulness in Hebrew poetic form, and gave it to the Chief Musician to set to music. Though the psalm is about King David's joy in God's favor toward him, the psalm reflects the triumph of Christ regarding His accomplishments in fighting the trinity of evil at the cross: Satan, sin, and death.

The psalm is divided into two parts: (A) the Thankfulness of the King for his Success (1-7); and (B) the triumphant faith of the King's People (8-12). Verse 13 is the general will-wishing that all Hallelujah-saints sing.

The Thankfulness of the King for His Success

1 (To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.) The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!+

The phrase, "the LORD's strength" is in the emphatic position in Hebrew indicating this king was not immersed in his own fame and success, but in those "Divine-coincidences" that lead to an army's deliverance and victory.

2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.

The king devised a plan for victory and prayed that God would help him succeed. After the conflict, the king realized God not only answered his weak-stumbling request, but that God inspected his desire and lionized it.

3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

The word "preventest" means "to meet, go in front of, or precede." God went before the army to insure the confrontation would be victorious. God did not prevent the battle, but he crippled the plans of the opposing forces. Likewise, He will go before all trusting hearts winnowing their path.

4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.

Wars kill. This king, though courageous in duty, prayed God would spare his life and the life of his army. He did.

5 His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

Returning from the battle a victorious general, the people laid accolades of praise on their Victor-king; but, this victorious king credits the victory to the LORD because of His honor and majesty.

6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

Knowing only the LORD of Hosts could accomplish this victory, an assurance that his reign was secure hummed through his entire being. The triumph assured him Heaven favored his cause.

“exceedingly glad” is a Piel stem expressing intense joy. The favor of God (thy countenance – panim) produces this gladness of heart in the ones looking at the face of the LORD.

7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.

This king did not trust in his army or the plans of his generals, but in the goodness and power of God. He prayed for mercy, and mercy established his throne.

The Triumphant of God over the King's Enemies

8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

The term “Thine hand” expresses a new confidence that the tireless, holy, powerful energies of God will search out and destroy counter-guerrilla forces warring against the kingdom of God. The hand is the working member of the human body. In law, lawyers use the term “clean hands” to refer to the innocence of their clients. The one who comes to equity must come with clean hands.

“To find out” is a Biblical way of informing the reader the wicked shall reap what they sow; God will defeat the adversaries, truth will triumph over lies; and, the jurisdiction of light will prevail over the kingdom of darkness. Infidels and scoffers will be crushed under the righteous hand of the King of kings.

Not only does King David have joy that God is for him, the people of God realize God is with them and for them. The king's victory is their victory, and the king's growth in faith is owned by the nation.

9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

The king's frustration with delayed justice gives way to new confidence kingdom-enemies will be completely routed.

The metaphors “fiery oven” and “swallow up” reference the hope that all hostile-politicians will be ravaged like burning twigs in the menacing flames of a red-hot furnace.

10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

“Their fruit” is a reference to the children and followers of rebel-nations. The king grows in his confidence that not only will God smash his opponents, but that He will uproot the black-hearted and crush their cause in the psalmist’s lifetime (Psalm 91:8).

God uses the wicked to destroy the seed of the wicked through evil plans: war, assassinations, abortions, medical practices like vaccines. See Psalm 37:28.

11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

“intended evil” -- The verb “intended” means “to stretch out” and “extend the hand” like a soldier extending his sword or a trapper lying cruel-snares for his prey. The enemies of God are portrayed as hunters sporting for God’s lambs. The psalmist grows in confidence that the tricks and schemes of the wicked will not succeed in demoralizing God’s people.

The Hebrew word for “evil” (*ra*) refers to evil actions or events planned by the wicked.

The word “mischievous device” (*mizzimah*) refers to “plots, plans, and wicked purposes.”

“not able to perform” is a poor translation. The imperfect verb “not perform” (*yakol*) refers to the wicked’s ability or power. The adverbial particle *bal* negates the intended action.

The NASB translates this as “they will not succeed.”

Those who plan “a mischievous device” do not have the power to accomplish all their wicked plans. Praise the Lord! Jeremiah informs us that God knows (*machashebeth*) his beneficent plans for us (29:11). They will succeed, but the plans of the wicked against Him will fizzle.

12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.

The phrase “turn their back (shoulder)” refers to the retreat of God’s enemies. Sometimes we think goober-rich politicians get their way in this life, but this is not always true. Plotters of evil are the most troubled people on earth because God restrains their evil plans. The wicked are wicked, but they are not as wicked as they could be because God frustrates their schemes (Psalm 76:10).

The Theme Song of the King

13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

This verse is the “national anthem” of true Israel, the pledge of allegiance of kingdom citizens. The desire of all the saints is that LORD God be exalted among the nations and that all of God’s people might sing His praises.

The grand thought in this psalm is that the LORD will triumph over all His enemies (my enemies) which will be followed by universal adoration from triumphant saints.

The King’s joy is the salvation of his people purchased with His own blood. Let us rejoice! We are more than conquerors through Him Who loved us (Romans 8:31-39)!

Psalm 22 - The Afflictions and Consolations of Messiah

The Sufferings of Christ



David is said to be the author of this psalm, and there is nothing in the poem that would contradict this conclusion.

Psalm 22 has been categorized as a Messianic Psalm because it mirrors our Lord's suffering on the cross; that is, the agony that David expressed metaphorically was literally fulfilled in our Lord's afflictions at Calvary.

David felt the shadow of the cross in his pilgrimage on earth; but, for a brief moment in time and for what seemed like an eternity, the Son felt the burning heat of what it was really like to be cut off from fellowship with the Father, "My, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Psalm 22, 23, 24 present a trilogy of Messianic themes:

Psalm 22 is picture of the Good Shepherd suffering to save his flock ([John 10:11, 14](#)); and,

Psalm 23 is a picture of the Great Shepherd providing for his flock ([Hebrews 13:20](#)); and,

Psalm 24 is a picture of the Chief Shepherd coming to take his flock home ([1 Peter 5:4](#)).

The key, therefore, to interpreting this Hebrew chorus is to feel the suffering of David and to consider how the imagery was ultimately fulfilled in Christ. David had the privilege of sharing in the suffering of the Lord in his own journey:

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (1 Peter 2:21). David's afflictions were a prophetic forecast of the afflictions of the Good Shepherd fighting to save His people at the cross.

However, this psalm is not just about doom and gloom; it is about what Christ had to endure to redeem you and me. Before us is the theme of salvation and glorification of the Son.

The Psalm begins with a trial, but ends in triumph; it begins with pain, but ends with prosperity. This hymn shows our Lord's suffering at midnight, but ends with the sun rising on the great congregation.

1 (To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.)

Superior songs call for a composition constructed by the chief Musicians.

The term “Aijeleth Shahar” literally means “the hind of the morning dawn.” A composition style known to the psalmists of David’s time, but unknown to modern men. Possibly, it refers to the sunrise and the horns of light extending across the eastern sky.

Many psalms begin with a positive thought like “Surely, God is good to Israel” (Psalm 73:1). But, this psalm begins abruptly with the unthinkable and incogitable: God forsaking man . . . His creation . . . the greatest affliction to ripple through the hearts and minds of men. How can this be?

Affliction Caused by God

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

The word “roaring” (shegah) refers to the distress-call of a lion caught in a trap. It is used here to describe the agonizing feelings of King David as well as the distress call of our Lord upon the cross (Isaiah 5:29; Ezekiel 19:7; Zechariah 11:3).

“God” is in the vocative and it is used twice: Eli, Eli (Hebrew); O Theos, O Theos (LXX) — a literary tool to communicate the level of anguish experienced by our Lord. The pronoun “my” implies a private, personal relationship with Theos — a private pain with a despairing tone — or, as St. Mark has it, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.*

“Me” -- We can understand God forsaking the wicked and the pathetic, disheveled, self-centered beggar . . . but “Me” your beloved?

The Hebrew word “why” (lama) turns the sentence into a question – NOT because our Lord was seeking an answer to His query. Jesus knew why He was suffering. The question is for our benefit, so we might contemplate the reason our precious Lord was upon the cross — an innocent lamb made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him . . . because the chastisement of our peace was upon the Lamb when God laid on Him “the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5-6; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

We receive more insight into the suffering of Christ on the cross: “I cry” day and night without intermission, but “thou hearest not.” Is there a greater agony among men? Oh, the prayers of those in hell that will never be answered!!

Because Christ was a man, He could suffer for us; because He was God, He could suffer enough! Selah.

But, the story does not end without hope. Christ was heard in that he feared (Hebrews 5:7).

3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

Now we are given a reason for the Lamb’s affliction. God is *holy*. When our sins were imputed to Christ on the cross, the Holy Father turned his back on the Son. Selah.

There is another perspective. The conjunctive “but” in English adds hope. In spite of seeming desertion, the psalmist believed his state of suffering was not permanent. He could still trust the Holy One. All those in a storm know that suffering has an end. The rain, thunder, and lightening will stop. The Sun will come out. Night will turn into day. This is our heritage in Christ.

“Thou inhabitest the praises of Israel:” The “praise of Israel” is not the choruses of His people. Rather, the “praises of Israel” refers to the Ark of the Covenant, the throne of God, His position as King between the cherubim; that *God is there* (Jehovah-Shammah) was the privilege, honor, blessing, glory, and praise of Israel. In a secondary sense, “the ever-ascending praises of His people become a throne for the Divine King, and take the place of the outstretched wings of the cherubim” – Ellicott.

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 confounded.

That the Father did not deliver the Son from the horrors of Calvary have mystified men through the centuries. The LORD delivered Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, and Hezekiah. Why didn't He deliver Christ from death on the cross? The answer lies in the greater victory of His resurrection from the dead — proof that death is not Lord — proof with strict proof of claim that He has the keys of life and death — proof that Christ discharged our debt.

This is an argument of David . . . of Christ . . . and all of God's people. Your people trusted you and were delivered; I trust you like you have taught me. Why shouldn't you answer my prayers? Your holiness (faithfulness, et al.) is the commonwealth of Israel. You delivered Gideon, Samson, and Samuel. Surely, you will deliver me. . . . but when? Oh, the “when” of deliverance!

My prayer: You are my Praise . . . my Hope! I am your child. I trust You. And, now I claim my inheritance in the commonwealth of the true Israel of God. Deliver me, O God, from my affliction.

Affliction Caused by Men

6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

David expresses his true feelings. Instead of feeling like he was a prince among his people, he feels like a worm soon to be crushed under the feet of men — a reproach (taunt) of men — something despised (contemptible) by the people. It is one thing to be despised by government officials or madmen in power . . . but, by the people of God? Who can understand why one is attacked by the sheep?

What holy, righteous, outspoken servant of God has not experienced inexplicable rejection by God's people?

Here is one answer: Christ was delivered to death by three government institutions. “When government is god in the minds of Christians, you cannot expect them not to betray you.”

7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

“laugh me to scorn” means “shoot out the lip” (patar) – see a description of our Lord’s suffering at the cross (Luke 23:35; Matthew 27:39). Instead of meeting pity and compassion, our Lord was met with contempt and insult. Furthermore, the mockers seemed to have no restraint or shortage of insults. O, the blindness of man . . . and the wisdom of God!

Let us remember that the world does not hate Christians. It hates Christ because He exposed their evil (John 7:7). In the early days of our Lord’s ministry, the people did not hate the disciples . . . BUT, after three years of discipleship . . . when they matured and became like Christ, the world hated them (John 15:18). Likewise, the world does not hate Christians. It hates disciples carrying a cross.

8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

This is a taunt muttered towards Christ on the cross by his enemies.

The word “trusted” (galal) is a Hebrew imperative meaning “to roll away;” i.e. to roll one’s burdens onto the LORD (Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 16:3); that is, Christ submitted to the will of the Father and trusted Him to deliver him from death.

The word “deliver” is a Piel verb meaning “to escape” fully and completely. The grounds of this trust is that the psalmist (Savior) delighted himself in the Father. Surely, God will deliver those who belong to Him and love Him! But, the Jews used this perception to taunt the Redeemer in a sarcastic and mocking way: if you are truly God’s Son, come down from the cross ([Matthew 27:43](#)).

9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother’s breasts. 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother’s belly.

To further heighten the tragedy of being forsaken by God, the psalmist infers his relationship to God and his trust in God began while he was still in his mother’s womb . . . upon her breasts. That is, the psalmist is no “Johnny come lately,” or “fair-weather friend.”

Jesus was devoted to the Father *ab aeterno*, and His trust was true, genuine, real, and substantial. Why kind of God would forsake a faithful, devoted Son? Surely, God will rescue those who delight in Him. While the Father did not rescue the Son from the terrors of atonement and the agony of the cross, He rescued Him from the grave — a greater victory than saving Him from the cross. Moreover, God rescues all those in the faith — the weak and strong.

11 Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

On holy ground, we are permitted to hear the heart-beat of the Son on the cross — “be not far from me.”

Moreover, this is the heart cry of all God’s people: Rescue me when trouble is near . . . when there is none to help.

12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

Here the psalmist compares his enemies to well-fed, Spanish fighting bulls (Toro Bravo), the bulls of Bashan, a land northeast of the Jordan; e.g., a metaphor describing the horned animosity of the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees.

13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

To help the reader understand our Savior's helplessness and the power of the enemy, he employs the metaphor "roaring lion." Few things in life are more frightening than facing a starving lion alone in a forest. Wrongfully arrested by a legion of temple / Roman police, the Lord faced the illegal, all-night trial and false accusations of paid witnesses organized by the Sanhedrin-priests — the roaring lions of legalistic Judaism.

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

"Poured out like water" refers to the suffering of the Redeemer. He compares himself to a jug of malleable water that is so easily disposed of by men; and, his vital organs to being like wax melted under the heat of the cross.

"All my bones are out of joint" refers to the dislocation of skeletal parts — a metaphor for intense pain and the total helplessness of the Good Shepherd.

"like wax" is a simile exposing his mortality and the ease of destroying the manly Savior.

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.

"My strength" could be translated "my palate."

The term "potsherd" refers to a part of a dry, broken, clay pot — a pot made out of wet clay.

"cleaveth to my jaws" describes intense thirst.

On the cross the Lord compresses all his suffering into the words, "***I thirst.***" Likewise, this text reveals the acute suffering of the Savior, and the manner of his death — death by dehydration at the cross. Oh, the agony of crucifixion! Let us never forget!

16 For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

"Dogs" refer to the enemies of Christ. The psalmist compares the actions of the priests and Pharisees to scavenger dogs that hunt in packs; that is, the terrors of Herod, the Sanhedrin, and Rome's police force punctured him to the bone.

The word "pierced" means "to dig" or "to claw" like a lion. Ellicott believes the best translation of this text should read, "The band of villains (literally, breakers) surrounded me, binding my hands and feet so as to cut them." While David felt like his hands and feet were being cut to the bone, Christ literally, physically experienced the depth of this excruciating pain.

17 I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

This appears to be a reference to Christ's arms and limbs being extended upon the cross. A spectator could easily identify define his skeletal structure.

18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

One should stop and consider how these words were literally fulfilled at the cross where even the soldiers gambled for His one and only cloak (Matthew 27:35).

The Prayer of the Afflicted

19 But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

Here we see the cries of a desperate, deserted, dying man. All others having forsaken him, the Lord cried out to the Father to sustain and deliver Him.

20 Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

The metaphor of "dog" and "sword" appear again as agents of death. The verb "deliver" is an imperative — the language of prayer.

The word "darling" refers to an only, beloved child. And, Jesus was God's one and only child abandoned at the cross to suffer for the sins of men.

Following the rule of parallelism, the "darling" is a synonym for "my soul."

Dogs shred and devour. The sword severs. The psalmist feared what we fear: having a soul divided by daggers of doubt, the cleaving knife of covetousness, and the paring knife of passion; having his soul devoured by the pit bulls of pride, wolves of wrath, foxes of fornication, the scavengers of strife, hounds of hatred, the rottweilers of revenge, and the like.

[By way of personal application consider how the enemy uses its swords of disinformation to produce divided affections and double motives. Duplicity abounds in hearts and minds. People often have a public life and a private life; a public persona and a private personality.]

Brian White observed "We never really grow up; we just learn how to act in public." Our life before men and before God is often different. Secret lusts act as a clever to steal our affections and slice away at pure devotion to LORD God. The Apostle James warns of being "double minded;" i.e. having two masters, two souls, two personalities, two ambitions, two motives, two loves — one in heaven and the other of earth.

A prayer: Lord, thank you for Christ's pure devotion to holiness. Keep my soul intact, and may I serve you with undivided affections. May I be a whole man completely devoted to You.

21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

Though abandoned by men, our Lord expresses hope — that the Father would hear his prayers from "the horns of the unicorns" (buffalos) could refer to God's omnipresence: from sunrise to sunset, from the rising Sun to the going down of the same, from east to west, to the heavens above to the earth below; but, most commentators consider the horns of the unicorns as a metaphor for enemies with horns: water buffaloes, rams, bulls, antelope, and deer — the imagery of angry, frightened wild beasts.

Consolations of the Afflicted

22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

Our precious Savior died on the cross, but was raised from the dead. Here we have the consolations of the risen, ascended, glorified Savior sitting at the right hand of the Father.

The “I” is our Savior and Champion Who has passed from death into life. Our precious Lord is head and shoulders above every man. But here, the resurrected Redeemer calls redeemed men his “brethren;” of the same mother with similar DNA in a physical sense; and, in a spiritual sense because we are part of the great congregation — the church — the family of God.

Jesus was a Rabbi, Teacher, and Master to the disciples. In John 15, He called them “friends.” After the God-man rose from the dead, he calls his disciples “brethren” — a term of endearment and intimacy — a name that honors Him and humbles us.

His promise is “I will declare” thy Name (the Father-God) to future generations. If you know the Lord today, it is because Jesus fulfilled His promise and declared “His name” to you; that is, all Christians become his “brethren” because Christ declared to believing men “thy name” “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Ephesians 3:15).

23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

That Christ revealed the Father to men merits a Godly response. Because the Good Shepherd reached out to us who “fear the LORD,” He deserves “praise” (hal’al). The verb “praise” is an imperative. We get the word “hallelujah” from the Hebrew root. Those that “fear the LORD” are Christians.

The “seed of Jacob” and “seed of Israel” is a reference to Hebrews in David’s time, and a reference to the New Israel composed of the spiritually responsive among Jews and Gentiles during the church age.

“Fear him” is a salvation term — an imperative. “Fear Him” and be saved. “Glorify him” is a term of sanctification — an imperative defining the privilege and duty of all the redeemed.

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.

The “he” is a reference to the Father; the One “afflicted” is the Son.

Philippians 2:11-13 “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every name: that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”

The word “affliction” (enuth) refers to the suffering of the Savior, and in part, to the troubles experienced by Christians. The Father heard the prayers of the Son; and, for this reason believers have grounds to trust Him.

This psalm begins with the Son’s cry of abandonment; however, this text assures us the Father didn’t abandon Christ to the grave. Likewise, no one who trusts Him will be despised or abandoned by God; i.e. He will not forsake those who “roll themselves on to the Lord.”

If the LORD heard the prayers of the Redeemer, He will hear the prayers of the redeemed — your prayers. In the course of life, you may “feel” abandoned, but “feelings” are not reality. He will “never, never, no never, never forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

25 My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

The text could be translated “of thee cometh my praise.” The joy of Jesus is His Father. “My vows” refer to our Lord’s obedience to God’s law. “The great congregation” refers to the OT Hebrew nation in a lesser sense, and in an enlarger sense to the church planted among the nations.

The sense of this stanza is my purpose and praise shall be “from you” and “about you;” i.e. I will call to remembrance your mercy and grace; I will unite with others in celebrating your goodness and faithfulness.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

The word “meek” (anaviym) means “afflicted” and “troubled.” This is a general promise to the church that her mission will prosper; that His power will be distributed to the poor and troubled; that the pious will have ample reasons to praise God. There is a power from God given to the weary that overcomes discouraging circumstances (Isaiah 40:21). He can and does make the poor rich and the weak strong.

“Jesus, the true Sacrifice, is the bread that came down from heaven; they who eat of this bread shall never die” (Clarke).

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

The goal of history is the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. History is not going in circles. It is moving toward the Eschaton which includes the salvation of the righteous and judgment of the wicked. The nations easily “forget” God, but here we see a revived gospel— a movement in history that causes men to remember the Lord and His law.

The word “worship” (shachah) means “to bow the knee.” One day all the nations will bend to His will and acknowledge His authority to rule the world. Why wait? Do it now!

Isaiah 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of

his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.

This gospel will go to the ends of the earth because the kingdom is the LORD's. By "kingdom" (meluwkah) the Spirit is not referring to a place . . . or an end-time event . . . but to the rule and authority of the LORD.

The issue before us is not whether the LORD has the right to rule mankind, or that He is the governor (mashal = dominion) of the nations, but *whether men will recognize him as such*.

When Christians pray, "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come" they are NOT praying for a millennial kingdom, but that men might recognize His authority and surrender to it NOW!

29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

"All they that be fat upon the earth" refers to all classes of people: the rich and the poor; upper class and the working lower class. Urban and rural people will come and worship the true God -- not the poor and needy only or the afflicted and the oppressed only, but the rich and affluent. Not many wise . . . mighty . . . noble are chosen, but a few are ([1 Corinthians 1:26](#)).

"down to the dust" refers to those who are broken and crushed by the troubles of life.

"and none can keep alive his own soul" seems to apply to those who are sick and dying, the aged and diseased, the feeble and helpless among us. Every dying man that puts his trust in Christ can expect to have eternal life: "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25-26).

30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord (Adonai) for a generation.

The term "seed" refers to a race, tribe, or family of people who serve God. The "seed" referred to shall be reckoned as a generation or family belonging to Him. There will always be a people of God serving Him on the earth. Moreover, the wicked will not triumph. Their plans will fail.

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

The "they" is the believing generation, the church.

One characteristic of the family of God is that they are engaged in proclamation, reclamation, and education so that the next generation can know the Lord. No man is born a Christian!! Every child, even in Christian families, must be born again. Thus, every generation of believers has the privilege and duty of proclaiming Christ to the next generation.

Psalm 23 - Me Shepherd Psalm



Written by David, this psalm is a favorite among the people of God. It is for sheep, not goats. It is about “me Shepherd” and not “our Shepherd.”

Listen to a [middle English reading](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xZ7ruvySRg) of the psalm – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xZ7ruvySRg>

Books have been written on this psalm and scores of preachers have read it at funerals.

The perspective: Using the literary device of anthropomorphism, David sees himself as a sheep in green pastures bubbling over with confidence because of the Lord’s tender care.

This is a personal psalm about this sheep’s personal shepherd. The personal pronouns “me,” “my,” “I,” and “mine” are used 17 times in this psalm informing us the Christian life is not so much about religion as much as it is about a personal relationship with the Lord. While there is a communal aspect about Christianity, the bulk of this life is about one’s personal walk with Christ.

Psalm 23:1 <A Psalm of David.> The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

This fat sheep looks over the fence at skinny sheep, lifts up his chin, and confidently brags, “The Lord is me shepherd . . .” who provides all that I need. I am well cared for. “I shall not want.” Calamity may come, but I am well protected.

This sheep has a Shepherd and not a shepherder. He is more like a dove than a driver of flocks; tender rather than terrible; gentle rather than hard; caring and not exacting; involved and not aloof; skilled rather than untrained; attentive rather than careless.

David did not find security in riches, wealth, or big bank accounts, but in the care of Good Shepherd.

David is not telling the reader that the Lord is a shepherd at large caring for the whole world. This is a personal testimony and not a global statement for the community. Thus, this psalm is inappropriate to read at most funerals because most men do not seek the Shepherd of Souls. The wicked always want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

“green pastures” = verdant pastures with freshly grown grass. The sheep continues his boasting. My Shepherd leads me to graze on orchard grass in high hills watered by the dew and rain. My Shepherd plans only the best for me. His green pastures never end.

“leadeth me” (nahal) is a Piel verb implying intense action. It means to lead to watering places and cause to rest. The context is the soul not business activity.

“still waters” or quiet waters express feelings of security. This sheep boasts that he lived free of fear . . . that His Shepherd led him to drink water by gentle streams lingering through meadows splattered with prairie grass and flowers. These streams were not rushing waters, hurricanes, or stagnant pools, but spring water fit to drink and easy to cross.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

“restoreth my soul” means “to turn back my life;” that is, He “quickens” me. “restoreth” means “to quicken” or “to revive.” “quicken” me is used nine times in Psalm 119.

“leadeth” (nachal) means to guide and direct; to bring something about. “paths” can refer to “paths, ways, or trenches.” In this case it refers to being guided in right living.

This sheep, like all sheep, became infected with parasites and other diseases. The shepherd revived him and nursed him back to health. He walked to and from pastures on safe trails he calls “paths of righteousness-” not easy, but the best trail for this flock.

Theologically, paths of righteousness refer to a lifetime of sanctification for the justified man — of growing in holiness and Christlikeness — a beautification of the Christian man.

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.

“valley of the shadow of death” may refer to literal sheep trails over deep ravines in Palestine.

Moreover, this is a metaphor for dark and gloomy periods of life lacking in sunshine and comfort. The LORD does not prevent the shadow of death from casting its blanket of darkness over us. But, during those times He is there protecting us from evil.

“walk” implies a steady pace without rushing or running.

The preposition “through” means “moving in one side and out of the other side:” That is, the believer does not live his life under the shadow of death . . . or in the valley of death. Rather, he moves through it into the sunshine on green pastures. Even as we face death, God’s sheep moves through the dark tunnel of despair into the marvelous light of immortality. We do not die! We sleep only to wake up in glory.

We go through the dark waters of the Jordan and emerge into the marvelous light of immortality. We do not die, we do but sleep but awake in glory — “for to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5). Death is not the end, it is the beginning; it is not the finish line, but the beginning of the fullness of eternal life. A believer may pass under the shadow of death, but never be trampled on by the iron riggings of death. “He that believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?” asked Jesus.

Consequently, “I will fear no evil” – regardless of the darkness, gloom, and shadowy ravines, this sheep had no fear. The presence of the all-powerful, all-caring, ever-present Shepherd relieved him of all fears. Never alone, and never afraid!

“death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains ...
Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man’s pathway even

for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us." (Spurgeon)

The rod and staff are symbols of discipline and comfort, training and rescue.

"the rod" is a short stick used in combat to drive away enemies. The Shepherd used his rod to protect him from wolves, lions, and bears. Possibly, the rod was used to prod the sheep and to keep him moving, and the staff was used to restrain this adventurous sheep or to rescue him in perilous circumstances — when downcast in a pit or stuck on the side of a hill.

Shadows are dark, but the message of this text is one of victory and comfort.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Passing through the valley of the shadow of death, this flock arrives at a mountain feeding ground. The table here refers to high meadow lands where the green grass grows. . . . and where wild creatures roam. The imagery is that of a luscious banquet. These are not "safe zones" as enemies of the sheep are also there looking on with helpless cattiness.

"anointest my head with oil" refers to the Shepherd applying olive oil to sheep scabs and insect bites.

"my cup runneth over" is a metaphor borrowed from feasts expressing the feeling of personal abundance and cheerfulness.

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.

While wolves, lions, and coyotes stalked most flocks, this sheep felt like the Shepherd left him a legacy of goodness and mercy.

"goodness and mercy" are terms that express provision and protection.

"the house of the LORD" could refer to the temple — a figure of being a part of God's family. To us the term refers to a better place in a better world, membership in the City of God — "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:22-24).

Remember, the Lord Jesus Christ is the "Good Shepherd" Who gives His life for the sheep (John 10:10); the Great Shepherd Who provides, protects, and perfects His sheep (Hebrews 13:10) "the Chief Shepherd" Who cares for all the sheep and all the pastors in every pasture around the globe (1 Peter 5:4).

Psalm 24 - Crisis at the Gates

The King of Glory Shall Come In



This is a psalm about glory that challenges us to be our best.

With so many people on earth many think they are too insignificant for God to care about them:

“And the justice due me escapes the notice of my God? ([Isa. 40:27](#),

NASB)

Others conclude their problems are too complex, their resources too few, and their God too small to fix all that is broken in their life.

This psalm challenges the God-seeker to expand his thoughts about the King of Glory. This regal Person is not small but the man’s perceptions of Him may be. Consequently, considering the grand theme of this song is like taking multi-vitamins to grow in one’s theology.

Psalm 22, 23, and 24 are a trilogy of Messianic Psalms. Psalm 22 presents the suffering of Christ as the Good Shepherd Who gives His life for the Sheep; Psalm 23 presents Christ as the Great Shepherd that protects and provides for His sheep; and, Psalm 24 presents Christ as the Great Shepherd coming to rule over His sheep in the kingdom of God.

The background of this psalm is the time when David brought the ark the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath Jearim to Jerusalem — an event that was frustrated by the death sentence on Uzzah the priest when he reached out to stabilize the tottering ark — a breach of transport protocol (1 Samuel 6; 1 Chronicles 13:6).

Psalm 24, Psalm 68, and Psalm 132 are dedicated to the glories of the ark coming to Jerusalem.

1 (A Psalm of David.) The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

David begins his introduction of the LORD with the most fundamental facts. He owns the earth . . . and the people . . . and the wealth thereof; that is, He has jurisdiction over everything, and every one. The earth does not belong to governments but to the people.

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

He is not only Possessor of Heaven and Earth, He is Captain of the Seas and its roaring mysteries. All bodies of water were created by Him and for Him. And, out of this water He created the earth. To claim the earth and seas belong to government is an arrogant overreach of authority.

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

This is possibly the most important question a man can ever ask himself.

There are many hills that boast of power and there are many mountains on which men seek the mysteries of life. David, therefore, queries his readers: Who is going to approach God's mountain to learn about Him?

The question is repeated second time with more specificity, "Who shall stand in his holy place?" Holiness? Holiness is the LORD's sensors that detect defiled intruders — a power deterrent warning sinners that death awaits the invader of His sanctity.

His holiness acts like foot soldiers at Buckingham Palace wearing full dress uniforms with red tunics and bear-skins hats authorized to kill trespassers.

It is easier to hold fire in the palm of the hand than to survive contact with pure holiness.

How can a sinner approach this holy God? Or, more significantly, how can One so pure and holy tolerate the unclean in His presence? A none-washed street-person in wrinkled clothes would have a better chance of reaching the Queen of England at Buckingham Palace than for a sooty sinner to touch the Divine presence. In David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem, Uzziah reached out his hand to steady the shaking ark and was struck dead. With this tragedy in David's mind he asks, "who shall stand in his holy place?"

Just as relevant, how was this holy God going to live in Jerusalem surrounded by flawed, unholy people?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

Who shall enter His Holy House? The psalmist provides the answer. Him that hath clean hands. This is so simple, a little child can understand it. The one approaching God must wash his hands . . . and his soul.

As one preacher said, *God loves clean and He ain't crazy about ugly.*

In law, the "clean hands doctrine" refers to a party that is innocent of a crime . . . to the party that has injured no man or his property. Here "clean" and "pure" refers to those (1) who have NOT lifted up their soul to vanity (falsehood), but have lifted up their hand to the Most High God, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth (Genesis 14:1). This has the sense of accepting his rule over one's life; and, (2) rejecting deceit and hypocrisy as a way of life.

The first time Israel attempted to bring the ark to Jerusalem, the Levites neglected movement protocols and Uzzah was struck dead when he reached out to steady the ark.

Numbers 4:15 And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

When the Levites brought the Ark to Jerusalem the second time, they did it right. They carried the ark on poles and not a cart. They studied God's instructions on how to carry the ark, and they sanctified themselves by washing themselves, putting on clean clothes, and strict abstinence (Exodus 19:10, 15).

1 Chronicled 15:14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

The man who lives by the "clean hands" doctrine before God is promised the blessing of salvation and righteousness from the LORD — a righteousness revealed in the gospel — a righteousness from Theos which comes by faith in Christ — a righteousness produced by the doing and dying of our Lord (Romans 3:21-22).

Job asked the ultimate question, "How can a man be just before God?" (25:4). The answer lies in "justification" by faith — a judicial act whereby God declares a man righteous and treats him as such (Romans 3:24; 4:5; 5:1).

This is not a self-scrub program, but an act of God that declares a man to have a right standing before God when He believes in the Son . . . a standing with effects that produce a cleans soul. Hebrews 9:14 teaches, the blood of Christ that was shed for our sins, cleanses "our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"

6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

This text is addressed to "Jacob," i.e. to the people that know they need God; that know they are sinners; that know they are weak and cannot succeed in life without His blessing upon them.

"to seek they face" means to seek his grace, approval, and favor. Jacob was a man that nobody loved accept the Lord. Those that seek the God of Jacob seek the grace of God.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Imagine this dramatic scene — an enormous parade of priests robed in white bearing swords marching toward the entrance of ancient Jerusalem carrying the Ark of the Covenant, the holy symbol of Divine sovereignty. As the armed priest approached the city gate, the gate-keepers proudly swing open the weathered doors to receive His Majesty.

But, the psalmist observes an unexpected crisis at the gates. The city gates are too old and too small to receive the King of Glory. The King will have to bow his head and humble Himself passing under the pillars. So, the psalmist orders the gates to "lift up your heads" because your arches are too low to receive this exalted King — a literary device known as "personification" where by the writer addresses an inanimate object as if it were a person.

These gates are "everlasting doors," grey with antiquity, hoary with age. Perhaps these weathered gates on this Jebusite city looked down upon Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God, as he marched his army in the

morning twilight to greet Abraham with bread and wine after his slaughter of the five kings. But in all the centuries that followed, these doddering doors had never seen such a grand and glorious King gracing the capital city with His presence (Maclaren).

“Lift up your heads” is Psalmist way of instructing men how to receive the King of Glory as their Lord and Savior. Humble yourself. Bow. Get low.

The lesson is clear: The one who wants a relationship with the King must wake up, wash up, and stand up; that is, the man seeking this King of Glory should rise to the occasion. He should dress honorably, speak with dignity, and behave with integrity. Dress up, wash up, and clean up. “Assume a virtue if you have it not” (Shakespeare).

We are told that Buckingham Palace has 775 rooms. These include 19 State rooms, 52 Royal and guest bedrooms, 188 staff bedrooms, 92 offices and 78 bathrooms. In measurements, the building is 108 meters long across the front, 120 meters deep (including the central quadrangle) and 24 meters high. It has 491 employees. But, even this is too petite for the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Our hearts are too small for this King. Our talents are too few to serve this King. Our gifts are inadequate. Our consciences are too dirty. “Lift up your heads, O ye Gates . . .”

America’s institutions are too complicated, too convoluted, and too corrupt for the King. “Lift up your heads, O ye Gates . . .”

8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Why would the psalmist shout the imperial order for the Gates to Lift of their Heads? Who is coming? Who is the King of Glory whose presence demands we clean up, wash up, and bow to Him?

Now the psalmist introduces us to this King. He is the LORD, strong and mighty. As “the LORD” He is the everlasting One; the Beginning and the End, the One who was, is, and shall be what we need Him to be; the Aleph and Tet (Tav) of all expressions wonderful. This is no ordinary person. He is strong in virtue, strong in justice, and strong in grace. He is mighty in knowledge, mighty in presence, and mighty in power. He is a regal King and those entering His presence should be their best and put on their best. Be humble or crumble.

So that we might know how mighty He is, the psalmist says it gain, “mighty in battle.” He is a bloody King that never lost a battle; a mighty King who defeated single-handedly man’s greatest enemies: Satan, sin, and death; a bloody King who shed his own blood to save sinners like you and me.

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

This is the psalmist’s invitation call for salvation. He repeats the main lesson of the occasion a second time to awaken moronic minds and dopey hearts. The arches above the gates are not tall enough . . . big enough . . . grand enough to honor the King of Glory. Humble yourself.

Make room for the king. Remove your idols. Confess Him as your Lord. Judge competitors. Clean out your heart and enlarge your soul to receive Him as your Master and King.

Churches would do well to ask themselves, "What can they improve so the King of Glory will be pleased to come in to meet with them?"

Psalm 29:1 Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.

Psalm 29:9, . . . And in His temple everything says, 'Glory!'

Note: Churches would do well to review their protocols for church. Is attending a worship service in a t-shirt and wrinkled jeans with coffee up in hand the way to receive the King of Glory?

10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

In case the reader fails to grasp the grandeur of the moment he ask the question a second time, not because he does not know the answer, but because he understands human minds are like bowls of Jell-O.

Likewise, for the dull of heart, he repeats the answer: Who is this King of glory? He is the Lord of Hosts, the Master and Commander of the Universe; the Captain of the armies of Heaven; the One who spoke and brought the heavens and earth into existence by His word. He is the King of Glory, the King of Righteousness, the King of Holiness, the King of Purity, the King of Humility, the King of Goodness, the King of Justice, and the King of Mercy. He is, He is, He is the King of Glory.

The King of Glory is coming to establish His kingdom on earth. "Prepare to meet thy God" (Amos 4:12). Is He your King? Do you have clean hands and are your Gates lifted up high enough to receive Him?

Psalm 25 - Trust Concerns of the Pious

Let Me Not Be Ashamed



This is the first of the alphabetical psalms . . . or nearly so. There are 22 verses for the 22 letters of the Hebrew Alphabet (Aleph – Tav). This is not a perfect acrostic psalm as there are some irregularities.

Acrostic psalms are a literary device designed for ease of learning. (Note: there are nine acrostic psalms – there are nine acrostic psalms (Psalm 9, 10, 25, 34, 37, 111, 112, 119, and 145).

It is credited to David and there is no reason to doubt that it was composed by him. Ellicott, however, prefers a post exile date due to the emphasis on waiting in the psalm.

The value of the psalm is that it sheds light on the concerns of the pious. The pious man is one who “trusts” God (2, 20), experiences “affliction” (16), “fears the Lord” (12, 14), and “waits on God” for deliverance (5, 21).

This psalm is a general prayer from a godly soul sharing his need for immediate deliverance with the LORD God. It is a psalm for the restless, lonely soul in search of God and His will for their life.

Shamelessness

(Aleph) Psalm 25:1 <A Psalm of David.> (Aleph) Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

David is not praying to a vague, anonymous deity, but to the LORD, the great “I Am”: the One Who promises to be what we need Him to be.

“I lift up my soul” refers to the property that David entrusted to the LORD to keep and preserve.

(Aleph) 2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

A “trust” is a deposit of valuable property into the hands of a strong man tasked with the duty of protecting property. David is the trust or beneficiary; and, the Lord is the Trustee. In this case, David committed his precious all to God and trusted Him to protect it against enemies seeking his life. Death is the final enemy of mankind that will be defeated.

Trust is to the Christian life what “home plate” is to baseball, the starting line and finish line of walking with God — a trek much harder than most of us realize.

“not be ashamed” means “to not be disappointed.” The greatest tragedy on earth is to deposit property to a strong man only to have him conquered and your property stolen by enemies stronger than the trustee.

David prays that the LORD will be all that he hoped God would be: a strong, faithful Trustee of his life and soul; that the Trustee will act and prove that his choices of trustees would be shown to be all that he hoped this covenant-making God would be to him.

Some trust their own powers; others trust the power money; and many trust the power of government. But, here is a man who doubted his own strength, and deposited his precious all with the LORD.

“let not mine enemies triumph over me” — Since David trusted the Lord, any enemy that conquered him would appear more powerful than the Lord. Thus, David prays that no enemy, within or without, corporal or spiritual, public or private might prevail over him lest it appear that God was unable to provide and to protect him.

(Gimel) 3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

So important was the outcome of success over enemies, the psalmist prays that all of God’s people might have their foot on the neck of their enemies whether it be within or without, corporal or spiritual, public or private.

The word “wait” means “to be made strong by twisting” (Ellicott) or to be “made strong by binding” (Strong’s).

The word “ashamed” means to be disappointed. David hopes God will not disappoint him and the Lord will prove His reliability as a Trustee; that the wicked who trust in their own powers and in their fictional gods will be the ones who are greatly disappointed — that their plans may be defeated — that God may frustrate all their wicked ambitions.

“let them be ashamed which transgress without cause” — There is no good cause to sin . . . and there is no sin that can’t be resisted. Since the wicked sin willfully there is no evil in praying for their defeat; likewise, no good can come out of their success; thus, we pray that God will frustrate all their evil ambitions (Barnes).

“without cause” (reyqam) could mean “vainly” implying that all sin is brainless, mindless, unreasonable, and foolish.

Knowledge of God

Instruction, guidance, teaching, and learning God’s way is heavy on the mind of the psalmist (4, 5, 8-10); yet, the psalmist seems intimately acquainted with the character of God: “tender mercies and loving kindness” (6), “mercy” (7, 10, 16), “goodness” (7, 8), “truth” (10); and the salvation of God (2, 5, 9, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22).

(Dalet) 4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

Ways and paths are metaphors for law, for principles, for values, and for priorities.

Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord

Thy guiding grace afford; teach me thy way! Help me to walk aright, more by faith, less by sight; lead me with heav’nly light; teach me thy way!

(Hey) 5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

Truth is a path of God.

David had deposited his soul into the hands of the Lord. Being surrounded by enemies seeking his life, he felt threatened. Where was his Trustee? David waited for this Strong One to manifest himself on the battlefield to save him from disaster. Perhaps, waiting is toughest job on earth for a beneficiary of His promises.

Lead me in thy truth – Truth is eternal and unchanging. We are temporal living in a world of constant change. God does not create truth, He is truth. He does not change. He does not mutate or improve over time. Because we live in a world of darkness blind to the truth, we pray that we might have His perspective, His light, and His guidance.

“my salvation” is not referring to the Pauline doctrine of salvation, but to deliverance from some trouble or difficulty.

“all the day” – We do not feel this way all the time nor did David feel this way all the time, but at this moment in his life, he felt this way; that is, it is common to have periods of waiting on God in life.

Mercy

(Zayin) 6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.

This Trustee is not only strong, He is tender and gracious. David appeals not only to His strength, but to his kindness. The pious soul comes to rest on the character of God. There are simply some things God can't do because they conflict with his nature. Abraham appealed to His righteousness (Genesis 18:25), and it is in His mercy troubled souls find rest.

“mercies” (racham) means “compassion.” “lovingkindness” (cheched) refers to His royal love – two virtues relied upon by all the saints throughout time.

Forgiveness and Mercy

There are three requests for forgiveness in this psalm (7, 11, 18). The consciousness of his sin and the need for pardon weighed heavily on the mind of David.

(Chet) 7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

David fears that his sins may hinder the LORD's promise of protection . . . for salvation . . . for direction. Because the LORD is pure and the beneficiary is impure, David prays that God might forgive and not let his sin hinder His promise to protect him.

Young or old, pious men confess and forsake their sins.

The psalmist relies upon God's goodness and not his own goodness as the foundation of forgiveness.

Guidance

David boasts that his Trustee is not only strong and merciful, but good and upright; that He protects the property of the weak and will guide them in the messy affairs of life.

(Tet) 8 Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

“Good and upright” — God’s character is worthy of confidence; that is, in our frustration, let us retreat to the character of God Who is not stingy or spiteful to His people. Abraham did (Genesis 18:25). We trust a God who is not only good and kind, but One Who is faithful to His promises.

God does not teach good men his way. There are none. He teaches “sinners” (chattah) his way. All of Jesus’ disciples are weak, flawed, humble men. None are perfect. All fall short of the glory of God. Accept it. Claim it.

(Yod) 9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

God guides the meek and poor in spirit. Therefore, let us seek true piety.

“judgment” (misphat) refers to justice, righteousness, honesty, and integrity.

“the meek” (anav) signifies one that is “poor, humble, and afflicted.”

(Kaf) 10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

The use of “mercy and truth” are movements toward the gospel; they also inform us what God is doing in history.

“All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth” imply all of God’s thoughts, motivations, wishes, ambitions, purposes, commands, actions and works are true to His character and merciful toward His people.

“unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies” — this expression denotes the true people of God — ones who are in contract with Him . . . men who aspire to please the Lord and to keep His testimonies.

“testimonies” refer to the two tablets of stone; from Mt. Sinai; i.e. His law which is the objective witness of His character.

Forgiveness

(Lamed) 11 For thy name’s sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

“pardon” is another word for forgiveness, remission, absolution, or lenience — a prayer that was not fully answered or understood until the cross of Calvary (Romans 3:24-36).

“it is great” implies that David felt the burdens of a guilty conscience . . . one not weighed down with peccadilloes, but one tyrannized by real transgressions against the law of the Lord God.

Cruci dum spiro fido.

(Mem) 12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.

To fear the LORD implies knowledge of God's power, holiness, and faithfulness. He only enrolls students in studies of Divinity that respect His authority, power, and goodness. The proud and foolish need not apply.

(Nun) 13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

Those that graduate from this College of Divinity *magna cum laude* "dwell at ease" which is better translated "shall lodge the night."

God not only keeps His promises, the fulfillment is always greater than the promise; that is, He perpetually out-performs His agreement. He promised Israel a Messiah. Who would have guessed that He would send His Son to be the Savior of the world? He promised life to those who trust Him, but He gives them eternal life. He not only protects the property of beneficiaries, He makes them sons of God and heirs of His kingdom (John 1:10-13).

(Samekh) 14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.

The word "secret," says Ellicott, means "couch" — a symbol of friendship, communion, and intimate conversation. Strong's says it refers to "council" or "familiar conversation." Intimate fellowship is only known by those in covenant with the LORD.

Benson comments are worth noting: "'The greatest happiness of man in this world,' says Dr. Horne, 'is to know the fixed and determinate counsels of God concerning the human race, and to understand the covenant of redemption.'"

Salvation

(Ayin) 15 Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

"Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD" refers to David's state of mind: hopeful, trustful, and faithful.

"pluck my feet out of the net" is a metaphor for deliverance from some trouble. He not only delivered David from death, he saved him from eternal death.

From sophisticated government schemers to the slicksters in business, Christians need deliverance from commercial, financial, legal, and medical traps. (

(Pey) 16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.

The word "Turn" (panah) is used because in David's mind, God seemed pre-occupied with other duties. He needed God to act now . . . immediately . . . soon . . . ASAPH — a common affliction of the saints.

"desolate" (yachiyd) means lonely, alone, and abandoned.

"afflicted" (anly) means "to be poor, weak, or in humble circumstances." Walking with God involves a certain amount of loneliness.

(Tzadi) 17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.

“desolate,” “afflicted,” “troubles,” “enlarged,” and “distresses” describe the terror that David faced and the reason he was calling upon his “Trustee” to fulfill His agreement to rescue him in “pronto” like fashion.

“enlarged” (rachab) means “to grow large” or “to grow wide.”

“heart” infers that David not only had circumstantial troubles, but emotional conflicts. Fears, loneliness, frustration, and bewilderment multiplied in his soul.

“troubles” (tsarah) refer to those intense interpersonal conflicts with no way to resolve them — “And her adversary (tsarah) also provoked her sore for to make her fret . . .” (1 Samuel 1:6).

The word “troubles” is used twice in this psalm: in verse 17 and verse 22.

“distresses” (metsuwqah) refers to “straits” or narrow places in life with no place to flee for safety. The word is used in Job referring to soldiers being overrun and crushed by an adversarial army (Job 15:24).

Favor and Forgiveness

(Resh) 18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

Sin and affliction are often linked in Scripture.

Again, David felt that his own sin might be hindering God from intervening in his distress. He was more right than he knew. Sins can gatecrash answers to prayer; but, he was also right in seeking forgiveness so that his sin did not interfere with the promise.

Prayer: Lord, if my sin is interfering with my prayers for deliverance, please forgive my sin and then act to save me. Cleansing from sin seems to be part of the process of deliverance and protection.

Deliverance

(Resh) 19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

David was well aware of the powers of his enemies, and he prays that his all-powerful Trustee would humble Himself and consider his human dilemma.

(Shin) 20 O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

Again, David prays that His Trustee would act, and that he would not be proved a fool for trusting God.

(Tav) 21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Better: “Let your integrity and uprightness preserve me . . .” The “me” is the object of the verb “preserve”; that is, David needed saving by the Lord. He is not saying save me because of my integrity and righteousness, but because You are good. Act in conformity to your character and cause me to experience “goodness and mercy” all the days of my life (Psalm 23).

David trusted God to be his Trustee because of His integrity and righteousness; that is, because He was trustworthy. In David's mind, God's integrity was being tested, and that to prove His righteousness, God needed to act now . . . immediately to save him from the sword of the enemy.

The English word "wait" is of German origin, and it means "to observe carefully" or "to be watchful" — to "stay where one is or delay action until something else happens." "I rang the bell and waited."

"wait" is a Piel verb requiring intense energy on the part of David. If he rushed forward, the enemy would slaughter him. His only choice was to wait on the Lord — a strenuous discipline that tested David's side of the agreement.

Redemption

(Pe) 22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

The final letter is not Tav, but Pe indicating this may be a later addition by some Levite. Moreover, this stanza represents a sudden shift from personal concerns to national concerns — a priority of those in exile in Babylon.

Ellicott makes this observation, "This verse, beginning with Pe, was apparently a later addition. Not only is it an isolated line, interfering with the alphabetical arrangement, but it also differs from the rest of the psalm by employing Elohim in the place of Jehovah. (Comp. Psalm 34:22.)"

Notes on the Acrostic psalm and its irregularities

"In the psalm before us, the general order of the Hebrew alphabet is observed, with the following exceptions: the two first verses commence with the Hebrew letter א ('), the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; while the second letter, ב (b), is omitted. The Hebrew letters, ו (w) and ק (q), are also omitted, while two verses begin with the Hebrew letter ר (r), and at the close of the psalm, after the Hebrew letter ת (t), the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet — another verse is added, beginning with the Hebrew letter פ (p). We cannot account for these variations" (Barnes).

Psalm 26 - One's Legal Standing to Pray

My Foot Standeth in an Even Place



This psalm claims to have been written by David, and there is no reason to doubt the inscription. The nature of David's conflicts in the course of his law-enforcement calling makes it plausible that he would be the author of this psalm — as one concerned about his own standing in God's Supreme Court.

One's Legal Standing to Pray

To maintain a cause in any court, the plaintiff party must have clean hands.

This doctrine requires the court to deny equitable relief to a party who has violated good faith with respect to the subject of the claim. The purpose of the doctrine, as explained in *Colby Furniture Company, Inc. v. Belinda J. Overton* is to prevent a party from obtaining relief when that party's own wrongful conduct has made it such that granting the relief would be against equity and good conscience (Legal Information Institute).

David was anxious about his position before the Throne as to whether or not he could maintain his cause before this righteous, impartial, all-knowing Judge. Therefore, he asks the LORD to examine him to see if there was any area in his life where he was not in conformity to His law. Possibly, his bloody-calling as a soldier might have contributed to his uncertainty as to whether or not he could advance a cause before this holy, merciful court.

"The status of a person is his legal position or condition"

(<https://famguardian.org/>)

A Prayer for Relief (Examination)

Psalm 26:1 <A Psalm of David.> Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.

2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

Q: Is there any matter in my life that is not in conformity to your law and your truth?

The word "examine" (bachan) and "prove" me (nachah) in this context has to do with a court hearing where parties are required "to appear" in court and to present evidence of their claim, Thus, courts are about hearing claims and cross-examination to test whether those claims are true or false.

In criminal law, courts will examine the "intent" of the accused. In this case, David boldly requests the Lord examine his actions and "the intent" of his heart.

Exculpatory evidence – Evidence which tends to show the defendant’s innocence.

Inculpatory evidence – Evidence which tends to show the defendant’s guilt.

Courts are all about examining claims and defenses of parties involved in a matter before the court. David makes a claim for relief, but first he demonstrated that he had clean hands; i.e. there are no areas in his life where he has not acted in good faith.

“An act does not make a person guilty, unless the intention be also guilty. This maxim applies only to criminal cases; in civil matters it is otherwise” (<https://famguardian.org/>).

The Grounds for Relief

To maintain a cause in court one must have clean hands. This doctrine requires the court to deny equitable relief to a party who has violated good faith with respect to the subject of the claim (Legal Information Institute).

3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

Q: Is there sufficient evidence I have walked in good faith before this court?

“lovingkindness” and “truth” are two sides of the same coin — two marks of God’s court. God’s court is not only about truth and justice; it is also about mercy and kindness.

4 I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

“vain” stands in contrast to that which is true and genuine. “dissemblers” refers to characters who break the law and then conceal their crimes.

18 U.S.C § 792 – “Whoever harbors or conceals any person who he knows, or has reasonable grounds to believe or suspect, has committed, or is about to commit, an offense under sections 793 or 794 of this title, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both. (June 25, 1948, ch. 645, 62 Stat.”

Q: Is there any evidence I am associated with the criminal element of society — deceivers, liars, and defrauders?

5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

We have here the same evidence of his clean hands repeated in another and a stronger form.

Q: Is there any evidence I have committed a crime or that I associate with lawbreakers and criminals?

6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

“Human nature does not change with time or environment” (famguardian.org)

“innocency” refers to David’s conscience; that is, he has no consciousness of guilt or overtly breaking God’s law. He is not a lawless man, but a lawful man! He is not a perfect man by any means, but he knows that he has not intentionally harmed any man or his property. That is, he

is not a “loose cannon on the deck tossed to and fro by the currents of the sea wrecking everything on board his ship.

Matters of the common law require that we do no harm — to love our neighbor as our self.

“With malice toward none with charity for all . . .” Abraham Lincoln

“He who has committed iniquity, shall not have equity” (Legal Maxim).

“He who is once bad, is presumed to be always so in the same degree” (Legal Maxim).

Q: Is there any evidence against me that I have willingly, maliciously, intentionally, or inadvertently violated your law causing harm to my neighbor; and, or, is there any evidence I am guilty of violating the Ten Commandments?

This is the clean hands doctrine — the duty all men have to make a claim in God’s court against another party.

Law is the science of what is good and evil.

The law is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34).

The law does not reward evil doers. “No man ought to derive any benefit of his own wrong.”

The law punishes falsehood.

It is not lawful to do evil that good may come.

Whoever does anything by the command of a judge is not reckoned to have done it with an evil intent, because it is necessary to obey (Isaiah 33:22, “For the LORD is our judge...”) (famguardian.org: “Right and Wrong”).

He, who has committed iniquity, shall not have equity – (Legal Maxim).

An outlaw is, as it were, put out of the protection of the law – (Legal Maxim).

David claims that not only has he no sympathy toward criminals, but that his actions demonstrate that he did what was right, longed to do what was right, and desired to be near the altars of the LORD. He did not choose evil companions. Though it is impossible to escape evil, he pours out his heart stating that his preferences were to be near godly men; that he still loved God and wanted to be near Him; that the only matter keeping him from being closer to the LORD was his duty as a military leader, husband, and father.

God’s law does not require impossibilities: “The law compels no one to do anything which is useless or impossible” (Maxim of Law).

7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

Q: Is there any evidence against me that I am not a friend of the court?

“ the voice of thanksgiving” literally means, “that I may cause to be heard.” The court cannot offer justice to a man denying principles. “He who does not blame, approves” (Maxim of Law).

David claims he is subject to law and a promoter of God's law-order; that He gives thanks, holds himself accountable to the rule of law and requires his cabinet to act in conformity to the law.

8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

Q: Is there any evidence I do not honor your law or desire to be in conformity to your house rules?

The law rewards those in compliance with its demands.

David claims to be a true friend of the court . . . to be in good standing with the court . . . to frequent the house of God with clean hands and to be in a position of honor in relation to the requirements of the court — laws that require one to honor the rights of men.

“When anything is commanded, everything by which it can be accomplished is also commanded,” (SEDM).

The Relief Requested

9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

“Gather” may refer to a court summons; that is the court’s “cattle call” on Monday morning where weekend criminals appear before the court in red jump suits.

Some men sin individually, and some men sin in a group due to public pressure (Exodus 24:1-4). David prays the Judge would separate him from the sins of the crowd . . . the sins of the age and not consider him a willing co-participant in organized crime, gang violence, or the foolishness of the senseless crowd during his age.

“Bloody men” refers to a class of men known as murderers — a violation of the sixth commandment — a crime often committed under color of law by government actors.

10 In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

The word “mischief” (zimmah) refers “to purpose,” “to plans,” or “to schemes” by the powerbrokers in government to defraud common citizens of their property in violation of the 10th Commandment.

“bribes” are lures that draw public officials in positions of power into crimes of perverting justice for love of money, the root of all evil.

11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

“But as for me” refers to David’s thoughtful decision to separate himself from men of power and greed, to walk honestly in conformity to God’s law despite the pressures upon him to commit unlawful acts by his peers (public officials). Because these pressures were as real as sticks and stones, he prays that God would find a merciful way to redeem him and to strengthen him to walk his course with integrity.

How could anyone prevail in a claim against a party who is obeying both God's Law and man's law?

12 My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

The word "even place" (miy'shor) literally refers "to level land, a plain, or something even like table land. Symbolically, it refers to justice.

The sublime idea is that David has standing in this court to pray and plead his case because he is a friend of the court with clean hands.

The standing in this text is not referring to a bodily position, but to one's *locus standi* (legal standing) in court; that is, the party seeking a legal remedy must demonstrate to the court they are within the court's jurisdiction; that they have clean hands; that they have suffered an "injury in fact"; that the alleged claim comes under the law of the court; and, that the court has authority to judge matters related to the Plaintiff's cause.

Psalm 27 - The Fearless man

The Road Less Traveled

"Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart . . ." (27:14).



The most analyzed poem in American history is "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.

The first line reads, "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood."

Psalm 27 has been a favorite among Christians for generations.

It was written to inspire confidence, and to encourage fellow pilgrims on this journey through life to trust the Lord:

Before us is a man marvelously delivered from fear . . . and, we would do well to tap into his Source and Power.

Psalm 27:1 A Psalm of David.

The psalm is attributed to David. Everything about this psalm has the smell of the outdoors. Yet, there are no time markers to tell us when David penned this work.

Because this masterpiece builds on his experience of deliverance, we assume it was written in mid-life after David's anointing at Hebron or possibly after his deliverance by Abishai in fighting the brother of Goliath (2 Samuel 21).

Before us is a man who experienced the salvation of God in the blood-cries of war. David shared his story so that we will seek God and trust Him during our battles with the enemies of God.

The world teaches men to trust you. Frank Sinatra made a hit on the song, "I did it my way." But, there was nothing unique about "his way."

The road MOST traveled is, "We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned *to our own way* . . ." ([Isaiah 53:6](#)).

Ducking under the humble gate, David found the Lord. There, he chose the road less traveled — the lonely, narrow highway of holiness. Light dawned in the darkness. Help appeared out of nowhere to assist him.

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

This is the conclusion of the psalm. It is not where he started. It is where he finished.

Exciting confidence in men to trust the LORD, this pilgrim encourages men to discover for themselves the light and salvation found in Christ.

Both roads are filled with darkness, distress, dejection, disease, disappointment, and death; but, David discovered the LORD is a light for those pursuing holiness in black times. For those experiencing trouble, sorrow, and perplexity, the Lord provides a lamp for the feet and a light for the path (Psalm 119:105).

Moreover, David discovered the LORD saves His people from predators of the night stalking travelers. He could even boast, "the Lord is *my* strength," stability, support, and salvation of my life.

On this road of trust, his fears quieted: "Of whom shall I be afraid?" Philistines? Moabites? Syrians? Kings? Russians? Relatives? Professors? Thieves? Muggers? Armies? Cops? Bankers? Government officials? the IRS? CIA? FBI?

But, one must believe to see, and believe to enjoy (27:13).

War is a dark place with clashing swords, deadly arrows, and muscular men seeking to kill and not be killed. Death shadows soldiers on every side. Who can imagine the terror that erupts in a theater of war?

Because war is dark and draining, we need the light of the Lord and the strength of God.

With God as his light, strength, and salvation, this warrior-king publishes his conquest over fear . . . and over his enemies. More than a casual nod to a spiritual maxim, David's proclamation is marked by the wisdom of an eastern sage.

God is light: if darkness is the symbol of distress, trouble, perplexity, and death; light is the emblem of hope, guidance, protection, and life. Even on the dark killing fields, this warrior-king found the LORD to be his Guide and Protector. Even on this battleground, David found reasons to face the enemy with courage and strength.

God is my salvation: The term "salvation" refers to an "in time," temporal deliverance from some potential catastrophe. In the course of battle, David learned that because God was with Him, beside him, in front of him, and behind him, the LORD was his reason for survival and success. He learned the NT truth that if "God is for us, who can be against us?" If God is for me, why should I fear anything?

God is the strength of my life.

David learned that with God beside him, there was no power in heaven or earth that could destroy him. If God is for me, what force should I fear?

The lesson here is to seek a relationship with the LORD God and to trust Him while facing common fears that plague us through life.

One way Navy seals overcome fear is by "preparing for deployment" and "trusting their training." But, the Christian goes further and taps into God's promises. He overcomes fear

believing God enters the battle with him. Deliverance comes by developing patterns of trust in preparation for conflict.

Attracted to faith, the Lord delights in protecting the one who trusts Him. How can God fail to help a man relying upon Him? See the Soldier's Prayer (Psalm 91).

2 When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

Rooted in experiences of soldiering, David shares the reason for his confidence.

David describes his enemies as "wicked" men hell-bent on devouring his flesh and soul like a hungry lion looking for a bloody meal. Furthermore, his enemies were God's enemies — godless, lawless, rebellious, malicious, reckless sons of Satan.

David knew that the military life of a king was not the Sultan's golden cake. His job as commander and chief of Israel's army involved confronting hostile forces hell-bent on crushing his bones and severing his head from his torso. Enemy combatants were bigger and stronger than him. Yet, David proclaims very simply without prating or panoply that with God as his light and strength. The monsters he faced faltered and fell to their death on the battlefield.

3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

What confidence! Out of David's terrifying experiences in battle grew a leather-tough certainty that no matter how huge the forces marshaled against him (a host), he was not going to let fear be his master.

Past victories assured him of future victories; yesterday's triumph assured him of tomorrow's achievement; yesterday's test became today's testimony; and, perceiving His presence provided power for the day.

"By enduring an intense emotional experience enough times, the anxiety diminishes." Navy Seal

Where there are no troubles, there are no triumphs. No enemies, no victories! No wars, no wins! No battles, no boasting! No habits of trusting, no history of conquests!

The lesson is when Christian men face each day's challenge with dependence upon the Savior, fears shrink and courage expands. A man grows in grit as he grinds out success with a strong grip on God in his life work. Small victories enhance the chance of larger victories.

President FDR said obtusely that there is nothing to fear but fear itself.

The truth is there is much to fear . . . but, when a man sees with the eye of faith that God is on his side, difficulties diminish and fears fade.

Fear shrinks the man and robs him of strength for the day. One should face his fears before he faces duties. Fear of failure can hold him back from pursuing a pace leading to success. It's not easy to face your fears, but pushing through them is essential.

David did not rely on “positive thinking” or practice some sort of mental-magic. He recognized the dangers of battle, but entered the combat zone with a confidence the LORD is sovereign and that His will and not the will of David’s enemies would be done.

4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.

Before us is the ruling desire of David . . . of all men of God – “that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.” This passion is from God and not men. No man is born with this craving. It is a gift . . . a grant that makes the man rich in relationship and beautiful in disposition.

The word “enquire” could be translated “investigate,” “seek,” or “reflect.” It is a Piel infinitive expressing INTENSE desire to seek and pursue God, His character, and His ways.

This great warrior reveals a startling truth. His ambition in life was not to be a great soldier or warrior king, but to be employed as a priest — even a doorkeeper in the house of God (Psalm 94:10).

This was not a bifurcated king, a double-minded man, a multipotential believer pursuing multiculturalism or polymath. He had one, singular, solitary, remarkable passion – to know God truly . . . wholly . . . deeply . . . and personally. Selah.

David is a man with singularity of purpose with one overwhelming desire — to dwell in the house of the Lord like tabernacle servants . . . to behold the beauty of the Lord . . . and, to enquire in his temple.

The word “beauty” (na’em) means “pleasant” and is translated “sweet” in Psalm 141:6. It is compared to “honeycomb” in Proverbs 16:24.

“Let the beauty (honeycomb) of the Lord our God be upon us.” –A Prayer of Moses (Psalm 90:17).

Moses prayed the sunshine of the Lord’s beauty might shine upon His people, that the charm and sweetness of His excellence might be reflected in them, on them, and through them. Remember, Moses glowed with the glory of God’s presence when he came down from the mountain after 40 days of being saturated with the brightness of Divine company. He wanted this for his people.

There is a heavenly beauty that makes the plainest face glow, the simplest saint shine, and the pure heart overflow with the joy of His transcendent presence.

Oh, the beauty (honeycomb) of the Lord! Who can describe it?

“Every revelation of God that is made to us—is a revelation of beauty. Everywhere in nature, in the flower that blooms, in the bird that sings, in the dewdrop that sparkles, in the star that shines, in the sunset that burns with splendor—we see reflections of God’s beauty. “He has made everything beautiful in its time!” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). In the Holy Scriptures, every revelation

of the divine character presents God to us in surpassing loveliness. Christ was “God manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), the beauty of the invisible God made visible to human eyes, and such enrapturing beauty has never been seen, except in that one blessed life.” J.R. Miller, gracegems.org

David could not escape the duties of a king, yet his whole being hummed with a desire to be in harmony with God.

The world is filled with ambitious people who want to be rich and famous, but King David wanted to be rich in the knowledge of God and famous to Him.

A hungry heart is a healthy heart.

But, be careful for what you hunger, for you will become the sum total of your desires.

A man occupied with the sweetness of Christ won't be bewildered by the bitterness of his enemies. A Christian with an eye on the LORD, a hand on a sword, and a heart full of faith doesn't have room for fear.

Aaron's Blessing: The Nasah ("lift up")

The LORD bless thee, and keep thee:

The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace (Numbers 6:24-26).

5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

“time of trouble” happens to all men.

“pavilion” refers to a “thicket, booth, or hiding place.”

Oh, the troubles (plural) we face on the road to the Celestial City. Who can count them all? But, the psalmist expresses this confidence: that God shall shelter, shield, and support him in the midst of them all.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices (shouts) of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises (zamar; make music on a stringed instrument) unto the LORD.

“lifted up” implies victory and triumph.

When shame enters the heart, the head hangs down; when prosperity shadows a man, he tilts his head high. Bursting with confidence that He would be able to hold his head high, he offers the “shouts of joy” before the final victory over his foes. Overflowing with confidence, his masculine chant to the LORD scattered his foes. Let us remember that praise is to God what complaining is to the Devil. The Lord loves it; the devil hates it.

The Psalmist's Prayer the LORD will Hear His Voice

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

The presence of many troubles (27:5) caused David to pray, "Hear, O LORD." His troubles, rather than stirring doubt, stirred his confidence in God. The enemies of God are my enemies. They can be defeated with the shield of faith and the sword of truth.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry. You hear many prayers, but hear my prayer. Have mercy on this flawed man and his flawed prayers. Don't be silent like pagan idols. Answer me.

**8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.
9 Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.**

We are prone to misinterpret troubles as a sign that God has abandoned us and that treasures are sign of His favor. This is hardly the truth.

Troubles are not proof you are out of the will of God, nor is prosperity proof that you please God. Difficulties may be evidence you are on the road less traveled.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

"father and mother forsake me" is an extreme hypothetical statement.

"When" . . . not "if." Following Christ isolates us from worldly family members. When forsaken by parents, brothers, friends, or one's contemporaries, the Lord will not abandon us.

"take me up" refers to eastern hospitality and the delightful custom of Bedouins receiving strangers into one's tent and providing them a meal.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

"way" refers to the law and customs of the LORD. "lead me in a plain path" refers to a straight and smooth path free of dangers.

"Teach me Thy way, O Lord,
Teach me Thy way;
Thy gracious aid afford,
Teach me Thy way.
Help me to walk aright;
More by faith, less by sight;
Lead me with heav'nly light,
Teach me Thy way.
When doubts and fears arise,
Teach me Thy way;
When storms o'erspread the
skies,
Teach me Thy way.
Shine through the cloud and
rain,
Through sorrow, toil, and
pain;

Make Thou my pathway
plain,
Teach me Thy way
When doubts and fears arise,
Teach me Thy way;
When storms o'erspread the
skies,
Teach me Thy way.
Shine through the cloud and
rain,
Through sorrow, toil, and
pain;
Make Thou my pathway
plain,
Teach me Thy way.

Long as my life shall last,
Teach me Thy way;
Where'er my lot be cast,
Teach me Thy way.

Until the race is run,
Until the journey's done,
Until the crown is won,
Teach me Thy way. "

12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

Not all men have our good in mind. David prays he would escape the snares and traps of powerful men in pursuit of power and wealth.

The Psalmist's Proposal to Men

13 I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

"I had fainted" is not in the text, but is correctly supplied by the translators.

David does not deceive us. In taking the road less traveled, the shepherd-king found monstrous conspirators that challenged his strength. In Dorothy's terms, the road to the Celestial City was filled with "lions, tigers, and bears, oh my!"

The psalmist's only means of support against these double-dealing devils was his faith in the goodness of God. Seeing the goodness of the LORD prevented him from plunging into despair due to the villains and vices of his time.

But, he had to believe in order to see!

One of the first lessons young Christians learn is to put their faith in facts and not their feelings. Our feelings lie to us, but the facts in God's Word are true, correct, and not misleading.

God is not training us to be Jedi warriors who follow their feelings, but to be Christian soldiers clinging to the sword of His Word.

We must believe the gospel to be saved; believe to enjoy the benefits of the gospel; and believe to overcome the enemies of the gospel.

Faith, not feelings, secures the future; Faith, not fears, moves the heart of God.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

However, we are not fideists that believe in fictions and fantasies common to pagan religions. It is not faith in faith that matters, but faith in facts, faith in the promises of God that conquers the demons of doubt and the reasoning of reprobates. It is faith that leads to *mazel tov*, good fortune. "Mazel Tov" is what celebrants shout to the bride and groom after a Jewish wedding ceremony as they face an uncertain future.

14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

The word “wait” in Hebrew is a Piel imperative informing us that waiting requires intense, muscular faith. He says it twice . . . “wait” “wait” . . . as a Hebrew form of emphasis. Most of us would rather “do” than “wait.”

The Spirit’s command is to wait on the Lord, to trust in Him, to rely upon him and not “to turn to your own way”; that is, when the road is uphill, “be hopeful” don’t doubt, don’t faint, don’t quit, don’t resign, don’t turn back, keep trusting. He will provide strength for the journey, and enable you to fulfill your duties in life. The outcome of *mazel tov* faith is strength.

Waiting on God for *mazel tov* is the “road less traveled.”

Psalm 28 - The Righteous and the Wicked

Beware of Contracts with the Wicked



There is no reason to doubt the author is King David. Concerned about being trapped into an obligatory contract with wicked lusty men, David prays God would provide a means of escape.

All of life is about contracts and having to “strike hands” with the wicked out of necessity tries the souls of honest men.

A Plea to Be Heard by a Desperate Saint

Aware of pressing danger around him, David motions the Court for immediate intervention lest he suffer irreparable harm. Feeling the pressures of entering a contract with the wicked and incurring guilt by association, David pleads with the Lord for power to resist and to disassociate with corrupt men around him in a suitable way that doesn't exacerbate tension between parties.

Psalm 28:1 <A Psalm of David.> Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to 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.

A Plea to Be Delivered from Yoking with Wicked Men

Compelled to work with wicked men and to contract with them, David fears being drawn into the vortex of evil swirling around him due to the deception of the wicked seeking increase by linking with power. David fears that he may not be able to resist these political pressures and that he will end up consenting to their evil plans. Consider the following maxims of law:

You ought to know with whom you deal.

He who does not protest agrees.

Consent makes the law. And, power to act is obtained by consent.

He who does not object to what he can prevent is viewed as assenting (Proverbs 1:10).

They who consent to an act, and they who do it, shall be visited with equal punishment.

Acting and consenting parties are liable to the same punishment.

3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.

David expresses a strong desire not to be linked with wicked people in design or in destiny . . . in life or in death . . . in time or eternity.

“peace” and “mischief” describes the artifice, duplicity, and hypocrisy of evil men — they lure you with sweet words and snag you with their hook. Most likely David is referring to the wicked with grand schemes to rob men of their property in violation of the Tenth Commandment — an enticement by sinners with no conscience toward God (Proverbs 1:10).

4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavours: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

“Give,” “give,” and “render” is a prayer that God would render a guilty verdict and bring down the gavel of punishment on them immediately.

5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

The wicked do not acknowledge God’s sovereignty over His creation, his law, or the rights of men. To shun truth is to build a society on lies. A society built on lies and deception has a date with death — “He shall destroy them!”

Praise to the LORD for Answering his Plea

This psalm begins in a storm and ends in peace. Relieved by the calm, David prays again. Effectively delivered from the pressures to strike an agreement with the wicked, David returns to give thanks and to bless the LORD for delivering him from the liabilities of these adhesion contracts.

6 Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

Experiencing calm after the storm and peace after turbulence, David appropriately thanks the LORD for His intervention.

7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

Deliverance and enjoyment of peace after conflicts provides new insights into the Lord and inspires new commitments to the Him.

8 The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.

Better translated “strength to them” referring to the people of God. Finding new strength personally, David wishes all of God’s people the same fortune.

“His anointed” refers to David as the properly inaugurated king.

A Plea for God to Save, Bless, Provide, and Sustain the People of God

Delivered from personal pressures to strike hands with the wicked, David focuses on the concerns of his nation. How do you know if you are spiritually healthy? Healthy souls serve the needs of others. They do not meditate or take inward journeys to discover self.

9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

Shifting from his personal success, David wishes the people of God might experience His salvation, blessing, provision in the form of plentiful harvests, and esteem among the nations.

Psalm 29 - The Majesty of God

Give unto the LORD the Glory Due unto His Name



David authored this psalm and his supreme description of a storm hints that the author spent much time outdoors. Thus the storm was used to incite men to consider the power, greatness, and majesty of God

(A Psalm of David.) Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

In a narrow sense, the psalm is addressed to “ye mighty” ones, *bene elim*, or angels.

In a broader sense, it is addressed to ministers of God including but not limited to storms and rulers. Government officers may also be in mind.

“Give unto the LORD” is an expression requiring men to attribute terrifying “acts of nature” to the Creator. Men can add nothing to God, but reason requires sons to honor the Father as the Source of all things beautiful (glory) and powerful (strength) — something men struggle to do.

2 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

Because men tend to neglect their duty to honor Him as the Creator-God, the command “give” glory to the LORD is repeated a second time.

“Give . . . glory” is used three times in this psalm. The LORD is not only awesome, He is admirable! He is not only to be feared, but cherished; that is, men should recognize His glorious attributes during all seasons of life. Pious men not only obey the LORD, they enjoy Him as the Source of all things lovely.

The term “worship” (*shackah*) is a Hithpael imperative meaning “to exercise your will;” i.e. to cause yourself to “bow down” to One greater than yourself. It is the psalmist’s invitation term: Give the Lord the place He deserves, and Honor Him as your Creator-God. Invite Him to sit on the throne in your life.

“Beauty of holiness” refers to one’s decor (attire) – a reference to the holy adornment of priests (Psalm 110:3; 2 Chronicles 20:21); that is, because you worship the King, dress, speak, and act your royal best! Speak reasonably, behave honorably, and dress appropriately.

“. . . he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army. . .”

“Worship the Lord in Holy Attire” (Psalm 96: 8-9). The Hebrew word for “attire” is “*hadarah*,” which means “adornment and glory.” When you and I enter as priests in God’s presence, this very act assures our adornment with glory” (Loving Grace Ministries).

When in church all “speak of the glory of God” (v.9). Men remove their hats, and women wear a head covering as a symbol that the glory of God, not the glory man, should be seen in this holy place (1 Corinthians 11:1-16).

3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.

“The voice of the LORD” refers to His authority over water, rain, and hail during the semi-darkness of stormy nights. The phrase is used seven times in this hymn.

“Thundereth” refers to the LORD as the source of rumbling thunder echoing throughout the night. Can you feel the wonder and terror of Bedouins as darting flashes of light and deafening thunderclaps rushed across the open fields? Whipping winds and great walls of water falling on our tiny tents are His doing.

“Upon many waters” refers to the LORD’s sovereignty over thunderstorms on land and sea. He controls the gentle pitter-patter of raindrops *diminuendo* and the sheets of torrential downpours *crescendo forte*.

4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

The boom, crash, and rumble of thunder and the jagged streaks of blinding light provide evidence of God’s regal power and royal majesty.

5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

These blinding flashes of light that split cedars into fragments of wood are attributed to the authority and power of God.

6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

The arrows of God that shatter the cedars of Lebanon into toothpicks are compared to the quick movements of skipping calves and dancing unicorns — a poetic hyperbole.

7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.

These jagged streaks of light splitting and dividing the sky as they zig zag to earth are attributed to the authority and power of the LORD.

8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

“Shaketh” means to “make tremble” — an illusion to desert storms and biting sand that dance in sheets of blowing crystals across the southern arid regions of the Levant. These thunderclaps and monsoon winds in the Wilderness of Kadesh are the ministers of Almighty God.

With squinted eyes of faith, the righteous understand that the deep rumbles of thunder echoing around shaking objects causing cascades of rains to come crashing down to the floor in Bedouin tents is His doing. God-fearing men believe the barrage of cannon fire that soars through window frames trapping them in a cacophony of wind and rain are from the LORD.

9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.

“maketh the hinds to calve” refers to female deer forced into labor by the fear of glowing lightening and peals of thunder.

“Discovereth the forest” means “to strip” or “to peel.”

The storms that cause our chest to ache from fright making it impossible to breathe are from Him. When death feels so near, and sudden flashes and rumbles of thunder compel us to fall to our knees in prayer are His doing. Trapped in one of these terrifying thunderstorms Martin Luther surrendered his soul to Christ.

The word “temple” refers to the “palace” of a king. Saying “glory” is a reference to the effect of electrical storms on men. Having shown the awesome power of God in thunder, He declares the duty of men to ponder and proclaim His glory. In His temple, the sons of God say, “Glory!” because they contemplate the awe and wonder of the Creator.

The requiem of the church is “Glory!” If thunder announces His glorious peals of light, how much more should his sons fear, honor, and proclaim the glories of God in the church?

10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.

“sitteth upon the flood” (mabbul) appears to be a reference to God’s authority over Noah’s flood — the most terrifying storm of all storms. He is enthroned high above the thunderclaps, darting flashes of light, hurricane winds, dancing grains of sand, and sheets of rain.

This psalm ends with the gospel of the Old Testament. The LORD reigns! As King he sits on cumulonimbus clouds and reigns over the terrors of cloudbursts. He sends these sheets of ice and wind as it pleases Him.

The rain, wind, dust, clouds, flashes of light, and blistering thunderclaps shout “Glory!” Likewise, the invocation of every temple service should be “Glory!” (the Requiem of the church). An invocation that begins with “Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD God Almighty!” is called the “trisagion” – the Divine Liturgy of the Eastern Church.

11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

As the people attribute the glories of nature to the LORD, He blesses His people and gives them strength and peace (See the Priestly Blessing in [Numbers 6:22-27](#)) — a promise to preserve His people during the cyclones of this life.

As the light bulbs flicker and storm waves crash on the shores of our life creating chaos in our hearts, let us trust God for His peace and His strength. When the mighty winds rattle the glass panes in our home and we feel cut and bruised like the rocks on a stormy beach, let us trust Him. The surf and foam caused by upheavals on earth will soon disappear. Like the calm on a sunny beach, He will fill our hearts with peace and strength (John 14:27).

Psalm 30 - Dedication of the House of God

Thou hast Turned for Me my Mourning into Dancing:



The psalm was composed for "the dedication of the house of David." Though we assume David wrote this psalm, there is no reason to call in question the correctness of this inscription.

1 (A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David.)

Building a house is a huge accomplishment for any man — a marvelous occasion that deserves a dedication service. Hebrews were known to dedicate a house after it was finished and to give thanks to God for His help in completing the ambitious project.

Deuteronomy 20:5, "what man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it."

David's thoughts run the gamut: In this psalm, we see his highs and lows, his ups and downs, and his faith and fears prior to the establishment of his throne in Jerusalem.

I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

"extol" (ruwm) means "to raise up."

"lifted up" -- At one time or another, all men feel scorned by disinterested people and oppressed by personal enemies. David did. Thus "lifted up" is a term requesting God to energetically interpose Himself and to provide a way of escape from pressing circumstances. Because David lifted up the Lord in his life, he had grounds to pray that God would lift him up.

The completion of the construction of his house was the external sign that God had saved David from his enemies and established his kingdom. Having completed the construction of his palace, he perceived that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, and that he had secured his throne for His people's sake.

But, there were many days in David's military / political career where he thought he may not survive the conflicts.

"I will extol (ruwm) thee," a Piel verb that literally means "I will exalt Thee" or "I will raise Thee up." Like water being drawn out of a well by a bucket, God dynamically lifted David up out of the cistern of destitution and obscurity (Exodus 2:19). Consequently, David declares the LORD as the Source of his promotion.

Reflecting on his past perils, David was compelled to compose a song to commemorate God's redemptive work in his life. He had come from poverty to prosperity, from shame to honor,

from danger to safety, from doubt to security, from death on the battlefield to life in the palace. Promoted to a position of honor in peace, David lifted up his praises to the Most High.

2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

The word “cried” (shava) is a Piel verb implying intense agony.

Thou hast healed (rapha) me may be literal or metaphorical, physical or spiritual — That is, God delivered him from his fears and troubles of his mind, (which are often compared to diseases,) that robbed him of strength for the day and of hope for tomorrow.

3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

“brought up my soul from the grave” -- No doubt, David reflected on how the Philistines tried to kill him . . . how Saul pursued him . . . how Absalom sought to dethrone him. In all these dangers, God preserved not only his life but his throne. So horrifying were these experiences David felt the trauma of stepping into his own grave. That the LORD brought him to the doors of “Sheol” and the edges of the pit and kept him alive were somber reflections by this vulnerable man on the providence of God.

4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

“Sing” is a Piel imperative calling the saints to praise God vigorously. Because He preserves them from great tragedies and does great things for believers, the saints are bound to live out a life of grateful service motivated by profound thankfulness. If the angels in heaven sing His praises why should the saints on earth be silent?

“holiness” -- What causes great fear to the wicked, causes great comfort to the godly. Made partakers of His holiness (Hebrews 12:10-12), believers have the capacity to heartily rejoice in the remembrance of the perfections of Christ.

“It is here called the memorial of his holiness, because the mercy and faithfulness which the Psalmist is celebrating are rays out of the light of holiness”
(Cambridge).

5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

Anger and weeping at night; and favor and joy in the morning are personified as two visitors that believers meet in their pilgrimage on earth. Thoroughly Oriental, sorrow (anger) is portrayed as a traveler coming to the tent of a Bedouin seeking lodging for the night. This gloomy guest is not said to leave, only that his visit is suddenly interrupted with the welcome arrival of another guest — the golden rays of the sun scattering the unseen terrors of darkness — the morning cry of joy that drowns out the groans of the night. Dark thunderstorms last for a moment, but the summer days are long. Rainy days come, but they are short blasts of discomfort compared to the warm days of summer.

The lesson is clear: His anger lasts for a moment; but, His favor last for a lifetime. The psalmist reveals the brevity of sorrow and perpetuity of joy.

6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

The wicked says in his proud heart, “I shall not be moved” (Psalm 10:6). A good man, deceived by his temporal success, may say, ‘I shall not be moved,’ but the mature saint says, ‘because He is at my right hand, I shall never be moved.’ (Psalm 16:8).

The lesson appears to be that believers carry unuttered presumptions throughout their pilgrimage on earth. When things are well with us, we are very apt to think that they will always be so. Because long periods of peace rusts the canon; prosperity darkens the night; and, riches dull the heart, the believer must renew his mind and sharpen his perspective. Dust clusters like “God does not care,” or “I am safe in nurturing my bosom sins,” should be swept out of the closet. The quietness of the volcano is no assurance of its complete extinction (MacLaren).

7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

The word “mountain” is a metaphor for David’s estate and God’s protection that sustained him.

The fluctuation of David’s feelings is shown by the rapid succession of clauses that lack conjunctions.

David’s thoughts shift from his present triumph to his former troubles; from his current prosperity to his expired poverty, from his immediate safety to his past insecurities. His house completed, David feels the warmth of God’s favor; but, he remembers the days when God hid his face from him and cold chills rippled down his spine.

8 I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.

It was in the darkness of those cold nights that David inched his way to God. Because he learned to pray in the dark, he could sing in the sunshine. It was during the night that David learned to claim God’s promises as his own. Though one walks on streets of gold, there is no security without Him. A man must somehow find his hope in the favor of Another or he will cling to spider webs hanging deceitfully from the ceiling.

“If God hide his face, a good man is troubled, though no other calamity befall him. But if God, in wisdom and justice, turn from us, it will be the greatest folly if we turn from him” (Matthew Henry).

The good man would rather die on his knees clinging to a reluctant God than to live in a paradise of pleasure without Him.

Because the man of God has learned to trust God in the storm, he is a comfort for those tossed to and fro by the waves of adversity.

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?

As David reflected on the adversity that confronted him, he heard mourners proclaiming his death. Feeling the near misses of spears hurled at him, David questioned the value of going to an early grave: “What good would my death bring to mankind?” While smelling blood on the battlefield and hearing the cries of death around him, he asked, “What profit or advantage would there be to thee if I should die?”

David knew that if he had perished in one of those bloody battles, he could no longer sing in God’s choir; no longer compose hymns for saints to sing; no longer proclaim the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Surely, the Lord was not on the side of his enemies discriminating his own nightingales.

10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

For sure, David lived near the edge of a cliff. In light of the high possibility of death, David prayed more earnestly. “Hear (shema), show mercy (ha-nini), be my helper (haya-azar)” in battle.

11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing; thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

At this dedication of David’s house, the king mused over his former terrors on the battlefield. As he reflected on God’s answer to his desperate prayer, his stressed-face yielded a faint smile.

Using poetic parallelism, he describes the reversal of providence as a transition from mourning to dancing; from being clothed in sackcloth to wearing the garments of a king. Providence moved him out of peril to a place of safety; from the slaughter house to a king’s palace; from fearfulness to peacefulness; from terror to delight, from rags to riches.

12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

The verb “sing” is a Piel stem implying intense action.

God did not save David because he was good, but because the LORD appointed David to glorify Him; that David’s problems would yield praises to God; that David’s deliverance would create hope in pious men.

“To the end” describes the purpose of liberation. You can have your deliverance, but God must have the glory.

“And not be silent” is the psalmist way of wishing his tongue might not be unemployed; that his precious all might be engaged in the contemplation of God and the praise of His name; that his house might not be a habitation of sin and selfish living, but that his house might be a place of serious sanctity and joy in the LORD.

Psalm 31 - A Prayer for Deliverance

Deliver Me in Thy Righteousness.



Uses of such terms as “rock” “fortress” are evidences this psalm was written by David.

This prayer is the heart cry of every saint.

Its sublime truth is so profound and so simple; it is easy to miss the main lesson of the psalm: trust the LORD. This lesson should touch the soul and not just shuttled through the head.

Defend Me

Psalm 31:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

“trust” is the keynote of the song . . . so simply stated . . . and so hard to apply.

Trust is the crux of the Christian life, the kernel of health, the meat of the strong, and a shelter for those in the storm of conflict.

In this text, “trust” is a Hebrew verb (perfect) . . . an action . . . whereby David deposited his property with his chosen Trustee.

In law, a trust is an arrangement whereby a person (a trustee) holds property as its nominal owner for the good of one or more beneficiaries. In this psalm the LORD is the trustee, and David is the trustor / beneficiary is. The property held in trust is David’s soul or “My times” in verse 15.

Some trust their own skills and choices; others trust money or government. But, here is a man who doubted himself, distrusted his enemies, and truly deposited his precious all with the LORD. This is **not** a self-made man that pulled himself up by his own bootstraps.

Hear me

2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.

“Bow,” “deliver,” “be thou my strong rock,” and “save me” are cries for help from a benefactor to his Trustee.

This prayer is the privilege of the righteous. It can only be effectively prayed by those who build their house on the rock of God’s promises; that is, upon Christ.

Guide me

3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

This is logic of the heart, and not the head.

“thou art my rock and my fortress” is David’s true declaration of trust. Consequently, he had authority to pray for advice, direction, and guidance — the heart cry of every simple soul.

Save Me

4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.

Oh, the nets, traps, and schemes of men and governments to capture the man and to turn him into a slave of ambitious politicians.

5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

“O LORD God of truth” is set in contrast to the liars and deceivers of this age. “redeemed clarifies David’s status and right to plead his case in this court.

“Into thy hand:” – Many a dying saint has uttered these words. Indeed, these are the last words of Jesus — words spoken in the cold, harsh hands of death’s terrifying grip, and not words of poet spoken in a picturesque garden on a warm summer day.

6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

“lying vanities” – literally, breath of lies. A man of truth is known by his hatred of lies and his love for truth — a rare commodity in a world of fictions, falsehoods, and fables.

“hated them” refers to the fraudsters in verse four. The word “hated them” is plural referring to people and not to some kind of abstraction in regard to evil. Moral evil is in men, not in the environment. Hate is an attribute of God worthy of worship and admiration. Hating evil men is also a virtue of godly men. One cannot be a good man unless he hates bad men.

There is no such thing as a “hate crime” just as there is no such thing as a love crime. All crimes stem from hatred of God and His law-order.

7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

David shares the result of his trust; that is, his Trustee came through on His promises and delivered to the beneficiary the benefits within the trust agreement.

Show mercy

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.

It appears all the psalmist’s troubles and griefs are due to sin in verse 10.

10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

“grief,” “sighing,” “strength faileth,” and “bones consumed” express the ghastly effect sin has upon the soul and body. Sin is a breach of the agreement. Therefore, David fears God might withhold the benefits of the trust.

The word “spent” means “to consume.” That is, sin exhausted the man. No particular sin is mentioned, but we learn his agitated conscience sapped him of vitality.

11 I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.”

Sin causes reproach. Reproach” refers “to shame” or “condemnation”; that is, David became the object of scorn and the “brunt of jokes” in the taverns of his day.

“especially” would better be translated “abundantly.” “neighbors” may refer to Israel’s traditional enemies — the Philistines et al. or it may refer to countrymen who saw David’s sin and used it as grounds to assault his administration.

“fear to mine acquaintance” means that his countrymen viewed him in the worst possible light; that is, they fled from him as a man flees from a wild beast.

12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

Sin makes one lonely and disconnected. Few things are more disconcerting than feeling irrelevant, tangential, and non-essential — like “out of sight and out of mind” — the plight of senior citizens and the poor.

13 For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

Revolt, revolution, and insurrection was in the air.

Sin gives a man’s enemies a pretext to citizen and disparages one in public. Slander is a form of murder and it is the weapon of choice by one’s opponents. False reports are indeed like swords in the soul.

14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.

This may be the most important lesson in this psalm. David is the trustor and God is the Trustee — the starting point and the finish line of faith.

It was when he was emotionally grieved, physically exhausted, and the object of slander that he trusted the LORD.

Trust comes from a Norwegian word meaning “strong.” As a verb it is a belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of a Trustee to keep, protect, and preserve property. A trustee must not only have strength, but have integrity.

Trust is to the Christian life what “home plate” is to baseball, the starting point and finishing point of walking with God — a trek around the infield that is much harder than most of us realize.

Though scorned by men, his confidence in God did not crumble. Though forsaken by friends, the LORD did not forsake him. His earthly companions turned away from him, but God did not abandon him. There is a God who will never leave us or forsake us. His friendship and loyalty is more valuable to us than a thousand senators.

Deliver me

15 My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

“My times” refers to seasons of prosperity and seasons of poverty; days of health and days of sickness; periods of victory, and periods of defeat; chapters of happiness, and chapters of sadness. My ups and downs; my risings and fallings; my promotions and demotions; my success and failures; my life and my death are in your hand.

Though overcome with iniquity, surrounded by enemies, and forsaken by friends, the psalmist expresses confidence that the epochs of his life are in the hands of an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-caring God. Thus, the Christian rests his head on three pillows: He knows, He cares, He can.

16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

The psalmist contends for God's favor on the grounds of God's mercy. David knows that he is not more deserving than that of other men so he can't plead his own righteousness. God loves, not because of who we are, but because of who He is — the God of love and mercy.

Preserve me from shame

17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee:

The “thee” is the LORD; the “me” is David. This is not a perfect saint pleading with a perfect God; but an unworthy creature pleading with his faithful Creator.

David seems to be saying, “I have failed, but in all my trouble, I have trusted Thee. Let me not be disappointed. Let me not be ashamed. Show me that my trust in You is not in vain . . . show me that You are faithful and true to sinners in need of You.”

Shame them

let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

David put his trust in God, but his enemies relied upon their own strength and skill. Let them fail and be disappointed. May their boasting be as silent as a grave. Let the world see they have built their house on sand and may your holy ones be instructed so they are not tempted to adopt their policies and share the same fate.

Silence them

18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

If truth be known, our whole society is built on lies — lies about history, lies about science, lies about medicine, lies about religion, lies about war, lies about law, lies about money. Politicians,

teachers, and the media lie like Bill Clinton. Censoring truth and lying is the mark of our times. No public figure can be trusted. Whole organizations and three-letter agencies are dedicated to hiding the truth and indoctrinating the public with falsehoods, fictions, and propaganda. When the foundation of society is a lie, telling the truth becomes a crime.

And, the most dangerous liars are those who have believed lies and think they are telling the truth.

Thus, a prayer these fibsters would be silenced . . . made speechless . . . and muted is an appropriate prayer for every generation.

Remerging His goodness

19 Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

In contrast to the deceivers, David's mind takes him to God's mammoth storehouse of goodness — a treasure chest reserved for those that fear the LORD . . . that trust Him and not the deconstructionists.

Winter is coming and those that trust Him will not suffer want.

Remembering His protection

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

"presence" means "the secret of thy face"; the idea is that the LORD would, like He hid Elijah, hide those who trust Him from public view . . . from the pursuit of their enemies and that they would be before Him safe and secure while enjoying His provision.

Remembering His Lovingkindness

21 Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city.

David felt God's protection and provision and called it "a strong city."

22 For 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.

David didn't always feel this security. In fact, he felt like his enemies were going to capture him and kill him. "thou heardest" is our encouragement to trust God when all seems hopeless.

An Exhortation to Love the Lord

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

First exhortation: The Spirit of God shows us the main lesson of the psalm. Follow David's example. Love Him. Trust Him and we will find Him to be our Protector and Provider. Furthermore, we will find Him to be the painful judge to the proud doer.

An exhortation to Be Strong

24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Second exhortation: Don't despair! Don't give in to depression. Stoke the fire of faith. Be strong and courageous. Walk by faith and He will strengthen the whole man.

Psalm 32 - The Blessing of Forgiveness

Blessed is the Man unto whom the LORD Imputeth Not Iniquity



This is a psalm by a sinner for sinners; by a beggar telling other beggars where to find food and shelter; by a repentant saint telling others how to find healing and forgiveness.

Because this psalm throbs with emotion traversing the north and south of despair and joy, the reader must “feel” his way through the sinner’s experience to reap the blessedness of the psalm. This is a psalm for the heart, not just the head.

The psalm begins with a blessing, but this is not where the psalmist started. He announces his conclusion first and then explains the lessons he learned on his spiritual journey.

The blessedness is what he discovered at the end of his spiritual experience, not at the beginning. At the outset, David felt the drumming sounds of true guilt pounding on his conscience when the Spirit said, “Thou art the man!”

After hiding in the dark, this sinner came into the light. While exposed to the sunshine of truth, he felt the warmth of Divine forgiveness restoring life in his soul.

The Blessing of Forgiveness Proclaimed

[Psalm 32:1 <A Psalm of David, Maschil.>](#)

A maschil hymn is a teaching psalm that instructs the congregation on how to walk with God.

[Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.](#)

The term “blessed” is in the emphatic position of the stanza stressing the awe and wonder of being right with God (Romans 4:6-8).

Guilt is like living with a thundering headache. Three words are used to describe the cause of David’s migraine: transgression, sin, and iniquity– the trinity of evil. While they mean basically the same thing, there are subtle differences.

Transgression refers to deeds that cross the line of forbidden behavior like trampling on the rights of others. It is doing what God says thou shall not do. It expresses apostasy and rebellion, the breaking of God’s law (Romans 4:15; 1 John 3:4).

Sin is a falling short of Divine commands. It is more than failure or doing wrong, it is a departure from God by way of disobedience to his commands.

The word forgiven means “to carry far away.” The word (nasa) is used in connection with Noah’s ark when it was “lifted up” above the flood of judgment safe and secure (Genesis 7:8).

Covered: What can possibly cover scarlet red sins? Ans: Only the waters of judgment that buried the Egyptians in the Red Sea (Exodus 14:24-28), or blood on the mercy seat (Exodus 12:13; Hebrews 9:12).

When God takes sins off a man's shoulders and removes them as far as east is from the west (Psalm 103:12), the heart hums with joy. With praise on his lips, this pardoned poet penned this wonderful psalm.

Imagine a toy soldier red with rust. Oiled, painted, and reclaimed, the little marine shares the blessedness of returning to his company and his Commander. He thought it would take a million years to heal his wounds, but after coming into the light, he is all smiles.

Matthew Henry notes how hard it is to bring a sinful man to humbly accept mercy; but, this is what the psalmist did.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Blessed is used a second time to reinforce the psalmist contagious joy. The second use of the term "blessed" emphasizes the happiness that pardon brings. The psalmist and happiness were not strangers. Like nuggets of gold in a miner's pouch, forgiveness makes the poor man rich. Like the prodigal son who returned to his father's house, there is joy and celebration in reunion between the wayward creature and his wonderful Creator.

Next, we are introduced to the 3rd monster at the gates of hell.

Iniquity (v. 2, *avon*) refers to the willful, shameful foolishness of sin — an act that deserves lashes because it is willfully performed. It is doing what one knows is wrong to do. The Hebrew word *avon* refers to guilt worthy of "punishment" in Genesis 4:13; "bear your iniquities" in Numbers 14:14; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" in Deuteronomy 5:9; "bringing iniquity to remembrance" in Numbers 5:15; and "eyed David" for punishment in 1 Samuel 18:9; 20:1.

Oh, the terrifying groans that sin, transgression, and iniquity cause within the guilty soul. The Lord Jesus silenced the roaring of these monsters at the cross of Calvary. The trinity of evil is defeated by the Holy Trinity.

Let us never forget why forgiveness is possible. God cannot forgive sin just because a man prays for pardon. If God could forgive sin through prayer, there would be no reason to send his Son to the cross. Forgiveness is only possible because Christ discharged the sinner's debt at Calvary by a blood bond (Isaiah 53:5; Numbers 14:18).

Remember, the first prophet in the Bible taught us that blood is the currency of the spirit world. Eternal redemption is by the shed blood of Christ and not by beans, broccoli, and beets (Genesis 4; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The word "impute" is an accounting term. It means "to think or account or ledger." The adverb "not" negates any idea that God keeps a little black book of his children's sins in order to indict

them at a later time. Like a drum major leading the band, the phrase “not impute” announces pardon to men of faith.

The term “forgiven” and “not impute” express the blessed sound of one in harmony with the LORD. Fountains of joy bubble within the heart when the burden of sin is lifted off one’s shoulders. The one in whom God does not account iniquity feels the night embrace and the moon smiling down upon him. Forgiveness is sweeter than the sounds of magic bells on angel’s wings.

The author of Hebrews says, “He remembers them no more” (Hebrews 8:12). Believers can remember their sins, God can’t. Thus, the believer can experience dissonance between his mind and the mind of God — discord that can only be reconciled by tuning in to the benefits of the cross and believing God’s Word.

Guile refers to deceit, trickery, and treachery. Guile is saying one thing and doing another; it is talk without the walk; a smile without sincerity.

“no guile” refers to the man who is as true as a carpenter’s level. Because forgiveness is not a deception, the pardoned is not a pretender. Because forgiveness is real, the man is free from the chains that bound him in darkness. Those washed in the blood of the Lamb are free of deceit, pretense, and hypocrisy.

The blessed state of the forgiven is that they do not force their cheeks to smile. What you see is what you get. Because God has forgiven them, they do not grovel around in the graveyard of sins digging up corpses at midnight. There is no purification here through self-torment. Knowing that Christ paid for their sins on the cross, those seeking forgiveness afresh do not flagellate themselves with beat sticks. Because God lifts sins off their shoulders, they do not go in search for them. Forgiven, they walk in the light on the highway of life without shackles of guilt cutting and ripping their soul. By faith, they claim and enjoy the grace-benefits of forgiveness.

Though the godly take sin seriously, they triumph over haunting memories knowing that God’s promises of forgiveness are true, correct, certain, and not misleading; that his promises to remember sins no more are more real than their own eerie awareness of past transgressions.

The Burden of a Dirty Conscience

3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

The term “silence” describes the psalmist’s spiritual condition after he sinned. Knowing he played the fool, he hid from God. His voice was so thick with conviction he became mum and mute. He couldn’t pray or praise God. Guilt sucked certainty out of his soul and turned his backbone into jelly.

“my bones waxed old” is the psalmist way of telling us that sin stressed him to the bone robbing him of strength. As David’s world turned charcoal grey, his spirit groaned like a coal miner’s mule pulling a wagon of rocks up Heart Break Pass.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

The psalmist uses the metaphor “thy hand was heavy upon me” to express the tonnage of guilt weighing on his conscience.

“my moisture . . .” is a reference to dehydration of his entire body. With hot needles from the sun piercing the eye of his conscience, his tongue dried up like a mouth full of dust during the dog days of summer.

Selah means “stop and think about this.”

Indians understood how guilt dried out the mouth. If three men were suspected of a crime among the Indians, each had to stick out their tongue. The prosecutor would then take a hot knife and touch the tongue of each suspect. The one with a burnt tongue was considered guilty.

The Blessing of Confession

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

Like a criminal caught red-handed by the sheriff, David confessed to everything.

“Acknowledge my sin” is David’s way of telling us he could no longer live with the pounding headache of guilt. A fugitive from justice, David came into the light to make a full confession of sin. Because he could no longer live a lie, he bore his soul to God. Like a man with a huge boil on his arm, the psalmist submitted to the lance. Out came the puss and toxins created by sin in his heart.

David quit the game of “Escape & Evasion” and made a full confession. He did not call his sin a mistake or blunder, nor did he hide behind the fig leaves of self-righteousness. He called an “ace an ace, a spade a spade,” and sin a sin. He did not call the death of Uriah a “casualty of war,” nor did he call his romance with Bathsheba an “affair.” He confessed to the somber facts of murder and adultery.

He called his feast at Satan’s Yum Yum Tree near the gates of hell a transgression, iniquity, and sin!!

This drama closes with a simple, sweet reality: “Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

As long as men call sin a sin, there is hope. God forgives “sin,” but there is no Divine remedy for “mistakes, blunders, and errs.” Confessing, “I was wrong” is much better than saying, “I am sorry.”

How did David know his sin was forgiven? Because Nathan the Prophet said, “God has put away thy sin:” that is, David believed the Word of the Lord and then claimed the joy of forgiveness.

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

The psalmist applies the lesson to the “godly” reader. Truth seekers pray in the darkness as well as in the sunshine; in stormy seas with its ocean spray and on calm waters with its blanket of peace.

“For this” means on “this ground” or “for this cause” (legal footing). The Hithpael verb is reflexive in meaning; i.e. let the godly apply the didactic shared by the psalmist to their own conscience-battles with sin!

“in a time when thou mayest be found” or “in the time of finding,” means to confess and repent while there is a window of opportunity to do so; that is, keep short accounts while your heart is tender towards him.

“Floods” are a metaphor for trouble and adversity. If the godly seek restoration to the LORD, He will “lift away” their sins, and row them to safety away from the danger of the deluge. Think of Noah’s ark being lifted up out of the sea of death. Benson claims, “As the temptations of the wicked one touch them not, [1 John 5:18](#), so neither do the troubles of this evil world; these fiery darts of both kinds drop short of them.”

7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

“Thou art my hiding place” is a confession of trust by this saint. Oh, the warmth and peace one enjoys finding shelter from the storm! Our Lord is not just the God of the masses; He is the Savior and Protector of individuals.

“thou shalt preserve me from trouble” refers to God’s providential dealings with the psalmist. Storms are difficult, but they cannot destroy the soul. No harm shall come to the man leaning on the everlasting arms. In response to his prayer and pious ways, God saves the pilgrim from leveling floods and the sting of the sea.

“Compass me about” refers to Heaven’s angels that surround and protect the godly.

“Songs of deliverance” are on the lips of mariners caught in the wind and surf of a sinister sea. The hope of deliverance presents an occasion for praise and rejoicing. The Christian man does not fear the roar of the waves nor wallow in self-pity. Because he accepts grace, he is a grateful man.

In summary, this didactic teaches us that David humbled himself, came into the light, confessed his sins, accepted forgiveness, and rejoiced in a renewed relationship with God by faith.

The Blessing of God’s Guidance

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

“I will” is the voice of the Spirit providing an answer of assurance to the sinner’s confession.

Instruct and teach: With sins confessed and slate clean, the Spirit promises instruction in the way the man should go; that is, God teaches the teachable. We are not pardoned so we can play near the gates of hell, but we are pardoned so we can learn Heaven’s ways. The world regards a

man as poor if he doesn't learn Plato, Darwin, and Freud, but the man that learns the law of the Lord and the grace of the gospel is rich beyond measure.

The verb "instruct" (sakal) refers to providing practical guidance consistent with God's law; and, the term "teach" (yarah) means "to cast" or "to shoot." The latter is translated "direct his face" in Genesis 46:28; "teach thee what thou shalt say" in Exodus 4:12; "to teach when it is unclean" in Leviticus 14:57; and "shoot three arrows" as a code instruction in 1 Samuel 20:20.

"I will guide you with my eye" is a tender promise from a caring father. Guidance with the eyes stand in juxtaposition to masters that are forced to beat their stubborn slaves.

Looking at the eyes, children can discern whether their father is sad, mad, or glad. When a father's eyes are narrowed to a pinprick, the child knows he'd better change his behavior. Thus, we learn that a godly man studies the face of God to discern the way he should go.

What a comfort to those who feel the cold chills of those who believe we live in an anthropocentric world.

This promise of guidance requires the righteous man (1) to study the Word of God, and (2) to follow God's leading. "Quench not the Spirit!" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). The Christian life is not like a walk in the city with all its "Don't Signs" and barriers. It is more like a walk in the forest that demands discernment and decision.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

"Be ye not" is a Jussive exhortation (command) to sinners. Sin ends in sorrow. Transgression leads to trouble. Iniquity rhymes with wickedly.

The horse loves to run and often bolts ahead of the rider. To slow a horse down wranglers pull back on the reigns. This text is instruction for "eager beavers" among us who are prone to go, to do, and to run without being sent.

The mule is the opposite of a horse in that the owner has to kick and whip the animal to giddy up and go. Out of the American West came the idiom "stubborn as a mule." This instruction is for the indecisive, reluctant, and fearful. Don't be like a mule God has to smack in order to force performance.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

"sorrows" is a reference to grief and trouble.

The term "wicked" does not refer to Christian men. Rather, the term identifies the godless man who has chosen a course to follow evil.

This is an argument to reinforce the proceeding exhortation. God has ways to motivate and chastise the wicked in order to subject them to his will, but don't be like them!

Those who are not reformed by gentle instruction, will learn through the rod of affliction. But, the one who learns at the feet of the Master will enjoy his goodness and protection. Mercy shall “compass him about” like a warm blanket on a cold day.

The Blessed Responses to Forgiveness

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

The Spirit instructs the forgiven on how to respond to the King’s pardon: Three imperatives are ordered by the Spirit: Be glad, rejoice, and shout! – A triple remedy for melancholy of soul!

Being pardoned and enjoying that pardon are two different staircases.

The Spirit knows that Satan is the accuser of the brethren who seeks to blind men to God’s forgiveness and bind them to melancholy by focusing them on their sins, transgressions, and iniquities (Revelation 12:7-12). Because Christians know that God will not punish them, many have a tendency to beat themselves with a guilt stick. The remedy for this phenomenon is to remember that Christ was punished for our sins . . . and to take comfort in his salvation.

Obedying these three commands is essential to being released from the pounding headache of guilt.

(1) “Be glad in the Lord” is an imperative that takes positive spiritual energy to fulfill. The Christian life is not a choice between melancholy and happiness. Being glad is duty. God is not glorified when we pine in sorrow over our sins. He is glorified when we celebrate his pardon. There is no glory for him when we visit the graveyard of past failures, grieve over our sins like mourners, and beat our heads with a brick.

(2) Rejoice: Double your effort to be glad! Stir your own soul to rejoice. The righteous rejoice in his pardon whether they “feel” like it or not. Who can be sad in the King’s presence with pardon in hand?

In case we missed the proper response to a pardon, the Spirit repeats his instructions a third time. Gladness and joy is hard for those who have mourned over the trinity of evil. But, it MUST BE DONE!

(3) “shout for joy” is a Hiphil imperative meaning prod yourself “to overcome, and cry out” with joy because of his pardon . . . even when you don’t feel like doing so!

Triple your effort to rejoice in his pardon. The Hebrew word for “shout” is *ranan*. It is translated “sing” 20 times; “rejoice” 11 times; and “sing aloud” 4 times. For serious conservative Christians this takes an act of the will! Sing, soul, sing!

One time I saw a powerful preacher singing to himself in his car before a service. I went over to him and asked, “What are you doing? Are you all right?” He explained, “I am very discouraged. I am going to sit here and sing until my heart is filled with joy.” I immediately understood.

The last command is addressed to the “righteous.” Let us find our supreme joy in the Lord, and not our alleged victories. Our focus ought to be upon the King and his gracious pardon, not upon our cruel sins, transgressions, and iniquities that sentence us to a debtor’s dungeon. Because the wicked will never praise God, let us triple rejoice in Jesus and his salvation. His blood cleanses us from ALL sin! (1 John 1:5-7).

“Rejoice, and again I say rejoice” – Paul (Philippians 4:4).

Psalm 33 - Praise is Comely

Sing Unto the Lord a New Song



Because there is no inscription, we don't know who wrote this psalm. Moreover, we don't know the time or the occasion for the psalm.

This is a magnificent, generic psalm for all time perfectly scribed so each generation can enter into the wonders of God and the joy of examining His works.

Exhortation to Praise

Psalm 33:1 Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.

The psalm begins with a Piel imperative "Rejoice" — a base drum kick ordering the national choir to stand at attention and prepare to sing.

"Rejoice, ye righteous (tsadiq'im)" — It is the duty and privilege of righteous people to come and read this psalm, take it seriously, and sing it *allegro forte* combined with resolve.

The English word "comely" is from an Old English word "cyme" which means "handsome." Praise is to the righteous what harmony is to a musician; a trophy medal is to an athlete; what shined shoes are to a business man; what a Hibiscus garland is to Hawaiians; what a new scarf is for a peasant; or, what a medal of honor is for a soldier.

Healthy souls offer praise to the Lord; sick souls complain; weak souls praise God to become strong; infirm souls grumble and become weaker. Praise is the occupation of the righteous; whining is the occupation of sinners. Search for Him and be strong; ignore Him and be degraded. The beautiful among us see the Lord; the ugly among us neglect Him.

2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

A Hebrew harp and psaltery had ten strings and was played by hand. They differed in shape, sound, and method of plucking the strings. The idea here is to employ every string in the orchestra to proclaim the glories of His Majesty. Let every composer employ his craft and let every bass horn, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, violin, guitar, organ, clarinet, and drum in the orchestra to be plucked, blown, or pounded to express the golden marvels of our Lord. Let every soprano, alto, tenor, and bass hit their notes with homophonic texture and rhythm.

3 Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.

New victories and new insights into the character and work of God require new melodies. Let the righteous open their eyes and employ every skill to score new compositions to inspire saints around the world to worship the Lord.

The word “noise” refers to “joyful shouts.”

Every attribute of God deserves a new song . . . a fresh voice . . . a new beat, a fresh style. Compose new lyrics, new choruses with a military cadence, New Orleans jazz, classical hymns, Western Country, Korean Court music, Persian Classical music, Post-modern Music, African Mirambas, Southern Gospel, Honky Tonk Blues, Nashville Sounds, Cajun Fiddle Music, Easy Listening, UK Base, Brazilian Calypso, Drumstep, Celtic Music, Basanova, Israeli Folk Music, Southern Soul Music and other noble styles. The best songs about our Lord have yet to be composed. Do all you can to add to Heaven’s Great Hymbook?

[Note the greatest classical composition is the Requiem Mass by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. composed in part of the Requiem in Vienna in late 1791 at age 35 — the year of his death.)

Don’t hear what is not being said. We are not saying that all music has to be a somber hymn. Christians are free to create music on life’s noble themes with all kinds of instruments. All music is religious even if it composed and executed by secularist promoting their ultimate religious value. No one has exhausted his / her talents to the glory of God. There are new beats, new styles, new lyrics with new metaphors yet to be composed by preachers, musicians, and writers. Let’s do our best to be accurate and esthetic in our craft for the honor of Christ.

Excellent Reasons to Praise

The world not only needs new melodies, but fresh lyrics shedding light on the inexhaustible themes surrounding the wonders and greatness of our Creator-Savior God.

The Word of Truth

4 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.

Everything God says is true and therefore provides a reason to compose a hymn and to praise the Lord. Nothing in His word is overstated or understated; flawed or defective; missing or incomplete; unreasonable or irrational; foolish or senseless; meaningless or pointless; vague or arcane; ephemeral or temporal; irrelevant or inapplicable; dull or lifeless. His word is superior to all other religious works; more majestic than the masters; more admirable than the great works of art; more valuable than silver and gold “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:17).

The Goodness of the Lord

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

Fools love death; Solomon loved women; Demas loved this world; many love power, and most love money; but the LORD loveth righteousness and justice.

From the Jordan Valley to Mount Everest; from the North Pole to Antarctica; from the great seas to the great forests; from the deserts to the tundra, the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD from which we receive golden grain, the water of life, precious ore, the fragrances of flowers, greens for animals, and sunsets to capture the eyes.

Who hasn't wanted to tour Africa, climb the Alps, behold the glaciers in Patagonia, rest on the beaches of Tahiti, study life along the Amazon, or study the wonders on the Galapagos Islands in order to behold the goodness of the Lord?

The Power of His Word

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

God breathed a word and the sun, moon, and stars mystically appeared and marched across the sky in lock step with one another as the guardians of life on earth. From the smallest molecule to the giant elephants, God is the Designer of them all.

Governments hire thousands of engineers and employ giant tractors to construct one nuclear plant, but God created the protons and electrons of every atom with a puff from His mouth!

His Creation of Weather Patterns

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

Before us are the mysteries of evaporation and condensation; of thunder and lightning; of tsunamis and monsoons; of tornadoes and hurricanes.

Waters cover seventy percent of the earth's surface. Seventy-five percent of all minerals necessary for life are derived from the sea. The oceans are the heartbeat of all life on earth pumping weather cells through the veins of heaven nourishing and renewing life on earth.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

Fear and awe are the appropriate response to these wonders. How small we are compared to our great God!

The Simplicity of His Power

9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

The deep blue oceans and majestic white-capped mountains, the stellar skies and the sparkling stars, and all the objects of scientific study came into existence by a single word from the mouth of God. Oh, the wonders of His power and wisdom! Forget "Puff the Magic Dragon," and remember the puff of our Majestic Creator-God.

His Nullification of Political Ambitions

10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

The word "heathen" (gowy) refers to nations in contrast to the Hebrews who acknowledged the LORD's supremacy — the beach head of God's saving work in history.

The word "nought" (puwr) means "to crush," and the word "none effect" (nuwr) means "to hold back," "to restrain," and "to frustrate."

Nightly the profit-driven media tries to stun their audience with reports about wars, corruption of the opposing party, legislative intents, and political hot spots around the globe that make lips to tremble and knees to knock.

If all the plans of the elite were half-way accomplished, common men would be serfs and slaves in prison camps . . . “owning nothing and being happy;” but, the LORD frustrates their grandiose schemes making their “counsels” and “devices” null and void.

The Immutability of His Purpose

11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

Men change. Societies morph. Wealth turns over, but the purposes of God are irresistible, irreversible, and immutable.

While the LORD nullifies the plans of the global elite, His purpose and counsels stands for ever. This world is headed toward the kingdom of God to the praise of the Lord Jesus Christ and there is simply nothing any parliament, congress, or chamber can do to stop it.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

The Spirit not only saves individual people, but nations! The “Great Commission” not only includes converting men but towers of power to the Lord.

On the whitecaps of the sea of politics, God’s prosperity and stability fall on “Christian” nations who acknowledge the sovereignty of the LORD God. He is a real God, the true God, and not a figment of man’s imagination. Because His laws are just and good, a nation that honors His law-order tends to prosper.

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men. 14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. 15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

The word “all” is used three times.

The psalmist views the LORD as sitting in heaven overseeing and directing the messy affairs of men. This transcendent God is not aloof. He knows; He listens; He executes His will on earth.

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. 17 An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

Kings are viewed as heavyweights in the bloody arena of politics whereby men attribute to monarchs more power and influence than they actually possess. Kings love large armies and massive military budgets because they enable kings to force their will on weaker nations. The fact that the eye of God is upon monarchs, knows their needs, and sees their dangers ought to inspire the confidence of every king that fears the LORD. Hezekiah comes to mind.

Horses represent a great military advantage for ancient armies. But, this text informs us that “no king” is rescued or enriched by military might, stockpiles of ammunition, or by sophisticated weapons that expel explosive projectiles.

This text does not say nations should not have armies, but that they should not trust in massive troop build ups.

18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; 19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

The interjection “behold” (he’geh) means to stop and look.

“the eye of the LORD represents His “super-vision” — the care, guardianship, and superintendence of Providence over matters of state.

This text is not telling us nations do not need armies to defend their borders, but it informs crowns the supreme requisite for defense is found in the “fear of the LORD.” More nations crumble from enemies from within than from enemies without; from moral decadence than from opposing military dominance.

Though a king may be conscious of his weakness and sins, this text informs us that those who hope in His mercy will find Him to be their Protector in war and Provider in times of famine.

An Explanation of Praise

20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.

“Our soul” (plural) represents the people of God. In contrast to kings that put their trust in armies, the pious trust the LORD as their help and shield.

“waiteth” is language expressing the occupation of the pious. They wait and depend on Him to be their Protector and Provider.

21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

Surrounded by lions and wolves, miscreants and madmen, the pious find their joy in the Lord and not military exhibitions, or horses on parade, or in the promises of self-promoting, blustery politicians.

22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

The psalm ends in a prayer that the LORD will open up his storehouses of mercy and shower them on the people proportionate to their hope in Him.

Psalm 34 - Golden Promises for the Righteous

“O taste and see that the LORD is good”



This psalm is ascribed to David by the director of hymn records, and there is no reason to doubt his authorship.

The occasion of this psalm appears to be the time David arrived in Gath after fleeing from Saul. This was the time David “changed his behavior before Abimelech” and pretended to be “mad” in order to save his life — a strategy he lived to regret (1 Samuel 21:10-15). See Psalm 56.

After his shameful behavior, David was able to pray, to think, and to discover the golden principles upon which to build the rest of his life.

Psalm 34, therefore, is a record of the lessons David learned from his failure before Achish, the King of Gath, a.k.a. Abimelech; and, the golden promises He claimed in the course of His life.

Golden Principles Discovered after an Experience of Salvation

Psalm 34:1 <A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed.>

The word “Abimelech” appears to be a moniker for a king much like the title “Governor” or “President.” The personal name of “Abimelech” would be Achish, the King of Gath.

“changed his behavior” refers to David’s shameful conduct of pretending to be an idiot hoping that Achish would take pity and offer him protection. What is a man after God’s own heart doing at Gath acting like a madman begging for protection from a pagan government as if God was incapable of protecting him?

1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

Having worked out the principles upon which he was going to rebuild his live. David introduces us to the conclusion of his quest in the first line of this hymn: “I will bless the LORD at all times.”

Instead of profaning himself, he would “praise” the LORD at “all times.” That is, he replaced fear with faith, desecration with devotion, bad thinking with words that bless the LORD . . . “continually.”

Blessing the LORD and praising the LORD became the first rule of survival — a model for us. The path to victory commences with praise and consummates with praise (Psalm 50:23).

2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

David's survival concerns in this situation did **not** include shelter, water, food, silver, and fire, but how to protect and nourish his own soul. He was more concerned about his spiritual health than physical fitness; that is, his first rule of survival was to take care of his soul to make sure it was in communion with the LORD . . . relying on Him . . . boasting in Him . . . humbly dependent on Him.

The word "boast" (halal) means "to praise" and "to shine."

The word "humble" means "poor." It refers to those without assets to protect them. The "poor" are glad; i.e. because David learned what the poor have always known . . . that direction and protection come from the Lord.

3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

Having learned the value of trusting God, David invites the poor to join him in magnifying the LORD.

The poor represent the common man.

The word "magnify" (gadal) means "to promote," "to grow" or "to make great." What a wonderful ambition to unite with others to bless the LORD and to trust in Him.

4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

David admits he fled from Saul and pretended madness at Gath because of fear. David needed to not only be rescued from ruthless men, but from his own ruthless fears. The greatest threat to David was not an irate father-in-law or the king of Gath, but the slave masters of fear flogging His soul. He prayed, and God rescued Him from the tormentors strangling courage on the inside.

5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

David was not alone in his flight from Saul. His men trusted God and found comfort and strength in the LORD.

It appears David turned inward, but here it seems his thoughts turned from himself to others. All looked to the LORD and each experienced the salvation of God.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

The neediest of healing in this band of followers was David. Seeing the faith of his soldiers, David looked up, prayed, and God saved Him from his political and spiritual troubles.

The Golden Promise of Provision

7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

David discovered a benefit from trusting the LORD and that is the protection of God's angels. He learned that in his vulnerable predicament that God had already sent his army of angels to surround David and his men; and, to protect them in the front and in the rear of the column.

“encampeth” literally means “to pitch a tent” around — a metaphor for protection. The angels of God protect the godly as a standing army protects a nation.

“delivereth them” means to rescue them from danger . . . trouble . . . and threats to their life.

But, some may say, “He didn’t rescue so and so’s son.” First of all, we don’t know more than God, nor are we more compassionate than He. We face human limitations. We don’t know why He rescues some and not others. It is O.K. to say we don’t know or understand. After all, we must be humble . . . and poor . . . and remember we are specks of dust on the scales of justice that simply do not have the capacity to grasp the providence of God.

Who can comprehend His sovereign providence: “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil (disaster): I the Lord do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7)?

God did not protect the lives of Ahimelech and the family of priests at Nob by Saul’s government during the time of David. 85 priests were unjustly accused and summarily slaughtered. Around 200 men, women, children, and babies were butchered along with 1000 sheep and donkeys by Doeg’s sword (1 Samuel 22 Psalm 52). Why didn’t God protect these holy people? Why, Lord, why?

Who can figure out His ways? Speaking to the unrighteous, the LORD said,

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The “goodness (hesed) of the Lord endureth all day long. ” God never does wrong and He injures no man; that is, nothing negative can diminish, derail, or disrupt the mercy of God – Psalm 52:1-3.

“Perhaps a clear sign of Christian maturity is the willingness to worship God when He has determined to be God hidden” (Rushdoony).

8 O taste and see that the LORD is good (tov): blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

David mixes metaphors “taste” and “sight” to urge the young to seek the Lord.

Finding protection and deliverance from trouble in his own experience, David encourages the humble to “taste and see” that the LORD is good . . . and always good; that is, David exhorts the reluctant and self-reliant to do a taste test and to sample the pleasures on the banquet table of faith. There is blessing in trusting Him. Sit down at the table and enjoy the feast.

“The Lord is good” to the righteous and to the unrighteous in this life. He is good during good times and bad times; during days of prosperity and days of poverty; during moments of tranquility and moments of adversity; in seasons of health and seasons of sickness; in matters of peace and in matters of war.

God is sovereign. Acts of providence happen. God is good and He does wrong to no man.

Maxims of law:

An act of God does wrong to no one. The act of God does no injury; that is, no one is responsible for inevitable accidents (famguardian.org).

No one is held to answer for the effects of a superior force, or of an accident, unless his own fault has contributed.

The execution of law does no injury.

An action is not given to one who is not injured.

9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

The term “fear” is mentioned twice in this stanza. Each time the object of that fear is the LORD.

“O fear the LORD” means “to trust Him” and to walk in a manner that pleases Him; to take His law seriously and to act responsibly; to fear being out of His will — the most basic attribute of the righteous.

“no want” means the basic needs of His holy ones are abundantly supplied.

David does not use the delusive adjective “all” before “them that fear Him.” This is a general statement and not a specific, in-time assurance. Let us remember every promise has its limitations; and, that every text must submit to the authority of the whole; and, the whole of Scripture does **not** teach “prosperity” for all of God’s saints. Thank God for the word “others”: in relation to faith: “and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mocking and scourging, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment . . .” (Hebrews 11:35-36).

God uses “want” to train individual saints and to improve their walk with Him; that is, this is not an absolute, every minute “health and wealth” postulate for every sheep in His pasture. The God of the masses is also the God of the individual. Many of God’s children desire and need specific tutelage in righteousness.

“But while these statements should not be interpreted as affirming absolutely that no child of God will ever be in need of food, or drink, or raiment, or home, or friends, yet it is generally true that the needs of the righteous are supplied, often in an unexpected manner, and from an unexpected source. It is true that virtue and religion conduce to temporal prosperity; and it is almost universally true that the inmates of charity-houses and prisons are neither the pious, nor the children of the pious” (Barnes)

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

Lions are the “king of the beasts” and “young lions,” still dependent on their parents suffer want as a means of training them to hunt. But, man is the king of creation and those that seek the Lord to be His friend and to live piously are given a general promise that they will lack no “good” thing. The word “all” is not inserted before the word “seek.” Under God’s tutelage, many a saint has experienced deprivation of “good” for his good.

“good” must be defined by God’s Word. Surely, “good” doesn’t include gadgets and super luxuries of modern life:

“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:8-10).

A Golden Exhortation to Fear the LORD

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

“Hear” is the *first mark* of a disciple. *The second mark* of a godly man is that he fears the Lord.

David addresses “sons;” i.e. the youth among his people. “hearken” (shema) or “hear” is the most basic duty of young men; self-control is the other (Titus 2:6). They are not talkers, but listeners; they are not free and careless, but careful and restrained. They do not hang around their peers; they seek out the counsel of older saints.

“fear of the Lord” is the hallmark attribute of the pious among us. Hearing God’s law produces a healthy fear of displeasing Him – a requisite for wisdom.

12 What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?

Those that fear the Lord love life, desire life, and hate the ways of death. They love good, and hate evil.

13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

The third mark of the pious is self-control; i.e. they restrain their tongue and guard their words. Too many people have their tongue tied in the middle and flappin’ at both ends. Want to be holy? Shut your mouth! Stop talking! Zip it! Stop making claims! Don’t act like a know it all. Don’t say, “I know.” Close your mouth. Stop complaining! Avoid cursing, outburst of anger, and blasphemy like you would avoid walking on glass. Practice the golden rule of silence, and don’t feel like you have to have an answer for everything.

14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

The fourth mark of the pious is that they “Depart from evil;” that is, they depart from foolishness, crime, and lawlessness. Do good! Be helpful to others. Do your chores, and serve your employer with excellence. Seek peace and avoid controversy, debate, hostility, rivalry, frustration, and things that produce tension.

You don’t have to confront every person that has a different opinion than yours and you don’t have to say, “I disagree.” Who cares? It doesn’t matter. It only matters what is going on between you and the Lord.

God’s Golden Promises of Protection

15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

The first golden promise is that the righteous enjoy the favor of God. The faithful know that He sees them and that His ears are open to their prayers. They don’t need the approval of men.

Notice the psalmist's use of personification in ascribing to God eyes to see, ears to hear, and face to recognize.

16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

The eyes, ears, and face of the LORD see and hear what the wicked say and do. The difference being that He favors the righteous and purposes good for their life; but, He declares those "that do evil" will be banished from the earth. No time frame is given.

He is a God-judge that keeps His promises.

Again, this is a general statement, and not a specific one. "them" is plural. It is not addressed to a single person. The evil-one who repents deeply can escape this punishment and join the righteous in the constellations of life.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

The second golden promise to the righteous is that the LORD will hear their prayers and rescue them from their troubles.

Again, this is a general claim and not a specific one; a public promise, and not a private one; i. e. some prayers of the righteous are incongruous with His purpose and plan for their lives. Thank God He does not answer all the demented utterances of His people. At other times God may have purposes for which the pleader is unaware. Trust Him!

18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

The third golden promise is the nearness of God to His holy ones burdened down by a broken heart . . . a disappointed mind . . . a contrite spirit shocked by tragedy. Being righteous and practicing a life of holiness does not make one immune to trouble or tragedy. All men experience bad news. But, the godly man has the assurance that God will be near making good come out of evil (Romans 8:28).

A Warning to Ministers: Many men choose the ministry hoping they will escape the troubles of the world: marital conflicts, divorce, rebellious kids, pregnant teens, financial setbacks, poverty, accidents, weather catastrophes, and the death of loved ones.

Yes, a life of righteousness protects the minister from troubles caused by overt sin, but the functions of a minister do not protect the man from suffering connected with his pilgrimage on this earth. At best, a religious life only abates teething troubles. It does not eliminate them. Moreover, troubles make the man. Without troubles and victories, a man has no stories to tell.

Accept life as it is. Live boldly, and trust God with the results.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

The psalmist adds an addendum to his statement above to clarify matters related to “the Lord’s deliverance promise” in verse 18; i. e. He seeks to prevent the righteous from jumping to invalid conclusions.

David wants the righteous to know that religion does not exempt one from suffering or make them untouchables in relation to human troubles. Religion is **not** “bubble wrap” that insulates men from the bumps and bangs of this life.

Moreover, it would be an error to think the afflictions of the righteous are more severe or more numerous than other men. David is simply making an observation that the righteous experience afflictions common to all men.

20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

The fourth golden promise is that while the righteous will experience suffering common to all men, the Lord will not let the trials of this life break the man.

“bones” are the skeletal substructure of the body on which all other organs depend -- a metaphor for spiritual and physical substructures necessary for life.

There are trials that can crush the man and destroy His faith. God monitors the hardships and removes those that could potentially destroy his faith in God. Therefore, we claim the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 that God will provide an escape from injurious trials.

But, there is no promise that offers a man total immunity from suffering.

Psalm 139 introduces the thought that God goes before us winnowing our path and removing potholes and rocks that could cause us to fall and never rise again: “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me” (139:5).

Bad things happen to good people, but they are never as bad as things could be. Good things happen to bad people, but they are never as good as they could be.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

David wants us to know that practicing evil will cause the destruction of the wicked; they will be “desolate” and held accountable for their crimes, pronounced guilty, and sentenced to everlasting punishment.

So we may understand what a wicked person is David sheds light on the major mark of the wicked: they hate the righteous; that is, they clearly have feelings of animosity toward godly men, righteous conduct, and God’s Law-Book.

22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

The fifth golden promise is that God rescues the life (nephesh) of His servants. This is not an absolute promise, for even the righteous die. Death is part of God’s will. But, the godly man will experience much deliverance from trouble in the course of his life.

The word “desolate” (asham) means “to be indicted and held guilty . . . to suffer punishment.” Because Christ died for our sins, believers have the assurance they are “justified, forgiven, and redeemed” by the precious blood of Christ.

Unlike the wicked whom God pronounces guilty and sentences to death, God will save His flawed people. Though they too are sinners, He acts to save them from judgment . . . and, this is what He did in and through the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son (Romans 15:1-4; John 3:36).

Psalm 35 - A Prayer Against Enemies

Traitors in the Church



This imprecatory prayer is ascribed to David.

Because it has the feel of war and betrayal in it, many assume this psalm was written during the Absalom revolt.

This psalm could be titled, "A Pleading Against False Accusers," but the title, "Traitors in the Church" was chosen because treachery and division is so common today.

What a terrible thing it is to trust someone and to feel the hot breath of falsehood and the sword of betrayal stalking your soul (11, 14).

If you are a faithful minister of God's Word and has a Judas in your ministry . . . or have ever been unrighteous betrayed by men of power in the church . . . or falsely accused by government officers, this prayer is for you.

The foundation of this psalm and all psalms is the law of the LORD God. Law and order are the duties of all men. No society can happily exist when every man is doing what is right in his own eyes. The law is not for me to obey and for others to ignore. The Lord calls every man to exercise police power against slander and defamation.

Because David's defectors did not follow the law of love, David's life and throne were threatened. The whole nation was divided because no one had the bark or the bite to stop political slander and rebellion. The prohibition against killing requires spiritual energy to confront backbiting and tale-bearing. Instead of protecting their king and his reputation, the rebels turned the discontented into a lion-pack eager to devour David.

The coup was such a mess; David had to flee his throne, pray like a beggar at heaven's gates, and later to send his special forces to wage war against Absalom. Thus, this psalm is a pleading by David for God to intervene, save his life, and the lives of the faithful.

A Pleading for the LORD to Go to War in His Defense

Psalm 35:1 <A Psalm of David.> Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

There are three references to intense conflict in this text: "strive," "fight," and "fight." The word "strive" means "to contend," and the word "fight" is the word for battle or war.

This striving was due to those who rebelled against God's law-order, and who refused to do their duty to protect their king.

"Plead" (riyb ' h) is a paralogic imperative (an extra hey inserted at the end of the verb for emphasis) wherein David pleads with the LORD to take his case and defend him against

powerful rebels who took matters into their own hands to remove him from power and to execute their king.

Like a man sued by big government or chased by a bully, David prays that the LORD would be his Advocate. Thus, David fulfilled the essence of religion by worshipping God when alone and rejected by men. David remained committed to the rule of law and order when all those around had lost their bearings.

2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. 3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

David is on the defensive. He is not the aggressor. He pleads that God would defend Him against his assailants.

A “shield” is a small armor to protect one from blows by a sword, and a “buckler” is a large shield to protect one from arrows and rocks thrown by an up-close combatant. A spear can be used to defend or to thrust a blow.

“say unto my soul, I am thy salvation” exposes the fragile, lily-like condition of David’s heart. This is not David “the confident giant slayer,” but a veteran soldier vulnerable to the aggressive swings and blows by an advancing soldier. Feeling attackable, exposed, and insecure in his relationship to the LORD, he prays he might know for certain that God will be his Savior, Defender, and Buckler.

David was no cherub. He knew he was a sinner. Thus, this is not the prayer of a confident saint secure in the LORD. Possibly, the guilt of committing adultery with Bathsheba was pounding the bass drum of condemnation in his soul making him feel vulnerable to the judgment of God — difficult circumstances possibly sent by God to ruin him. On the other hand, David knew that he had done nothing lewd to deserve the assault of his enemies. Thus, he prays that God would assure Him that He is on David’s side as frail and weak as He was.

Moreover, it is not long into the ministry that a pure, minister of the gospel finds himself the target of attack in a church by bossy women or proud deacons. Beware! No good man is immune from gossip, lies, and underhanded attacks by unsanctified church members. More ministers are attacked because of their allegiance to God’s Word than for any other reason.

4 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

The “them” might be Absalom and Ahithophel.

“confounded,” “shame,” “turned back,” and “confusion” are terms for political defeat.

“confounded” (buwsh) means “to be disappointed.” “shame” means “to be confused and humiliated.”

Feeling like he was more righteous than unrighteous, David prays that his adversaries and critics would be defeated, shamed, and disgraced.

“devising hurt” is a violation of the 6th and 10th Commandment — do your neighbor no harm; that is, David’s adversaries were overtly breaking God’s law, not David! Vilification and defamation precede an all-out war against an innocent king. Slander is the weapon of choice of unscrupulous politicians. David, though far from a perfect king, did not deserve these assaults. He was clearly on the side of righteousness . . . but, the people are easily duped in these media wars. Therefore, David prays that his opponents would be exposed and confused.

5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them. 6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

David employs the metaphor of chaff being sifted by an evening wind as the preferred means of his opponents defeat. He employs “the angel of the LORD” as the driving force of separating the chaff from the wheat, the false from the true, the righteous from the unrighteous, and the innocent from the guilty.

“dark” and “slippery” are metaphors for treacherous places like a dark, rain-drenched, mossy slope.

7 For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.

In order to make a formal complaint, you must have probable cause. The great question to ask any plaintiff is the following: “Was anyone harmed by what I did?” or, “Did I violate a known contract signed by both parties?” If the answer is “No!” the complaining party has no probable cause and the case has grounds for dismissal.

“they hid for me their net in a pit” informs us that David’s adversaries not only lacked probable cause to charge him, but that they were the ones with a malicious, rancorous, duplicitous plans to injure, trap, and destroy him. Betrayers use the politics of destruction (false accusations) to turn the people against their opponent while hiding under “color of law” and “color of process.”

8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

David prays that his betrayers would fall into their own pit . . . that they would be exposed for the very crimes of which they were accusing him. Political assassination by one party against an opposing party is often rhetorical violence by deranged lunatics guilty of the very things they are smearing their opponent.

9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

A man has a right and a duty to defend his own reputation, but sometimes the controversy gets so twisted and convoluted only the LORD can save the innocent man. In this case, David saw the LORD as his only means of escaping the coup d’état.

“rejoice in his salvation” — Joy surfaces when the innocent are justified and false accusers are charged with the crime of malicious defamation.

10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

“all my bones” is a metaphor for wholeheartedness.

“too strong for him” — what poor sap citizen has the power to fight corporate lawyers or the copious financial resources of a government agency? Sometimes a man is forced to trust the LORD to be his defender from powerful men hell bent on destroying him for no more than having an opinion on a third rail issue or defending himself against political triggermen intent on plundering his private property.

A Pleading that His Adversaries Would Fail

11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

A “false witness” gives false testimony. In so doing, he violates the 3rd, 6th, 8th, and 10th Commandment.

“Laid to my charge” are non-facts against the defendant that favor the plaintiff’s bogus claim.

Witnesses are necessary to convict anyone of a crime. When there is no crime, there are no witnesses. However, revolutionaries seem to have no trouble finding gritty characters willing to perjure themselves by providing false testimony against the innocent to persuade the jury that the charges of the Plaintiff are true.

Lesson: charges are required to have proof of claim with strict proof of claim. No proof; no claim. No proof of claim; no protection from the penalty of law-breaking; that is, the false accuser ought to be punished concomitant with the penalty associated with crime allegedly committed by the defendant. Punishment must fit the crime and if the crime is perjury leaving the accused vulnerable to the death penalty, then the false witness must be executed.

See Deuteronomy 19:18-21 King James Version (KJV)

and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil (perjury) away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Note: Both Absalom and Ahithophel received the death penalty they both deserved. They both sought the death of David and both died in the revolt. Absalom was killed in battle; and, Ahithopel murdered himself.

Because modernism is at war with God’s law-order, slandering a political opponent has become acceptable “free” speech. To change the climate of political slander by using the courts to punish adversaries, the nation must return to the Biblical order of purging out evil by employing appropriate punishment for perjury.

When “woke” becomes normal, and slander becomes ordinary, no one is safe from defamation.

12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.

The principle of justice “an eye for an eye” requires rewarding evil with evil and good with good — a law fragrantly violated by the rebels.

“the spoiling of my soul” refers to the murderous plot to kill David, a man who had not wronged his betrayers — an assassination scheme in violation of the 1st, 6th, and 10th Commandment.

“rewarded me evil for good” — David informs us that he is righteous, and that his accusers are unrighteous; that he is innocent, and that they are guilty of the very thing of which they are accusing him. Having a clear conscience may be the most important weapon in the arsenal of those falsely accused of some vice.

Every faithful minister of God’s Word has been falsely accused by jealous, ambitious opponents. Careless men cannot help themselves. They are driven to charge the righteous of what they themselves are doing in secret — “neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Matthew 7:16-18).

More men lose their pastorates because they are faithful to the Word of God than for any other reason. People are trained in a liberal environment, and they simply cannot tolerate black and white instruction from the Holy Scriptures. Church members cuddle their idols. Expose one of them and you may be the object of gossip or slander.

13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

David takes a journey into the past. He contrasts his behavior with the conduct of his accusers. When they were sick, he put on sackcloth and prayed for their wellbeing. This may be literal or David may be using “sackcloth” as a metaphor for going out of the way to minister to their physical and emotional needs.

“humbled my soul” refers to fasting, prayer, and acts of kindness he showed his adversaries before they became traitors to his administration. Though David was gracious to them in the past, he notes their present state as one of being filled with hate and ingratitude. Whatever he did for them was marked by deep kindness and humiliation. Their repayment to him with vicious insults was without merit — a result of bitter selfishness and unthankfulness.

14 I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

“as” means David treated his present accusers like a friend or brother when they experienced troubles before their present conflict.

The second “as” compares his grief for their troubles as to a son who has just lost his beloved mother.

15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not:

“they” refers to David’s betrayers. “rejoiced” can be translated “to stand still” or “be motionless” — something necessary before uniting together.

The word “abjects” (nekeh) means “to smite” or “to strike.” They gathered together, not to help their king, but to destroy their king — an act of treachery. Beware of “snipers” in the church who take pot shots at the pastor while hiding in choir robes. See [1 Corinthians 5](#).

The meeting of the conspirators took David by surprise. He had no knowledge of their deep hatred and plans to remove him from the throne and to murder him. Traitors are not interested in helping their king. They do not personally come and share their grief with their shepherd. Cowards need the support of the congregation so they organize secret meetings to share their gripes in a one-sided diatribe and to secure their loyalty. After gaining the support of major players, they organize a coup leaving ordinary citizens confused and divided. Beware of wealthy church members who have nothing to lose by splitting a church.

David contrasts their present response to his trials to the kindness he showed them when they were experiencing affliction. David showed mercy and love; and, they repaid him with slander and hate.

16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

David compares their recrimination to mockers and drunk hecklers scorning the righteous on their way to worship festivals.

“gnashing of teeth” demonstrates the vigorous intensity of their hate; that is, they emptied their gall of bitterness against God’s lamb without restraint or reservation — something that shocked David much like a lion stuns his victim with a paralyzing roar before he goes for the jugular.

Some railers are willing to divide the church, burn down the chapel, and set fires all over town to crush a simple pastor doing his best to shepherd the flock. To make matters worse, God’s little preacher doesn’t understand the pride and deep hatred of his accusers. Not only are they beating him, God’s servant may take out his own beat stick and flog himself for his many weaknesses.

First lesson: If you are a man of integrity, don’t tolerate the treachery and carping by malicious critics who don’t have your interests or the interests of the church in mind. Some deacons are professional accusers very skilled at destroying men of God and they ought to be resisted and confronted. Hopefully, they repent. If not, the people ought to remove them from the church.

Second lesson: If you are conducting your ministry with integrity you are probably aware of your weaknesses. Weaknesses are not sins. Don’t beat yourself. Identify the sins of your accusers, and demand they repent or leave the church.

A Pleadings for God to Act Quickly

17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

David did not question God's existence or his presence, but he did question why the LORD was taking so long to rescue him? God does not move. He saw it all, but He did not interpose Himself. Things went from bad to worse, from worse to desperate; from intense to fierce.

"God's delays are not necessarily His denials. Just because He hasn't, doesn't mean He won't. His timing is perfect" (Craig Goreschel).

"God is seldom early; never late; and always on time — His time" (Unknown).

The pronoun "their" and the metaphor "from the lions" refers to the character of David's conspirators and traitors — probably Absalom, Ahithophel, and other revolutionaries seeking to overthrow David's throne by killing him.

"My darling" refers to David's precious soul — his life.

18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

David makes a promise that when God's delivers him, that he will become a thankful, praising worshiper of the LORD — a witness of the faithfulness of God to the people of God.

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.

David is committed to praise and worship. What a tragedy it would be for these conspirators to succeed in their plans to kill David and to rejoice in their own success. Therefore, David prays against the false accusers that they wouldn't even be able to wink or squint with laughter over any success.

20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.

David reminds us that he is not dealing with personality conflicts or misunderstanding, but conflict with malicious, treacherous, lubricious transgressors of fundamental law — transgressors of the 4th, 6th, 8th, 9th, and 10th Commandments.

"speak not peace" reminds us that the deserters did not de-escalate the conflict, seek reconciliation, or speak peace — that their tongues clashed like swords in pursuit of blood.

"devise deceitful manners" refers to their undercover violations of the 10th Commandment.

"quiet in the land" refers to God's sheep, the innocent ones in Israel.

21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

"Open mouth wide against me" refers to vicious, reckless denunciation and castigation. Before people joust with swords, "tongues are a waggin'."

"Aha, aha" is an objection by a censorious dissenter claiming he has detected a defect in David. When people are held up to standards of perfection all fail. Measuring David by perfect creeds of idealism . . . of utopian dreams, the faultfinders claimed that David was corrupt, negligent, and debased. All of this verbal bantering turned out to be malicious prosecution of the man.

A Pleading for God to Wake Up

22 This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. 23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

David knows that God's eye is on the dissenters just as their eyes were upon him nitpicking every move.

Denigration by his enemies was one matter, but God's repose was another. Troubled by the LORD's quietude, David pounded on heaven's gate, "Wake up!" "Be not far from me." He is the ultimate judge in these matters, and silence from the Court confused David just like God's silence confuses all of us.

"Stir up thyself" — My enemies appear to be winning. They are laughing at me. Let them not have the victory or the joy of triumph!

23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord. 24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

David cries to heaven calling for God to wake up a second time. David's Lord appeared to be a "do nothing" type God. Therefore, he shouts again, "Stir up thyself!" Wake up! Rise and shine! Get up! Come alive to my predicament, my God and my Lord. "Judge them! Save me! Don't let the wicked triumph or succeed in any of their plans to wreck my life.

God could have acted in the beginning of this revolt to stop it, but instead, walking the gauntlet made David a better and stronger man. Moreover, the Spirit penned his ordeal in Scripture as a lesson for future generations.

25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. 26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.

Let them not congratulate themselves for apparent progress in this coup; don't let them feel safe or like they have succeeded. May they feel like things are not going as planned. May doubt and fear choke their confidence. May they look as gloom as a wet Sunday. Instead of pride, may they feel naked and afraid.

A Plea for His Supporters

27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

By the grace of God, David managed to offer a prayer for his supporters. Though loyal to David, they too were plagued with doubt and confusion by David's sudden political reversals. Fortunately, these were not fair-weather friends or fickle followers. He wants them to be convinced his cause is righteous, and to focus on glorifying God in their terrible predicament.

David manages to maintain an infectious confidence that God is pleased with him even though the whole nation was divided.

28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

Banished from his throne and fleeing the traitors, David commits himself to trust God, to speak well of Him, and to praise Him even in the midst of his political crisis. David understood that though He had lost his throne, God had not lost His.

May our lives emanate confidence in the Lord all the days of our lives.

Psalm 36 - Precious Mercy



This psalm is ascribed to David, but we have no idea on what occasion it was composed.

The grandness of the psalm is the value David places on the mercy of the Lord — his place of refuge.

A Description of the Wicked

Psalm 36:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD.> The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.

David was a great king, but he calls himself a servant of His majesty — a glorious title to claim. As God's servant, he grappled with the character of the wicked.

Though the general sense seems to be clear, the text has grammatical challenges.

“within my heart” refers to the psalmist's analysis of the wicked in his own mind. We would say, “In my estimation . . .” After studying the depraved, he concluded that the nefarious conduct of the unrighteous proceeded from a heart lacking the fear of God.

The focus of his study was on the “transgression” of the wicked — a particular public act not mentioned by David nor known to us — deeds performed without the fear of God or consideration of His law-order. Because the iniquitous proclaim the death of God, they seek the death of men. Above the law, the wicked become gods in their own minds. Because they are gods, they know no limits or restraints.

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

“For he flattereth himself in his own eyes” – is singular. Possibly, David has Saul in mind — a man who hid his sin behind a lubricious tongue. And, this is the view I take here.

Insincere praise became a smoke screen to hide hatred (sane').

“found to be hateful” — not lacking in self-esteem, this godless man overrated his value and his own abilities. Like a magnet, his compass of flattery pointed to self. The praise of his tongue for himself cloaked the deep hostility in his heart he had for David. Doing what's right in his own eyes, God permitted this miscreant to pursue a course which ultimately made his conduct odious to all people (Barnes).

3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good.

David studied the words of this reprobate and observed the iniquitous and raw character of his speech. He not only praised himself, blasphemy, pride, pompousness, depravity, and vulgar profanity were also on his lips.

“But he who sins against me injures himself; All those who hate me love death”
(Proverbs 8:36).

“he hath left off to be wise, and to do good” refers to a choice this miscreant made to leave the path of wisdom. He forsook law and love to pursue a course of lawlessness and death — A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit (Matthew 7:16-20).

“left off to be wise, and to do good” — Good men think about how to be a blessing to their family and friends. Evil men think about money and power. They have no conscience about crushing others under their command. Because they are above the law, they are not cognizant of evil. They have no reins on their depraved impulses. Out of control, depraved men cannot resist doing wrong. They are a bad tree bringing forth bad fruit.

4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

“He deviseth mischief upon his bed” — refers to a reprobate who flagrantly and intentionally violated the 10th Commandment by dreaming up schemes to kill David and rob him of his destiny. What he did during the day was the result of his deliberate plans at night. And, his evil plans were the result of rejecting God’s law-order.

“in a way that is not good” — his thoughts and plans were without redeeming value . . . without profit . . . without good towards people.

Good is defined by God’s law; those who reject His law end up doing what “is not good.” Though this miscreant had praise on his tongue about himself and could speak intensely on religious subjects, his nature begat death.

The godless man speaks of life and the “crime of punishment” wherein he substitutes medicine for morals, therapy for justice, and government for religion. But . . . he still births death.

A Description of the Mercy of God

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

Leaving his study of the wicked abruptly, David changes his attention on the mercy of God.

“Thy mercy” (cheched) seems to be a favorite theme for meditation. Likewise for us. His mercy is our prize and our hiding place.

It is a miracle that David could study Saul’s character and not become infected with his duplicity. Only because David meditated intensely on God’s mercy did he escape the contagious nature of Saul’s deadly sins. Focus on another’s faults, and you may be unconsciously contaminated by their depraved attitude.

“heavens” and “reacheth unto the clouds” describes the inexhaustible supply of God’s mercy; i.e. man cannot exhaust it, empty it, or touch the outer limits of His grace. The LORD’s mercy and faithfulness to man knows no boundary as it is as wide and deep as the cross of Calvary. Because this text compares God mercy to the vast sky above, we have authority to characterize His mercy as limitless, infinite, and endless.

His mercy is not only everlasting; it is the most distinguished, pre-eminent attribute of the LORD in the eyes of the redeemed. While all His attributes are to be admired, His mercy is desperately needed by sinners . . . and, therefore, the one most cherished by us.

There is no need for his mercy in heaven, but the need for mercy among fallen humanity seems abundantly clear.

6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

Not only does the LORD show mercy, He does it without compromising His righteousness. At the cross, mercy and truth kissed each other.

Psalms 85:10-13 – Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yes, the LORD will give what is good; and our land will yield its increase.

“like great mountains” – Being the most immense structure man’s small mind can imagine, God humbles Himself by comparing His greatness to the opulent alpine peaks of earth.

“thy judgments” refer to God’s law and judicial decisions. Combined with justice and mercy, His judgments are compared to the depths of the deep blue sea. Deeper than the ocean is more than the ancient mind could calculate.

The modernist has no appreciation for God’s judgments because he sees himself as above the law. In the humanist’s world, men don’t need mercy, they need money; they don’t need repentance, they need tolerance; they don’t need salvation, they need a vacation; they don’t need to be redeemed, they need self-esteem; they don’t need responsibility, they need therapy. The problem is not with Adam and Eve or the serpent, but with the apple. Blame God for man’s troubles.

7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

The word “excellent” (yakar) means “precious” or “valuable.” Hebrews used the term to describe rare and precious jewels (1 Kings 10:2, 1 Kings 10:10-11). Few things are worth more than diamonds and rubies. Men will travel the world in search of gems, but there is no more precious jewel than the mercy of God. The psalmist valued His mercy as his greatest gem . . . and so do we.

The word “lovingkindness” (chehed) is translated “mercy” in verse five. The psalmist begins his meditation (v. 5) and ends his meditation on God’s mercy (v. 10). The psalmist can appeal to God’s faithfulness, but he can only find refuge under the wings of His mercy.

Not all men find mercy, but those who hide under the shadow of His wings discover the comfort and warmth of His lovingkindness (Psalm 91).

8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

“They” refers to those who take shelter under the shadow of His wings (v. 7) – a metaphor for trust.

“fatness of thy house” and “rivers of pleasure (delight)” are metaphors for wealth and health.

The word “abundantly” (nachal) means “water,” “stream,” or “torrent.” The metaphors refer to a thirsty man who drinks his fill of cold water on a hot day. Those who trust the LORD will be filled to the brim, satiated, and soaked with satisfaction like a dry valley after an abundant rain.

9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

“fountain of life” – as all streams flow from lakes or underground springs, life comes from the Lord. Everything worth having flows from the rivers of God to men. All good, all that makes us happy, and all that is real and true comes from Thee.

“in thy light shall we see light” – Death stalks all men. Therefore, His life is the light of men, the hope of men, and the confidence that the grave is not lord. That Christ defeated death in and through His resurrection and that eternal life is available to all who put their trust in Him.

A desire to take the mercy of God to the upright

10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

Though afflicted by trouble, the gems of God’s mercy made David rich.

The word “continue” (mashak) means “to drag,” “to lead” or “to draw out along.” It contains the idea of continuing or prolonging his exhibition of mercy – to dragging the mercy of God to the people. As a host invites an enchanting guest to extend his stay, David desires that God would remain with His people and perpetually extend His goodness to them.

A man rich in mercy will never be poor.

11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

“foot of pride” is a metaphor for conquest. “hand of the wicked” refers to David’s political opposition.

Specifically, David prays that he would not be trampled down in battle as a defeated foe.

12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

“workers of iniquity” describe the character of David’s adversaries. The first use of the term “iniquity” is in reference to the growing lawlessness of the Amorites (Genesis 15:16).

Like so many psalms, this precious hymn begins with a spirit of depression and ends with a spirit of triumph.

“workers of iniquity fallen” and “cast down” and “shall not be able to rise” is the language of crushing defeat.

David beams with confidence that his prayer has already been answered. He was so certain the LORD heard his prayers that he speaks of the defeat of “the workers of iniquity” in the past tense.

The lesson of this psalm is that no man lives in utopia. The real world has sinners dominated by greed, ambition, and duplicity. When sinners throw off all restraints and give themselves to wickedness, the godly oppose them . . . and in so doing find themselves engaged in a battle for the conquest of humanity. In this war, David found his riches and his comfort in the mercy of God. Convinced that the mercy of God would triumph over the deception of men, David leaps with confidence that the wicked would be defeated and that he would be a victor.

Psalm 37 - Stop Fretting

Stop Fretting Over Wicked Rulers in Positions of Power



Are you burdened by the calamitous legislation of higher functioning psychopaths and sociopaths working at the seat of power in governmental institutions? Then this psalm is for you.

Because of the mass media, we are in touch with more political corruption than our little minds and hearts can manage. If your heart is righteous, you are probably angry at the injustice of our time.

This psalm is the voice of grey-haired wisdom. Consider the following Spirit-inspired promises about the wicked — those planners and schemers who introduce corruption into society in the name of freedom and fairness.

Addressed to the godly men, this psalm is about the temporal prosperity of the wicked and God's permanent protection of the righteous.

You can be at rest by considering the destiny of the wicked in your time.

God orders His people to cease fretting over the temporary success of *the wicked (rasha – singular; rasha'm plural)*.

1 (A Psalm of David.) Fret not thyself (tit'har) because of evildoers (ra'im), neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

'Fret not thyself' is a reflexive verb which prohibits God's man from fueling his anger by stoking the fire with reports about what "evildoers" (pl.) *ra'im* is doing.

The word "fret" (charah) is translated by the word "hot" ten times; "angry" nine times, "fret" four times, and "burn" once in Scripture. The word "fret" is the same word used in Genesis 4:5: "And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell;" that is, he was angry enough to kill. Selah.

The word "wroth" is our word "fret" in Psalm 37:1. "Fret" is a Hithpael verb (reflexive, future) which means the one fretting is causing himself to suffer emotional strain by burning with anger. The one who feeds the furnace of anger injures himself.

Some reports about the success of the *ra'im* are disturbing. Consequently, some men are tempted to "envy" (qana) and be jealous of their financial and social success.

The "evildoers" (*ra'im*) are the movers and shakers in society promoting transgression of God's law-order. . . . people in blue suits and red ties in the Municipal Corporation in the District of Columbia.

“workers of iniquity” (asah-evel) is contrasted with those who do good in verse 3. These are the people that sow tares in the wheat field with malice aforethought. The *rasha'm'm* are more than sinners. They are committed to evil as a means of advancement in society.

The opposite of fretting is trusting (3), delighting (4), committing (5), and resting (7).

The grounds of this “rest” are twofold: (1) God knows and protects the righteous; (2) God knows and punishes the wicked.

Reasons Not to Fret

God slashes the hope of the wicked.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

“cut down” (namal) is the verb that also introduces the act of circumcision. “soon” is an adverb.

The psalmist addresses the *ra'im* as a group (“they”) or in the plural. This metaphor pictures the wicked prospering, then perishing.

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

There two imperatives in this text: “trust” and “do-good.” The word “trust” means to “rest on,” “lean on,” “put your confidence in” the LORD. It is the opposite of being your own counselor and going your own way.

“Thou shalt pasture on *faithfulness*, i.e., be supported by God’s truth and righteousness as by a rich pasture. (Comp. Psalm 23:1, and, for the expression, Proverbs 15:14, “feedeth on foolishness.”). The faithfulness of God is the security of man” (Ellicott).

4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

“Delight” (anag) is a Hithpael imperative. Cause yourself to “delight” in the Lord. Develop a taste for His Word. Consider this autumn wisdom by a seasoned saint. Life with its many reversals did not sour or disquiet him.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

“Commit” (galal) is another imperative meaning “to roll down;” that is, roll all your concerns on to the LORD.

“Trust” (batach) is an imperative repeated a second time in these first few verses.

The Hebrew word “the way” (der’ke’kah) contains a Kafh (כ). Rabbinical mystics say the Kafh represents a palm as it look like a backward C or a cupped palm; that is, trust in the Lord and he will hold you in the palm of his hand.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

Expensive things like gold, silver, and rubies come from the dark caverns of the earth. Likewise, the righteous man is hidden, but the LORD has a way of bringing that righteousness into the light as a shining in the darkness.

7 Rest in the LORD, 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.

There are three imperatives in this verse.

The command “rest” (damam) means “to be silent, dumb, and be still” — an action that calls for us to restrain impulses to be nervous and anxious . . . to talk . . . to complain . . . and to nervously do things. When we are anxious our tongues seem to be tied in the middle and flappin’ at both ends. “Rest, soul, rest!” “Restrain yourself!”

The command “wait patiently” (chuwl with a Hith-polel suffix) is verb requiring intense, vigorous action on one’s self to fulfill the command “to wait.” It means “to dance,” “writhe,” or “twist.” The opposite of waiting are acts of the flesh. That is “waiting patiently” requires all the energy a man can muster from within himself to “rest” and chain down his soul to the stake of contentment.

The command “fret not” (charah) means “to be hot with anger.” It is a repeat of the command in verse one. Saying it twice confirms the divine will to not fuel the furnace of anger with the deadwood of evil reports.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

The command “cease” (raphah) means “to relax, to sink down, and to deflate.”

The imperative “forsake” (azab) means “to leave, abandon, or divorce” one’s self from “wrath” (chema) or the heat and fever caused by anger.

So important are the commands in Psalm 37 the Spirit commands us NOT to “fret” a third time. Repeating a command three times is like adding three exclamation points to an English sentence!!!

But, the Spirit adds a warning about “giving up,” “resigning or giving into the evil trying to shackle us in its chains. No man is authorized to fight sin with sin.

God thwarts the expectations of the wicked and limits their influence.

9 For evildoers (ra’im) shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

Now the author provides the grounds of rest: God will deal with the *ra’im* in His time and His way. Selah! The verbal action “cut off” is terminal. It means “to cut” and “to kill.” It refers to circumcision, cutting off the boughs of a tree, cutting a covenant in blood, and cutting off a man’s head.

Before us is a big promise with a big condition. “Wait” is a tough command for ambitious men as it requires one to quietly “trust and obey.” Earth, not heaven, is the destiny of the righteous.

Those that wait upon the LORD are the righteous, the meek, and the humble. The term “wait” refers to one Source of hope and protection. Some trust government to deliver them; the meek trust the LORD.

10 For yet a little while, and the wicked (rasha) shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

We like the guarantee the wicked shall be cut off. It's the in a “little while” that tests the souls of the *tzadikkim*.

In the second stanza of the couplet we have the promise, “thou shalt diligently consider his place,” but this is a poor translation. The verb “diligently see” (biyn with Hith-Polel prefixes) implies an intense seeing — that believers will see (perceive) the ruination of the *rasha'm*. The Hebrew word “place” (me'kow'mo) refers to one's status, post in life, or abode. The wicked will fall, and the righteous will see it.

The text does **not** say “thou” shall see ALL the *ra'im* disappear or even see the downfall of particular *rasha'm*. But, the text does declare the Christian man who has his eyes open will see the ceiling collapse on the *rasha'm*. How many careers of politicians and Hollywood perverts have we seen crumble like a house of cards or suffer a sudden death in our lifetime? The verb “diligently consider” requires acute observation on our part. We must look for it.

11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

This is another strong promise.

The “meek” (*anah'vim*) are the opposite of the *ra'im* (the wicked); that is, the “meek” are the poor, righteous souls who have placed their trust in the Lord and His promises; and, the *ra'im* are the antinomian Christ-rejecters. Shalom awaits the *anah'vim* and the horrors of judgment await the *ra'im*.

The earth belongs to those who submit to the dominion mandate, the *anah'vim*, and not the *ra'im*.

God ordains an end for the wicked.

12 The wicked (rasha'm) plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

For literary, communication purposes the terms “wicked” (*rasha'm*) and the just (*tzaddik*) are in the singular but we can generally apply the principle propounded to apply to more than one *rasha'm*; that is, the schemes and legislation of the *ra'im* stem from secret motivations to crush the righteous. They are motivated by hate and they take out their animus on the *tzadikkim*.

13 The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.

“his day” is the Day of Trouble . . . the Day of Judgment.

The language of “laugh” does not refer to God jumping up and down with joy, but an attitude of One who knows that all the plans of the *ra'im* are vain – as not worthy of serious thought, or worry, or care; that all plans to thwart the will of God will crash on the roadway of life. Each

individual *rasha'm* will have his “bad day!” This fact provides more reasons to rest and be at peace while the *ra'im* initiate their plots against the *tzadikkim*.

God destroys the wicked by using their own schemes against them.

14 The wicked (*rasha'm*) have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

The reports of wicked schemes are often true. They have drawn out their sword and have pointed their bows at the poor and needy with the intent of slaying the upright. The phrase “upright conversation” (*yasar derek*) refers to a “straight road” — a metaphor describing the honorable ambitions of the *tzadikkim*.

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

The psalmist switches back to the plural. Another strong promise that evil plans of the *ra'im* will boomerang back on them.

16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked (*rasha'm*).

This text addresses the insecurities of the *tzadikkim*. Great riches involve many cares. This text assures the reader the few assets that the righteous (*tzaddik*) possess is a better status than the status of the *ra'im* with all their treasures.

God crushes the strength of the wicked.

17 For the arms of the wicked (*rasha'm*) shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

Another powerful promise that God will break the power of the *ra'im* and sustain the *tzadikkim*.

“Arms” is a metaphor for strength and power. God will break the “arms” (power) of the *ra'im* but He is a sling for the *tzadikkim*.

18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

As the *ra'im* prospers and the *tzadikkim* anguish over their troubles, the godly man is tempted to think his trials are evidence the LORD has forgotten him. However, this text assures us that God knows all the troubles in all the days of the *tzadikkim*.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

Here is another powerful promise. Evil times come upon all men in every generation, but the *tzadikkim* have divine assurance of His provision and protection. For insight on the word “ashamed” (*buwsh*) see Genesis 2:25; Ezra 8:22; 9:6; and Psalm 25:2.

“Jesus wept!” And, the reason for His grief may have been because Mary and Martha were not taking sufficient comfort in His presence or His promises — an exhortation to believe more and doubt less. Oh, how the Lord must be grieved by the pain caused by our skepticism.

God consumes the wicked and diminishes their power.

20 But the wicked (rasha'm) shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

Two metaphors shore up the confidence of the *tzadikkim* — “fat of lambs” refers to the sacrificial part of lambs; like “smoke” blown away for the wicked (*ra'im*). Smoke is a symbol of temporary prosperity.

21 The wicked (rasha'm) borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

The Spirit provides a mark of the *ra'im* — they do not pay their debts; and, a mark of the *tzadikkim* — they show mercy and pay their debts. By debt, we mean a contract that involves an exchange of tangible assets — and, not fake debt due to fake loans base on intangible money of account.

We learn from this text the wicked are takers, and the righteous are givers.

22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

The Spirit repeats the promise in verse 11 — double assurance that His promise is true, correct, and not misleading.

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

The word “good” (*tov*) is not in the text, but it can be assumed that the man God delights is the *ish tov*, the *ish anav* (meek man of v. 11), and the *ish tzaddik* of verse 16.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

The Spirit addresses a troubling concern of the *tzadikkim* — many are often shadowed by their own particular spiritual failures on the road to the Celestial City. The righteous may stumble and fall, but the LORD enables the humiliated to rise and be restored. Solomon informs us the righteous fall seven times and arise, but the wicked fall down and stay down (Proverbs 24:16).

25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

The psalmist now confirms the promises of God with his own experience. In his entire life, he cannot recall seeing a truly pious man destitute as if he had been forsaken by the Lord and constrained to beg at the back door of the *ra'im*.

26 He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

The “He” in this text refers to the *ish tzaddik* who is characterized as merciful and generous — a family man who not only cares for his children, but shows concerns for the plight of his neighbors.

Again, the *tzadikkim* are givers and not takers. Society is made better by holy men.

27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

The lesson is clear: since the above text shows the provision and protection of God upon the righteous, let us too depart from evil and to do good. Let us be generous, pay our debts, and shun covetous practices.

“dwell for evermore” is a general promise of not only life in heaven, but for a long life on earth.

God uses the wicked to exterminate the offspring of the wicked.

28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked (*rasha'm*) shall be cut off.

God loves to do what is right (*misphat*) toward the *tzadikkim* and towards the *ra'im* (evildoers). He preserves His saints (*ha'se'dim*) and punishes the seed of the *ra'im*.

The word “forsaketh” (*azab*) means “to leave, abandon, or neglect.” The “not” negates the verb. The *tzadikkim* may feel forsaken, but those feelings are a lie. The LORD forsaketh not His holy ones.

In contrast to the *tzadikkim* this text informs us that the seed (children, offspring) of the *rasha'm* “shall be cut off.”

Application: Stop fretting about abortion. God uses baby killers to fulfill his promise to exterminate the offspring of wicked people who want to kill their babies.

Psalm 21:10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

Proverbs 24:20 For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

The promise that the meek shall inherit the earth is now extended to the righteous; that is, the “meek” (*anah'vim*) are the *tzadikkim*. The terms “poor” and “humble” are synonyms for the righteous (*tzaddik*).

30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

The psalmist continues to identify the marks of the *tzadikkim*. Not only do they do good, they speak with wisdom. The word “speak” (*haga*) refers to a lion’s roar or to the *ish* (man) that moans and groans out thoughts on wisdom (*chokmah*) and justice (*misphat*).

31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

Another mark of the *ish tzaddik* is that the Law of the LORD God rules his heart. He thinks, speaks, moans, does, and talks about *misphat* (justice) and *amet* (truth).

The Hebrew word “truth” (אמת) (Psalm 31:5) begins with the letter Aleph and ends with letter Tav, the first and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet; that is, truth is about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Aleph and Tav, the A and the Z, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

God frustrates the plans of the wicked to ravage the righteous.

32 The wicked (*rasha'm*) watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

The distinguishing marks of the *ra'im* and the *tzadikim* are clear. While the *tzadikim* think about *mishpat* (justice and goodness); the *ra'im* cast an evil eye on the righteous man with the intent to ruin him. Evildoers look for the right time to cast aspersions at the righteous in order to crush their careers and families.

33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

The *ra'im* devise schemes to attack and destroy the *tzadikim*, but the Lord restrains their power and provides a way of escape. There are seasons where the *tzaddik* comes under the evil influence of the *ra'im* but the LORD will preserve His own; that is, we are not to interpret troublesome times as God's abandonment of the *tzaddik*.

34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked (*rasha'm*) are cut off, thou shalt see it.

Two more ordinances are issued to the *tzadikim*: wait and keep. The imperative "wait" (*qavah*) is a Piel verb requiring intense vigor to trust God and to fulfill one's duty . . . even when troubled by the *rasha'm*.

His way is the way of righteousness and love as defined in His law.

The *tzadikim* have the promise that God will "exalt" them and pull them out of trouble to experience goodness in the land of the living whereas the *ra'im* are ruined in this life and the life to come.

Duty is ours and the righteous embrace it.

We have a promise: "thou shall see it;" that is, the observant man will see with his own eyes the fall of the wicked. What have you observed in the last month on how God is using the wicked to destroy the wicked? Wars, shootings, political reversals, abortion, and falls from power are evidence that God is fulfilling His promise to "cut off" the wicked in verse 28.

God impairs the prosperity of the wicked and tempers their influence

35 I have seen the wicked (*rasha'm*) in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

Now the author affirms the promises supra from his own experience. In his experience, he marveled at the prosperity of the *rasha'm*.

36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

In time, the psalmist saw not only the rise of the *ra'im* (evildoers) to positions of power, but their complete fall from power.

37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

But, the *ish tzaddik* has a different set of circumstances that the individual *rasha'm*.

The author exhorts us to carefully observe the course of the righteous. The word “perfect” (*tam*) adds to the list of synonyms for a righteous man: meek, poor, humble, and now the word “complete.” A righteous man has many troubles, but at the finish line there is peace.

Ellicott reads this text as “Mark the honest man, and behold the upright; for a posterity (shall be) to the man of peace.” Benson interprets this text as the righteous man moving from trouble to triumph.

God counters the ambitions of the wicked and scourges their future.

38 But the transgressors (*pasha*) shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked (*rasha'm*) shall be cut off.

“Transgressors” (*pasha*) is another name for the wicked. It refers to lawbreakers and rebels against God’s law-order. Just as the term “poor” (37:4), “meek” (37:22), “humble” (34:2) and “perfect” (37:37) are synonyms for the righteous man (37:16), the term *pash'im* (37:38) is a synonym for the *ra'im* (evildoers; transgressors) and the *rasha'm* or wicked (37:1).

39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.

Duty is ours and we must do it; but, the results belong to the LORD. Though a saint may experience deep troubles in this life, his future is everlasting peace. Two powers of God are at work: His power to save the *tzadikkim*; and, His power to affect the ruin of the *ra'im*.

The *tzadikkim* are secure. They know power is not their own, but solely due to the salvation of God working on their behalf.

40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked (*rasha'm*), and save them, because they trust in him.

This psalm begins with a command to the meek not to be angry over the fleeting prosperity of the wicked and ends with a golden promise that God will deliver the *tzadikkim* from the snares of the *ra'im*. Because they trust God (*ha'saw*) and not themselves, the LORD will help them (*azar*), deliver them (*palat*), and save them (*yasha*).

The general thought in this psalm is that any prosperity the *ra'im* experience is temporary, and that the righteous are eternally safe and secure in the palm of His hand (37:24); that the troubles of the meek are temporary and the troubles of the wicked are permanent.

Note

“yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be,” and, “thou shalt see it.”

Consider the untimely fall of the following: Elvis Presley, Playmate Marilyn Monroe, River Phoenix, Kurt Cobain, Gary Hart, O. J. Simpson, Anna Nicole Smith, Al Franken, Robin Williams, Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Harvey Weinstein, Jeffery Epstein, David Cameron, Jacinda Ardern,

Notes on Psalm 37:28

Stop Fretting About Abortion

Psalm 37:1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers

Righteous people are concerned about the spread of evil in their lifetime. Christians are trained by the media to do something . . . anything: listen, learn, vote, write, protest, jump up and down and scream, etc.

In fact, it is a mark of a good Christian to be burdened down by abortion, homosexuality, gun violence, sex change surgeries, and other degradations. But, this chapter tells us to STOP FRETTING ABOUT ABORTION . . . WARS . . . and GUN VIOLENCE.

The Imperative

Psalm 37:1 Fret not thyself (ti'har) because of evildoers (ra'im), neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

'Fret not thyself' is a reflexive verb which prohibits God's man from fueling his anger by stoking the fire with reports about what the ra'im are doing.

Believers know they should not fret, but they do. They fret because they do not rest very well on the bed of God's promises; that is, they have not found the grounds on which to live a worry free, fret free life.

You can stop fretting by growing in the knowledge of God.

First, know that it is God's job to judge the wicked; that is, to separate the husks from the corn, the goats from the sheep, the tares from the wheat, and the wicked from among the righteous. We have a duty to remove the leaven from our own lives, but we have NO duty or power to remove malice and evil in society.

Second, know that God has promised to judge the wicked.

2 For the wicked shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. . . . 9 For evildoers shall be cut off . . . 14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow . . . 5 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken. . . . 17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: . . . 20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: 28 . . . but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

Third, know that God is removing the wicked from society NOW!

28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

The "seed" here refers to the babies, children, and families of the wicked.

Psalm 21:10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

Fourth, know that God uses the wicked to cut off the seed of the wicked.

—Stop fretting about abortion. God is using wicked abortion “doctors” to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed (babies, children, offspring) of the wicked — promiscuous fornicators and adulterers in Hollywood, NYC, Chicago, London, Berlin, Paris, and the inner cities.

-Stop fretting about war and the casualties of war. God is using war to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about gun violence in Chicago. God is using gun violence to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about vaccine injuries and deaths. God is using the vax jabs to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about child sex-change operations. God is using these monstrous procedures to sterilize the children of the wicked in order to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

-Stop fretting about the elite’s plan to reduce the world population by billions. God is using these wicked schemers to fulfill His promise to cut off the seed of the wicked.

Open your eyes and see. God is using the wicked to cut off the seed of the wicked.

Fret not!

Rest, soul, rest!

Disclaimer: Reasoning from the general to the specific is generally faulty reasoning. A faulty generalization is a true statement wherein a faulty conclusion is drawn from specifics of the major premise that is not mentioned in the statement.

It is true all dogs have four legs, but it is not true that Zebras are dogs because they have four legs.

It is true the wicked die, but not everyone who dies is wicked.

It is true that God shall cut off the seed of the wicked, but it does not mean every mother that has had a miscarriage is wicked. Some distresses, said Jesus, are for the glory of God (John 9:3).

Psalm 37:28 should not be used to label grieving parents who have lost children children and to judge them as wicked. Psalm 37:28 is a general promise that should encourage us, but not empower us to sit as judges on specific persons and their trying circumstances and then to conclude they must be evil. God forbid!

Psalm 38 – Sin and Sickness

Morals and Medicine

“For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease”



This psalm is subtitled, “Morals v. Medicine” because of the modernist’s fixation on drugs as the “cure all” for all of man’s diseases. By drugs, I am not referring to natural remedies and herbs for man’s ailments, but to the brainwashing of the American mind by pharmaceutical companies — to a deception the Bible calls “witchcraft” (pharmakeia) — Galatians 5:20.

In this psalm the solution to David’s illness was not capsules, but confession; not medicine, but morals; not drugs, but devotion to God. However, this is not to say that a person may not need a medical prescription to improve a particular health concern.

This psalm is attributed to David and there is no reason to doubt his authorship. We don’t know the occasion for the psalm, but some assume it was written after David murdered Uriah and committed adultery with Bathsheba. Surely, these crippling sins robbed him of strength. Large or small, sin injures all of us.

The psalm describes the condition of David who was feeble and frail because of personal sin (Psalm 38:2-3, 38:5, 38:7-8, 38:10-11). Not all infirmity is the result of a specific sin, but in this case, it was.

He did not write this psalm when he was sick, but after he recovered. Words are useless to describe what pain is really like until the crisis is over when everything has calmed down. Then, words are connected to the memory of pain. There one struggles to find accurate expressions to describe the agony.

The value of this psalm is that it relates sin to sickness. His suffering was real, but so was his faith. Despite of the fact that David felt his sins were at the root of his infirmity, he expresses hope that God would eventually restore him to health. And, He did!

The Terrible Condition of the Psalmist Described

Psalm 38:1 <A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.> O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

The word “rebuke” (yakach) and “chasten” contain the idea of punishment.

Apparently, David had been inquiring into the cause of his suffering and suspected that it might be because of his sins. Feeling like he was being punished for his transgressions, he prays that God would not visit him in wrath and anger.

As sinners we need correction, but who can endure the heat and fury poured out against sin by a holy God?

2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

God, not nature, was the source of the psalmist's affliction – a sickness that could be traced to his own sin.

David describes his suffering with two metaphors – (1) as a wounded, bleeding, dying soldier pierced by one of God's arrows, and (2) as a man knocked to the ground with his head spinning as if anesthetized by the iron blow of "thy hand."

3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.

"because of my sin" informs us of the reason for his affliction.

"no soundness in my flesh" or "bones" – the psalmist informs us of the fragmentation of his disease; that there was no part of his body that was free from chronic pain – an affliction that felt like he had been crushed by the roaring dragon of God's anger.

The bitterness of sickness was not because of a virus or a bad diet but the fount of sin bubbling up and overflowing within his own heart.

We get the word "peace" from the word "rest" (shalom); that is, he had no peace in any part of his body. Every part of his being was at war with cankers stabbing and slicing him into a cadaver.

4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

"For mine iniquities are gone over mine head" and "too heavy for me" – David feels like his sickness could be traced to his sin . . . that he was thrown overboard for his pride and wrongdoing.

"burden" and "heavy" inform us that his numerous sins overflowed their bank and were crushing him . . . that he was drowning in a sea of iniquity paddling like a scared puppy unable to keep his head above water.

5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

Switching metaphors David describes the smells of his yellow-green sins as putrid and rank . . . as infected with gangrene reeking with the smell of decomposing, dead fish.

"corrupt" (maqaq) means "to melt" or "to pine away" producing putrescine odors like ulcers and sores tend to do.

Again, the psalmist identifies the cause of his suffering – "foolishness."

"foolishness" informs us that the psalmist's sins were voluntary, volitional, and willful.

6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

“troubled” and “bowed down” are in the perfect tense indicating that David was in chronic pain; that is, his agony sliced and diced him into throbbing parts.

The word “troubled” means “to bend” or “to twist”; i. e. he had so much pain shooting through his lumbar into his legs, he could barely stand. Hunched over like a cripple, he hobbled along on a homemade crutch moaning over every creak in his arthritic joints. Possibly David wretched with convulsions and seizures as sick people tend to do. Sensitive to pain and cold, fatigued and depressed, he leaked out more groans like a mourner at his own funeral. Was this his deathbed?

7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.

“loins” refers to David’s internal organs — his stomach, intestines, bowels, kidneys, etc.

The word “loathsome” (qalah) means “burning” or “roasted” like a patient with inflammation and a high fever with spells of nausea.

We would equate this burning sensation and urge to vomit with food poisoning or the flu.

“no soundness in my flesh” means his whole body was on fire fighting infection.

8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

The word “feeble” describes a numbing sensation — that feeling of having “hot spells” and then “cold shivers” — a fever combined with cold chills.

“broken” refers to his immune system that was unable to fight disease.

The word “disquieted” refers to grunts and howls due to the pain — as the roaring (nehamah) of the sea (Isaiah 5:30) — pain due to fevers.

9 Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

David was a man with dual citizenship: one in the kingdom of God and the other in the kingdom of the sick. But, he managed to leak out a prayer to the Lord.

“my desire” expresses David’s hopes, wishes, fears, and prayers. As miserable as a man could be, David leaves his case with the Great Physician.

“Not hid” means David was being totally honest with the Lord . . . that he bore his soul about his sins and trusted God . . . that his malady in soul and body was in the hands of the Lord. Though sick, he seems to have confidence that God would decide his case for good or evil.

10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

The term “heart” refers to the spiritual and emotional stress that his sin caused.

“panteth” refers to short gasps for air — a further description of a man overcome with fever having a difficult time breathing — as a man deprived of oxygen laboring for air. Sick people struggle to breathe until inflammation eases and congested sinuses begin to drain.

“light of the eyes” refers to the disappearance of the sparkle of life . . . and the appearance of dark circles under shrunken, collapsed eyes, opaque with thickened corneas and neovascularized iris — even a clouding of the eye causing the onset of blindness — progressive damage to the blood vessels of the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye that is necessary for good vision.

The Contributing Factors of His Sickness

11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

“stand aloof” – David’s family and friends were unwilling to come near him. They abandoned him and left him to suffer alone.

It is the nature of people to look away from mortal news about those who are sick, weak, and troubled. Pain is new for the sufferer, but it loses its originality for those around him. People shun bad news. David’s whole countenance looked like death in a bed pan. Therefore, people avoided him. David was truly alone . . . helpless . . . laboring to breath.

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

“snares” — To make matters worse, David’s enemies saw his illness as an opportunity to ruin him. David’s health crisis was aggravated by enemies who wished him dead. Taking advantage of his weakness, his enemies made strides to impoverish the man and to enrich themselves.

13 But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. 14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

“as a deaf man” — means that David pretended to be deaf. Though he heard every word, every laugh, and saw every smile of his purported friends, he simulated deafness. When disparagements were uttered, David did not react or become angry. He remained calm as if unconscious. He listened, but chose not to speak.

Never attack an opponent or make a claim when you are weak. Wait till you are strong.

The Consolation of the Psalmist

15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

“thou wilt hear . . . ” is an imperfect verb expressing David’s hope that God will hear his prayer.

Here we see the grounds for David’s patience. David did not place his trust in physicians. He did not expect more of men than they were capable of giving. Living life on God’s terms, he had a reason to hope in the Lord. He hoped that God would protect his character from the reproaches of his adversaries; and, that God would forgive his sins, hear his prayers, and restore his health.

16 For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.

Verse 15 and 16 inform us that David was conscious of his own weakness and his liability to sin, He understood that his sins might be the reason for his present affliction; that his affliction might be unto death.

“For I said” is a reference to his prayer in verse fifteen. Dangers arise, not so much from enemies without, but from the enemies within. Thus, David prayed that he might not commit apostasy due to the power of sin working in his person; that his sufferings might not expose his weakness and that those weaknesses might not conquer him; that his faith might remain firm; that his sins might not be the reason for his conflict with enemies; that God might not use his enemies as His tool of destruction.

The Great Confession of the Psalmist

17 For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me.

“sorrow” refers to David’s pain.

The word “halt” (tsela) means “to stumble” or “to lean to one’s side.” Hunched over, it appeared that one part of his body was more afflicted than the other.

18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

Having analyzed his suffering, David came to realize that his sin was the cause of his physical sickness — that soul sickness was at the root of his physical illness.

Unconfessed sin is often the root cause of physical ailments. Men often need morals rather than medicine; clarity more than therapy; confession more than medical attention; restoration to God rather than introspection into self. The problem is not micro-organisms you can’t see . . . as much as sins you can see.

Instead of taking an injection of medicine consider confession. Instead of taking Big Pharma medication, consider forsaking your dereliction.

David’s strategy for dealing with pain did not include medicine, pain killers, or therapy, but confession of his sin (Psalm 32; 51; 1 John 1:5-10). In the New Testament, the word “affliction” or “sickness” can refer to a physical disease or to an infirmity of the soul. In James 5:14-16, the infirmity of the sick was caused by sin. Thus, he needed to call the elders of the church to help him to overcome the negative-power of his sins.

Instead of emphasizing individual integrity, modernists emphasize group responsibility; that is to say, that individual men are not to blame for their debaucheries; that, men are a product of their environment and not their own sin.

The Menninger Psychiatric Clinic tends to blame society for a man’s aberrant behavior rather than the individual. According to Karl Menniger most people have a mental disorder; that is, mental illness is normal. What? Is Menniger saying that healthy law-abiding people are the abnormal among us . . . and, therefore, the most dangerous”?

Men will take off work and stay home till they are physically well, but only a few will take off work to confess their sins and to restore their soul-health.

The Continual Contention of the Psalmist

19 But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong; and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

David was a king with many covert political foes.

“lively” means “being alive.”

“Mine enemies, being alive, are strong.”

David’s foes are God’s enemies. Men that hated God hated him. They despised him because he loved God, goodness, and righteousness. Love the Lord and obey Him and the world will hate you (John 7:7).

20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.

One of the principles of law is an “eye for an eye.” This non-literal principle teaches us that punishment must fit the crime. When reprobates forsake God’s law, they punish good and reward evil.

The world does not hate its own. It detests those that oppose them. Since the world loves death and sees disorder as progress, it will ridicule men who seek law-order. The more holy you become and the more you submit to God’s kingdom, the more the citizens of this world will despise you (John 7:7).

The Communion Sought by the Psalmist

21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.

“Forsake me not” — Feeling abandoned and isolated from God and man, David prays – Do not leave me in my sickness, stress, and sorrows. Don’t let my enemies get the victory and gloat over me. Don’t let doubt and fear conquer me.

22 Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

“Come now to my rescue” is the heart cry of David.

Note that sickness, sadness, and sorrows drove this man to God. Affliction is good if it leads us to the Lord. Anything that gets us on our knees before Him is good.

Confession is More Important than Capsules

Note that Americans are trained in medicine and not morals in taking drugs, not self-discipline. Pharmaceutical companies have taken over the world training all of humanity to take drugs and Big Pharma products. “Obey your doctor,” they say. What other industry has this mandate? You don’t hear maxims like “obey your broker,” or “obey your engineer,” or “obey your insurance agent,” or “obey your pastor.” This psalm teaches us that sin is at the root of many ailments; that morals are more important than medicine; that confession is more important than capsules; that devotion to God’s law-order is more important than drugs.

Think of how many sicknesses are sin diseases: drunkenness, syphilis and STDs, overeating, obesity, stress, fornication, adultery, unwanted pregnancies, Sodomy, depression, vaccine injuries, diabetes, drug overdoses, anxiety, etc.

Instead of calling men to live responsibly, “doctors” order men to take drugs, vaccines, capsules, injections, and pain killers.

But, God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control!

Just think of how many diseases would disappear if men would just exercise restraint of their passions and appetites. Morals are more important than medicines; theology more important than therapy; confession more important than capsules; and self-discipline is more important than drugs. Practice these things and many diseases will disappear.

Consider the value of “self-discipline”: exercise, sleep and rest, eating fruits and vegetables, maintaining a healthy weight, not allowing one to get angry or bitter, and saying “no” to more and more sweets.

Note: Robert E. Lee said to his son, “Do your duty in all things. You can’t do more, and you should expect no less.”

Accept responsibility for your health and do not *blindly* trust your health to medical doctors.

It used to be that medical doctors took an oath “to do no harm” — a principle based on the 6th Commandment: “Do not kill.” But, today the medical field is not only about medicine, it is about money where health is being sacrificed for the “almighty dollar.” Americans are now being subject to medical tyranny in and through the “vaccine” mandates. Remember “operation warp-speed”? Possibly, citizens will be forced to except medical marshal law all in the name of “health.” According to Dr. Peter McCullough, “every single person who got even just one COVID jab is now experiencing some kind of problem or series of problems related to the heart – whether they realize it or not.” (Quoted by Ethan Huff at newstarget.com 12-4-2023).

See Psalm 6.

Disclaimer: Don’t hear what is not being said. We are not saying the world does not need medical doctors. They are absolutely necessary to set broken bones and obtain prescription glasses. We are saying the first step to better health is to pursue a healthy spirit and begin to accept responsibility for your own health decisions.

Psalm 39 - Musing, the Fire Burned

Restore My Smile, O Lord



This is an uncomfortable psalm because it addresses the affliction of a disobedient saint struggling with a terrifying chastisement imposed upon him because of his own sin.

The occasion for this hymn is the “stroke” of God upon the psalmist (39:10) — an undefined affliction which explains the melancholy that seized this saint.

The psalm is attributed to David and there is no reason to doubt his authorship.

The value of the psalm is that it expresses how life is like a fleeting shadow and man’s great need for Divine guidance.

The triumph of the psalm is that David moves from a posture of silence due to the vanity of life to a posture of prayer due to hope in the character of God.

Compelled to be Silent

Psalm 39:1 To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

The revelation David received during his ordeal was important enough to forge a 13 stanza limerick and send it to the chief musician to score an appropriate melody. Great lessons in life are best shared in song.

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 are before me.

We don’t know the specifics of the psalmist’s troubles, but we do know that his affliction shook him to the core.

So disconsolate was David over God’s discipline, he determined to inspect his walk and to bridle his tongue to prevent sinning with his lips. Voicing one’s feelings under unwelcome distress is routine for most, but this divinely appointed difficulty caused David to adopt a posture of silence — the companion of carefulness and stillness.

“while the wicked is before me:” His affliction prompted the man of God to restrain himself from uttering skittish thoughts racing through his mind — ideas that were either embarrassing to him or inappropriate murmurings about Providence that did not need to be shared with worldly men around him.

2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

Normally a responsive, interactive man, the psalmist feels compelled to explain his posture of silence.

The Niphal verb “dumb” (alam) means “to bind.” This afflicted saint didn’t speak and couldn’t speak; that is, he intentionally “bit his lip.” Like a runaway horse has to be held in with bit and bridle, this psalmist tethered his tongue “even from good.”

The phrase “even from good” could mean “I held my tongue without profit” (Ellicott) or that he spoke “not a word, either good or bad” (Benson); that is, he did not vent his feelings even to those that might vindicate the ways of God to men.

“my sorrow was stirred:” His effort to suppress his thoughts only resulted in more anguish and sorrow. Better to be silent than to speak like a fool; and better to refrain from injuring the honor of God than to speak our mind and injure the lambs of God. Better to be silent and leave people questioning your demeanor than to mar your own luster before men by expressing your jaded doubts and fears.

But, if you must speak, share faith, not fear; hope, not despair.

The Brevity of Life

Compelled to Pray

3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue, 4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

In the heat of conflict his feelings burned hot. Silence proved too much for him. In the furnace his passions were forged into thoughts. The gag on his mouth was removed. His first words were a prayer— a prayer born out of the realization that life is so temporary . . . so transient . . . so feeble . . . a prayer that he might be improved after experiencing his own frailty and mortality.

In his suffering he realized that life is a vapor . . . a shadow . . . a predawn fog . . . a short performance on stage that ends with the blink of an eye.

5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

“Behold” expresses his new found revelation. Instead of measuring the duration of his life in feet, yards, and miles, he measure his days in inches — a handbreadth of four fingers. Children count age in years, but to the God-conscious man, one’s life span is measured in milliseconds.

The word “vanity” means “vapor.” Prince or peasant, rich or poor, strong or weak, all the sons of Adam at their very best state are deemed a mist that appears and disappears like an Atlantic morning fog — as a cold puff on a winter day.

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

The word “vain” (hebel) is used three times in this psalm — “growling in vain” or “merely a breath.” It refers to one who pursues vanity instead of virtue . . . falsehood instead of truth . . . follies instead of faithfulness . . . the spotlight instead of character . . . fame instead of friendship with God.

The great surprise of this psalmist’s awakening was the cold brevity of life — like smoke blown in the wind.

“a vain shew” is best translated as “a shadow walks a man” (Ellicott).

“Shadows we are and shadows we pursue” (Burke).

Man’s life is not viewed as an “act” or “show” but a phantom, a mirage, a dream, and a mist that burns up when the sun comes up. Oh, the silliness of chasing shadows on a wall. All man’s pomposity and expended energy to shape the impressions of himself in the minds of others is like wearing cheap perfume . . . like introducing people to a dwarf . . . like trying to control the morning dew . . . like meeting a beggar wearing a business suit.

Regarding the fleeting nature of life, Shakespeare put it this way:

“Out, out, brief candle, Life’s but a walking shadow; a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage, And then is heard no more.”

The word “disquieted” means “to growl” or “to roar;” that is, the term refers to burdens men cannot carry; to galling events that are impossible to endure . . . to the unwanted poking by a prison guard. Oh, the tangled knots of good and evil, of purpose and emptiness, of necessity and pleasure, of excellence and mediocrity, of wisdom and foolishness, of fact and fiction that God gives men to unravel during their brief lap around the gridiron of life. Oh, the adversaries God appoints His sons to fight . . . the monstrous temptations with which they have to grapple . . . the mountains each has to climb . . . the chocolate sins they best decline . . . the fetters that must be endured . . . the wagon load of troubles men have to carry on their journey to the celestial city.

Oh, the pain of knowing that trees, mountains, gold, silver, and rocks will outlast us. Oh, the wonder of who will inherit the riches of our toil . . . the “who” that will enjoy the shade from the trees we planted.

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.

While the psalmist did not have the hope of immortality revealed in the gospel, the psalmist understood the brevity of life and that true happiness could not be squeezed out of passing shadows. Though melancholy about his near-death experience, he does not leave readers in the valley of despair.

Life passing; health vanishing; riches fleeing; not finding happiness in transient vapors, this author invested his hope in the Lord who created it all. Dejection knocked on his door begging entrance, but the only guest welcome in this house was the Hope of God

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

Going deeper into prayer, the psalmist reveals the source of his troubles – transgressions against the law of God and the discipline assigned to him by the hand of the LORD.

One requisite was needed to relieve him of his stress – deliverance! The word “deliverance” (natsal) means “to snatch away,” to “deliver, rescue, or save.” This pilgrim feels that if God will rescue him from the power and penalty of his transgressions, all his troubles would be removed.

“make me not the reproach of the foolish” — Because David acted foolishly, he is compelled to appeal to God’s mercy that the shame and reproach of his sins might be removed far from him. Pardon my sins! Break the iron chains binding me to unhappiness. Renew my hope! Guide me! Hear my prayers! Let me again bear fruit for the glory of God! Supply power that I might be a blessing to God and to men.

9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

The psalter expounds upon his silence. He opened not his mouth to complain of his suffering because Providence ordered it. He could not blame men for his troubles because God afflicted him; he could not complain to God because his own sin was the source of his pain.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine 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.

In the mind of this writer, God was the Source of the problem and the Solution to his peril.

Though not clearly defined, the psalmist takes us to the genesis of his troubles. The rebuke of God for his inequity broke the man and shattered his bones. Pain tutored him.

He would not open his mouth to complain, but he would open his mouth to pray. Something unlocked the psalmist’s sealed lips and out came a prayer — a groan from the grave by one forced to face the melancholy fact of his fleeting existence.

The word “stroke” (nega) refers to a blow by the hand which could be a plague or disease or wound suffered for his foolishness. Apparently, the LORD gave this saint a heavy belting because of his sins — a discipline of affliction not undeserved, but hard to endure. The psalmist compares his affliction to a vulnerable moth shedding body parts being easily crushed by human touch.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

The afflicted’s hope is not in man, but in the LORD.

LORD, You hears many prayers, but hear MY prayer! Though I am an afflicted child suffering under the heavy hand of my Heavenly Father, be pleased to hear MY prayer!

That God would hear the prayers of this transgressor seems to be in doubt. Therefore, he humbly pleads for the LORD to be gracious and to hear his vexed pleas.

The pain of rebuke and discipline awakened the psalmist to the fact that he was an alien in the house of God . . . a transient . . . a squatter on God's plantation . . . a stranger to the ways of Heaven . . . a foreigner with no claim on the benefits of grace.

While very true, who can endure the sorrow of this truth? Praise God for the gospel. Jesus provides a pillow of truth upon which we can rest our troubled souls: "the Father Himself loves you" (John 16:27).

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength (smile), before I go hence, and be no more.

The pain of affliction and the sting in his heart marshals another prayer: "Spare me." The Hiphil imperative "spare" (sha-ah) means "to gaze at" or "to look at;" and the word "strength" refers to a "smile." Feeling like God had turned His face away from Him, He pleads with his Judge to remove His heavy hand so he could smile again and enjoy the remainder of his fleeting life.

"May the end of our affliction be a smile, O Lord!"

Psalm 40 – Mine Ears Hast Thou Digged



The inscription indicates David to be the writer of the psalm. It is addressed to the chief Musician” to whom David entrusted to create a composition fit for public worship.

We don’t know the occasion for this psalm, but it was written after some trial. Great trials, lead us to great lessons in life; and great thoughts drive the sensitive to compose great songs such as the one we have here. David was in the “pits.” Like the woman who spent all her money on physicians and then found the Great Physician, David found Christ at the bottom of his purse.

This is a messianic psalm. The suffering that happened to David in part was totally fulfilled in Christ — a suffering that led to our Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair.

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39).

In reading this psalm, look for the wonders of the Son.

David Speaks

Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair!

“He brought me up also out of an horrible pit”

Waiting Patiently

Calamity Described

Psalm 40:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

“I waited patiently” (qavan) is perhaps the most difficult discipline to master. It is a Piel verb meaning “to endure” or “to be still with expectation” during one of life’s afflictions. And, to endure in godly silence with virtue is the great triumph.

2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

Is there anything worse than being stuck in a dark, wet, muddy abandoned well alone without a rope? The word “horrible” hardly does justice to such dire circumstances.

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 the LORD.

Being delivered from certain death in an abandoned mine shaft and sitting on a rock in broad daylight would create new songs for sure. But, this new song is not just about deliverance, but about the One who delivered Him. David wants all men to know that he prayed; that the God of the Covenant heard him, and the LORD liberated him from his dark, wet prison.

Confidence in the LORD

4 Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

In David's mind, there are only two courses in life: to trust the proud, or to trust the LORD; to listen to God's Word in the quiet hours of the night or to listen to arrogant personalities spitting out lies and deceit about fake science, fake medicine, fake religion, and seductive politics.

In an age of lies finding the truth is rigorous, and speaking the truth is dangerous.

5 Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

What a positive, healthy attitude David has about the LORD! His trials did not make him bitter; they made him better. Without weary troubles he would have never learned the wonders of God's tenderness.

Words like "many" "wonderful" "cannot be reckoned" and "more than can be numbered" describe a God Who thinks about us all the time. Who can conceive of such a caring Father . . . and, who among us really believes it? David did!

The noun "thoughts" (machashebeth) refers to thoughts, intentions, plans, or good purposes.

"many" (rab) means "great," "abounding," "more numerous than," and "exceedingly great."

"wonderful" (pala) refers to something extraordinary, surpassing in number or excellence or beyond one's power to calculate.

The infinitive "reckoned" (arak) means to arrange in a row, to calculate, number, or recount. It is negated by the adverb "not" (en) meaning all of humanity cannot count or number God's tender affections toward us.

"more than can be numbered" (caphar) is a Piel verb implying the impossibility of counting God's good plans for His own; that is, it would be easier to count the grains of sand on the beaches of the world than to count God's thoughts toward us. Shallow words like "unfathomable," "incalculable," and "infinite" come to mind.

This text can be claimed by every man lowered into a dark, wet, miry grave. God will not abandon us. He will resurrect us and set our feet on a rock. Thus, we get the title of this commentary: "Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair!"

Moreover, this text applies to His Beloved Son.

The Messiah Speaks

Diving into the Deep, Deep Well of Christ's Devotion to the Father

A Look at the One Who Delivers Us from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair!

Captivated by God's Will

The Spirit of God moves David to describe the heart of Christ. The Person captivated with the will of God is the Messiah, David's Greater Son.

6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

"Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire" expresses pure truth — that God desires devotion, not donations; subordination to His will, not contributions to His work; dedication, and not displays of emotion.

"mine ears" is the voice of Messiah. The ear is the instrument of hearing . . . of learning . . . of respect and submission. The word "ear" is used 25 times in Psalms; the word "ears" 9 times; and the word "hear" 57 times.

The word "ears" is plural and the word "opened" means "digged" like a well.

"mine ears has thou opened" refers to the fact that God gave His Son the capacity to hear the Father's will . . . that His ears were opened wide like a well dug into the earth to find the water of His Word, to hear it, and to do it. Most people's ears are clammed shut to His Word, but both ears of Christ were wide open to Hear the Father. (Pray for big ears!)

Moreover, "mine ears has thou opened" (pierced or bored) may refer to the tradition requiring voluntary slaves who loved their master to be singled out from the crowd and to have their ear pierced with an awl as a public sign they were devoted servants . . . as a public symbol that their master was a man of integrity and worthy of total dedication (Exodus 21). In the case of Christ, we should view Him as a man with both ears open, with both ears pierced, with both ears dedicated to hear and to do the Father's will.

In the Book of Hebrews the quote was changed to "You did not desire sacrifice and offering, but you prepared a body for me" (Hebrews 10:7). The term "body" expands the "open ear" analogy to include the fact that every organ . . . every cell in our Lord's body was devoted to and sacrificed to the will of God.

Most men are all tongue and no ears; all talk and no walk; and, a windbag with all motor and no sail. Many try to power their boat through the waters of life with their tongue tied in the middle and flapin' at both ends. Unlike many sinners plagued with "cerumen impaction" our Lord did not suffer from earwax blockage.

Our Lord's ears were not only opened to hear the Father, a metaphor of pierced ears inform us that our precious Savior was the true "Servant (doulos) of the LORD" with double-devotion to our Heavenly Father.

All burnt offerings and sacrifices in the Levitical system were merely a type of Christ's actual obedience to the will of God. Think of it! One man on earth totally, utterly, completely, fully dedicated to the will of God even unto death. What an interest to Heaven! Jesus was truly the joy of the LORD . . . the fulfillment of the voluntary offerings . . . the Bread of Heaven, "My Bread" according to the Father – (Nehemiah 8:10: Numbers 28-29).

Most men listen to the news and are in tune with world events, but our Savior's ears were in tune with Heaven. He was Heaven's crowned Prince assigned the cardinal task of redeeming the world through Calvary. Our Savior did not contribute to the plan of God, He completed every detail of the will of the Father even till His last breath on the cross; He not only found the will of God, He fulfilled it; He did not subsidize it. He totally satisfied His law. He not only did the will of God, he doubled down on obedience with both ears open and both hands on the plow. No wonder the Father announced, "This is my beloved Son. Hear ye Him!"

Though there was a complete sacrificial system in the Old Testament dispensation, every sacrifice typified the supreme devotion of our Lord to the Father's will. While it is our privilege to lend our talents, voices, and wealth to the gospel, let us remember Christ gave His precious all. What a Savior! What a Son!

An American pastor was visiting a Scottish sheep rancher with a friend when the shepherd whistled to his dog. His companion stated, "Your dog is all ears." Immediately, the pastor understood the meaning of obedience — obedient Christians are all ears.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,

Again, we hear the voice of the Savior. See Hebrews 10:7. Every law and every command in the Holy Scripture is an expression of His will; that is, every law and every command represents the heart and character of our Lord Jesus; that is, He is the fulfillment of Old Testament dreams, expectations, and hope.

8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

Many seek the will of God. Some do it partially; but, our Lord took pleasure in pleasing the Father and fulfilling every aspect of "thy will." Only one man can say this — the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

What is His will? His will is expressed in His law. Christ obeyed the law, not to go to heaven; but, because the law is from Heaven. His law is the objective expression of the will of Heaven; Christ is the subjective expression of His will on earth. One man on earth totally, completely dedicated to the will of God. What an Interest to Heaven!

9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

This text can only apply to the Lord Jesus Christ who was a preacher of righteousness . . . who came to fulfill the law and not to abolish it . . . Who had both ears "digged" to hear His Father than to faithfully teach the masses who "were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority" (Mark 1:22).

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 congregation.

The adverb “not” negates the verb “hid.”

It is a crime to be silent when one has a duty to speak, and to speak when one has a duty to be silent. He did not speak too much or too little. He spoke just enough. It is difficult to speak truth to those who believe lies, and to speak truth to those who have power to crush you. But, Jesus did it. He did not kowtow to the Pharisees to be safe or humble the weak with his knowledge and power. He never said a swear word or complained to men about men.

“I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation” – Christ taught us that the Father counts the hairs of our head, attends the funeral of every sparrow, and loves us personally. Our Lord taught us to see God as our “heavenly Father” “Who so loved the world that He gave us his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish.”

“I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.”

Our precious Lord showed the whole world the Father’s love . . . a love that led His One and only Son to the terrors of Calvary.

1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

2 Thessalonians 3:3 But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

1 Peter 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Lamentations 3:22–23 The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness

David Speaks

Claiming Deliverance from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair

11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

The Spirit shifts from His Messianic theme back to prayers relevant to David. Having been lifted up into the heavenlies to behold Christ, he seems to come back to earth where he renews his concerns about his need for deliverance.

The verb “withhold” (kala) means “to end” or “to finish.” It is negated by the adverb “no”; that is; do not shut off your mercy to me!

The word “mercy” (racham) refers to feelings of compassion; and, the word “lovingkindness” (he’sed) means “love” or “mercy.” Possibly, David feels like he’s exhausted God’s mercy with his sins and wearied Him with his failures. Knowing he has no strength on his own, David prays that God’s mercies might preserve and sustain him . . . that the LORD would be faithful and true to His mercy.

12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

Now we see why David pleaded with the Lord to be merciful. This text explains his prayer of desperation in verse 11.

“evil” (ra’ot) is plural. David faced multifarious evils on numerous fronts — inside and out; up and down and all around. Possibly, He’s thinking about his adultery with Bathsheba and His order to have Uriah murdered on the battlefield as a cover up for pregnant Bathsheba.

“Innumerable” (micpar) means “too many to count.”

The analogy of “more than the hairs of his head” express the magnitude of his sins. According the “Scientific American” the average person has between 90,000 to 150,000 hairs on their head . . . and, this is not counting one’s eyebrows or beard.

“compassed me” (aphaph) means to surround or encircle. David was so ashamed of his iniquities (depravity) he couldn’t even look up. With chin down, he groaned over his wrongs. He had more sins than the hairs of his head, and the stress effected his heart — the kind of stress that causes a heart attack, high blood pressure, and strokes.

What an encouragement for sensitive souls who bite their lip because of guilt. . . for pastors with a hypersensitivity to peccadilloes — for distressed souls ferrying around a bucket of guilt — kind of like carrying a dead chicken around the neck.

“The best saints see themselves undone, unless continually preserved by the grace of God” – Matthew Henry.

David was not better or worse than other men. He faced the same challenges all men face. Likewise, our sin-problems and shadows of guilt are not unique to us. Psychologists are wrong when they teach every person’s bugbears are unique to them . . . to their circumstances . . . to their upbringing. Men have more in common than they have differences. And, this is why Scripture speaks to all men everywhere. It is the only work that addresses man’s struggle with sin.

If this sin-burdened king with more moral failures than feathers on a chicken could plead the mercy of God, SO CAN WE! His need and claim on mercy ought to give all men hope.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

Matthew Poole seems to have the sense of this text correct: “deliver me from my sins, and the punishments due to them.”

New Testament Christians need to claim the word “all” in 1 John 1:7 and then rest by faith; “and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

Confound My Enemies

14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

David feared that he might be put to shame by his sins, but his prayer is, let my enemies, who have not repented, be ashamed (disappointed) and “confounded” (surprised and distressed) — jussive in meaning; that is, this is not a wish. David testifies of their destiny: “They will be ashamed and confounded.”

“driven backward” means “turned back” due to frustration and driven to the rear of the column.

“be put to shame” (kalam) means to be “insulted” and “humiliated” like a braggadocious boxer knocked out in the first round.

15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

“desolate” (shamem) = “to be stupified, stunned, and shocked.”

“shame” (bosheth) refers to some kind of public, painful humiliation.

“aha, aha” is the voice of frivolous exaltation by enemies who express triumph and satisfaction for suddenly finding a pedantic fault with what another says or does.

The Devotion of Those Delivered from the Deep, Dark, Dank Well of Despair

Console the Righteous

16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.

David could not serve God alone. Turning from prayers of punishment for his enemies, he prays for the prosperity of the pious in pursuit of God.

“Let” is a jussive . . . a mild command and not a wish. While God’s enemies wanted the worst for His people, David wanted the best for them . . . “joy” and “gladness” in the Lord. “Let them find Thee and the joy they seek.”

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 pronoun "I" is either a personal pronoun referring to David or the literary "I" referring to the people of God as "poor" . . . and "needy" of grace and mercy . . . of ones with their only resource in God . . . of those delivered, from the dark, deep, dank well of despair. David calls Him "my help" and "my deliverer"; Haggai calls Him "the joy of all nations" (2:7) Luke records Him as "the glory and consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25); Christians call Him "My Lord and Savior."

Hurry to help is the cry of the pious. Hurry to make us holy . . . to open our ears to the will of God . . . to save us from our sins.

Psalm 41 - Heal My Soul

I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.



This psalm is ascribed to David. It has the feel that it was written after the Absalom Revolt and after the treason of Ahithophel.

David felt the ingratitude of his friends and suffering aggravated by their neglect and disloyalty – circumstances that pained his heart and that affected his health. See Psalm 38.

David walked with God. He loved people . . . but, people did not necessarily return the affection. One of the deep afflictions of David was that no man cared for his soul (Psalm 142:4).

All his “friends” wanted something from him. His enemies wanted to do something to him. To make matters worse, David realized that his own sin was the cause of his illness and the unrest in the nation. Thus, this psalm describes David afflictions and the need for healing in his soul.

Blessings for the Merciful

Psalm 41:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

Though a king, David did not feel like he was better than others. He needed love like all men, but received little. Coming out of this political storm a victor, David gained insight that God blesses those who take an interest in the souls of others.

“poor” refers to normal, simple, lonely, harmless people.

Thus, this is the main lesson of the psalm. Be a blessing; be a giver instead of a taker; escape the cyclone of self-interest and invest in others. Instead of talking about self and what you know, be a friend. Quiet down. Stop talking. Ask questions. Listen. Learn. Determine the best way to help.

First blessing: Men who love are rare, and the LORD promises to deliver them in the time of their trouble.

2 The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

Second blessing: preservation.

One of the blessings about being a lover of men is that God promises to provide and protect him . . . to bless him and his family . . . to deliver him from the will of his enemies.

3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.

Third blessing: strength in time of adversity.

The idea here is that God will enable him to endure his sickness; that he will impart power, physical and spiritual strength, when his body fails.

4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

Consequently, David calls on God to be merciful to him because those around him were lacking in mercy. None were concerned about his soul . . . his spiritual health . . . or what effect his trials were having upon him as an individual person. They loved his power and position, but not him.

David was sick of heart and sick in body. He realized that he was infirm because of his own sins; and, therefore, prays for forgiveness . . . for healing of his sin-battered soul.

Q: How do you know when you are healed? A: When you start giving and taking care of the needs of others . . . when you return to your duties . . . when you accept responsibility and go back to your ministry of loving others.

Betrayal by Friends and Enemies

5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?

"speak evil" refers to muckraking, mudslinging, and defamation. David's enemies concluded that his influence in this world should come to an end; that it was time for David to die.

In a world dominated by the lust, it is not possible to do good and not have enemies that want you dead. David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, and John were shadowed by countrymen with murder in their hearts.

6 And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.

The "he" is an enemy that came to visit David under a pretext of kindness to see for himself David's true condition.

"he speaketh vanity" suggests this false friend did not ask questions to discern the true condition of David's soul; that he just entertained frivolous chit chat; that he offered no words of encouragement nor exhibited any expressions of sincerity. Thus, the conversation was vain and superficial.

"gathered iniquity to itself" refers to the hidden purpose behind the visit which was to gather information to vilify and indict David for wrongdoing. Hiding behind the veil of kindness and wearing a cloak of hypocrisy, this enemy searched for a basis for indicting David in order to have him removed as king.

7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.

"whisper" — David's political enemies spoke to each other out of ear shot of the king in small clandestine groups, to not only conceal their treason, but to spin facts and to build their case

against David. Traitors are cowards. They need the support of others to justify their insurrection. There is security in numbers. They met, not to help or to protect their pastor-king, but to pulverize his administration and to create a narrative that would make David look like evil on stilts in the eyes of the people.

Beware: Slander is the favorite weapon of dissidents. Innocent people are unable to resist or refute one-sided, scandalous reports about a pastor, employer, or figure head. God's man must learn to deal with insurgence swiftly and decisively. Those that tolerate slander fall into the Devil's snare.

8 An evil disease, say they, cleaved fast unto him: and now that he lite he shall rise up no more.

"An evil disease" can be translated "a thing of Belial." That is, David's enemies accused him of consorting with the Devil, of conspiracies, and of incompetence in order to discredit him in the eyes of the public. Coming as a group gave the rebels superficial authority to blame David of misdeeds and to create a successful coup. Even David's melancholy and physical infirmities were used to discredit him.

9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

"Yea, mine own familiar friend" can be translated "the man of my peace" — a confidant David thought he could rely on — possibly Ahithophel.

"which did eat of my bread" refers to friends that relax and eat meals together. David had no right to expect that an enemy would not be found among his friends. Traitors lurk in every corner of power. Nevertheless, the treachery shocked David to the core.

Warning to Pastors: David had an Ahithophel; Jesus His Judas; and Caesar his Brutus. You have no right not to expect that you will not be betrayed by a deacon or staff member. It would be an error to think that church members are as pure as the driven snow; that men are free from jealousy, hate, and ambition. Be a student of human behavior. and beware of wealthy, subtle, discontented men in positions of power. One pastor said it this way, "Watch out for the man that drives you from the airport to the convention center." Beware of duplicitous men that work for the government and hold positions in the church. They have nothing to lose in discrediting you.

Note how David did not lift up his hand against Saul when he was vulnerable in the cave of En Gedi (1 Samuel 26-27). Because David trained his men how to treat a weak leader, his soldiers new how to protect him when he was weak and vulnerable. Consequently, David survived the military coup and the civil war instigated by Absalom.

Believing God for Mercy

10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.

Again, we see David taking refuge in the mercy of the Lord. David was truly a victim of betrayal . . . but David was also a predator who murdered Uriah and stalked Bathsheba for an

adulterous affair . . . and it was David who needed healing from sin working in his own soul . . . healing from the spirit of bitterness . . . anger . . . and the spirit of revenge.

“raise me up” – a Piel verb expressing intensity. Preserve me! Heal me! Raise me up that I may once again be Your instrument of justice . . . and mercy . . . and healing for others.

“requite them” means to give the rebels what they deserve. As the chief law enforcement officer in the nation, David had a duty to restore law and order and bring the revolutionaries to justice. The penalty for treason is death and this is what happened to Absalom and Ahithophel through the providence of God.

But, most of us are not law-enforcement officers nor has God called us take revenge on those who betray us (Romans 12:19). Most people are not “victims.” It is a grave mistake to see ourselves as “victims.” Many of us are predators who will use our pain as an excuse to hurt others. We need healing so sin does not turn us into vindictive people . . . so we can be wounded healers like our Lord Jesus Christ who was wounded for our transgressions and by whose stripes we are healed.

11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

As circumstances would have it, David’s army squashed the rebellion and won the civil war. And, this may be the reason for David’s confidence that God favored him. With the kingdom restored, David could rest physically and spiritually.

Sometimes we do not know if God is on our side! If this be the case, let us make sure we are on God’s side. Let us oppose fear and give ourselves to power, love, and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7).

12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

So marvelous was David’s restoration, he beamed with confidence. Not only did God deliver him from the treachery, God restored his throne (2 Samuel 15-18). He came out of this political storm assured that God’s love and mercy would sustain him all the days of his life. Many good ministers are not this fortunate.

Blessed be the LORD

13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.

Since God was the reason for his restoration, David wished that the LORD God would be praised, honored, and adored by his people forever — from eternity to past to eternity future, may men speak well of the Lord . . . and this will happen when we are healed and give ourselves to love.

How is your soul?

Book 2 (Psalm 42-72):

Psalms 72:19 reads, "And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen."



Psalm 42 - Dealing with Despair

Reflections for those Suffering from Depression



Depression! Locked in a dungeon! No key. No visitors. Alone with the aching pain of lost hopes?

We do not like being depressed nor do we like being around people who are melancholy. Their spiritual condition challenges are shallow understandings of God and our faith.

The truth is if you have never been discouraged, you are unqualified to minister to God's people. The best ministers are ones who have been in the dungeons of despair but have found a way out through Jesus Christ. If you have never been depressed, you have never been fully invested in a work or a relationship. If you are not depressed today, you will be in the future. It is estimated that some 23 million Americans suffer from depression each year. The question is not 'if you will experience depression, but when will your soul will come face-to-face with the black raven that build nests in your tree?

You can overcome depression, by studying three insights about despair from Psalm 42: The Plight of Depression; the Pressures of Depression; and the Promise for those in Depression.

The Plight of Depression

We do not know for sure who wrote this psalm. It has the smell of the outdoors on it—the smell of David after he lost his son Absalom. Others think King Hezekiah wrote it before the Assyrian invasion or after he received the news that he was going to die. We may not know the exact circumstances behind this psalm, but we know it is perfectly written. It offers truth about sadness and hope for those captured in the bear trap of depression.

David was not an idealist nor was he a Pollyanna. He wasn't a shallow friend that tossed out a meaningless phrases like, "Things are bound to get better." David does not deny the pain of his experience. His pain was real, but in the midst of his blackness he offers a ray of hope for the eye of faith.

Like a Philadelphia lawyer, David cross-examines himself, "Why are you in despair, O my soul? The psalmist is having a conversation with "I" and "me." Deeply in touch with his feelings, he is bewildered by the low tide of misfortune that has carried him out to the sea of despair. He searches for rescue, but no ship appears on the horizon.

Depression has been called the "common cold" of spiritual afflictions. The psalmist uses the expression "my soul" six times in this psalm. "Six" is the number of man. Depression is so human, so a part of our earthly experience. If you are depressed today, take heart, you are not alone. You are in the company of the saints.

Psalm 42:1 <To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.>

The term “Maschil” is prefixed to eleven psalms. It means “enlightened” or “wise sayings.” In this case, the psalmist prepared this song to be sung by people worshipping at the temple.

"A poem of the sons of Korah." The psalms to which this title is prefixed are the Psalm 42:1-11; 44; 45; Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 47:1-9; Psalm 48:1-14; 49; Psalm 84:1-12; Psalm 85:1-13; Psalm 87:1-7; 88.

Korah was the father of three sons, Assir, Elkanah, and Abiasaph (Exodus 6:24); and of their descendants David selected a number to preside over the music of the sanctuary, 1 Chronicles 6:22-23, 1 Chronicles 6:31; and they continued in this service until the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:19. (See Barnes)

This psalm was meant to be sung by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem and arriving at the temple during festival seasons.

First Stanza

A Confession of A Desire to Commune with God

As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

“hart” refers to a male or female deer that has been on the run. The psalmist compares himself (and the people of God) to a thirsty stag in the time of drought. Thirsting for God in times of stress is a good thing . . . for a man will become the sum total of his desires; that is, this psalmist is healthier than he thinks he is. Worshipers who hunger for God are normal.

No one can satisfy a thirsty soul with things, money, or stuff. As Augustine said our souls can only be satisfied “by Thee.”

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

This Levite did not thirst for personal success, but for communion with the one, personal, infinite, virtuous, triune Spirit, the God of Scripture, the God of Israel – a thirst all the people of God possess.

“When shall I come and appear before God?” -- That is, when will I again be able to appear before Thee in the temple? This was a question all pilgrims asked as they traveled to and from Jerusalem.

Apparently, this Levite’s home was far from Jerusalem. This heart burned with the question, ‘When shall I again have the privilege of uniting with your people in public prayer and praise?’ – A desire that all pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem carried in their hearts.

This saint missed “church,” communion, and fellowship with the saints.

A Confession of His Depression

3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

This saint was eating “tears” instead of bread. Possibly, this Levite was in a state of fasting over his troubles. He looked to God for provision and protection, but His remedy was nowhere to be found. Apparently, this Levite had been rebuffed and rebuked by “miserable comforters” who questioned his hope and faith. The dogmatism of their pragmatism pierced his soul.

Surrounded by bigots and supremacists, all true saints feel the same way.

4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

“I pour out my soul in me” – The idea here is that he emptied his concerns in prayer to the Lord; that his soul lost all firmness, power, confidence in God, that it had turned to water; that his soul had melted under his troubles so that it no longer had faith and conviction that God was with him . . . for him . . . or even loved him. The fires of grief conquered joy; doubt defeated confidence; and, his fire of faith in his soul had turned to ashes. And, what saint surrounded by madmen and psychopaths has not felt the same way?

The Chorus

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

This text performs as the chorus in this psalm. It is stated twice. See verse 11.

Sinking under the weight of sorrow, the psalmist becomes his own soul-practitioner – “Why are thou cast down, O my soul?” He issues his own prescription to His own soul: “hope thou in God.” And, this is the prescription for all depressed souls among the people of God – an exhortation to the saints.

“and why art thou disquieted in me?” – The word “disquieted” literally means “to growl as a bear” or “to roar like waves of the sea.”

Realizing his case was not as bad as he felt, and that he had nursed his grief inappropriately and excessively, he commits himself to a course of praise . . . of thanksgiving . . . of thinking truth.

God had **not** left Him. The Lord had **not** removed “the help of his countenance.” His feeling lied to him. Thus, this liturgical message was to be sung by all attending temple worship services -- a reminder that God is the remedy for all melancholy – a remedy no psychologist seems to recommend or understand. “Therapists” look inward, not upward.

Recalling the Sure Promises of God, this Levite refused to give into his deceptive feelings or to look within for solutions to his depression:

“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”
(Deuteronomy 31:6)

“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5).

“And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do *it*: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, *even* my God, *will be* with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.” (1 Chronicles 28:20).

Second Stanza

The Confession of His Despondency and Depression to God

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

The psalmist takes his mixed-up feelings to God. Yes, his soul was cast down. But, this Levite reversed his thinking and began to reflect on God’s faithfulness to the nation and to himself.

“therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar” refers the land grant promises God gave to Israel.

“Hermonites” and “the hill Mizar” refer to the northern boundaries of Israel known as Mt. Hermon. Constantly laden with snow, this region formed the source of the River Jordan – the important water source for much of Israel. Possibly, the psalmist travel to Mt. Hermon and took a sabbatical on the small mountain “mizar.”

More likely, he writes this so all Israelites from Dan to Beersheba could identify with this song.

Reasons for His Depression

7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

Possibly, the Levite was near the headwaters of Jordan where a rippling waterfall along the upper river reminded him of his sorrows.

“Thy waves” – the psalmist realizes that his failure was not the source of problematic circumstances – that his troubles were not the result of bad choices -- that the Sovereign Lord permitted his troubles and appointed his “miserable comforters” to cajole him for his faith.

Perhaps he remembered verses on the sovereignty of God:

“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today ” (Genesis 50:20).

“In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind . . . With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.” – Job 12:10, 13-14

“See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand” (Deuteronomy 32:39).

“For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast. The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.” (Psalm 33:9-10).

The Remedy for Depression

8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

The psalmist took his eyes off himself, looked up, saw the sunshine. He realized that God commanded the sunlight and the shadows; that His faithfulness did not change between day and night or with the seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter – a lesson all God’s people have to learn.

Possibly the psalmist is using day and night metaphorically to represent prosperity and poverty; that the God Who commanded the day, commanded days of light and darkness; that the sunlight of prosperity would return by the command of God.

9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

In calling God “my rock” the Levite proclaims the Lord as his Provider and Protector; his Defender and Deliverer – a lyric the psalmist wanted all Israelites to be able to say.

His circumstances told him that God had forsaken him . . . but, the psalmist begins to question this voice: “why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?” It’s as if he realizes, “God is greater than my enemy . . . greater than my circumstances . . . that the words of my enemies are lies and the Word of God is true.

10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

Now we understand the crux of the psalmist’s melancholy. There were proud, successful, influential people in his community that mocked his faith, called him a simpleton for trusting God, and advised him to be more self-reliant and not be so childish about religion. The criticism and rejection of his unbelieving brethren pierced his soul like a sword. That “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words may never hurt me” is false! Word hurt and bullies and bossyboots know how to use them to control people.

What Hebrew did not live in a community where there was not at least one grouch who mumbled about everything? Thus, the worship community could identify with this psalm.

The Chorus

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 health of my countenance, and my God.

This is the same chorus in verse five. See comments on verse 5.

The major lesson of this psalm is that feelings are not truth. The Word of God is true. Feelings lie. When depressed we need to stop relying upon our fickle, deceptive melancholy; and, start leaning upon the Promises in Holy Scripture. Messages from the shadows are dark. The Lord is our Sovereign. Matters are in His hands. Trust Him. The Sun will come out.

“I will never, never leave you; no, never, never forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

Notes:

The word “despair” (NASB) is translated “cast down” in the KJV. It means to “be weakened,” “to be humbled,” “to sink,” “to be bowed down,” or “to be in mourning.” It can refer to a sheep that lies down in a hollow and is unable to regain its footing. Unless rescued by another, it will die. Only a saint can experience this kind of despair. Only one who has soared to the heights of heaven in fellowship with God can experience the loneliness associated with the depths of hell.

David said in Psalm 139:7, “If I ascend to heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there.”

On Mt. Carmel Elijah prayed and saw fire come out of heaven to lick up his sacrifice proving the Prophets of Baal to be imposters, but in the valley he became so depressed over Jezebel’s threat to have him executed, he prayed the Lord would take his life (I Kings 19).

John the Baptist boldly proclaimed the kingdom of God to be at hand, and when this greatest of prophets was cast into prison, he sent messengers asking our Lord if he was the one to come or should he look for another.

Paul was beaten with stripes above measure, thrown in prison, stoned once, and in perils by sea and land. In his hunger and thirst and he said he “was cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:9).

Jonah became so angry with God, he begged God to take his life (Jon. 4).

Martin Luther was a tiger among men and his pen smoked hot against his opposition. On one occasion, he became so depressed they found him in his cell lying on the floor without a sign of life.

A friend said of Charles Spurgeon said, “I cannot but think, from what I saw, that his comparatively early death might be in some measure due the furnace of mental suffering he endured on and after that fearful night.”

Spurgeon was the first Baptist in England to confront Darwinians and the German higher critics that infiltrated the Baptist Union. Opposed by his brethren, he was forced to resign. It broke his heart. These depressed souls were men of God. All were made to taste the bitterness of despair only after they first tasted sweetness of fellowship with Christ.

The word “disturbed” means “to murmur,” “to roar,” “to make noise.” Radio noise, cell phone noise, and irritating sirens awake peace from its nap. It is hard to find a quiet place. The cacophony in the Psalmist’s soul kept him from hearing God. He could not delight in heaven’s

symphony on the beach of his life because of the waves of doubt crashing on the shore of his soul. A battle raged. The clanging of swords, the roar of chariot wheels, and the screams of wounded hopes drowned out that still small voice David longed to hear.

The Pressures of Depression

Using six analogies in the psalm, the Psalmist describes the emotional pressures that weighed like an anchor dragging his soul to the bottom of the sea.

First, the psalmist compares the plight of his soul to scarlet thirst:

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God?” (42:1)

The deer here is not a doe drinking leisurely by a stream, but a hunted buck—a deer chased by hunters with bows and arrows aimed at his heart. Possibly, the deer was chased by a pack of dogs and his energy was spent. The chase created an intense, scarlet thirst within the harmless animal.

When I played football, our team would do double practices in August during the 100 degree heat under the New Mexico Sun. Back in those days, the coaches thought you were a sissy if you wanted water during practice. In long sleeve shirts, the players would do exhausting drills. It was not uncommon to see five to ten boys collapse from dehydration. After practice, I remember having to stand behind a dozen players gulping down water in drenched football pads trying desperately to quench their scarlet thirst.

The psalmist had a thirst, but not for water. David was heartsick for God. Heaven’s silence created an insatiable thirst for a word of comfort from his Lord. But, it did not come. The tongue of his soul stuck to the roof of his mouth. Desire burned like a blazing forest. Heat sucked the energy out of his life force. The foul breath of death breathed upon him. Garlic rotted in his soul. His heart cried for assurance that God loved him and cared for him—but, there was no word from Heaven, no whisper from the Holy Spirit, no comforting touch from Christ. A man can go 30 days without food, 3 days without water, and only three minutes without hope. Spiritually dehydrated, death stalked his soul like hunters after the hart.

Second, the psalmist compares his soul to a starving man:

My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” (42:4).

His bones protruded beneath the starving flesh of his soul. His soul fed on the brine of his own salty tears. The only link between himself and God were cries of despair. Can you hear the lonely wail, “Where is your God?” The most wretched part of human existence is that God hides himself. When a man is in trouble, sometimes He is nowhere to be found. David could not see God, hear God, or feel God. His sunken eyes told the story of a famine, not of bread, but a famine of soul—a soul starving for nearness to God.

Third, the psalmist compares his soul to a spent libation:

These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, with the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival (42:5).

Possibly, David went to the tabernacle and observed the High Priest pouring out a libation in one of the services. This is the way David felt: empty, spent, drained, depleted. There was nothing left. He had come to the end of his mental, physical, and emotional resources. Part of his pain was that he could remember his happy times among the people of God. David was now in hell . . . alone . . . exhausted with all his memories in tack. When you are young, you are like an astronaut—it's all about the launch; when you are old, you are like an archaeologist—it's all about looking back and evaluating your miserable failure and lack of accomplishments. David could remember the feasts, but he could not escape the pressure of his personal famine.

Fourth, the psalmist compares his soul to an alien in a foreign country:

O my God, my soul is in despair within me; Therefore I remember Thee from the land of the Jordan, And the peaks of Hermon, from Mount Mizar (42:6).

One time I went on a mission's trip to Mexico. Though I had taken Spanish in college, my language skills were greatly diminished. I remember being at a party unable to communicate effectively. The Mexicans were laughing and telling jokes, and I could not understand the punch line. Suddenly, a dark cloud of gloom clutched my soul. With people all around me, I felt like the last leaf on a winter's limb.

David felt this way. Jordan is the lowest place on earth. In the far north barely outside the borders of Israel, Mt. Hermon was the highest place known to David. Mt. Mizar is presumed to be part of the same mountain range. Poetically, David has created a spatial extreme. His was a true mountain-valley experience. David was not in his own country. Nor did he feel like he was in the kingdom of God. Like the Jews in Babylon, he could not sing the songs of Zion. He was a stranger to the ways of God, an alien with no remedy in heaven's court. With no rights to God's throne, he felt lost and hopeless. But, whether on the mountain top or in the valley, David remembered the Lord.

We happily sing the chorus, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through." But, when the reality of this song rips through our house like a tornado taking everything we love, we feel so poor we can't pay attention. David hints at the remedy. Whether we are in the valley or on top of the mountain, remember the Lord.

Fifth, the psalmist compares his soul to a drowning sailor:

Deep calls to deep at the sound of Thy waterfalls; All Thy breakers and Thy waves have rolled over me (42:7).

Is there anything more terrifying than being lost at sea: washed overboard in the middle of the night by a gigantic wave in a storm, being engulfed in the black sea, stunned by the darkness that sucks certainty out of the soul, the despair of a losing sight of the ship, and terrorized by monster waves to drown alone? David felt cast overboard by God to face the cold, wet

blackness. His soul mourned, but no one heard. He cried for help, but there was no response. "Thy waves rolled over me."

Sixth, the psalmists felt like a wounded soldier on the battlefield overrun by his enemies:

I will say to God my rock, "Why hast Thou forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?" As a shattering of my bones, my adversaries revile me, while they say to me all day long, "Where is your God?" (42:9, 10).

Forgotten, how can this be? Has not God said, "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me." (Isaiah 49:15, 16).

David knew well the terror stricken faces of wounded troops. He pictures himself as a wounded soldier with broken bones lying on a battlefield overrun by his enemies – the terror of every soldier. Helpless, alone, unable to defend himself, it was a matter of time before an enemy soldier finished him off with a thrust of the sword, stripping him of his clothes, and leaving his body to bake under the desert Sun for vultures to gorge on his rotting flesh.

A Promise to Claim

"The LORD will command His loving kindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night . . . for I shall yet praise Him" (42:8, 11).

The word "in the daytime" is the first word in this Hebrew sentence. Even though he was surrounded by a starless night, David believed the Sun would rise and chase the darkness away.

The word "command" indicates the mode of deliverance. God is sovereign. One executive order from the lips of God can crush the bones of the enemy, blow open the cell door, defeat illness, or bring manna from heaven: "Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob" (Psalm 44:4).

The verb in the phrase, "The Lord will command his loving kindness" is a Piel stem that stresses the intensity of hope. It is an imperfect verb meaning that deliverance had not yet come. It was unrealized hope—but a hope that was sure to come. Having any kind of hope while drowning in a sea of negativity is a gem to treasure. His faith was not in men, but in the "royal *hesed*" of his God. Struggling with faith and hoping to revive his dead faith, he ordered his own soul: "Hope in God." (42:11). The word "hope" means "to wait" on the Lord. Waiting is a spiritual discipline that is so difficult when one is surrounded by darkness. But, waiting is the highest occupation of the Christian.

Application

I don't want to offer a false hope or a cure-all for depression. If you are suffering today, your affliction is so real, so painful, and so agonizing. You may be going deaf from the screams coming from within. But, there is hope. Things may be impossible for you, but there is nothing impossible to God (Mark 10:27; Luke 1:37; 18:27).

If you are suffering from depression, don't beat yourself up over your depression. Depression is a serious, but common affliction of humanity. Your depression may not be the result of sin in your life, and even if it is, sin can be confessed, forsaken, and forgiven (Psalm 32; 51; 1 John 1:9). David fully acknowledged his depressed state to God. Take your feelings to Him. He can handle it.

Claim a promise. Though you feel abandoned, He promises, "I will never leave you or forsake you." There are five negatives in this promise. "He will never, never, never, no never leave you."

Find an excuse to praise. Get out of your coffin and go into your choir loft and sing His praises. There is something about praise that prepares the way for God to work (Psalm 50:23). Deliverance is preceded by praise. "I shall yet praise thee" means "I shall throw up my hands" in worship and surrender.

Hope in His name. He is the "Great I Am"-the One Who will be what His people need Him to be. Do you need healing? He is Jehovah-Rophi. Do you need provision? He is Jehovah-Jirah, the One Who provides. Do you need His presence? He is Jehovah-Nissi. Do you need peace? He is Jehovah-shalom. Do you need guidance? He is Jehovah-Rohi. Whatever you need, God is. Are you depressed? You are in good company. Many of God's best saints have been in the pit of despair. Hope is the key that unlocks the dungeon cell. Your state is appointed by God for your growth and His glory. Your deliverance will come from a "command" from God. Trust Him. Wait for His command.

Listen carefully, God may be calling you to make changes in your life—a new job, a new diet, a new church. Some things, especially financial difficulties, call for more education, better training, or new career. These things are not easy. We are sheep that like to tread the same path. So, listen to God . . . and listen to trusted counsel. God may be calling you to feed in a different field.

Finally, REMEMBER CHRIST. Somehow, someday, get into God's Word and remember the sweets of Christ. Honey from the Rock can drive the bitters away. Whatever afflictions you are experiencing, they pale in comparison to the dark, grisly suffering of the cross. In the Garden of Gethsemane, his lips tasted the blood and tears rolling down his cheeks. At Calvary, Jesus knew thirst: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;" (Psalm 22:15). He was the famished soul, the spent libation that poured out every ounce of strength as the sacrifice for our sins. He was the alien that cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" With our sins on his back, he was the drowning sailor that faced the fierce waves of God's wrath. With spikes in his arms and feet, He was the wounded soldier that gave his life fighting for our salvation. In the grave, God gave the orders for His Son to be released from the prison of depression and He is alive today to be your Deliverer and your Praise.

If you know of someone who is depressed, please don't shrug them off. Our churches are full of self-righteous, all-wise, omniscient Pharisees. Most Christians are like Job's miserable comforters; i.e. they know how to accuse, blame, criticize and offer smug advice, but they don't

how to listen carefully and to give a constructive answer. Don't play psychologist and binge on some positive, secular, humanistic psychological cure-all for depression. Study to answer. Be a true friend. Listen to God's Word and carefully consider what to say . . . or whether to say anything at all.

If you can, provide perspective. Depressed people need your objectivity. Even if their emotions smell like rotten garlic and their lips are crawling with termites, be strong in their weakness. Surround them with love. Inject steroids of hope into their heart and minds. Don't let them go. Don't let them be alone. Assist practically where you can. Sometimes, helping a person clean their house can lift a burden.

Psalm 43 - A Prayer for God to Intervene

Let Light and Truth Lead Me



We don't know the author or time or circumstances under which this psalm was composed.

Psalm 43 is so much like Psalm 42 that some scholars think they were written by the same author at the same time over the same circumstances.

Others speculate the two psalms were united together into one hymn and became separated by mistake.

A Prayer for God to intervene

Psalm 43:1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

“my cause” -- The psalmist is aware of his weaknesses, but he also feels he has been greatly wronged. Therefore, he pleads his cause upon which relief can be granted; and, and he prays that God would interpose himself on his behalf to show the world that he is innocent of the accusation hurled at him by his adversaries.

“deceitful and unjust man” -- He describes the adversary causing his pain as an ungodly nation . . . as a deceitful and unjust man. Moreover, the psalmists see himself as a true victim of fraud and injustice.

2 For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

The word “cast off” (zânach) implies strong disgust – something odious; that is, the psalmist felt like he was something disgusting that was tossed into the trash.

“mourning” -- The psalmist's strength and joy came from God. But, for an unknown reason, he sensed that God had deserted him — that God's ship left port without him. Most people are quite content to go through life without attending church or walking with God. But, not this saint. He forsook the pleasures of this life to initiate his “God walk.” Feeling banished and having invested in following His God, he naturally plunged into despair like a mourning widow.

A Plea for God to Guide

3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

Living in cold darkness and despair, the psalmist prayed that God would impart light and truth to warm his soul. This weary soul needed guidance during his midnight experience.

“holy hill” and “tabernacles” refer to God’s home . . . his “father house” on Mt. Zion.

“tabernacles” (plural) may refer to “the holy place” and “holy of holies” in the tabernacle.

Feeling exiled and banished because of delayed justice, the psalmist pleads for acceptance and restoration to a good standing before his Maker; that is, he desires to be close to the Lord.

4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

“Then will I go” – Feeling stranded on a deserted island, the psalmist yearns for the day when he can be restored to God and able to rejoice in the mercies of God. This psalmist invested all his happiness in God – mentioned three times in this text – that is, he bet his precious all in communion with God. Plying the harp in the choir was his greatest joy; and, the feeling of banishment became his greatest sorrow.

The Chorus

A Prescription for His Own Soul

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

“Why are thou cast down, o my soul?” is a form of self-talk.

The psalmist does not excuse his melancholy due to a “wounded inner child.” Rather, he challenges his spiritual condition, and exhorts his soul to hope in God. His remedy for depression was to “praise him” – to get his mind off his petty self and on to the greatness of God – a lesson all counselors would do well to learn.

Hope in Him Who created the world . . . in Him that sent His Son to save us . . . in Him who is the King of Heaven . . . in the LORD our judge, the LORD our lawgiver, the LORD our king; he will save us (Isaiah 33:22).

Healthy people look upward and focus on the beauties of Another; sick souls turn inward and plunge into the ugliness of self.

Psalm 44 - Sheep to the Slaughter

“Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat”

Thou art my King, O God: Command Deliverances for Jacob.



This song has a strong similarity to Psalm 42, but that does not mean it was written by the same author.

We don't know the time or the occasion of the psalm but some feel it was written after the death of King Josiah, after the tragic ending of his reign 2 Kings 23:26-30; 2 Chronicles 35:20-27. And, this is the perspective taken in this commentary. See the notes at the end of this psalm.

Second Kings records how King Necho II met King Josiah at Megiddo and killed him (2 Kings 23:29). Josiah was one of the best kings ever to rule over God's people. Who doesn't read the history of Josiah and question the providence of God regarding the tragic end of this godly king's life? Moreover, his death launched the beginning of the end for Judah. Oh, to possess the Divine Perspective on history!

Psalm 44 is a lament over political vassalage (44:9-16) and a prayer for deliverance (44:23-26). The psalmist remembers what God did for His people during the period of the exodus (1446 BC) and the psalmist is strengthened by reflecting on it (44:1-3). Consequently, he devotes himself to the God of Deliverance and boasts of God's grace and redemption (44:4-8).

But, the psalm is filled with conflict. The underlying question of this psalm is why does God permit the suffering of His "innocent" people?

The value of this hymn is that it can deliver a Christian man from the trap of idealism. How do we deal with the disappointments that Providence brings into our lives? Moreover, it answers the question, "Why do the godly suffer?" But, it is also a warning against bad thinking that if I am pious, I will not suffer. How do we respond when we have to suck lemons given to us by the Lord?

Delight in Better Times

The psalmist reflects on Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their conquest over the Canaanites during the time of Moses and Joshua.

Psalm 44:1 <To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.> We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

The deliverance of Israel from Egypt and preservation in the wilderness is the inheritance of every Hebrews. It is difficult to separate patriotism from religion, but the history of Israel is

totally religious. To talk about history . . . politics . . . law . . . and life in Israel was to talk theology.

2 How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

“heathen” refers to the Canaanite nations that possessed the land before Israel arrived. Not all heathen nations are Canaanite nor are the nations of the world deserving of slaughter, but the Canaanites reached the nadir of moral depravity and God used Israel to annihilate them. At other times God used the heathen (go’im) to chastise His backsliding people.

[Note: it would be an error to view modern Palestinians as Canaanites deserving of genocide – a sad and pathetic doctrine of the murderous propaganda of modern Ashkenazim.]

3 For they got 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 hadst a favour unto them.

“the land” refers to Israel’s miraculous conquest over the land of Canaan by the power of God.

The psalmist wants the reader to know that this victory this conquest was not based on Israel’s superior military strength, but due to the light and favor of God upon the nation.

Determination to Trust God

4 Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

“Thou art He, my King, O God” — The psalmist claims his present God-King is the same King Who interposed Himself to rescue the founding fathers — that the One he recognizes now as King is same Sovereign Ruler that rescued Israel in the time of the Exodus; that is, we have not committed idolatry!

“command deliverances for Jacob” – Since we trust you, do now what you did in the past. Order your troops to trample my enemies.

Since he served the same God-King that ancient Israel served, he expected the same results in the covenant relationship . . . but, that didn’t happen. Thus, the confusion and conflict of the psalmist.

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

These are the words of a man of faith.

The verb “push down” (nagach) is a Piel imperfect meaning “to gore,” “thrust through,” or “to push.”

“Through thee” — the same God who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua . . . and, that gored Pharaoh, will defeat our present enemies; that is, we have not nor are we going to change gods. With the help of the LORD, we will gore our enemies just like our founding fathers did. We will survive; they will die.

6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

The psalmist grounds his hope in the Lord and not his own bow or sword — in God’s capacities, not his own abilities.

Did Josiah do the same?

7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us. 8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

In looking at past victories, the psalmist could rejoice that God saved them from their enemies. Therefore, Israel had grounds for rejoicing.

This joy of salvation was not a fleeting momentary expression of delight but something stationary and trustworthy. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Defeat and Disaster

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies. 10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.

“But” raises a question about Providence. In the past God gave them victory, but now they are “cast off” and defeated.

The psalmist remembers past victories, but he now grieves over a present political calamity that engulfed his people. Apparently, the nation was a target of ridicule and plunder. And, he charges God with misfeasance — deliberate neglect of His people.

Divided Among the Nations

The psalmist wants us to know that this act of seeming betrayal by God was no small matter. The choices of Providence smashed the nation.

11 Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.

“Thou hast given” informs us that God ordained the defeat. The verb is in the emphatic position in the sentence; that is, the psalmist wants us to know that it was God who ordered the slaughter of His people.

“sheep for meat” = “sheep for slaughter” (ESV).

The recent aggravated, military defeat of Judah under Josiah crushed the people. Disquieted, many soldiers fled only to be captured by surrounding nations. Judah felt like sheep going to get their throat cut.

The Lord taught us to pray, “Thy will be done.” But, what if God’s will is for us to go to the slaughter house? We love victory. We hate defeat. We pray and expect God to be with us, but what if He isn’t?

12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.

“thou sellest thy people for nought” means that God took his people to the market and simply gave them to the butcher as if they were worthless. Ouch! Men sell sheep for money in order to increase their wealth, power, and influence, but not God! He gave his sheep away to be butchered.

The question is, “Why?” What gain was this defeat to God . . . to Judah . . . to the people in Jerusalem? The people appeared to be sold on the auction block with no equivalent consideration. What gain did God receive . . . or did Israel receive for this transaction? How did this defeat advance God’s kingdom program? What possible advantage could a crushing defeat have in any Christian’s life?

Feel like you have been removed from service, hung out to dry, packaged up, and stored away in some huge warehouse? So, did the psalmist.

Dumbstruck by God’s Providence

The psalmist rehearses his confusion over Providence.

13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

The people of Judah felt forsaken of God. Even the heathen considered the nation forsaken of God. And, the truth of the matter is that God did permit His people to suffer defeat . . . a slaughter . . . death.

Q: Why would God allow this troubling defeat? This is not what we want to hear!

14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.

The word “byword” (mashal) means “proverb” or “parable,” or “derisive joke” like “Benedict Arnold,” or “failures can’t be choosers,” or “spoonerism” named after Spooner” who kept mixing up words (“belly jeans” for “jelly beans”).

15 My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me,

“confusion” (kelimmah) = shame, reproach, embarrassment, dishonor, or insult. This defeat stunned the psalmist. He had no answers for why God would permit the slaughter of His people.

When people mentioned the name of the LORD, the psalmist hung his head in shame.

16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

“enemy” = foreign nations.

“avenger” refers to nations taking revenge on Israel for what they regarded as wrongs; i.e. long standing hatred — kind of like Arab nations using the “Crusades” as an excuse to attack the West.

“reproacheth and blasphemeth” -- Israel suffered a horrific blow by Egypt. To make matters worse, the enemies used their victory as a basis for boasting and as grounds for taunting Israel’s

God. In the psalmist mind, he could not figure out how this defeat contributed to the glory of God.

17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

“All this is come upon us” refers to the recent calamities of defeat (Josiah?) In the psalmist mind, he could not connect their recent national defeat with current national infidelity or unfaithfulness to God. Under Josiah, the nation experienced its greatest revival. Why would God sentence the revival king to death?

The psalmist’s bad theology comes to light that “only the wicked suffer.”

18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way; 19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.

In the psalmist’s mind, Judah had done no wrong and therefore God was being unjust to the nation.

“dragons” (taniyn) refers to serpents or alleged sea monsters — a metaphor for death, defeat, and destruction.

The thought is connected to the previous verse (v. 19) — the psalmist could not think of a good reason why the LORD would allow the nation to suffer such a terrible defeat. Why uses dragons to crush innocent sheep?

How did Josiah’s death square with God’s promises?

2 Kings 22:20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

2 Chronicles 34:28 Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;

“forgotten the name of our God” refers to deep apostasy; and, “stretched out our hands to a strange god” refers to outright idolatry which is also deep apostasy.

In search of an answer to the psalmist’s “why” question, he lists two good reasons why God might abandon His people — apostasy and idolatry. But, in the psalmist’s perusal of recent history, he could not identify any kind of apostasy that merited God’s abandonment of the nation to a crushing defeat by Israel’s neighbors.

21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

The psalmist reasons that if there is a secret undisclosed spirit of apostasy at work in the nation, God knows about it. If the defeat was due to this secret apostasy, the apostasy was unknown to

the psalmist . . . and to the rest of the nation. If God judges secret, unknown, undisclosed sins, who would stand? Thus, the psalmist in his spiritual journey concludes that Providence is unjust and has treated the nation unfairly.

The time of Josiah was a time of a government ordained revival, but the psalmist appears to have forgotten the inexcusable apostasy of His father Manasseh and the nation's willing compliance with his idolatry.

22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

Q: Why do the righteous suffer? Now the Spirit provides the answer to this perplexing question.

A: The answer is in verse 22: **"Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter."**

Most people are in love with plastic, whitewashed, sanitized Christianity and intuitively think that if they believe in Christ with all their heart, they will be accepted and prosperous.

NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH!!!! Bad premise; bad theology!

"Who supposed godliness is gain" – 1 Timothy 6:5.

* Health and Wealth is the apostate gospel of our age *

The truth is "men hate God and His law" (Romans 3:10ff); John 7:7). Yes, even many so called "Christian men" are in rebellion against the law of God and the God of law. And, they will take out their animus against God upon His people.

Perhaps, this text explains the reason why the righteous suffer. They suffer, not because they are doing something wrong, but because they have done something right. Like their Lord, they are appointed as "sheep for the slaughter." A world that creates action heroes like "Rambo," "Indiana Jones," and "Dirty Harry" hates fluffy, white sheep.

More pastors lose their pastorate for teaching the truth than for any other reason (JR). Faith, not foolishness, is the reason for their being fired! In an age of lies, it is dangerous to preach the truth; and, when men build their lives on fiction, preaching faithfulness to God's law-order can be fatal. When the modern mind is filled with idealism (CGI) and perfectionism, being a flawed human being is considered vulgarity.

Deliver Us from the Dust, O LORD

23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast us not off for ever.

In wrestling through all the possible reasons for the nation's defeat, the psalmist concludes that God was "asleep at the wheel"; that God was dozing off . . . napping . . . dreaming . . . Logically, therefore, he called for God to wake up and come to the nation's defense.

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

The psalmist pours out his true feelings.

Note the anthropomorphism and how the psalmist views God as sleeping. The psalmist knows that God was not asleep though he felt like it. Still, the troubling question remains, “Why are you hiding your face . . . refusing to show us favor . . . removing your pity and compassion from us?”

25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

The psalmist employs more metaphors to express the true feelings simmering in the nation. The expression here is one of absolute defeat, humiliation, and depression. The psalmist and his generation could not go any lower in the dust than slithering on their belly like a snake.

26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies’ sake.

With no resolution and no answer to his piercing questions, the psalmist ends his song with a prayer for God to wake up and to mercifully redeem his people.

“mercy” – Lacking knowledge of any personal sin that would cause defeat, the psalmist prays for God to wake up and deliver His people.

He is not so brazen as to build a case for salvation based on known obedience and observance of duty attended by so many imperfections. He pleads mercy, not justice; grace, not righteousness.

Likewise, we ground our prayers on gratuitous mercy and not our personal merits; the need for deliverance based on his kindness and not our devotion . . . our degrees . . . devoutness . . . or our dedication to the will of God.

Warning: The reader would do well to be warned against false confidence and the sins of presumption. The pious rightly hide under the shadow of His wings, but if one is not careful, he imperceptively comes to trust in his own piety as the reason God should protect Him. Bad premise, bad theology! Be humble or stumble. God judges men for impiety, but He disciplines the pious for their good. Trust in God’s mercy, not human merit. Trials come, not because we are bad, but because God wants to make us better.

Moreover, you may be suffering not because you have done something wrong, but because you have done something right — “for His name’s sake.”

Study Notes:

The Tragic End of Josiah

God’s Gracious Promise to Josiah

There was no king in Israel like King Josiah who pursued revival: “The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem.”

Because King Josiah had responded properly upon his hearing the Word of God (2 Kings 22:19; 2 Chronicles 34:27), cleansed and repaired the temple, and purged evil from the nation, God graciously made the following promise to him:

2 Kings 22:20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

2 Chronicles 34:28 Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

According to these statements, God promised to Josiah that he would be gathered to his grave in peace. This revelation from God very likely would seem to have led him to believe that he would die in a peaceful manner that would not involve great pain or suffering. But, he tragically died in battle against King Necho of Egypt . . . and, this is the dilemma of the psalm.

Why, LORD?

We could ask, “Did Josiah meet his tragic end because he did not heed the warnings of King Necho?”

2 Chronicles 35:20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. (A battle against the Assyrians – the enemy of Judah)

21 But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not.

22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

King Necho said that he was on a mission from God, but Josiah didn’t believe him . . . and why should he? On the other hand, Josiah knew about the Assyrian advances. Why didn’t he assist Necho?

“Perhaps this promise of his going to the grave in peace even led Josiah to conclude that it would not be possible for him to die in a battle setting at the hands of an opponent” (Rajesh Gandhi).

Since Necho’s enemies (Assyrians) were Josiah’s enemies, why did Josiah declare war on King Necho? — It seems to have been a foolish and presumptuous act on the part of King Josiah. He should have left Necho pass peacefully through the causeway and or even joined Necho to fight against the Assyrians — the nation that defeated Israel. You don’t war against a nation who is being used of God to crush your enemy: “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

Thus, this may explain why God permitted Necho to prevail and why Josiah met such a tragic end.

Psalm 45 - The Royal Wedding Hymn

A Psalm on the Excellence of Christ



Before us is a psalmist bursting with joy over the beauty of Another, and we would do well to do the same — A royal wedding hymn that highlights the excellences of Christ.

Before us is a psalm that deserves weeks of study and a lifetime of thoughtful consideration.

A Description of the Royal Author

Psalm 45:1 For the director of music. To the tune of “Lilies.” Of the Sons of Korah. A maskil. A wedding song.

The tune “lilies” speaks of the purity and loveliness of this psalm. Of all the lyrics ever written by the sons of men, this hymn is a lily that stands above the orchard hills.

My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.

In Psalm 45, we have a heart “stirred” by a noble theme. Hearts are often stirred by fruits connected to the Poisonous Tree, the love of the world, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. But, this heart is stirred by virtue beaming from the Groom.

We ought to be careful about what we desire for we will become the sum total of all our desires—whether good or bad.

The Hebrew word “stirred” (rachash) is in the emphatic positions. It means “to bubble over” or “to keep moving.” Like an artesian well, the author feels his heart is going to burst with life-giving joy.

The word “noble” is the Hebrew word tov. It means “good” or “excellent.” Good things come out of a good heart. It is perplexing when good things come out of a cold heart. It is sad when bad things come out of a warm heart. But, it is wonderful and refreshing when good fruits appear on a good tree.

The occasion for this geyser of enthusiasm is a wedding between a prince, the most eligible bachelor in the land, and his beautiful, country bride. We love weddings and there is nothing that captures the interest of nation more than a royal wedding.

Who is this author whose swelling heart begs to pen the excellences of the King? The answer to this most important question is in the final verse of the psalm:

Psalm 45:17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever

Who is this Author? It is none other than the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Prince? The Prince is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is delighted to showcase the splendor of this majestic King. Only the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son can sustain such a promise. He works to inspire men to remember the greatness of Another.

Who is the Bride? It is His church, the redeemed, those chosen to share His reign.

Bubbling up with lovely words, the author spills over to pen this wedding hymn—and a geyser it is!

A Description of the Royal Bridegroom

Psalm 45:2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

Consider his statement, “You are fairer than the children of men.”

The Hebrew word “fairer” is the Hebrew word “yaphah” which means beautiful or handsome. The verb comes from a Piel stem which implies intensity. But, it more than this, the verb emphasizes the beauty of this king by repeating the main stem twice “yapha-pha,” and by placing the word in the emphatic position. Thus, the Spirit has a triple emphasis on the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It’s as if the King suddenly appeared before the Author. He utters a fact, a compliment, true and certain. The Spirit contrasts the beauty of this Prince with all the “sons of Adam” (ben adam). Of all the men that have been born, of all the soldiers that have adorned a sword, of all the noble poets that have ever penned a word, and all the generals that have marched to war, our Lord is infinitely greater and more virtuous than them all!

We cannot count all the virtues of the Savior, but here are a few ways the Lord Jesus Christ is superior to other religious leaders and common men:

- He is fairer than other men in His origin whose goings forth are from everlasting.
- He is fairer in conception whose mother was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- He is fairer than other men in His nativity.
- He is fairer than other men in His nature—He is the God-man.
- He is fairer than other men in His childhood. He is the obedient, respectful son (Luke 2:52).
- He is fairer than other men in His manhood. He is the man’s man.
- He is fairer than other men in His character. He is holy and true.
- He is fairer than other men in His calling. He is called to be the Savior of the world.
- He is fairer than other men in His works—He died for the sins of men.
- He is fairer than other men in His teaching.

- He is fairer than other men in His response to evil.
- He is fairer than other men in His transfiguration.
- He is fairer than other men in His righteousness.
- He is fairer than other men in His devotion to the Father.
- He is fairer than other men in His suffering and passion.
- He is fairer than other men in His death.
- He is fairer than other men in His accomplishments.
- He is fairer than other men in His resurrection.
- He is fairer than other men in His reward and exaltation to the throne of God.
- He is fairer than other men in His reign and kingdom ministry.

Only as we focus on Christ can our hearts be filled with good things. It is too easy to focus on our problems, our faults, our sins, and our wants or the garbage pit where world leaders rule. It is too easy to focus on the problems of our spouse, or boss, or co-workers, or political leaders. Let us do what the author of Hebrews exhorted us to do and “fix our eyes upon Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith and “consider Him who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” Then and only then will our hearts become an artesian well of spiritual life (Philippians 4:7-8).

Grace is poured into His lips

The Spirit does not focus our attention on the “looks,” “talents,” or “wealth of the Prince, but upon his words — words that express the vigorous character of his heart. Though tough, this Prince possessed words like honey — sweet to the soul and healthy for the body (Proverbs 16:24). The Author is careful to inform us that his words are life-giving fruits in the field of Him “Who is altogether lovely” (S of S 5:16).

By words, brides are won and wars are fought. The words of men seem to have no end and they are, more often than naught, fruits of the Poisonous Tree. But, the lips of Christ are anointed with grace. One word from his lips can raise the dead. “Rise” or “Come forth” or “Neither do I condemn thee,” or “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven” are words of life.

Our Lord never cursed, never swore, and never used profanity. Only once did a curse appear on His lips, and that was a lesson for the good of his disciples (Mark 11). He cursed a fig tree because a nation rejected the prophetic Word about Him, and the disciples had to be prepared for the end of an era.

Most men have garlic on their breath, and poison under their tongue. Consider how this king’s lips were anointed with grace:

- He never lied or embellished the truth.
- He never swore or used profanity.
- He never used a mince word.

- He never complained. Life's irritations never spawned angry speech, cynicism, or sarcasm.
- He never bragged or boasted; He never uttered words of self-pity.
- He never ranted or spoke in rage.
- He never berated others or exposed their hidden secrets.
- He never answered a harsh word with a threat or bitter invective.
- He never condemned a man that was just; or acquitted a man that was unjust.
- He never spoke when He should have been silent; and was never silent when He should have spoken. Before Pilate he was a sovereign in control of all things; and, before the Roman-Sanhedrin high priest he witnessed the good confession.
- He never said more than needed to be said, or less than a man needed to hear.
- His words contained no poison or venom or bitterness or bait or hooks.
- He never gave a sales speech or advertised the purchase of a commodity.
- He never rambled or continued talking after nothing else needed to be said.
- He never asked a question of which He did not know the answer.
- He never promised more than He could deliver, yet every fulfillment of a pledge was greater than His promise.
- His speech, though gracious, was never sugar-coated or sickly sweet.
- He never gave a man a tongue-lashing . . . or an insincere compliment.
- He never apologized or admitted error or a mistake or confessed a sin. In most men this would be evidence of arrogance and pride, but with Jesus it was because "He knew no sin," and "did no sin" and "had no sin."
- He knew all things but revealed the secrets of none; He knew the sins of all but slandered no man.

His praise of others was genuine and sincere; and, his condemnation of men was less than they deserved. He said of the Centurion, "I have not found so great a faith in Israel," and said of the Jews, "You are of your father, the Devil."

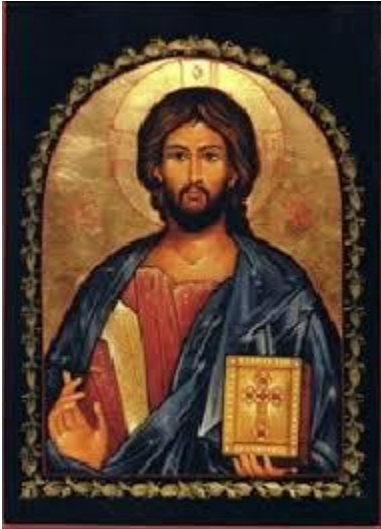
He infused hope into the depressed; strength into the weary; health into the sick; life into the dead. He lifted Peter out of failure; Martha and Mary out of depression; Nicodemus out of self-delusion; and, the thief on the cross out of despair when He said, "Today, you shall be with me in Paradise." He could cheer the hopeless and strike fear into the proud and arrogant.

The officers sent to accuse and arrest Jesus blurted out, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).

His words were full of life and healing and hope and truth and grace. They were like myrrh on the lips, rain after a drought, and dew upon lilies.

A man of excellence, He is the Balm of Gilead (Jeremiah 8:22).

Therefore, God has blessed thee forever.



3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

This king is not a “girly-boy” or spoiled prince sitting on a cushion of strawberries eating chocolate mousse, but a warrior-king girded with a sword willing and able to execute justice. As Commander and Chief of the nation’s armed forces, He defends the life and liberty of the people. He is heroic in war as he is impressive in person.

The name “O most Mighty” (gibor) refers to manliness, strength, and military skill — Israel’s “tip of the spear” special guard. In modern terms this would be equivalent to a U.S. Marine, special forces Ranger, Navy Seal, or the Green Beret.

But, this “el gibbor” is not merely a muscle-bound killing machine without restraint. The text refers generally to his glory and majesty, but not a particular attribute. Christ has no outstanding virtue, because He excels in all. The Spirit portrays him as gentle and mannerly; intelligent and charming; courageous and restrained; skilled and competent. Though He is the envy of all, He exhibits no air of superiority. This is the humble warrior-king duty-bound to enter the contest to rescue his people from the trinity of evil: Satan, sin, and death.

Spiritually speaking, the sword is the Word of God that slays men and wins hearts. It is his only weapon in the battle for world conquest — the Apostle Paul said His Word is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and is represented by the Apostle John as a sharp two-edged sword coming out of his mouth, Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:19.

4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

The imagery here is of warrior-king riding his mount at the head of the column with his hand and sword extended toward the enemy as a signal to charge and follow him into battle. His right hand wields a sword (and a bow with arrows) which tutors rebels in lessons on submission. Some generals fight wars for glory, and others fight for power and control; but, this king wages war for truth, self-control, and righteousness against lies, indulgence, and lawlessness.

5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

The imagery of an intense battle and a charging Captain continues. Sword and arrows are icons of death and defeat. With the Spirit guiding arrows, the slaughter staggers the mind. Except, this warrior-king pierces hearts with conviction. He humbles men and enables proud rebels to confess their sins and to surrender to His law-order.

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

This text is applied to the Messiah by Paul in Hebrews 1:8. The use of the title “O God” informs us this is a Messianic psalm presenting to us the sovereignty of the God-man. The Captain-prince is none other than our sovereign Lord Jesus Christ Whom the Father granted “authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him” (John 17:2).

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

The “oil of gladness” is a metaphor for joy. Oriental weddings involved perfumes, ritual oil baths, and burning of incense. The Spirit desires the reader to perceive the joy of the Bridegroom which is powerful and pleasant — the royal fragrance derived not from external oils but from the character of the Groom.

“Fellows” refers to the attendants of the wedding party whose sanguinity inspires the guests to celebrate the joy of occasion.

The reason for all this enthusiasm is the aromatic character of the bridegroom who loves righteousness and hates wickedness; Who loves order and despises lawlessness; Who loves good and hates evil; Who loves truth, and hates lies; and, Who loves life and hates death.

8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

“All thy garments smell of myrrh . . .” speak of the pure, unblemished character of the Groom. The aromas are a metaphor for the virtues of Christ germane to the man.



Consider that many couples spend lots of money on weddings to enhance the joy of the occasion. But, it isn't long into the marriage that every couple begins to sniff malodorous character flaws resembling decaying compost. But, not so with this Bridegroom! There is “no fly in the ointment” (or sin) that can pollute the sweet scents emanating from the Prince that vitalizes the wedding party.

The spices mentioned formed the delightful blend of flora in the “oil of gladness” — the same blended herbs in the special anointing oil of the High Priest in Exodus 30:23-24. No music is mentioned. Only the royal fragrances flowing out of open doors of the ivory palace so the celebrants could participate in the sweet, sensual delights streaming through the air.

A Description of the Bride

9 Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

The focus in this wedding song switches from the glories of the Groom to the beauty of the bride. She is the lovely “queen” adorned in the gold of Ophir (1 Kings 9:28).

Figuratively speaking, the bride represents the church of our Lord Jesus Christ Who “loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

The stunning bride became a queen by the will and grace of the King. Her silk-satin, silhouette wedding dress, royal jewels, and golden necklace are gifts from the Groom.

As all do at weddings, the court Seer shines the spotlight on the bridesmaids. They were not toothless, country bumpkins dressed in hand-me-down, tattered-cotton dresses surviving on welfare, but stately ladies of the court. The author calls them “honorable” (yaqar) which means rare, precious, splendid, or weighty (1 Samuel 13:1).

10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

The Spirit has some royal advice for the new queen. All brides need guidance on how to be a good wife, and this bride also needs counsel. The Seer gives her the wisdom of the ages — advice, if followed will make her the queen of queens to the King of kings.

First, is for the bride to “shut” her mouth and “put her ears on.” The Advisor exhorts her to restrain her tongue and to “hearken,” “consider,” and “incline thine ear” so she can conform to the noble standards of godly women and courtly manners of the palace; and, so she can learn to respect and to please her new husband. She must remember that while she is a queen, she is still His royal subject. As his subject, she must learn to restrain her personal and emotional powers. Many a mouthy woman has aroused the anger of her husband and shattered her marriage because of her inability to control her tongue and to show respect to her husband-king (James 3:1ff; Ephesians 5:24ff).

Second, is for the bride to leave her parents and to cleave to her new husband; that is, to leave, cleave, and weave — to leave her parents mentally, emotionally, and physically; and, to cleave to her husband-king. Furthermore, she learns “to submit” to her husband and weave faith, hope, and love into her marriage by arranging herself under his authority. This is the Spirit’s way of telling Christians to forget their ways in Adam and to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.

11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

The exhortation in verse ten is for the purpose of enhancing the dazzling beauty of the bride. The charm of a Queen is not in her clothing, but in her noble, self-restrained character; and, studied devotion to her husband.

All brides would do well in aspiring to be a daughter of Sarah remembering her husband “is thy Lord.” For the Scriptures says, “the head of the woman is the man;” and, “the wife must respect her husband” (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:33; 1 Peter 3:1-6).

Likewise, the beauty of the church is her devotion and submission to Christ.

12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.

The Seer offers this promise. The nobility of the bride and her devotion to the Groom invites the attention of the nations who will come with gifts in their hand and hopes in their heart.

13 The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.

“The king’s daughter is an affectionate metonym for the bride who herself is the daughter of royalty. Her golden jewelry is only surpassed by her golden devotion to the King. Beautiful within and without, the Spirit praises her.

Likewise, the church of Christ is all glorious within — born of the Spirit and endowed with spiritual graces, she is the hope of men. Her silk-satin dresses highlighted by gold and her internal perfections are gifts of grace weaved by the Spirit as the bride beholds the beauty of the Savior-King (2 Corinthians 3:18). Perfect in standing, the true church practices what is pleasing to the Lord.

14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

As with all weddings, the guests anticipate the presentation of the bride to the groom. She is a virgin unspoiled by lusty admirers. Her virtuous purity, the intricate silk-satin embroidery detail of her gown, and the glorious beauty of bridesmaids stuns the audience.

Likewise, the church waits the day when she shall be presented to her Heavenly Groom arrayed in the golden accomplishments of His salvation.

This is an ideal picture of the church — something every Christian congregation aspires to be.

15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.

Entering the kingdom of God is compared to a glorious royal wedding, and the presentation of the bride is compared to entering a king’s palace filled with articles of gold and earthly comforts.

Oh, how the church eagerly waits for the final day when she shall be adorned with the glories of redemption and be presented to her beautiful Savior.

16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

Here we see the bride’s growth in maturity where she stops thinking like a child of her father and transitions to think like the woman-bride of the king and a mother to princes.

17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

This royal wedding hymn begins with an artesian well of praises to the Crown Prince, but the wedding song ends with a promise the wedding feast not be forgotten, and that the glorious union of the Groom and Bride will be remembered forever.

Who is this author? Only the Holy Spirit has the power to make His name and His accomplishments in the church known to all generations.

Thus, we reflect on the fact the church is the hope of blessing to the world and the source of everlasting happiness to the men. Selah!

Barnes notes this psalm has been on the lips of millions, and it will be on the lips of millions more in future times as an expression of the majesty and tender love of the Redeemer.

Psalm 46 - Nothing to Fear

Be Still and Know that I am God



This has been called “Martin Luther’s Psalm.” When all seemed lost, Luther would say, “Well, let us sing Psalm 46.”

This is a big psalm about a big God for people with big problems.

It is the ultimate assurance psalm based on the experience of the Hebrews that practiced the “discipline of being still” during the Assyrian invasion of Judah (circa 722 B.C.).

“Being still” and practicing “silence” is a rule of Orthodox monasteries, and we would do well to learn the discipline of compline after the noise and business of the day.

46:1 (To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.)

Great lessons in life call for great compositions by great composers — “the chief Musician for the sons of Korah” — conductor of Israel’s national choir.

The term “alamoth” denotes music in the high soprano range — music fit for Hebrew virgins to carol. How fitting for the most vulnerable of Israel’s population to dance and sing about the glories of their Protector; that is, this song is not for religious men. It is for true Christians leaning on the everlasting arms.

Stanza One

Nothing to Fear

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Like many psalms, the writer introduces the conclusion of his study first . . . but, this is not where he began his journey.

Some trust in chariots, some in armies, some in science, some in government, some in the will of the masses, and some in white-coat doctors. But, we trust in the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

The pronoun “our” applies to the true Israel, the church militant, waging war at the gates of hell.

Just as Assyria was unable to annihilate ancient Israel, it is impossible for Satan to destroy the body of Christ. The church is invincible.

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

“Therefore” refers to the wonderful effect of trusting in the Lord.

Have you noticed the chill factor in listening to the media? In the topsy-turvy world of politics, you get the idea that pompous, blathering buffoons in government are going to pass legislation that will split the earth and hurl the mountains into the midst of the sea. Wars and rumors of wars blacken the future.

The “therefore” announces the application. Graphite confidence fills the heart of all who trust Him. Trust feeds courage. Doubt feeds fear. Fear then, is a preposterous, irrational, absurd response for those claiming to trust God. Fear and trust cannot soldier together.

With so many enemies in positions of power assaulting the true Israel of God, how strong is this confidence?

The conjunction “though” is an argument that introduces the extent of this trust. Confidence in God leans on the breast of His love and the muscle of His power. This assurance is true “even if” mountain ranges like the Alps and Andes melt like wax.

“Evil is powerless when the good are unafraid” (Ronald Reagan).

Let us listen to our faith, not our fears! Let us believe God, not our foes.

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

In this spiritual masterpiece the psalmist uses the term “Selah” three times. The word is a musical notation, but to some it means to “STOP AND THINK ABOUT THIS!”

The conjunction “though” introduces another hypothetical extreme to demonstrate the diamond-quality of this trust — trust that grows as one examines the steel powers of the LORD God. Confidence in God’s protection should reign in the heart “even if” the earth rumbles with tower-cracking earthquakes and mountain peaks smoking with volcanic ash while spewing out fire-red lava that flows into the deep blue sea.

Roaring seas and volcanic mountains are metaphors describing the surf and foam of politics and fiery on of kings lusting for power. When we have no answers for stupidity on stilts and these hot-tempered eruptions that scorch the earth, we boldly trust God.

Stanza Two

Everything Provided

4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

The river that makes glad the people of God is not a literal water source in Jerusalem, nor is it the muddy Jordan in the Jericho Valley. Rather, it is a refreshing metaphor for the water of eternal life which flows from “the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city” — the ideal picture of the gospel of grace (Revelation 22:2).

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

“God in the midst of her” informs the audience that His help is near and sure; that the enemies of God can only go so far before they are restrained and crushed by God’s armies.

This psalm has the same fragrance as Isaiah 36-39 where the Lord crushed the Assyrian invasion during the reign of Hezekiah without Israel having to shoot an arrow.

“And that right early” means God is seldom early, never late, and right on time.

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

“The heathen raged” is the psalmist’s way of describing the fiery furnace of politics – especially the invasion of Assyria during the days of Hezekiah. Because psychopaths rule the nations, news is filled with lava-hot conflicts and madmen preparing for war.

That “kingdoms were moved” inform us of the confusion that occurs when armies are on the march. Israel trembled with knocking knees and pounding hearts when they heard the news that Sennacherib’s army defeated Lachish and advanced towards Jerusalem. The earth trembled, and hearts melted.

The Chorus

7 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

We have the second “selah” in this verse – a musical and literary notation.

“The Lord of hosts” is a reference to the armies of God – a lesson the people in Jerusalem learned after God’s armies crushed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers.

“The God of Jacob” refers to undercover providence and the release of grace to protect people despite their many flaws. Nobody loved Jacob, but God did!

“That God is with us” must have been in doubt when the citizens of Jerusalem peered over the wall and stared at the Assyrian infantry setting up camp around their walls.

The next day, when the people of Jerusalem woke up and saw the corpses of their enemies strewn on the battlefield, they shouted with joy, “God IS with us! He IS, He IS, He IS! He IS our refuge!”

This knowledge came after their mighty deliverance and without a soldier lifting his sword against the Assyrians.

Selah notes a musical pause, but spiritually speaking, let us “STOP AND THINK ABOUT THIS!”

Stanza Three

Something to Behold and Believe

8 Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

Soldiers dead. Corpses everywhere. Chariots and supplies abandoned, the nation became street-hawking evangelists: “Come, behold the works of the Lord!” That is, this is the psalmist’s invitation to come and share in the lessons they learned after this great victory.

“Desolations” refers to the crushing of Sennacherib’s troops and the plague of death that decimated the Assyrian army.

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 chariot in the fire.

“He maketh wars to cease” refers to the sudden end of the Assyrian campaign against Judah.

Breaking the bow and burning the chariots with fire refers to the wings of death and destruction that smashed the Assyrians when they entered the killing fields of the Lion of Judah.

Likewise, the Lord frustrates the plans of generals. A strange force is at work preventing war hawks from launching nuclear strikes. Look and see. Hear and learn. He crushes cynical ambitions for war in our day. He does not make all wars to cease, but He does prevent many wars.

Threaten His lambs, and you are a dead man!

10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

The main application of the psalm is wrapped up in two verbs: “Be still, and know that I am God” — a difficult command for the hyperactive Christian. The Hebrew Hiphil imperative verb is causative; that is, take steps to calm yourself . . . to be still . . . to be quiet.

There are times when we are not permitted to exercise “freedom of speech” or to run around in a panic waving our hands and crying out for Christians to do something . . . anything . . . to do more . . . to pray more . . . to write more . . . to vote more. . . more, more, more. Our hope is in God, not the nervous activity of religious zealots.

Hezekiah ordered the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be silent. The people were not permitted to speak a word during the Assyrian siege. Every tongue begged to be free of the king’s order and to blather about the size of the Assyrian army, to complain about personal discomforts, and to share fear with anyone who would listen.

“But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, “Do not answer him.” (Isaiah 36:21)

What wisdom by Hezekiah!

The first discipline we learn when facing adversaries is to “Be still!”

The Spirit of God instructs His people: when you face problems bigger than you . . . “Be still in your spirit . . . and practice the discipline of silence.”

The word “be still” (raphah) means “to cast down, to sink, to relax, or to abandon” a course. It is translated “idle” in Exodus 5:8; “forsake” in Deuteronomy 4:31; and “let alone” in Deuteronomy 9:14. Compare with Exodus 14:13, “Stand still, and see the salvation of God.”

We live in a world of noise, chatter, commercials, causes, protests and sirens where peace and quiet is a treasured commodity.

Many of us are “go getters.” Nervous energy burns within the furnace of our hearts when troubles arise. We want to solve them . . . to do something . . . anything. We have difficulty learning the discipline of being still. Our impatient voice mutters, “Are we there yet?”

“Being still” is not merely external, but an internal state where a man is prepared to hear the voice of God. Hearing the voice of God is not to be taken “literally.” Rather, the phrase refers to a soul finding rest by believing the Holy Scriptures.

The second discipline follows the first. The purpose of being still is so a person can know God in an undistracted way.

In every age, the most spiritual among us seek golden silence and the knowledge of God. It was the key in Habakkuk’s day:

“But the LORD is in His holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before Him.”
(Habakkuk 2:20).

During “Compline” (9:00 PM) Orthodox monks take time for personal prayer and meditation. Speaking is strictly forbidden.

Some problems are bigger than the man, bigger than the family, and bigger than the nation. Silence with a trust in God is the need of the hour!

“Know that I am God . . .” – that is, think about the greatness of God, and not the greatness of our problems.

When facing giants, we need to abandon worry and ponder the power of God. “Know” the Lord Jesus Christ is God . . . enthroned at the right hand of the Father . . . having all authority and power “to crush Satan under your feet” (Matthew 28:18; Romans 16:20).

Knowing God means to know that God is God, and that we are not in charge of the universe. We are not in control. We are not in command, and therefore we do not need to be giving orders to others! The Spirit calls us to rest and harness all nervous energy erupting from the inferno of our anxiety. Our need is to arrange ourselves under His authority, His will, and His law — not to act like a general ordering subordinates to do something.

I will be exalted in the earth.

Your battle may not be about you, but about God being exalted (Heb: rum = lifted up – Genesis 14:22) among the nations.

“I will defend this city and save Jerusalem for my sake and for the sake of David my servant!” (Isaiah 37:35).

The final vision of history is not one where Satan wins by enslaving every man to vices rooted in darkness. Rather, the Prophet Habakkuk informs us . . .

“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

History is not going around in circles. It is headed toward the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.

“I will be exalted in the earth” infers the conversion of the Gentiles by the gospel of Christ: when “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

When His glory is at stake, we know the battle is won. He is reigning now. He will defeat all His enemies! Our duty is “to be still” and to know that God will defend His honor and deliver His people.

Sometimes we have to “let go” and “let God” engage the enemy. He does not need our counsels or nervous energy feeling like we have to do something . . . anything. Further, He does not need the wheel of government to accomplish His purposes: “Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” (Isaiah 40:15)

In these global developments there is little a single patriot can do to deter the anti-God forces. Huge headaches call us to forsake complaining and to trust God . . . to forsake the harvest of our anxiety . . . to diligently know that the risen Christ is our Commander . . . that He is in control of all the events of history.

Do not hear what is not being said. The Spirit is not encouraging irresponsibility or telling us to despise duty. Many of our personal problems can be resolved through prayer, planning, and perseverance in doing good.

Remember what Robert E. Lee told his son, “Do your duty in all things. You can’t do more, and you should never wish to do less.”

But, when the problem is bigger than the man, it is time to practice the discipline of “being still” — to know that God is God . . . that He is our Refuge and Present Help in the time of trouble. . . that He will be exalted among the nations!

The Chorus

11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

This verse contains the third “selah” in the psalm. Be still like a cow chewing on its cud mulling over these promises in our minds. Rest, Soul, rest!

In case the reader didn’t catch the supreme truth that conquers fear, he repeats his lesson on theology: “The Lord of hosts with all his angelic armies is with us; the God of Jacob, the God of all grace is with us.”

Therefore, “BE STILL! REMEMBER GOD! DO NOT FEAR! Fear and faith never shake hands.

Selah: Some think this is a musical notation, but others think it means, “STOP AND THINK ABOUT THIS!” It certainly applies here. The wicked will not win! The LORD God will be exalted among the nations!

Psalm 47 - The Great King

The Lord Reigns Over the Nations



This psalm feels like a king's coronation; like the time David brought the ark to Jerusalem. But, it is more than this. Because of expressions like "nations" and "earth" and "shall chose," we interpret this passage in the broadest sense of Christ's authority.

This psalm challenges our faith. For those people who read scores about the politics of madmen, it seems like we are ruled by patients from an insane asylum. It is one thing to say "the Lord is in control," but it takes eyes of faith to believe "the Lord reigns" when we walk on a knife's edge.

Psalm 47:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.>

Reasons for Victory Shouts

O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

The LORD summons the whole world to salute His ascension with applause and shouts of triumph. God's reigns is the gospel of the Old Testament (Psalm 97:1; 99:1: 47:8). This truth ought to bring hands together in loud claps and voices that whoop and holler.

In the following verses the psalmist gives reasons for this shout of victory.

2 For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

"terrible" (yare') means "to be feared."

Reason One: There are many gods, but the LORD is the Most High — a God to be feared (terrible) by all the nations of the earth. We are not slaves under some despot; we are made kings under the Most High.

The phrase "a great King over all the earth" is the principal message of this psalm. He rules the world. Nations rise and fall because He is the universal sovereign. He governs. He leads. He restrains. He rewards and He punishes. His grace and justice is upon all. And, He does no man wrong.

In Hebrew parallelism, "great" and "most high" are comparable adjectives.

Clap and shout for the Most High God is great in power, great in knowledge, and great in mercy. Cherubims above the mercy seat stand ready to serve His sovereignty, and marvel that His mercy endures for ever. He brings gentiles into his fold, not for slaughter, but for salvation.

3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

Reason Two: He reigns over us for our good.

The verb “subdue” can mean “to chose” or “to speak” or “to command.” It feels like He is saying, “I intentionally chose you as my inheritance to be your guide on the rocky trails of life;” or, “He shall speak (command) the people to be under us;” that is, He chose us to be rulers and not slaves.

“it is reasonable to conclude, that the bringing the nations of the earth to the knowledge and worship of Jehovah, and under subjection to the gospel, whereby, instead of being slaves, they were made free from the bondage of sin and death, was the great subject signified by these magnificent expressions” (Benson).

His Word is the agency of nations subjecting themselves to His authority. What kind of Champion is Christ who conquers people, and then showers them with gifts fit for a king (Ephesians 4:3-10)?

4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

Reason three: “He shall choose our inheritance for us” referring to the land of Canaan as the inheritance of Israel, or more completely, He chose us to participate in the glories of His kingdom by giving us land.

“the excellency of Jacob” refers to the Holy Land (Deuteronomy 8:7-9; 2 Kings 18:22). Psalm 47:4).

The verb “choose” (bachar) is in an imperfect — a future tense causing us to consider God choosing the church to share in the “common wealth of Israel” and in the glories of His salvation. The view “that all the promises are mine” comes into play here.

Moreover, “the meek shall inherit the earth.”

5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

Reason four: The LORD has ascended His throne and is ruling over the affairs of men.

Trumpets were used in Israel to warn, to proclaim, and to announce important events.

“gone up” refers to the Ark being brought to Jerusalem in triumphal procession to install Him as King of the Nations — a marvelous celebration where the LORD ascended His throne to rule over a grateful people.

Picture in your mind's eye people shouting, clapping, and trilling when the Ark was brought to Mt. Moriah (Jerusalem) to reign over Israel; moreover, consider the ascension of Christ when the Son completed his work on earth and ascended the throne at the right hand of the Father with trumpets blasting and angelic choirs singing.

Reasons to Sing and to Praise God

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

The command “sing” and the word “praises” is repeated four times in this verse. Emotional interjections of shouts and clapping are not enough. Poets compose artistic lyrics and choirs

must be organized to celebrate the reign of the King . . . the reign of the sovereign, merciful LORD God. Men have yet to exhaust their talents in commemorating the glorious reign of this triumphant Savior-King.

7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

Before us is another prime statement: "For God is the King of all the earth."

The Lord is not just King of Israel, but King over all the earth. He is not only my King, but King of the Nations. It is one thing to say "God is the King of all the earth;" and, it is another matter to understand it and to "stand under" this truth in the time of trouble. It was this message of King Jesus that "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6-7).

8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

This text is the cardinal truth of this psalm: *The Lord Reigns Over the Nations*.

Biblical minds understand that God reigns over His people, but it takes a spiritually dilated mind to perceive He rules over the nations with all their imperfections.

The word "heathen" (gowy) refers to the nations.

"God sitteth upon the throne" is Hebrew parallelism for the foremost statement, "God reigneth."

"upon the throne of holiness" instructs us that His reign includes judgment as well as beneficence.

9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

"shields" is a metonym for the protection governments provide for their people.

The "princes of the earth" refer to kings, chancellors, and heads of state. The "shields of the earth" include the kings of ancient Israel descended from Abraham and the armies of Babylon, Persian, Greece, Rome, Egypt, Syria, Britain, France, Germany, China, Japan, Australia, India, Angola, Libia, Argentina, Canada, and the United States. All are under His authority and injunction.

The psalmist ends with a final thought: "He is greatly exalted." Consider our Lord Jesus Christ Who is sitting . . . not just upon the throne of David . . . but at the right hand of the Father on the throne of God in majesty, glory, and power with all things under His feet.`

The fulfillment (Acts 2) is always greater than the promise (2 Samuel 7).

Living in an insane asylum? Walking on a knife's edge? The Lord reigns! Know it; believe it, rest in it.

Psalm 48 - Our God Forever and Ever

God Will Establish Our City



Due to a mighty deliverance, enthusiasm is the heart-throb of this psalm.

Because this psalm praises the victories over confederate kings, the Assyrian invasion under Sennacherib circa 701 BC best coincides with the enthusiastic triumphal theme cherished by the composer in this psalm . . . but the songsmith may have another victory in mind which is unknown to

us.

Great Victories Call for Great Celebrations

The Great King and His Great City

1 (A Song and Psalm for the sons of Korah.) Great (gadol = intense or large) is the LORD, and greatly (me'od = exceeding) to be praised (halal = boast) in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

This psalm thunders with jubilation.

Great thoughts about a Great God call for great praises to be sung by great minstrels (“for the sons of Korah”) so that great truths can be shared with future generations.

The proud cadence of military victory parades itself through this canticle for inspection by now-time soldiers. Some terror brooded over the people causing them to panic. Shouts of joy due to the muscle and might of the LORD erupted as the people realized that their God delivered them from the Assyrians.

“in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness” refers to beloved Jerusalem under siege by the Assyrians who had trapped the city “like a bird in a cage” (Prism of Sennacherib).

The metaphor “mountain of holiness” refers not so much to religious / patriotic feelings, but to the fact Jerusalem is the place God chose to manifest His character and power to the people. Jerusalem was separated from the cities of the world to be His earthly palace — His beachhead for defeating Satan, sin, and death; and, winning hearts to the one true God.

Because God defended his own city without blood on a Hebrew sword, the people erupted with shouts of joy. They realized their God was not just a local deity, but the one true God who is “the joy of the earth” (48:2) and the praise of all men “to the ends of the earth” (48:10).

Almost every country in the world has a “maiden icon” (maiden castle) upon which the people derive inspiration to fight present conflicts. For Britain, it is Dorchester; for Americans it is Fort McHenry in Baltimore where the “Star-Spangled Banner” was written; for ancient Israel it is

Jerusalem; for Christians it is the cross and heavenly Jerusalem of which earthly Jerusalem is a type.

Ellicott notes “The grand words of Isaiah about this very Assyrian invader are our answer to all fears within and foes without: ‘Say unto him, the virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee (37:22). . . . I will defend this city to save it for My own sake, and for My servant David’s sake.’ (Isaiah 37:35-36).

This text is our anchor of hope. The church and its gospel ministry will never be defeated (see v. 8).

2 Beautiful (yaphea) for situation (elevation or height), the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

“Beautiful for situation” (noph) directs the reader’s attention to Jerusalem’s unique “elevation” and “location” in the Judean Hills away from the corridors of international travel in the western hills. Jerusalem was God’s sanctuary where the “Lord of Hosts” established his authority before launching operations to take jurisdiction over all the earth through gospel preaching (Acts 2).

“Sides of the north” refer to the northern quarter of Jerusalem, the highest hill in the city on which the temple was constructed; that is, Jerusalem was not only a place of worship for the people, but the throne of its Great King. The defeat of the Assyrians was proof of claim that there is one true God who ruled “the whole earth” from ancient Jerusalem — a joy for all God-fearing men and women in every nation of the world who know that the God of the Bible is the God of all men.

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

Elohim is not only the God of the common people, but a Great King from Whom princes and parliamentarians can seek counsel. This is the Spirit’s way of informing men that those living under the shadow of His authority are safer and secure than other cities with their great motes and castles.

The Great Kings of the Earth that Threatened Jerusalem

4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

“The kings . . . assembled” refers to Assyrian forces with confederate kings and legions of soldiers camped around Jerusalem eager to kill and plunder the Lion’s capital city.

Likewise, every generation faces madmen hell bent on obtaining power and plunder.

The Terrified Kings Ruined by God’s Great Reign in Jerusalem

5 They saw it, and so they marvelled (tamah = astounded); they were troubled (bahal = alarmed, terrified), and hasted away.

There is no “and” in this text; that is, verse 4 and 5 perform one phenomenal thought about the stunning defeat of Sennacherib’s army.

During the night, God sent his death angel to the camp of the Assyrians killing one-hundred and eighty-five thousand soldiers. Thus, this text describes the panic-reaction of the surviving commanders. When the generals saw the corpses of their soldiers in the camp, they were struck with panic and confusion. Aghast with fear, they fled the killing fields as fast as their hot-blooded, broad-chested Appaloosas could pound hoof.

6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.

The metaphor “pain as of a woman in travail” describes the trembling terror and gut-wrenching distress that seized the surviving infantry.

7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

Tarshish refers to the territorial waters of Morocco, Spain, and Gibraltar.

“Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish” is a mariner metaphor describing the horrors seamen feel when their ships break apart shattering wooden beams during a fierce electrical-thunder storm killing hundreds of men in an instant. Like sailors seized with terror when their ships capsize, so terror shattered the confidence of the Assyrian generals.

The Great Promise of Redemption

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

“As we have heard” refers to the ancient story of God destroying Pharaoh at the Red Sea which every Hebrew knew by heart.

“so have we seen” likens salvation during the time of King Hezekiah to their ancestors’ deliverance from Pharaoh under Moses. The story of the exodus took on new meaning as they experienced the same wonderful powers from the existing threat of the Assyrian forces as did their fathers during the Exodus Period.

For “God will establish it for ever” is a pledge of eternal stability for the past (Israel) as well as the future (the church – the new Israel). Every generation can lay hold of this promise for “He is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

“We have thought of thy lovingkindness” seems to refer to reflections on God received from liturgical services connected with worship in the temple — reflections realized anew in their experiential-triumph over the Assyrians.

10 According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.

The term “name” appears to be a metonym for “fame.”

“thy right hand is full of righteousness” refers to the Source of salvation. Instead of emotional revenge full of thunderbolts from a mean-spirited deity, the deliverance from Assyrian malice is attributed to the equitable justice of God.

Great Joy Regarding Salvation

11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

“judgments” refer to the defeat of the Assyrians.

How should the people of God respond to the gavel of Divine justice falling on His enemies? Not with ghoulish masochism, but with joy and gladness appropriate for righteous people.

“daughters of Judah” refers to the spontaneous joy and delight often expressed by women — an example which all righteous men should emulate during displays of Divine justice.

“Rejoice” is a positive command that takes affirmative action. For some, being glad requires decisive effort. The application is for us to double our pains to rejoice; to stir our own soul to rejoice. So important is this command, Paul repeats it twice in Philippians 4:4. Rejoice, soul, rejoice!

12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

“Walk about Zion” is a call for patriots to inspect Jerusalem’s defenses and to perceive the presence of God which had protected them during the Assyrian siege.

“Tell” is an encouragement for eyewitnesses to declare their story. During the Assyrian encampment, Hezekiah ordered a military rule of silence. But, after the stunning defeat of their enemies, the composer exhorted each person to share their story — to go about the city praising and blessing the LORD God Who had marvelously delivered them from the terror of Assyrian swords.

13 Mark (divide) ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

Because the next generation needed to learn the lessons of salvation, God ordered the victors to mark each detail of the victory and to inscribe it with an iron stylus on the minds of the people. The people were not saved by stones and mortar, but by the heavy-hand of God. Forgetfulness is the wrong of a compromised people, but remembrance of God’s works is the wealth of a God-fearing people. “Do this in remembrance of me . . .” ordered Jesus.

14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

The One delivering Jerusalem from the malicious plans of Sennacherib was God . . . our God. The truth passed on to the next generation was this God is a powerful, caring shepherd — a “forever God” and a “now-God” that will guide each man through life . . . through the perils of death . . . to His heavenly home where their will be no more invasions, suffering, or death. Hallelu-jah!

As great as the victory over the Assyrians became to Israel, nothing compares to the war and triumph of Christ at Calvary. For the One defeating death at the cross “. . . is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

Psalm 49 - Why Should I Fear?

The Foolishness of Trusting in Wealth



We don't know the name of the author of the psalm. It could have been written by any Israelite trapped in a society where wealth was the ultimate value.

This psalm is the same title as Psalm 42:1-11; 44; 45; Psalm 46:1-11; Psalm 47:1-9 (Barnes).

The psalmist wrestles with his fears and status in life and in so doing discovers the answer to the question, "Why should I fear?"

The value of the psalm is that it answers the most fundamental question of life.

Wisdom for the World

Psalm 49:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.> Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:

"Hear" is an invitation for those seeking wisdom. He wants men to read this psalm and carefully consider the answers he discovered to questions he had during his pilgrimage on earth.

2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together.

This psalm offers wisdom whether one is rich or poor, young or old, male or female.

3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

So important is this psalm, one's eternal destiny rests on the truth penned by this seeker of truth. The psalmist expresses confidence his "meditation(s)" belong with the wisdom of sages and that they deserve attention.

4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

So important is the psalmist's search, it had to be set to music so all could learn the wisdom of his answers.

The word "parable" is not referring to a New Testament parable, but to a maxim of truth, a poem, an apologue, or short wise answer to a complex question.

"upon the harp" is that this pithy answer should be set to music so all can easily learn the riposte to his complex question(s).

The Perplexing Question Investigated by the Psalmist

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

The Great Question is, “Why should I not fear the power of the rich?” Or, “On what grounds can I live a fear free life?” Apparently, rich men in positions of power perplexed and unsettled him. His fear of the wealthy and powerful sent him on a journey for an answer that would ease his anxiety and bring him peace.

The whole psalm revolves around the answer to a perplexing question. In asking this question to his peers on how to live a fear free life, many answered “Money!” But, the psalmist was not fooled by this answer, and in researching the question, he found the grounds of peace — an answer he ranked with the wisdom of the ages (v. 3).

There are no shortages of answers as to what “the days of evil” are or to what the psalmist is referring when he says, “when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?”

Is he referring to the heels of his own iniquity, or to circumstances of poverty, or to the iniquity of others against him, or to the heels of the rich which goaded him in the course of life?

Certainly, every man is chased by his own iniquity and needs to pray that his own sins do not dominate and conquer him.

But, the psalmist seems to be alarmed about the evil conduct of known adversaries.

The word “heels” demands we interpret this text in reference to Jacob who “in the womb he held his brother by the heel” (compare Genesis 25:26; Hosea 12:3); that is, the psalmist is plagued by those seeking to supplant him . . . that buffeted him in the course of a business day . . . that used their wealth to intimidate him. Further, the context demands we interpret “the iniquity of my heels” as referring to the rich who rose to power due to their fortune, opposed a religious trust in the LORD as not being pragmatic, and sought to dominate him due to their wealth and prestige.

Jeremiah 9:4 – Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

In modern times, due to the media, Christians are much more aware of the conspiracies of the rich and famous to enslave and control humanity. Consequently, the lessons of this psalm are precious to all those trusting in the Lord.

The Answer for those Who Trust in Wealth

All men have fears and the answer to most fears is “make more money.” But, the psalmist rebuts this presumption.

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 soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) 9 That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

The psalmist offers the following reasons why poor men should not be intimidated by those “that trust in their wealth . . . in the multitude of their riches.”

Trusting in wealth is foolish because a man’s soul can’t be redeemed with money . . . it can’t buy a man’s way into “for ever” land . . . nor can it save a man from the grave (corruption).

The issue before the psalmist is not “eternal life” as in the gospels, but mortal life. Money cannot prevent death or prolong life.

10 For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

Trusting in wealth is foolish because it can’t save a man from death. Though the elite know this, they still trust in wealth.

From a Christian perspective, trusting in wealth is foolish because a man can’t take his wealth “to heaven.” Rather, he has to leave his gold and silver to others.

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.

Trusting in wealth is foolish because the grounds of trusting in wealth rest on a false premise, “that their house shall continue for ever . . . to all generations” . . . that their names shall last forever because of their financial success. Name the richest men in 1950, 1850, 1750. Who cares?

The psalmist observed the wealthy live under the false presumption that their estate will last forever.

12 Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.

Trusting in wealth is foolish because it does not provide everlasting honor . . . both the man, his status in society and his prestige among men perish; that is, rich men are soon forgotten.

13 This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

It is foolish to believe that wealth can deliver one from the grave . . . to suppose that men will remember you for your financial success; and it is just as foolish for those who approve and applaud men the rich because wealth cannot deliver a man from the terrors of death.

Trusting in wealth is foolish because it is it is unwise to place so much importance on money; “to imagine that it can deliver from the grave; to suppose that he can perpetuate his own name, and secure his possessions in his own family upon the earth” (Barnes).

14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

Trusting in wealth is foolish because money has yet to deliver one rich man from the grave. Like sheep, all die. All are on the same level six feet under.

Trusting in wealth is foolish because death reigns -- death “shall rule over them.”

Trusting in wealth is foolish because there is a day coming when the upright shall “shall have dominion” over the arrogant and presumptuous. We live in an aeon of darkness. But, morning is coming when “the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye (those that trust God) shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall” (Malachi 4:2).

The Answer for His Own Soul

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

Trusting in God is wise because He has the power deliver men from death . . . from the power of the grave . . . from eternal judgment . . . from the fires of hell. The psalmist did not have a New Testament perspective, but he had amazing faith for his time. Let us include gospel thinking as we meditate on the psalmist wisdom.

Trusting in God is wise because those who trust Him have the assurance of eternal life – “he shall receive me.” Selah = stop and think about this.

16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

Thus, the psalmist addresses his own soul: “Be not thou afraid” (O, Soul) when one is made rich . . . accumulates wealth . . . is highly successful . . . is the object of jealous by the poor . . . is honored by the rich and famous . . . is lifted up as the model man do not be afraid.

The command to “fear” not includes rebuking all negative emotions: worry, concern, fretting, anger, jealousy, envy, alarm, panic, insecurity, et al.

The Fate of those Who Trust in Wealth

17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

The psalmist teaches us the hard truth that the rich cannot take their wealth with them, nor can they take their highly prized fame to heaven; that in hell, there are no claps or applause for being rich on earth. He is a poor man indeed who can only measure wealth with shekels.

18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.

We learn the temporal nature of riches. The elite cannot take their reputation or status among men into eternity. In the gospel we learn that without the Savior men will go to hell; that in hell, the rich are a nobody . . . that in hell no one praises the former wealth of the rich.

We learn the foolishness of thinking that wealth is a means of blessings to the soul. All should know that things cannot satisfy the soul, protect the soul, or enrich the soul. So why trust in riches? Wealth cannot save a man from the grave . . . or save his soul from hell.

We learn that worldly men esteem wealth and therefore praise the rich; that the world praises men with big bank accounts. But, God praises those who trust Him and serve others. No one will praise the millionaires in hell.

19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

The wealthy die like all men, but in hell there is no light, no hope, nothing to see, and no way to escape the shoreless sea of death and the midnight of suffering.

“When wealth is lost, nothing is lost; when health is lost, something is lost; when character is lost, all is lost” (Billy Graham).

20 Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

A rich man who thinks he is special for being wealthy and does not understand that his esteem among men is temporary, are as a dumb as horny toad.

Learn from psalmist and be wise!

“Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; Where your treasure is, there is your heart; Where your heart is, there is your happiness” (Augustine).

“It is the heart that makes a man rich. He is rich or poor according to what he is, not according to what he has” (H.W. Beecher).

Psalm 50 - Prayer as a Legal Pleading

Psalm 50:15 "And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me."



A child of God will never know God's strength until he has met adversity.

Trouble may be the black horse upon which blessing rides.

You can find Christ in an empty wallet but He is seldom found in a cash box. There is something about difficulty that causes us to dig deeper, pray better, and work harder. Out of the darkness white lilies grow.

At one stage in my ministry, I was unfairly sued for five million dollars along with my Christian friend in retaliation for doing my duty as a minister of Christ. Though I did nothing wrong, I was concerned.

I found myself spending hours at the library reading frantically through law books to figure out how to defend myself. My whole life was turned upside down. I did not understand legalese (lawyer talk), comprehend procedure, or know diddly-squat about courts and judges.

With the help of my lawyer friend, I scratched out "an answer to the complaint," "a motion to dismiss," "a counter complaint," and "a motion for summary judgment." Over a few months my knowledge of shuffling legal cards increased and my confidence grew. On the day of my hearing, I presented my defense and the judge dismissed all charges against me because the plaintiff's accusations were divorced from the facts. But, the judge sustained my counter complaint! What an ordeal! What an education!

One thing I learned is that prayer is much like a legal pleading, and if you will learn to plead your case properly before the High Court of Heaven, your prayers can be more effective.

The Standing of the Righteous

You can prevail in prayer in the day of trouble by properly pleading your case.

Plead your Obedience to the Summons

Psalm 50:1 <A Psalm of Asaph.>

1 The mighty God, even the LORD, 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. 3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. 4 He shall call to the heavens from 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.

“The Mighty God even the Lord” speaks and summons the earth . . . that He may judge his people.

His summons is an authoritative citation ordering a defendant into court to face a charge . . . or to receive justice due.

Right or wrong, true or false, convenient or inconvenient, if the defendant does not show up for court, presumption of guilt prevails and the plaintiff will be awarded a judgment.

It is the Judge, the Might One (El), God (Elohim), the Lord (YHWH) who issues the summons. It must be obeyed!

A summons from God is not optional. When we come before the Throne of Grace, we are not there because of human presumption, but by Divine command. Prayer is not man’s invention, man’s prerogative, or man’s contrivance. Prayer is simply obedience to an Order of the Court, and we would do well to honor it. Failure to appear shows contempt of court. It also creates a presumption of guilt. Furthermore, failure to appear can result in a heavenly bench warrant. When you pray, acknowledge that you are before the Bench in response to His summons.

Plead the Power of the Court

The said purpose of the summons is stated: *“that He may judge His people.”*

A judge not only condemns, he justifies; he not only punishes offenders, he protects victims. In the Book of Judges, Israel’s judges rose up to defend the nation against foreign powers that had enslaved them. Moreover, there is forgiveness in this court. This judge is a savior, not an accuser; a victor rather than a villain; a warrior king rather than a wailing prosecutor. The purpose of this summons is for protection. The judge intends to bless, not condemn.

Yes, the Judge has a complaint against His people, but his purpose is to remove the offense in order to bless His people. Selah.

No claim is charged against His people. He is an advocate, not an adversarial witness.

Plead the Proper Party

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.

A hearing before a court cannot occur unless the proper parties are present and there is “a ratification of commencement. A proper party is one who has an inherent interest in the subject-matter of the litigation. In fact, ratification of commencement ought to be the first order of business in any court (Rule 17).

Here God calls upon His people to appear in His Court. He calls them, “His consecrated ones” (godly ones) and those “who made a covenant with Him.” Who are you? Are you one of His people in His kingdom jurisdiction? Have you made a covenant with Him? Are you a Party Injured?

If your answer is “yes,” you are the Proper Party and you have a right to appear and motion the Court to provide a remedy. God has set His love upon you, elected you before the foundation of

the world, and washed you in the blood of the Lamb. Surely, of all people, you have a right to move the Court for injunctive relief.

If you are not “godly” and are not a partaker of the “new covenant,” then you are not the Proper Party and you have no right to approach the Bench of Almighty God! You are in the wrong jurisdiction. Stop praying and go to your god-government for a remedy.

Plead In Personam Jurisdiction of the Court

Psalm 50:7 “Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.”

Jurisdiction is a term of paramount importance. It determines the powers of the courts to inquire into facts, apply laws, make decisions, and declare a judgment. It is the first issue to be decided in any case. Does the court have the authority to hear the case? An American living in the U.S.A. has no duty to the laws of Russia. A New York Court cannot try a Delaware resident. A federal court has no jurisdiction over a private Citizen. A State court only has jurisdiction over state officers, state corporations, and other jural persons.

“Hear, O my people” - God commands because He has in personam jurisdiction over His people. Heaven’s Court has jurisdiction over “the earth” (50:1), “the east and west” (50:2), “Zion” (50:2), the “heavens” (50:4), “his people” (50:4), and the “saints” (50:5), but the “wicked” have no right to petition the Honorable Court (50:16). If you are God’s child, the Court has jurisdiction over you and all subject matter. You have a right to plead your case before the Judge.

The word “against” means “surrounding your concerns.” God is **not** an opponent or adversary. He is an Advocate-Witness, **not** a prosecutor.

Furthermore, He has subject matter jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to His law and His people. And, He has territorial jurisdiction seeing that the “earth is the Lord’s and the people thereof” (Psalm 24:1).

The Judge claims his power to “testify against thee,” **but** there is no claim, no indictment, and no accusation mentioned in this case . . . or throughout this summons-psalm. Though deeply flawed, the sins of the people are not mentioned in this Court. How can they? The Son paid for all those sins at the cross and then made his people “perfect” forever through His one perfect sacrifice at the cross (Hebrews 10). All of God’s people have a righteous standing (justified) in this Court (Romans 3:21-28; 4:5; 5:1).

Plead the Competence of the Court

8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been 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 fowls 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?

The Judge is omniscient. He knows all things. He knows all the birds in the air and all the beasts in the fields. Justice is His profession. He wrongs no man, and He cannot be bribed.

The purpose of coming into court is not to be charged and rebuked. The text says, “I will **not** testify against thee.”

Plead with Honor and “clean hands” to the Court

Psalm 50:14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

The imperative “offer” (shabah) means “to sacrifice,” “slaughter,” or “kill” — a reference to worship and devotion.

The word “thanksgiving” (todah) means “to throw up the hands” as in praise or as in taking an oath of devotion to the Lord.

The Hebrew word for “pay” is *shalam*. It means “to deliver one’s self from faults”, “to surrender,” or “to submit” one’s self to the authority of the LORD God. Since God summons his people to Court, the word “pay” implies “surrender” to His jurisdiction — to His authority as Judge.

The name of this Judge is the “Most High” in English and *elyown* in Hebrew. Since there are many gods and many jurisdictions with differing laws and rules, God is calling men to recognize Elohim as the Most High God, the “Possessor of Heaven and Earth,” the God of Mechizedek and Abraham (Genesis 14:18; Deuteronomy 28:1) — the One Sitting in the ‘Upper Chambers’ of this Court.

Plead the Order

15 And call upon me . . .

The Court has ordered you to “Call . . . in the day of trouble” (50:15).

By calling, you are not being a pest or a nuisance. You are not an inconvenience. A judge’s order must be obeyed! Prayer is the proper way of motioning the Court to act. David motioned the Court, “Hear my prayer,” a Qal command in Hebrew (Psalm 4:1). It is no mistake that the language of prayer is in the imperative. The petitioner respectfully moves the Court to honor this motion.

His Court is never closed. Never too busy; never over scheduled; never bogged down with cases. He has commanded you to come. An order of the Court is not to be ignored. Would He have delivered the summons if He did not intend to honor the purpose of it?

Plead the Character of the Judge

“ . . . call upon me . . . ”

In our country the courts are considered incorruptible, and they are! The judges sitting on the bench, however, are very flawed, fractured, biased administrators.

But, not so with Heaven’s Judge. He is too good to be corrupted; too righteous to be partial; too holy to be tainted; too just to be unfair; too gracious to be critical of what may appear to be petty

concerns of imperfect prayers and imperfect devotion. Come before His Majesty and say, “Lord, I appeal to You who are too great to change, too good to lie, too compassionate to overlook my plight . . . I pray you would . . .”

The Judge is not poor. “Every creature in the forest” and “every bird in the mountains” and “the cattle on a thousand hills” are His (Psalm 50:1-12).

The Judge is not stubborn and unwilling. He has commanded you to “Call.”

The Judge is not unable, “for nothing shall be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37). If necessary, He will shake heaven and earth to come to your rescue. He will provide a path through your Red Sea.

Plead the Opportunity

. . . me in the day of trouble:

Trouble is an opportunity. God cannot deliver a man who is not in trouble, or heal a man who is not sick, enrich a man who is not poor, or forgive a man who is not sinful. Trouble gives you the right to expedite your case; the right for special considerations; and, the right to waive honorable court rules.

Illustration: Do you remember the elections of 1990 when Bush defeated Gore in Florida by only a few hundred votes? Lawyers challenged the election process and motioned the Supreme Court to expedite their case because of the election crisis. The Court dispensed with special publication rules. Instead, the lawyers submitted their briefs on regular 8 ½ x 11 paper.

Likewise, if you are in a day of trouble, surely, the Court will waive certain expectations. You haven’t time to tweak your prayers and adjust your motions. Just get into the Courtroom and plead your cause. The day of trouble is a day of opportunity.

Plead the Time

“ . . . call upon me in the day of trouble.”

Trouble happens to all men. When trouble knocks on the door, it is time to pray.

When you prey to the Court you are obeying His Order!!

Maybe you have a wayward son, or in a health crisis, or financial need. Yesterday, you were not in trouble. Today you need deliverance. Tomorrow will be too late. If it is a midnight hour and there are only a few grains left in the hourglass, then plead the time — the day of trouble.

Plead the Promise

“ . . . I will deliver thee.”

The text says, “ Call . . . and I will deliver you.” The word, “deliver” (chalats) is a Piel verb meaning that extra intensity is intended in the deliverance.

The word “deliver” means “to draw out.” It is translated “tear out the stones” in Leviticus 14:40 supplying the imagery of removing difficult, heavy problems. It is translated “watered garden”

in Isaiah 58:11 implying that God will refresh the weary soul. It is translated “to present the breast” in Lamentations 4:3. The imagery here is of nursing mother pulling out her breast to give her crying baby milk to drink and comfort to feel.

The phrase “I will” certifies, verifies, and validates the Judge will honor His promise. He Who is holy and just, can be nothing but faithful and true.

The fact that the Judge will deliver is forever settled – *Furthermore saith not!* The gavel comes down and the matter is settled.

But, what is not settled is the “when” of the deliverance.

For this, the supplicant trusted Wisdom of the Court, for the “spirit of wisdom and understanding” are upon Him (Isaiah 11:2). God is seldom early, never late, and always on time.

Plead the Proper Object

Psalm 50:15 “I will deliver You.”

Will He deliver everyone else, but not me?

The “you” in this verse refers back to “his people,” “my consecrated ones,” “my people” and to “Israel” (Psalm 50:4, 5, 7).

You who have put your faith in Christ, are you not a son of Abraham (Galatians 3:7)? Are you not a member of the “called out ones,” the true Israel of God (Matthew 16:16; Romans 9:6)? Having received Christ are you not now His child (John 1:12-13)? Maybe, He will not answer the wicked, but surely He will answer you, a member of His family. Maybe, He will not answer the backsliding Christian, but surely He will answer You -- the one who is walking with integrity.

You may say, “But I am flawed. How can God answer me?” Even better! Plead your weakness. It was to an imperfect, flawed, fractured ritualistic people to whom the promise was given (50:8-14). Did not God say to the ailing apostle, “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9)?

He does not answer the prayers of perfect people . . . because there are none. Only Jesus is all-good. He answers the prayers of humble, repentant sinners; and, His responsible, obedient sons and daughters.

Plead the Purpose of the Court

50:15 “ . . . I will deliver you, but you shall glorify Me.”

You can have the deliverance, but God must have the glory. You can have your health, but God must have the honor. You can have your win, but God must receive the worship. You can have your pardon, but God must have the praise. If you are a thief of God’s glory, how can He honor His promise to deliver?

The only uncertain thing about this promise is the “When?” While we wait for God to work, we wait in darkness where the white lilies grow.

The Lack of Standing of the Unrighteous

16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? 17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee. 18 When thou sawest a thief, then 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 an 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.

The Judge does not operate on presumption. God hears the prayers of sinners, but the self-righteous, proud, and lawless have no standing in His Court.

Plead with Thanksgiving for Giving Thanks Glorifies God

50:23 Whoso offereth (todah) praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth (suwm) his conversation (derek – way) aright will I shew the salvation (yesha) of God.

Every pleading must honor the court. Praising God and speaking well of Him, glorifies Him. The Devil hates it; God loves it. Praise acts like incense carrying our weak, flawed prayers to Heaven.

Note the promise of the Court. The one who approaches the court with respect and honor can expect to see “the salvation of God” in relation to his trouble.

Does God delay?

He did with Mary’s prayer for her sick brother (John 11). But, maybe a resurrected Lazarus could bring Him more glory than a recovered Lazarus?

Did God wait 14 years to answer the prayer of aging Abraham? Maybe, a child from an old man and an old woman could bring Him more glory than the gift of a child to a young bride.

Did Jacob’s plea for protection and prosperity happen in the first year of his departure from Canaan? Maybe, an impoverished patriarch with no commodities, two wives, and eleven children could bring Him more glory than a wealthy single bachelor.

After defeating Goliath, could not God have made David king of Israel? Maybe, an innocent but vilified fugitive seasoned by years of hardship would make a better king than a naïve boyhood-king.

“Out of the Darkness

Out of the dark forbidding soil

The pure white lilies grow.

Out of the black and murky clouds,
Descends the stainless snow.
Out of the crawling earth-bound worm
A butterfly is born.
Out of the somber shrouded night,
Behold! A golden morn!
Out of the pain and stress of life,
The peace of God pours down.
Out of the nails — the spear — the cross,
Redemption — and a crown! (Source Unknown).

It is not a mistake that a pleading is called “a prayer” in court. Prayer is much like a legal pleading, and if you will learn to plead your case properly before the High Court of Heaven, your prayers can prevail.

Personal note: On that five million dollar lawsuit. We entered into negotiations and I came away from the bargaining table with a handsome settlement. Six weeks later, my adversary declared bankruptcy but called me and promised to pay. A year later the man’s wife died. But, he sent me letters letting me know he would pay me. I wrote him a letter cancelling the entire debt encouraging Him to find consolation in Christ. Writing back, he expressed profound thankfulness and wonderment in what he called “an amazing Christian expression of love and forgiveness.”

Notes:

There is more to this psalm which is worthy of study: For example:

The Lack of Standing of the Unrighteous

Claim the Judges sanction of the wicked

The Bible contains two grand themes: The Day of Salvation, and the Day of Judgment; the baptism of the Spirit, and the baptism of wrath (John in Matthew 3); the exoneration of believers, and the condemnation of unbelievers; access to God by men of faith, and rejection for those without faith (John 3:36). Likewise, Psalm 50 presents two themes: the advantages of the righteous, and the disadvantages of the wicked; or, the standing of the righteous (50:1-15), and lack of standing of the unrighteous (50:16-23);

The Wicked have no standing in this Court

Psalm 50:16 But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?

The Wicked despise authority and violate the 1st Commandment

17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

The wicked have no standing in this Supreme Court, rights or privileges in this Court, but his “righteous” ones do.

The Wicked consent to crimes and are involved in a conspiracy to commit evil in violation of the 7th & 8th Commandment.

18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.

The Wicked commit fraud in violation of the 9th Commandment

19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

The wicked lie and commit murder in violation of the 6th and 9th Commandment

20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother’s son.

The wicked error in their theology

21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

The wicked are under command to acknowledge His authority and to submit to His law-order

22 Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

God promises salvation to those that acknowledge His sovereignty and surrender to His authority

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

Every pleading must honor the court. Praising God and speaking well of Him, glorifies Him. The Devil hates it; God loves it. Praise is like incense carrying our weak, flawed prayers to Heaven.

Note the promise of the Court. The one who approaches the court with respect and honor can expect to see “the salvation of God” in relation to his trouble.

Praise not only glorifies God, it opens the door for success (salvation).

Does God delay?

He did with Mary’s prayer for her sick brother (John 11). But, maybe a resurrected Lazarus could bring Him more glory than a recovered Lazarus?

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Redemption — and a crown! (Source Unknown).

It is not a mistake that a pleading is called, “a prayer” in court. Prayer is much like a legal pleading, and if you will learn to plead your case properly before the High Court of Heaven, your prayers can prevail. Furthermore, saith naught . . . well, almost.

Personal note: On that five million dollar lawsuit. We entered into negotiations and I came away from the bargaining table with a handsome settlement. Six weeks later, my adversary declared bankruptcy but called me and promised to pay. A year later the man's wife died. But, he sent me letters letting me know he would pay me. I wrote him a letter cancelling the entire debt encouraging Him to find consolation in Christ. Writing back, he expressed profound thankfulness and wonderment in what he called “an amazing Christian expression of love and forgiveness.”

Psalm 51 - Confession and Restoration

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.”



Except for verse 18, there is little doubt this psalm was written by David — the principle confession of his terrible sin regarding Uriah and Bathsheba. A required study for all who desire to walk with God in truth.

A Prayer for Pardon

Without any attempt to justify himself or to blame others, David confesses his sins and pleads for mercy. There is nothing superficial about this confession. David expresses deep repentance for his deep sins. He prays for pardon, for cleansing, for a new heart, for a new relationship, and for new joy.

That David could ever recover from such serious sins as adultery and murder is nothing short of astounding. Most of us believe God can forgive little sins, but believing that He will forgive big, fat, ugly, inexcusable sins is another matter.

Maybe the real miracle of this passage is that God heard his prayer, forgave the man, and then set about to mend and restore his sin-shattered soul.

The fact is that God did forgive David, but it is also a fact that David was never quite the same after his fall.

Forgiveness is available to all men, and some find it. But repairing the sin-tortured heart is like repairing a locomotive after a train wreck — very painstaking and difficult. Best not to sin in the first place.

Psalm 51:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

This is the utterance of a crushed, broken heart. David is not dealing with “guilt feelings,” but with true guilt, real guilt, real law, the breaking of law, condemnation, and the penalty for law-breaking. Hanging his head in shame, he pleads the mercy of the court.

There is no attempt to excuse his sin, to cover it up, or to justify his actions. Moreover, David does not complain about God’s law or the high standards or righteousness. Guilty and totally at fault, David pleads for mercy.

Deep sins call for deep repentance.

2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

This verse begins with an infinitive verb with an imperative meaning “multiply your washing toward me.” That is, David needed continual, constant, effective cleansing from the filth of his sins. He was not a victim of parental neglect or childhood traumas. He was totally responsible for his sin and therefore pleaded for total cleansing of his lust, his homicidal mania, hypocrisy, and hard-hearted cover up.

A warehouse full of Borax Soap could not cleanse his conscience, but the “blood of Christ” cleanses us from all sin. Sin is not in the environment. It is in me . . . in you . . . in all men.

3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

David did not hide or conceal his sin. He came clean and confessed the particulars of his sins. David does not play the victim. He was not a victim, but a predator; he was not injured, he did the injuring; he was not hurt, he did the hurting; he was not wounded, he did the wounding.

4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

David viewed his immoral acts as sin. These were not foibles, flaws, shortcomings, mistakes, or blemishes, but deliberate, willful acts of rebellion against God’s righteous law. He did not violate his own personal principles, but intentionally violated the law of the LORD God (the 10th, 7th, 6th, 8th, and 9th Commandments). Moreover, a case could be made that David violated all Ten Commandments.

David did not justify his acts; rather, he justified God by declaring His law to be right and just.

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

“shapen” means “molded.” David did not trace his sin back to his parents, early childhood training, or poverty, but to the fact that he was born a sinner with a desire and capacity to sin. Though inexcusable, David did what he wanted to do; and, what he wanted to do was sin. The problem was his own sin, not his parent’s sins, society’s sins, or his circumstances. He did not blame his environment or the government, but sin at work in his person.

David’s problem was not a lack of self-esteem, but too much self-esteem. He sinned when he became lust-centered instead of duty-centered.

6 Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

“desirest” means “to take pleasure in.”

God delights in truth; man takes pleasure in fables, fictions, and fantasies. To be right with God who is truth, one ought to give up fairy tales, myths, and utopian ideals; that is, a man desiring to be right with God repents of all that is contrary to truth (God’s law). He seeks deliverance from presumptions and falsehoods that trap him in sin.

7 Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Hyssop, a small minty plant, was used by Hebrews in their sacred rights and cleansing rituals. Thus, hyssop was a symbol of purification. David didn’t seek ceremonial cleansing, but

substantial cleansing by the power and purity of the Holy Spirit. Little did he know that his greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ, would have to shed His blood so he could be forgiven.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.

Instead of listening to the bone-crushing roars of guilt, David longed to hear the sweet harmonies of *shalom*.

Spiritual alarms blasted away in his conscience like air-raid sirens. The cacophony of ear-splitting sins with all their blaring discords deafened David to the Word of God. He longed for the quiet, peaceful melodies of “forgiveness,” “joy,” “gladness,” and “pardon.”

9 Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

“Hide thy face from my sins” (an anthropomorphism) – That is, do not look at them; take my trespasses away; turn your ears and eyes from my ugliness; do not let my sins march into Court and make charges against me. Please don’t allow these true witnesses to testify in this Court anymore. I admit I am guilty. Therefore, I plead the mercy of the Court.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

“Create” (*bara*) means to create something *ex nihilo* – something that was not there before (Genesis 1:1). Lord, you have every right to hand down a sentence belonging to murderers and adulterers, but hear my plea before the sentence is passed. I plead the mercy of this Court. Instead of executing your servant, create in me a clean heart, scrub me down, and wash me free from the power and defilement of sins that once ruled my heart.

11 Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.

“Cast me not away from thy presence” means do not reject me, abandon me, or throw me away like an oil-stained cloth. Please, LORD, do not leave me in my sin . . . to be ruled and controlled by the spirit of rebellion.

“take not thy holy spirit from me” should be taken in the Old Testament sense and not from a New Testament perspective. In David’s day, the Holy Spirit guided David, spoke to David and influenced him in good ways. David is praying that God would again be pleased to lead him by His Spirit. In no way is David thinking of the Spirit as the 3rd Person of the Trinity, the Agent of rebirth, the Payer of salvation, and the One indwelling the temple of his heart as the Representative of Christ.

12 Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

David knew what it was like to know God and to fellowship with Him . . . a delight which he lost when he sinned against God. His prayer is simply, “Cause your joy to return. Hold me up! Don’t destroy me.”

Before us is a great lesson of fellowship: the only way to enjoy “religion” is to do it right: to hear God’s Word, to obey it, and to keep short accounts of wrongdoing. There is no joy in being half-hearted and lukewarm.

A Prayer for Personal Restoration

Bowing to grace, David expresses how he will respond to forgiveness by humbly giving himself to praise and proclamation of righteousness.

13 Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

The “then” is not in the Hebrew. It was added by the translators to correctly separate these two sections in this psalm.

David jumps into the Hebrew religion with both feet. In befriending the LORD, he makes himself an enemy of sin; i.e. he not only forsakes sin, he devotes himself to building up the “church” in his day . . . to encourage others to repent, forsake their sin, and serve Him as Lord.

14 Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

“bloodguiltiness” refers to the sin of murder and penalties associated with crime: “life for life.” No doubt the plot to kill Uriah weighed heavily upon David’s conscience . . . and, rightly so. He sought deliverance from the pounding drums of guilt, shame, and judicial condemnation. If he was ever going to serve God again, he had to have a clear conscience. How can a man serve God with a dead chicken tied to his neck?

From a Biblical perspective, God **cannot** forgive sins just because men pray and ask to be forgiven. If this were the case, there would be no need for the Father to send His Son to die on the cross. Let all remember, that forgiveness is only possible because the Lamb of God accepted our sins, paid the debt by dying as our substitute on the cross.

Therefore, all confession and prayers for forgiveness must be grounded on the Savior’s sin-bearing work at Calvary. Without Christ it is not possible to obtain forgiveness. With the eye of faith, David anticipated a day when the Christ would pay for his sin; and, we look back in history with the eye of faith and claim the marvelous benefits of His propitiatory death on the killing tree (Romans 3:23-28).

15 O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.

Who can deny that David’s lips moaned and groaned over his sin? Somehow, someday, praise had to replace sorrow, happiness had to replace remorse, and confidence in God had to replace guilt. Open my lips to praise and not to grief.

16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.

Oh, that there was some ritual, some hill to climb, some log to carry, some sacrifice, and some holy-water ceremony that could wash away guilt, but there is none. There was no Levitical offering powerful enough to remove willful sin in the Old Testament. Only the blood of Christ and faith in His blood can cleanse the conscience of the sinner and restore joy to the heart (1 John 1:5-10: Hebrews 10:1-17).

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

Many people sin . . . but brokenness is as rare as pretty on an ape.

The word “contrite” means “to be broken and crushed to pieces.”

“I’m sorry” is not brokenness. Feeling bad is not the same thing as being broken over the energies of sin at work in the heart. Penance is not the same thing as repentance. True repentance says three difficult words, “I was wrong!” Brokenness involves a man staring at the law God with knees “a knockin” and with a floodlight on his heart. Remember the tax collector’s prayer. Pounding his chest, he cried, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

When it comes to repentance, God requires truth, brokenness, and humility. Fake repentance; quicky confessions; hum-drum prayers, and superficial sorrow do nothing to restore man to a right relationship to the Lord. God responds to truth . . . to humility . . . to grief over sin, and. to a submissive heart.

Sometimes, the way up is the way down. Darkness precedes the dawn. Sickness precedes healing. Authenticity precedes connectivity; and deep repentance precedes true restoration.

The good news of the psalm is that triumph follows trouble, kindness follows grief; forgiveness follows bent knees; healing follows honest confession; and, faith leads the parade of joy and gladness.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

This text may have been added during or after the exile in 586 B.C. Because there is no record of walls being in disrepair during David’s day, this prayer seems to be the concern of the exiles in Babylon. However, building the walls could be David’s metaphor requesting God to build and bless the nation.

Moreover, a healthy, restored heart will transition from a concern for one’s own soul to a concern for the souls of God’s people.

19 Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

The particle adverb “then” (kallyl) presupposes honest confession and contrition. Ceremonies are important, but not all important. Once the repentant confesses his sins in truth, he can rebuild healthy habits, renew religious rituals, and carry out the performance of religious duties. But, not until he has fulfilled the requirement of confessing and forsaking his sin.

Proverbs 28:13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

Psalm 52 - The Wicked Tongue

The Goodness of the Lord Endureth Forever



The background of this story is found in 1 Samuel 22 and Saul's slaughter of the priests at Nob.

The value of the psalm is that it is the only commentary on the tragic killings that took place in 1 Samuel 22; that is, this psalm explains the terrible slaughter of innocent priests and their households.

No doubt the HEADLINES for the liberal Gibeon Post would read:

"The King Orders the Execution of Rebel Priests and their Families."

The HEADLINES from the conservative Hebron Times would read quite differently:

"A Holocaust to Remember: The Government Goes on a Killing Rampage Murdering 85 Innocent Priests, 200 Helpless Women, Children and Babies . . . and 1000 Harmless Baby Lambs and Goats!"

The "wicked tongue" refers to the blabbermouth tongue of Doeg the Edomite, descendent of Esau, a duplicitous, money-hungry, power-seeking man among the servants of Saul.

Psalm 52:1 <To the chief Musician, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.>

In fleeing from Saul, David came to the tabernacle where Ahimelech served as high priest. Pretending to be on a military mission, David requested bread to eat, and Ahimelech gave David's men sacramental loaves from off the holy table — a lesson demonstrating that necessity takes priority over ceremony.

Doeg, according to the Talmud, was one of the most learned men of his time — "the greatest rabbinist" (Ellicott).

Calling Doeg an Edomite associated him with Esau who sought the destruction of Jacob, the Israel of God; that is, the one who persecuted David, the one destined to be king of Judah.

Doeg, "who stood with Saul's servants," saw Ahimelech show kindness to David. During the early days of Saul's pursuit of David, Doeg reported to Saul Ahimelech's mercy to the young general — not for the love of truth, but for political gain . . . as proof of loyalty to Saul who was beginning to show signs of delirium.

Saul ordered Ahimelech and the priests to appear before him to give account of their kindness to David. Saul represents the de facto government. More killing is done in the name of government than any other name. Governments killed over 160 million people in 20th century.

Thus, the government of Saul charged the priests with criminal conspiracy. Without due process, the Supreme Court Judge (Saul) issued a summary judgment for his military to execute the priests for high treason. But, his officers protested with silence refusing to carry out the groundless order. The king-judge of Israel's government, operating on the principle "guilty until proven innocent," barked out the execution order to Doeg, the government sycophant.

Eager to please Saul, he vigorously murdered Ahimelech along with 85 other priests. Moreover, Doeg rushed to the city of Nob and lifted up his sword against helpless wives, children, babies and livestock belonging to the dead, innocent priests — a Jewish holocaust against a Levite priestly family. Only Abiathar escaped.

During WWII the navy posted signs, "Loose lips sink ships" And this psalm is about Doeg's wicked tongue that censored the truth resulting in the tragic, inexcusable genocide of Abimelech's family.

Doeg the Edomite, in order to secure the favor of Saul, gladly obeyed the king's twisted order.

One of the main lessons of this psalm is that no man has the duty to tell the truth to men of power who will abuse the truth. Wisely, Saul's other officers remained silent. Doeg's legalistic dedication to a "tell all" policy and his perverted devotion to his rebellious boss was the cause of hundreds of deaths. Because he put devotion to the government above devotion to God, innocent people died.

The Damnable Character of the Informer

Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.

"mischief" (ra) means "evil."

The word "boastest" (halal) means "to shine." It is at the root of "hallelu-jah" except in this case Doeg shined for evil; that is, he thought of pleasing the king and being an executioner of priests made this man's face to light up with Devilish delight.

"Those that glory in sin, glory in their shame" (Matthew Henry).

"O mighty man" is sarcasm and not a compliment. Doeg was mighty in evil, in wickedness, and in depravity. More like a powerful thug, gang leader, or mafia figure, he lacked all the virtues of an *el gibbor*. Rejecting the omnipotent power of Almighty God, Doeg sought political power from the king of Israel.

"Clearly, if man will not worship God he will worship that which he believes will give him power" — Rushdoony.

"the goodness of God endureth continually" is the main lesson of the psalm. Literally it means "all day long" — the idea here is that Doeg's blow to the priesthood appeared to be a substantial victory by the powers of darkness. However, David assures us the goodness of God endures and prevails over evil; that Doeg's genocide did not diminish or damage the goodness of God; that there is nothing that evil men like Doeg can do to derail the purposes of God . . . the mercy of God . . . or the power of God.

“All things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Let us learn a lesson here. The media seems to possess a subtle joy in reporting negative news around the globe, but there is nothing the rich and powerful can do to frustrate the eternal purposes of the LORD God and His goodness toward men. History is headed toward the kingdom of God and there is nothing that deceivers can do to spoil God’s plan.

- The King Saul’s order to kill the priests of Nob did not diminish the goodness of God.
- The slaughter of men, women, children, and babies did not abate the goodness of God.
- The sudden death of a beloved family member does not arrest the goodness of God.
- The slaughter of innocents by governments does not frustrate the goodness of God.
- The senseless killing of Christians in church by an insane terrorist does not fetter the goodness of God.
- My death or your death will not disrupt the goodness of God.

God is good and always good. Even in bad times, rest under the cedar tree of God’s goodness. It “endures all day long.”

“Perhaps a clear sign of Christian maturity is the willingness to worship God when He has determined to be God hidden” – Rushdoony.

2 Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

“Thy tongue” is a metonym for Doeg . . . and his twisted ambitions. A sophisticated man, his words could not be trusted.

“deviseth” means “to plan, scheme, calculate, or invent.”

“mischiefs” (hav’vah) is a feminine, plural absolute in the emphatic position in the sentence; that is, this man’s mind was filled with devilment, Machiavellian motives, and venom.

“the tongue of man creates nearly all the mischief of the world” (writer Edwin Paxton Hood).

“like a sharp razor” is a metaphor for treachery, malice, and unrestrained recklessness. Doeg’s tongue was as sharp as a razor and it resulted in the bloody deaths of over 200 innocent people.

“Doeg, pretending only to vindicate himself from the imputation of disloyalty, 1 Samuel 22:8, really intended to expose the priests, who were friends to David, to the king’s fury and cruelty” (Benson).

3 Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

Doeg’s feigned political devotion to King Saul could easily be misinterpreted as loyalty and patriotism. David, however, takes us to the core of truth on this matter. Doeg murdered these innocent priests not for love of country but because he loved evil (Isaiah 5:20).

“Thou lovest . . . lying rather than to speak righteousness.” For the undiscerning legalist, it might appear Doeg did what he did because he loved the truth. However, this mess had nothing to do with truth and everything to do with fraud and financial gain.

His account was a lie about David being a disloyal servant . . . a lie about the motives of Ahimelech who exercised love and kindness toward hungry men; that is, helping David was not an act of disloyalty to Saul but an act of kindness acceptable to God. Saul concluded from Doeg’s report that David hated him; that Ahimelech had taken a political position against King Saul, and Doeg did nothing to defend David, Ahimelech, the innocent priests, or the truth. Doeg was a man willing to countenance the lie that this whole affair was a conspiracy against Saul. True men protest when their superiors jump to the wrong conclusion based on a distortion of facts.

“to speak righteousness” refers to the standard of speech — that is, God calls men to guard their tongues, to do what is right, and to speak what is right. In a sinful world where men are hell bent on doing evil, you do not owe the truth to men who will abuse the truth. Abraham did not share the absolute truth to Pharaoh (Genesis 12); the midwives did not share the truth to Pharaoh (Exodus 1); and, Daniel did not share the whole truth to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2). And, Doeg, instead of telling the whole truth only told the facts that fed Saul’s prejudice.

4 Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.

Again the “tongue” is a metonym for Doeg . . . his thinking processes and the instrument of lies.

The phrase “devouring words” refers to chosen words that “swallow up” . . . that trap and immediately persuade crowds . . . that appeal to one’s biases . . . that stir the emotions to support a political perspective. In the instant case, Doeg’s report about the alleged treason of David and Abimelech seemed plausible and credible . . . words that caused Saul to jump to conclusions with no need for investigation.

“devouring words” that if believed would result in death and destruction . . . like whales swallowing men whole . . . like lions tearing a man to shreds and then eating them.

“deceitful tongue” refers to the intent to defraud and to destroy — to malice aforethought.

Modernists call this fake news, rumor, hearsay, scandal, prejudicial reporting, propaganda, and brainwashing.

The Destruction of the Informer

5 God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

“destroy” means “to tear down” or “beat down” as demolishing a building.

“take thee away” — means to seize and carry away like cold coals from a fireplace. Barnes sees this as a man carrying a pan of hot coals out the house so they don’t burn the house down.

James’ metaphor for the tongue as fire and venom comes into focus here (James 3).

Changing metaphors from fires to gardening. David uses terms like “pluck up” and “root thee out” of the land to define how God is going to deal with weedy tongues. Liars and murderers are not welcome in God’s house . . . and choking weeds of malice are not welcome in His garden. Tares will be gathered and burned.

6 The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

Here we have the reaction of the pious to God’s judgment on liars and murderers. When the righteous see the collapse of deceivers, they experience mingled feelings of solace in the overthrow of the wicked and fear due to the power of God.

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.

The particle of interjection “Lo” means to “stop and study this.”

Gill says, the Targum renders it, “that made not the Word of the Lord his strength.” Literally, however, it should be translated, “Behold, the man does not set (or make) God his means of safety and protection.”

“this man” refers directly to Doeg the liar-murderer and all that follow in his footsteps. This is a man who trusted in his riches . . . in his wicked king . . . in political power instead of the God of power.

Here is a man “willing to purchase Saul’s favor at the expense of God’s displeasure” (Matthew Poole).

“Right or wrong, he would get what he could, and keep what he had, and ruin any one that stood in his way” (Matthew Henry).

“but trusted in his riches” -- Gill calls Doeg an anti-Christian whose boasting of his riches and trusting them. In actuality, he was a government sycophant. Merriam-Webster defines sycophant as “a servile self-seeking flatterer.” In layman’s terms, a sycophant is a brownnoser, a flunky, or a suck-up.

“and strengthened himself in his wickedness” -- Doeg not only invested his soul in money . . . he increasingly shed his interest in the Almighty while adding more stock in shekels to his portfolio.

The Destiny of David

8 But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.

“green olive tree” is a metaphor for prosperity. “green” represents the color of the tree and not its age.

While Doeg was investing his hope in money, David invested his precious all in the kingdom of God . . . “in the mercy of God.”

“for ever and ever” teaches us that David believed trusting God was not only a benefit in this life, but had eternal consequences. David was a green olive tree in the house of God because the power of love overcame the love of power.

9 I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.

David has no praise for the rich man who gained the favor of Saul by obeying his wicked orders.

“I will praise thee because thou hast done it” — The “it” refers to the destruction of David’s unrelenting enemies and his exaltation as King in Judah.

“done it” seems to mean that David saw the destruction of Doeg, and David saw the establishment of his throne in the divided nation.

As a prince, David’s trust in God was on display. The establishment of his kingship justified his trust in God — a key event in the history of the nation — a major reversal that was good for the saints. Not only did David rejoice in his new found success, but the whole nation reaped the benefits of his election to power.

Psalm 53 - God's Intolerance of Fools

"Corrupt are They"



Psalm 14:1-7 is the sister to Psalm 53. The resemblance of the two is remarkable.

While there are slight differences in the choice of words, they both have the same author and the same message. All that is wrong with the world can be traced to Godless hearts.

One of the great lessons in this psalm is not only the folly of atheism, but God's intolerance of infidelity.

God's Estimation of Fools

Psalm 53:1 <To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, A Psalm of David.> The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: there is none that doeth good.

The name of YHWH is not used in this psalm. Rather, David employs the generic title "God" (Elohim) to refer to the Supreme Being of the universe — a reference to Genesis 1:1.

Philosophers call people who do not believe in God "atheists." Scientists who don't believe in God are called "evolutionists" or "Darwinians." But, the Spirit of God calls them "fools" — silly, self-deceived blockheads who deny the evidence of the Creator while living life on their own terms. This Scripture labels them "corrupt" doing "abominable iniquity."

Psalm 14 uses the term "works," and Psalm 52 employs the term "iniquity."

"corrupt" (shachath) means ruined or marred.

"abominable" means detestable.

"iniquity" refers to radical lawlessness; that is, fools cannot do good. It is impossible for them. Everything they touch turns to worms. All the great sins of oath breaking, fornication, homosexuality, adultery, murder, petty theft, and fraud can be traced to hearts lacking the fear of God.

Only a fool denies the existence of the Creator.

Only a fool can deny the law of contingency — that every thing that exists must have a cause.

Only a fool denies the principle of "irreducible complexity" — the fact that complex organisms cannot exist without other complex pre-made organisms: that is, eyes cannot exist without a brain, heart, liver, blood, blood vessels, etc. That an eye is first formed and then a million years later a heart comes into being; and, a million years later blood appears is the pinnacle of

nonsense. All must exist together at the same time with the ability to reproduce. The belief God created all that is necessary for life at the same time makes perfect sense and to deny this fact informs us this person is a few eggs short of a dozen.

2 God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God.

This text forms the theological foundation of the Apostle Paul's doctrine of sin (Romans 3). With all hearts open and naked to Him, God observed there was not one single person searching for God. Only by the grace of God moving in hearts do men seek Him.

3 Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

"Every one of them is gone back" indicates a departure from God; that is, unless God draws men to Himself, there are no God-seekers on earth. Men seek power, wealth, and honor from men.

"altogether become filthy" means "tainted" or "defiled" with sin; that is, except for the grace of God there are no righteous men on earth living in conformity to God's law.

"none that doeth good, no, not one" informs us that except for the grace of God there are no "good" people on earth. Only God has a right to define "good" and there is no man or woman that does good as He defines it. When men define good they end up morally apostate.

If men are to seek God, He has to put that desire in their heart. If we see certain men in pursuit of God, know that He is the Prime Mover.

4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread: they have not called upon God.

"workers of iniquity" would include the fools: political liars, fornicators, thieves, Idolaters, war hawks, and violators of human rights.

"who eat up my people as they eat bread" is a metaphor informing us that the "workers of iniquity" are users and abusers of men, women, and children.

This text affirms in the most absolute and unqualified manner that none of these deviants have any true knowledge of the living God — the one, true, infinite personal Spirit Who is the Creator of all that we see and observe.

"they have not called upon God": Prayer and religious ceremonies are part of human history. However, this text informs us that in all men's religious activity NONE were seeking the Creator; that in worshipping the sun, moon, and stars they were seeking power and not Elohim.

Rushdoony states that men who will not worship the God of the Bible will inevitably worship naked power instead.

"If the omnipotent and all-gracious God of Scripture is not worshipped, men will pursue their adoration of power in other ways."

“Clearly, if man will not worship God he will worship that which he believes will give him power.”

God’s Intolerance of Fools

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 God hath despised them.

“they” refers to fools: politicians, legislators, cult leaders, revolutionaries, Marxists, and the like.

“in great fear” could be translated, “they feared a fear.” Fear is the opposite of love (2 Timothy 1:7).

The psalmist informs us of another fact — that intense men sought power religions, not out of love for the Creator, but out of fear of death, of sickness, of misfortune, of poverty.

“encampeth against thee” refers to pagan religions as being absolutely hostile to the true God, to goodness, and to true religion.

We define “religion” as holding to some fixed value. Consequently, atheism is a religion because even atheists have ultimate values.

False religions would include atheism, humanism, feminism, polytheism, and all the other religious “isms.” Moreover, all men are religious because all men have ultimate values.

“scatter the bones” and “put them to shame” informs us that God exercises a noteworthy intolerance of fools and frustrates the ambitions of fervent men in pursuit of happiness rooted in the power religions. That God frustrates false religions means that Christians in pursuit of Christ-likeness also resist public apostasy and those that worship money and power.

Moreover, the doctrine of religious freedom does not mean that Christians tolerate Satanism or other cults. Let us not confuse God’s patience with God’s intolerance. While believers seek to show respect to people with differing views, it has no duty to respect those ideas. Christianity offers limited tolerance to false religions, but it has no tolerance for cults that injure the rights of men due to their inclusive “beliefs” and demands for the total subjection of the total man to total government.

Christianity promotes the private practice of religion as well as the public application of Christian law. It promotes human responsibility and freedom, but resist tyranny. The Christian faith does not seek to command personal beliefs, but it does demand punishment of revolutionaries who promote the overthrow of Christianity and the establishment of enslaving power religions as a national norm (Deuteronomy 11, 13).

Fidelity to the Lord demands intolerance of infidelity. The idea that there are no religious absolutes and that everything is relative and that all religious claims have equal value is the product pluralism. Truth is not plural.

True Christianity does not tolerate the destruction of its public icons, nor does it tolerate the public promotion of philosophical beliefs that end up destroying property. Just as God expected His Old Testament people to be intolerant of religious, philosophical, and religious pluralism,

He expects His church to express vigorous intolerance of secularism and its foolish demand for Christian suffrage.

Exodus 22:18 “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live” (intolerance of religious revolutionaries) – “To consult a witch was an attack on the sovereignty of God” (Doug Van Meter).

19 Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death. (related to the original sin of standing under an animal instead of taking dominion over nature).

20 He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

21 Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt (tolerance of people with a differing worldview).

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

“salvation” is in the plural (yeshuw-ot). Salvation(s) refers to deliverance from the perils of atheism and foolishness.

“captivity” presupposes that some parts of Israel were subjected to pagan powers; that the psalmist wished for a day when the whole of Israel would be liberated from the corrupting influence of these blasphemous movements.

“Jacob shall rejoice” implies a time when the nation would totally unite around Elohim and His law-order.

That “multiculturalism” is our strength or that pluralism leads to happiness is the lie of our time. Happiness comes to people who are organized around the Creator and His will for mankind. Feminism and humanism cannot produce a happy, unified people any more than cages can make a happy tiger. One or the other will be destroyed! And, that will be humanism and feminism. God’s plans for humanity include exercising religious, philosophical, and theological intolerance of all that is anti-Christ.

Oh, that Christians might become intolerant of the foolish, humanistic revolution sweeping the country.

Notes:

1. Moses, the man of God, smashed the golden calf, melted it, and scattered its dust (Exodus 32).
2. God opened up the earth to swallow Korah and those who worshipped power (Numbers 16).
3. God ordered the death of revolutionaries (Deuteronomy 13:1–5)
4. Elijah ordered the execution of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 17).
5. Jehoiada the priest ordered the execution of apostate Athaliah (2 Kings 11).

6. John the Baptist confronted Herod for his apostasy (adultery) (Matthew 14).
7. Jesus drove the moneychangers out His Father's House (John 2).
8. Paul confronted the idolaters on Mar's Hill (Acts 17) and ordered the expulsion of apostates from the church (1 Corinthians 5).

Psalm 54 - God is My Helper

“For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul”



The background of this psalm is the double betrayal of David by the Ziphites who twice reported the whereabouts of David to Saul (1 Samuel 23:19; 1 Samuel 26:1.). See Addendum Notes.

One of the values of this psalm is the pure, unfettered confidence that David possessed about the Lord being his Helper. It is one thing to say God is our Helper, but it quite another to believe it and to rest in it.

David’s Prayer for Deliverance

Psalm 54:1 <To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, A Psalm of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?> Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.

David lifts up a sincere prayer to God His only refuge. Because David represented a man after God’s own heart, God’s honor is tied to the fate of David.

“Save me by thy strength” implies David had no other strength but the power which God provided.

2 Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

God, you hear many prayers, but hear my prayer . . . my words . . . my groans.

The Occasion for David’s Prayer

3 For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

“strangers” (zuwr) refers to the Ziphites, degenerate Israelites, who did not know God.

The men of Ziph did not seek God or discern His will during this national division. David labels them “oppressors” (ariyts) which means violent, terrifying, or ruthless. Supporting Saul’s de facto power, David feared for his life among these people.

“Selah” = a musical term not related to the sense of the passage (Barnes, Ellicott).

Application: Political issues divide people and the man of God discerns who can be trusted and who can’t. The Ziphites could not be trusted.

David’s Confidence

4 Behold, God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul.

“Behold” (hegy) is an article of interjection commanding the reader’s attention.

“helper” (ezer) means “support.” In these particular circumstances, God was his only supporter. David not only believed the Lord was his Helper, but that He was the Helper of all who supported him.

There is no self-doubt here. David’s confidence booms like thundering canons. He believed if you are with me, God is with you! If you are against me, God is against you! David knew with certainty that God was on his side because He was on God’s side.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:32ff)

Doubt is the mother of all evils and doubt does not plague David at this time in his life.

One cause of self-doubt is being “double minded” (James 1). Another cause of self-doubt is attributing more power to our opponents than they actually possess. Furthermore, focusing on one’s weaknesses or past sins attracts the vultures of doubt to circle overhead.

The one in pursuit of God confronts self-doubt and silence the inner critic. A pure God deserves pure faith from a pure man. Confidence comes when our faith is unsullied. Therefore, let us beware of overthinking, double thinking, and self-sabotage.

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Ephesians 6:10).

Let us be sure our cause is just, for God stands with the righteous.

5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.

David is not only confident that God will save him and those who support him; he expresses confidence that God will resist and frustrate the wicked plans of his enemies.

David’s Resolve

6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good.

The reason for our existence is to glorify God, and David pledged himself to this purpose.

The “LORD” is His name. His name is good, powerful, and merciful. And, all that is good is derived from Him.

7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.

David “delivered” is in the perfect tense indicating that David’s trust in God was justified — that David trusted God not only to deliver him but to frustrate his enemies.

The context of this text is that Saul received news that the Philistines had invaded Israel (1 Samuel 23:37-28); and, therefore, Saul had to forgo pursuing David’s company in order to defend his nation against the border raids of the Philistines. David saw Saul’s forces approaching . . . and then . . . he saw them depart. What a relief!

Coincidences happen to those who trust God.

But, what if He doesn’t deliver us from a particular negative circumstance? We pursue God not for His power, but because He is more than power. He is justice, love, and grace and so much

more. If He withholds His power from us, it must be for a higher reason than deliverance from some difficulty . . . and, therefore, we still worship Him: "I will praise His name!"

Addendum

Ziph: A town in the Negeb (q.v.) area of Judah ([Josh 15:24](#); [1 Chron 2:42](#); [4:16](#)) where Ziph is a clan or family affiliated with Caleb. No doubt the family gave its name to the town. Probably modern Khirbet ez-Zeifeh SW of Kurnub near the old Edomite border.

A town in the hill country of Judah ([Josh 15:55](#)). David hid from Saul in the open country near Ziph ([1 Sam 23:14, 15](#); [Ps 54](#) superscription). In the same region David later took Saul's spear and water jar and spared his life ([1 Sam 26](#), note [vv. 1, 2, 7, 12](#)). The same town was fortified by Rehoboam after the secession of the northern kingdom ([2 Chron 11:5, 8](#)). It is prob. at the site of the modern Tell Zif, four m. SE of Hebron on a hill some 2,890 ft. above sea level commanding the open country around, about level with En-gedi (q.v.) on the Dead Sea. (Bible Gateway Encyclopedia).

Psalm 55 - Know Your Enemies

Cast Your Burden on the Lord



The Christian is at war with enemies within and without.

Sun Tzu taught:

“If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

Ellicott says this psalm “is one of the most passionate odes of the whole collection—bursts of fiery invective alternating with the most plaintive and melancholy reflections: it has supplied to Christianity and the world at least two expressions of intense religious feeling, the one ([Psalm 55:6-7](#)) breathing despair, the other ([Psalm 55:22](#)) the most restful hope.”

The Troubled Soul

[Psalm 55:1 \(To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil,](#)

Since David penned this psalm after the Absalom revolt, we would do well to learn the major lesson that came out of David’s conflicts.

Great conflicts inspire great thoughts, and great thoughts require great songs.

The term “Neginoth” refers to a vigorous tempo to express villainy as well as conquest.

[A Psalm of David.\) Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.](#)

Forced to flee Jerusalem during the Absalom revolt, David was unsure if God was pleased with him. Fearing that God might ignore his pleas and turn away from him in his troubles, he pleads with the LORD to not shut His eyes nor close His ears to the frailty of his person or to the fractures in his prayers.

Pounded by critics, David prays that God would hear his prayer. O God, you hear many prayers, but hear my prayer. May my moans be sweetened by the Spirit and ascend to heaven sprinkled with the incense of Christ.

That God “hides himself” is a fact all men face; but, let it never enter our mind that God has abandoned His children. Hiding maybe, but forsaken? May it never be (Hebrews 13:5–6; Deuteronomy 31:6–8).

David prays that God would come out of his chambers, appear in court, and make a ruling in his favor. When the pilgrim feels like God is hiding Himself, let him remember there was only one man in history from whom God hid his face and that was when our Lord became sin for us

upon that old rugged cross. As long as we are alive, there is hope God will hear our prayers and bless them.

2 Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;

A “complaint” is a formal charge before a competent judge against an adversary that caused substantial harm.

“Attend” is an imperative, the mood of prayer in God’s Courtroom. David motions the Court to hear his verifiable complaint. He realizes that his imperfect pleading is like a loud noise that disturbs the peace of the Court. Nevertheless, he pleads that the Most High would patiently consider the facts of his case.

Linearly thinking, David’s enemies were Ahithophel and co-conspirators in the Absalom revolt.

Geometrically thinking, the Christian would do well to consider that his enemies are those in rebellion against God’s law-order. These would include tyrants in foreign countries, government officers, corporations, neighbors in society, and even wives, husbands, children, who are hostile to God (John 7:7). King Ahab (the government) called Elijah his enemy (1 Kings 20). Jesus warned the disciples that in choosing to follow Christ, enemies would arise from their own household (Matthew 10:36). Eve enticed Adam. Miriam was struck with leprosy because she had the arrogance to criticize Moses (Numbers 12). Jewish leaders prosecuted the apostles (Acts 3, 5-7, 12).

3 Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

In referring to the “voice of the enemy,” David may be thinking of Ahithophel, Absalom, Shimei, and loyalists to Saul who plotted David’s downfall.

Geometrically speaking, godly men and women are surrounded by government agents, news broadcasters, and members of their family that launch missiles of slanderous commentary against them. Contentious women can drive a man out of the house. Adulterous husbands make themselves an enemy of faithful women. Rebellious children can blame and castigate responsible parents making themselves an enemy of the family.

4 My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

The political criticism, much of which was untrue, plagued this lamb-king. The mutiny shook the foundation of David’s throne. And, then, there was the matter relating to Uriah — an arrow of bitter-truth that pierced his own soul.

5 Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

Like thieves breaking into one’s house at midnight, these pirates of peace stirred up fear and caused David to respond with sweaty palms, shortness of breath, and knocking knees. One can tolerate an open belligerent, but who can manage covert conventions and whispers of revolt by secret conspirators? Many a good man has been the victim of a conspiracy taking place around the office water-fountain. More pastors have lost their pastorate for following Christ than for any other reason.

6 And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

“dove” -- At this moment in the king’s life, David felt like the last leaf on a winter’s limb. If he could not stomp his enemies like an elephant, he would escape like a dove. Lonely, afraid, and surrounded by political adversaries, this monarch wanted to disappear into the evening sky to escape the steel traps set for his slaughter.

7 Lo, then would I wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah.

Deserts are death for large armies, but David saw the wilderness as a place of safety. Israel in its flight from Egypt was sustained by God in the desert. Like Israel, David wanted to flee, be alone, and experience the calm of a Bedouin life. Wise men always seek peace and quiet so they can escape the hustle and bustle of city life to commune with God and gain perspective.

8 I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest.

A storm was brewing, and David wanted to flee his post like a little dove. Indecision meant certain death. Unable to bear a direct confrontation with the rebels, this little bird-king fled Jerusalem to reach the calm in the Jordan Valley . . . and to avoid a massacre of the innocent.

But, dear reader, you are not a bird and you have no wings. But, you can “take refuge in the shadow of His wings until the disaster has passed” (Psalm 57:1).

9-11 Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

In his flight from Absalom, David whispered a quick prayer.

The word “destroy” means “to swallow up.”

David saw the political parties convening and plotting for power in Jerusalem. He knew Jerusalem was divided in their loyalties. Because “divide and conquer” is a well-known strategy for conquest, David prays that God would divide their counsel . . . their unity . . . and ambitions; that He would turn their words into babel and divide the gang of mutineers. And, He did (1 Samuel 15, 16).

Forget trying to manipulate rebels. Pray and trust! Pray and rest! Pray and do not resort to covert manipulation.

Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow are in the midst of it. Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

The very heart of the capital city was rotten to the core. Where noble statesmen should meet, corruption poisoned justice. Crime abounded. Treason seized motives. Bribes captured hearts. Proud psychopaths coveted the throne. Trustees became treacherous. Commoners became commanders. Thieves prospered. Law and order vanished. Despair set in like a London fog.

12-14 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. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

The most troubling aspect of the Absalom revolt was not that loyalist to Saul cheered the rebellion, but that Ahithophel, his trusted counselor, joined the revolt and counseled Absalom on how to destroy David's company.

When chatter through the grapevine reached David that Ahithophel betrayed him, the report crushed his confidence in man. David could endure invectives from sworn enemies, but betrayal from a trusted friend? A turncoat by a brother in the faith was more than his heart could endure. A friend becoming a foe? It was easier to face Goliath than it was to grasp the fact that Ahithophel had turned into a Judas. The dagger of treachery thrust deep into his soul. "Et tu Brute?"

There was nothing in this political rebellion that discouraged David, except that his trusted friend and counselor had joined the coup. Likewise, Christians in pursuit of holiness are not rattled by the malice of anti-Christians, but nothing shakes a godly man more than to learn close friends have joined a conspiracy to end his career, or ministry, or life. It is even worse when these traitors turn out to be a wife, son, or "brother" in Christ.

If you have a Judas in your ministry, you know that you are in the will of God. If you are a Judas, repent deeply!

15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

The king orders a death sentence. With his sense of justice provoked, David erupts with disgust spewing out fire and fumes in every direction. Like a good soldier, he wished for conquest over his enemies. His enemies driven by madness sought to kill him, and the king determined to defeat them. When you can't live with your enemies, they must die. Love is the answer for some troubles, but death is the answer for rebels. Those who seek peace with God will find the olive branch of salvation, but those who war against God will only hear the gavel pounding condemnation.

"wickedness in their dwellings" addresses the nature and character of the wicked.

Covetousness controls their conversations. They live in a den of iniquity with hatred, violence, and fraud. Their hearts are fountains of pride and lusts. These swine love the pigsty and must be rooted out by the justice of good men and the judgment of Almighty God.

"hell" or hades: There is justice in this age. Some sinners are judged now in this life, and others will fry like bacon when they are cast into hell.

16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me. 17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

The word "cry aloud" (hamah) means "to murmur, groan, or growl." That is, David would find a way to give expression to the roaring taking place in his soul. Generals rely upon planning and counter plots; but, David relied upon prayer. His confidence is astounding.

David made his stand: Let others drown themselves in a sea of selfish ambition, but for me and my house, we will trust the Lord. I know not what course others may take to secure their future, but as for me, I will pray “evening, and morning, and at noon.”

“He shall hear my voice” expresses faith. Faith speaks positively of the LORD . . . but not necessarily about the riffraff on stage in this political theater. While determined to pray, David knew that deliverance was not far away.

18 He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.

The verb “delivered” (padah) is a perfect tense meaning “to ransom;” that is, even though the revolutionaries outnumbered David’s forces, he views God as already having redeemed him from defeat and death. Though Absalom had military muscle, God blessed David with tactical superiority. In this civil war, Absalom was killed and David lived.

“For there were many with” should be translated, “For there were many fighting against me.” Many or few, great or small, strong or weak, God has the power to deliver those trusting in Him.

19 God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.

“Afflict” (anah) means “to answer.” That is, when the enemy complains, God has an answer; when the enemy strikes a blow, God delivers a counterblow; when enemies lie, the Lord speaks truth and slays them.

“he that abideth of old” refers to unrepentant adversaries settled in their crusty habits of corruption.

“they have no changes” refers to the relentless pursuit of enemies. Because these political adversaries did not fear God, they could not turn back, change their course, or retreat from their evil intent to murder David.

20-21 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant. The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords.

“He” is a poetic device used to express the character of the whole.

“put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him” refers to the treachery of these actors who outwardly speak peace but inwardly love death and criminally assault peaceful men who have not injured them (Proverbs 8:36).

Broken covenant: Faithless people break contracts, treaties, promises, rules, and the restraints of law.

Benson: I speak especially of “that perfidious person, who hath not only violated all the laws of friendship, but profanely broken his promise and oath of fidelity, wherein he was engaged to me.” — Bishop Patrick.”

The phrase “smoother than butter” and “softer than oil” expresses the charming deceitfulness of traitors. There is a difference between what the wicked say and what they do; between how they talk and how they walk. That speaks peace, but practice war; they promise change, but promote revolution; they have the smile of a panda, but a sting of a cobra: they offer an olive branch in one hand, but have a sword in the other.

The phrase “smoother than butter” literally means “curd mouth,” “milk mouth,” or smooth mouth. “Smooth are the butterings of his mouth” (Benson quoting Alexander). Using modern expressions we label these snake oil salesmen self-appointed cheerleaders, traders of lies, slickster tricksters, and charlatans. These grumblecakes offer you dessert, but feed you arsenic.

The Remedy for a Troubled Soul

Now the Psalmist applies the lesson he learned during the Absalom Revolt to us.

Psalm 55:22 Cast your burden on the LORD (the protasis), and he will sustain you (apodasis); he will never permit the righteous to be moved (the apodasis).

The Hebrew word for “burden” is *yehab*, and it means “lot” or “what is given.”

God handed a grievous burden for king David to bear. The background of Psalm 55 is the Absalom Revolt including the treason of Ahithophel, and David’s flight from Jerusalem during the coup d’etat — a wretched revolt against his administration that led to a ghastly civil war.

Here the sweet psalmist of Israel shares a valuable lesson learned during the uncertainty of the chaos: trials are a gift of God!

Barnes says, “This may be regarded as an address of the psalmist to his own soul – an exhortation to himself to roll all his care upon the Lord and to be calm.” But, the lesson of the psalm applies to us.

The Hebrew word for “cast” is *shalak* — a Hiphil imperative calling for intense, deliberate action of the will: “Stir yourself and cast” your burdens on the LORD.

The Hebrew verb *shalak* means “to cast,” “to put,” “to throw,” or “to hurl.” It is translated

“put (*shalak*) under one of the bushes” in Genesis 21:15;

“throw (*shalak*) him into one of the pits” in Genesis 37:20;

“cast (*shalak*) into the Nile” in Exodus 1:22;

“throw (*shalak*) it on the ground” in Exodus 4:22;

“they spread a cloak, and every man threw (*shalak*) in it the earrings of his spoil” in Judges 8:25; that is, just as the men of Israel threw (*shalak*) in their gold trinkets on to the cloak as a gift, we are to throw (*shalak*) our lot in life on to the LORD.

The word “burden” (*yehab*) is a noun which refers to one’s lot or what is given. It is translated

“give” (*yehab*) in Genesis 29:21; 30:1; 47:15; Joshua 18:4; Judges 1:15; 20:7;

“take or choose” (yehab) in Deuteronomy 1:13; “ascribe” in Deuteronomy 32:3; Psalm 29:2;

“make me a gift” (yehab) in Job 6:22;

“grant” (yehab) in Psalm 60:11; “give” and “give” in Proverbs 20:15;

“give (yehab) me my wages” in Zechariah 11:12;

and “burden” (yehab) in Psalm 55:22.

It could easily be translated throw your ‘lot,’ or throw “what is given to you’,” or throw “the gift of your trial” upon the LORD.

In the New Testament, the word “**burden**” is translated “cares of this life” (1 Peter 5:7; Luke 21:34), and the word “cast” is translated, “throwing their cloaks on the colt” (Luke 19:35).

The first promise is that the one who “cast what is given to him” upon the LORD will be “**sustained**” (apodosis).

The condition is “cast your burden on the Lord” (the protasis) “and he will **sustain** you” (apodosis)

The Hebrew word for “sustain” is *kul* — a rare Pihel (Piel) verb form which implies intense action. It means “to contain,” “to sustain,” and “to maintain.”

The Hebrew word *kul* (“sustain” in English) translated:

“There I will provide (kul) for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come,” in Genesis 45:11;

“and Joseph provided (kul) his father, his brothers, and all his father’s household with food” in Genesis 47:12;

“do not fear; I will provide (kul) for you and your little ones” in Genesis 50:21;

“He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher (kul) of your old age . . . ” in Ruth 4:15;

“those officers supplied provision (kul) for King Solomon” in 1 Kings 4:27;

“I have commanded the ravens to feed (kul) you there” in 1 Kings 17:4;

“I have commanded a widow there to feed (kul) you” in 1 Kings 17:9;

“Forty years you sustained (kul) them in the wilderness” in Nehemiah 9:21; and,

“he will guide (kul) his affairs with discretion” in Psalm 112:5.

The second, or complementary part of the apodosis (the conclusive part of the promise) is that “He will never permit the righteous to be moved.”

The noun “**moved**” (mote) means “to totter, shake, or slip.”

The verb “**permit**” means “to give, bestow, grant, ascribe, employ, devote, deliver, stretch out, extend, or designate.” It is preceded by a negation “**never**”; that is, our God will never permit us to “be moved.”

There is a testing that could destroy our faith and demolish our God-confidence. The promise here is that God will never let that happen. He will not permit the “righteous” (Romans 5:1) to totter and fall, but He may permit storms to enter their lives that cause them to tether themselves tighter to the promises.

Barnes puts it this way,

“He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved – literally, “He will not give moving forever to the righteous.” That is, he will not so appoint, arrange, or permit things to occur, that the righteous shall be “ultimately” and “permanently” removed from their steadfastness and their hope; he will not suffer them to fall away and perish.”

23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

In contrast to the protection of the righteous, David informs us of the fate of bloody and deceitful men – a short life. In contrast to the wicked, David trusts the Lord.

Need protection, provision, or navigation? “Throw what has been given to you” on to the LORD. Roll your lot upon your Creator.

Psalm 56 - When Afraid

“ I will Trust in Thee.”



Before us is a rock-hard lesson to learn — a lesson taught in the darkness and not the light: to walk by faith and not by fear during the stormy seasons of life.

Psalm 56:1 To the chief Musician upon Jonathalemrechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

In the title “upon Jonath-elem-rechokim,” the first word – “Jonath” – means a “dove,” a favorite emblem of suffering innocence (Ellicott).

In fleeing from the wrath and jealousy of King Saul, David found himself at the gates of the Philistines (Gath) acting like a madman (1 Samuel 21:10-22:1). Ashamed of his behavior, David sought the Lord. During this low point in his life, he learned his greatest lesson. See Psalm 34.

Somewhere in this act of desperation, David came to his senses and shifted his trust from man to God. Later, he penned this prayer that we might learn the lessons of dependence on God.

Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me

Instead of mentioning Saul or the Philistines, David refers to man individually or to fallen man collectively. The Hebrew word for “man” is *enosh* – a reference to the frailty of mortal man.

In this fight, David depends upon God’s mercy, not upon his own merit; upon the mercy of God, not upon the mercy of man (*enosh*). The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel (Proverbs 12:10); but, the endless mercies of the Lord are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). The man who receives the mercy of God obtains all that he needs to be safe and happy.

Merit gives a man what he deserves (judgment); mercy does not give a man what he deserves. Mercy gives a man what he needs (relief).

The Hebrew word “oppresseth” (*lachats*) means “to press or squeeze.”

The reason for this shift in trust is David suddenly realized that not only does Saul want to kill him, but the heartless Philistines feeding on their own bitterness would swallow him up like starving wolves; that is, these callous brutes (*enosh*) would find pleasure in seeing him suffer.

2 Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.

So, anxious is young David about his predicament at the Gates of Gath, he mentions their intent a second time: “mine enemies would daily swallow me up.”

The word “swallow” can also mean “to pant after,” “trample on,” or “bruise” as dogs panting after a rabbit in a chase eager to devour the helpless animal. This event is not just a chase, but a passion driven hunt for David’s life.

David impresses us with his plight by using the term “many” (rab) which means “abounding.” His friends were few; his enemies were many. Alone, he felt chased after by a pack of panting, slurping wolves eager to devour him.

The term “O most high” is one Hebrew word (mar’om) and not a phrase. It means “elevated” referring either to the elevated attitude of his enemies or to God Who is in heaven. There are many gods in this world, but Melchizedek, Abraham, and David raised their hand to the LORD, the Most High God (Genesis 14:22).

Some expositors note that the Hebrew word *mar’om* translated “O thou most high” (elevation) is not in the vocative, and therefore, does not refer to God. Rather, they believe the “most high” refers to the attitude of his pursuers. His enemies were not only passionate, but proud and arrogant acting as if they were archers shooting arrows at him from a high tower. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown recognize the possibility of this meaning.

Other expositors such as Barnes believe “O thou most High” is an appeal to the God of Heaven to look down and see his plight. Likewise, Gill adopts this view. The term “High” (mar’om) is used of God in Psalm 92:8. Whether this is how we should interpret this word, the next verse definitely shows David looking upward and not around at his enemies.

“trust” -- As far as we can tell, David was the first to give the word “trust” (batash) a religious meaning.

The word “trust” is used in the Bible is in reference to the corrupt leadership of Abimelech where he is alleged to say, “put your trust in my shadows;” that is, trust my government (Judges 9:15). Boaz observed that David’s grandmother (Ruth) trusted in the shadow of His wings (Ruth 2:12); and, it was David, Ruth’s grandson, who advanced the principle of trusting God as a rock, shield, horn, and tower (2 Samuel 22:3).

David did not begin his flight from Saul with raging confidence in God. This is the lesson he learned and the commitment he made **after** he played the madman at Gath — an essential discipline to learn on the pilgrim path to the Celestial City.

David announced, “When I am afraid,” I will trust. This is no fair-weather trust; that is, I will trust God in the darkness, not just in the light; in difficult times, and not just easy times; in rough seas as well as smooth seas; at midnight and not just at high noon; during cloudy days and not just in the sunshine; during the cold winters of life and not just in the warm summers of this pilgrimage. As a man bundles up under his winter coat during a blizzard, so I will cluster my precious all under His protection during the bitters of life.

This is the lesson: This is the principle David learned to apply the rest of his life: Faith, not fear, will be my guide. When I am afraid, I will trust!

Some men learn this sooner than others. May the Lord help us all to apply this during periods of darkness.

Lamentably, this lesson can't be learned in the sunshine. It is learned after midnight . . . after an unwanted trial . . . after a spiritual failure. But, better learned in the darkness than never learned at all.

4 In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

This verse contains a textual challenge: The KJV says, "I will praise his word." The LXX says, "I will praise God with my word."

"The obvious treatment of the verse is to take the construction as in Psalm 44:8, "I praise God with my word," i.e. in spite of all my enemies I find words to praise God" (Ellicott). But, other scholars believe David trusted God's Word and not the words of his enemies.

Both positions are true: We have respect for His Word, and we praise Him with our words.

"I will not" should be translated: "I fear not" What can flesh do? The text is not so much a promise or commitment as it is a settled position of reliance on the LORD.

5 Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.

David returns to the tactics of his enemies.

The "wrest" (atsab) means 'to twist and to distort' his words to the injury of the man. Personal enemies are incapable of speaking the truth in a fair and balanced way. All the reports about David to Saul were designed to incense Saul's anger against David. Likewise, today. The media twists, distorts, and perverts what good men say in order to ruin them politically. Slander is a form of murder and it is the favorite weapon of hidden hands.

6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

What David experienced from his enemies is true in our time. The enemies of the righteous are like snipers hiding in the bushes looking for the right time to launch their invectives against God's attack-lambs.

The lesson for us is to be wise and avoid naivety. Beware of wire-pullers and kingmakers. When government is god in the minds of men you cannot expect men not to betray soldiers for Christ.

7 Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

The meaning of this text is obscure. Ellicott says the meaning here is "for iniquity thou wilt requite them;" that is, since there is a God in heaven who umpires the threats of men, how can they escape?

The psalmist asks with earnestness and amazement whether, under the divine administration, people "can" find safety in mere wickedness (Barnes).

8 Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?

The word “telletst” means “to count, recount, or number.”

From David’s conquest over Goliath to the death of Saul, David lived the life of a fugitive wandering from hide-out to hide-out.

Barnes recounts David’s wanderings:

“My wanderings,” to Gath, 1 Samuel 21:10; to the cave of Adullam, 1 Samuel 22:1; to Mizpeh, in Moab, 1 Samuel 22:3; to the forest of Hareth, 1 Samuel 22:5; to Keilah, 1 Samuel 23:5; to the wilderness of Ziph, 1 Samuel 23:14; to the wilderness of Maon, 1 Samuel 23:25; to En-gedi, 1 Samuel 24:1-2.”

According to the rule of parallelism in Hebrew poetry, the term “wandering” is coextensive with the word “tears.” “Wandering” (singular) is a metaphor for “mental anguish;” “tossing’s to and fro of the mind;” confusion and the feelings of distress caused by the slander of his enemies.

“tears into thy bottle” is not literal, but a metaphor claiming that God knows all David’s pain, anguish, and depression caused by the malicious criticism of his adversaries. What a comfort to learn that God knows and treasures all our sorrows.

9 When I cry unto thee, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God is for me.

Cries occur when people are hurt.

“Cry” is a synonym for liquid prayers by those carrying crosses. The first two verbs (Imperfect) indicate that David has confidence that his enemies will be defeated the next time he prays instead of flees.

The wandering shepherd could say, “this I know; for God is for me.” David knew God was on his side because he was on God’s side.

10 In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word.

Because faith banished fear, David praised the LORD for His promises and acts of tolerance. David was not a forgetting pouter, but a grateful praiser.

The presence of praise means the absence of fear; and, the presence of fear means the absence of faith.

11 In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

David repeats the main lesson of the psalm and the hardest lesson to learn for pilgrims awakened by the cries at midnight.

The sentiment in this verse is the same as in verse six except that the word “man” is used here instead of “flesh.” Since God was his friend, the young prince adopted a position that he would not fear what mortal man could do to him.

Faith in Heaven defeats foes on Earth.

12 Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.

Deliverances cause thankful men to go deeper into the Divine will. Vows imply commitment. Freedom from fear and foes ripens resolve and acceptance of responsibilities. Freedom from future failures appears to be grounded on present promises. David determined to trust God and to never again let his fears dictate his destiny.

13 For thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

The sentiment in this verse is the same as in Psalm 56:6, except that the word “man” is used here instead of “flesh.”

“Wilt thou not deliver . . .” is better translated “Hast Thou not delivered . . .?”

We have here a greater to lesser argument. Since God delivered him from death, David believed he could trust the LORD to deliver him from lesser difficulties. The fact that God rescued him in the past gave him confidence to trust God for the future; salvation from yesterday’s difficulties gave David confidence that God would deliver him from today’s adversities.

“that I may walk before God in the light of the living?” shows the purpose of God’s salvation in our lives. He delivers us not for our pleasure, but for His Divine plan — that we might walk with Him every minute of every day.

Having been delivered from darkness, let us walk in the light. If He is in the light let us walk in the light. If Christ took the high road, let us take the high road. Since He is holy, let us be holy. If he delivered us in our weakness, let us walk in His strength by faith that we might enjoy freedom from fear and savor the favor of God.

Psalm 57 - Praising God in the Midst of Trouble

“my soul is among lions”



This psalm rings with certainty that the author is David. This is a prayer muttered in darkness while pursued by Saul — a prayer for mercy. How do you hide? What do you do? Where do you go when pursued by an army of thousands? David endured and trusted.

The value of the psalm is that it shows us the character of this powerful prince and his determination to believe the best about God with death and doom lurking behind every rock.

Warning: because we are so familiar with the life story of David, readers must stop to feel the life-threatening pressures on young David and understand the profound trust He deposited with the Almighty. Feel these pressures and you can enter into the main lesson of this psalm — the determination to praise . . . speak well of . . . and to trust God in the midst of trouble.

David’s Confident Prayer for Mercy

Psalm 57:1 <To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.>

“Al-taschith” means “destroy not” – a tune appropriate for the profound theme of the psalm.

“Fled” implies intense fear. The context of this prayer is that David’s small band of men were being pursued by Saul’s massive army on a “search and destroy” mission — a mission “to kill on sight;” that is, David was fleeing for his life from Saul’s elite assassination team.

“from Saul in the cave” is possibly the Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22:1ff).

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

“mercy” and “trusteth” informs us David had nowhere else to go . . . that God was his only source of protection. What military could rescue this young general from the force and power of Saul’s troops? David could stand and fight . . . but, if he did, he and his men would be slaughtered. They were no match for the superior Benjamite forces of Saul.

“in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge” -- Using the metaphor of chicks and a mother hen, David flees for protection under His wings. It is easy to be a sunshine Christian, but to trust God in the darkness with canons blaring and men screaming with pain is quite another matter. David’s trust in God was not from the pew, but from the trenches surrounded with barbed wire and the whistling sounds of shells flying past . . . sort of speak.

To put it another way, David was not trusting God in a “safety zone,” but from a “killing zone”; not while sitting on a perch above the fray, but while slogging through a bloody battlefield; not while walking home from school, but running from an armed, irate, killing mob hell bent on snuffing him out.

“until these calamities are overpast” informs us David lived with a certainty that God called him for a special purpose and that his terrifying troubles were only temporary.

2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.

Like Abraham (Genesis 14), David served the Most High God — the one, absolute, sovereign God of the universe. Because the worlds are subject to Him, David stood under His authority and power.

The word “performeth” (gamar) means “to complete” or “to perfect.” The idea here is that God completes his work and links it to His ultimate purposes.

“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

The young prince’s troubles were deathly real — “save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.”

“from heaven” implies that God is everywhere. He does not move or occupy a particular place; that is, David’s source of deliverance was not on earth, but from the omnipotent, omnipresent God who ruled the heavens.

David did not know when or how God would deliver him, but he possessed a stunning confidence God would issue His order from His throne and show him the mercy he long-craved . . . and to affirm the truth he believed. He knew the “what” but he did not know the “how” — a storm, a miracle, an angel? He knew God would deliver him, but he did not know the “when” — in a minute, an hour, or the next day? — a question that tests the faith of every man.

David’s Commentary on His Enemies

4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

David employs a “lions” metaphor to describe the fierce, ferocious, feverous madness of king Saul’s manhunt for David.

“fire” refers to the inflamed passion of the government’s men to assassinate David.

“teeth” and “tongue” and “spears” and “swords” describe the deadly intent and armed capacity of Saul’s army to eliminate David; that is, this is not a mild disagreement, but deadly, hate driven chase.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.

Not only was David's life at stake here, but God's glory would be won or lost depending on what happened in this encounter with Saul's henchmen.

6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.

The use of the word "net" and "digget a pit" implies a preplanned hunt to murder David. His predicament was no accident. It was a well-organized, engineered, orchestrated scheme to lure him into the trap.

David's Confidence in God

David was a man like all of us, but here he bears his soul . . . its conflicts . . . and his decision to belief the best about God even though terrible troubles tested him — mainly Saul's manhunt for his life.

7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

The word "fixed" (kuwn) is used twice for emphasis. It means "prepared," or "established" — the opposite of doubt, wavering, and indecision. Doubt and indecision were not at work here.

The verb "praise" (zamar) is in the mood of the Piel Imperative stating David's intense commitment to praise God. Use of a Piel verb expresses the speaker's vigorous desire, intention, self-encouragement, or determination to speak well of the Lord despite the troubles he was experiencing.

Thus, we come to **the main lesson of the psalm.**

"I will sing and give praise" means David's lips would not doubt, gripe, grumble or complain about Providence. Rather, his words express confidence in God — not an easy task when the stakes are high and when the soul is on life-support. Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and David chose life . . . faith . . . and words of light.

8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.

"my glory" refers to the noblest powers of the soul; that is, employing the lips to speak positively of God in the midst of this deadly conflict required total concentration and total commitment of the total man to the total task of believing God for a positive outcome.

David's Commitment to Glorify God

9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.

Being chased and hunted down brings out fear and doubt in most men . . . but, not David. He was truly committed to express trust in God for deliverance — to speak only of God's faithfulness during this troublesome period in his life.

10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

David was in narrow straights with sabers rattling all around him, but his hope was in the endless supply of mercy that is higher than the heavens.

11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

The crowning theme and goal of David's life was to see the Lord exalted in the affairs of men. Consequently, in the midnight darkness, he spoke words of light to his men; when things seemed out of control, David praised the sovereignty of God; when his men questioned the wisdom of God, David praised the goodness of the Lord.

Let us learn a lesson on leadership. Never complain! Be real . . . but speak well of the Lord.

Psalm 58 - Break Their Teeth, O God

"break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD."



Burdened with the maladministration of government officials, the Psalmist sends this imprecatory prayer to Heaven petitioning the Lord to pour out His crushing justice on the psychopaths of his time — an appropriate prayer as we see wicked officials promoting infanticide, Sodomy, gender confusion, and oppressive taxes upon the people.

A Query of the Wicked

1 (To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David.) Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

The word "congregation" is the Hebrew word *elim* which can be translated "silence" or "gods" (Psalm 82:1). It appears to be a metonym for corrupt judges who ignored righteousness and ruled wickedly.

Luther renders this, "Are you then dumb (silent), that you will not speak what is right, and judge what is proper, ye children of men?"

Gesenius (Lexicon) renders it here, "Do ye indeed decree dumb justice?"

Professor Alexander renders it, "Are ye indeed dumb when ye should speak righteousness?" The allusion is clearly to some public act of judging; to a judicial sentence; to magistrates and rulers; to people who "should" give a righteous sentence; to those in authority who "ought" to pronounce a just opinion on the conduct of others (Barnes).

In the American system of law, officials are not required to answer the Citizen; that is, silence is the preferred means of communication; and in law, silence is form of speech that can convey agreement or be an admission of guilt:

"Silence can be understood as acceptance when both parties had a preexisting relationship before the current contract" (Findlaw).

The psalmist reminds these potentates who sit in the seat of power that they are but men — men who themselves will be judged by Almighty God.

2 Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

"in the heart ye work wickedness" is translated "in the heart you work lawlessness" (anomia) in the LXX. Juridical decisions which were supposed to promote justice resulted in further injury to the people.

"weigh" is a judicial term referring to scales and balances and the powers of office.

The term “violence” refers to personal injury. The Bible is a book of common law, “Do your neighbor no harm.” But, these administrators acted in a way that violated the rights of man.

A Description of the Wicked

3 The wicked are estranged (ta’ah) from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

The word “wicked” or “anomias” in the LXX does not refer to the whole of the human race but to judicial officers. His cause is not personal, but general outrage against the forces of evil at work through wicked men that acted lawlessly.

The word “estranged” (zuwr) means “strange;” that is, these Jewish officials were strangers (foreigners; aliens) to the household of God and His law-order.

The word “astray” (ta’ah) means “wander,” “go astray,” “be intoxicated,” or “stagger around like a drunk man” who has lost his way.

Genesis 20:13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander (ta’ah) from my father’s house,

2 Chronicles 33:9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err (ta’ah)

Job 12:25 They grope in the dark without light, and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man (ta’ah).

Isaiah 28:7 But they also have erred (ta’ah) through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way (ta’ah); the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way (ta’ah) through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.

How do you explain the maniacal decisions of judges? The psalmist concludes their maladjustment began in their youth; that they were born sinners, and early childhood -raining failed to correct these miscreants. Lies, fictions, distortion, and deceit became a normal course of conduct in the halls of power.

4 Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; 5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

Their lies are compared to the venom of a snake (na’hash) that stops the heart.

“Deaf” refers to various kinds of serpents that “will not be charmed.” A deaf adder (pe’ten; Egyptian cobra) “suddenly darts forth its fangs, and shows itself not only untamed, but untameable” (Ellicott).

These antinomian judges were deaf to all of the Lord’s counsels, to the dictates of their own consciences, and to the authority of God’s law. Like the deaf cobra, they could not be charmed; that is, they were unresponsive to the dictates of God’s law and to reason.

An Imprecatory Prayer Against the Wicked

6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

The wicked judges are compared to snakes and lions. To neutralize a serpent, you defang it. “Break out the great teeth” of a lion is the psalmist’s way of asking the Lord to subdue the wicked; to prevent injustice; and, to remove these traitors from office. Having no capacity to do good, these lawless judges ought to be removed from power – “break their teeth, O God.”

Our culture bends toward permissiveness. Beware of being too nice and having more sugar than the fairy godmother. Let us learn to be meaner than an anvil.

7 Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. 8 As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.

Continuing his theme regarding the ruination of the wicked, he wishes their collapse to be like four undoing’s in nature:

- Like the melting waters of snow and ice . . .
- Like the tragedy of broken bows and arrows of an archer . . .
- Like the crushing of a vulnerable little snail that tries to defend itself with its pronged horns as it melts away under the heat of the day and moves along its slimy path losing its own precious moisture.
- Like the tragedy of a still birth by an expectant mother whose child never sees the light of day.

9 Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.

The psalmist expresses confidence that God’s justice will be swift and sure . . . like the quick-burning fires of a bramble bush used to heat broth in a clay pot over an open fire . . . like the short-lived, angry whirlwind or dust devil so common in the desert regions of the world.

The Sweetness of Victory Over the Wicked

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

The pompous buffoonery and the prosperity of the wicked grieve the righteous. The odious presence and dastardly deeds of these political monsters cause many a man to question the wisdom and power of Divine Providence.

As the imagery shifts from city gate to that of victory in a bloody battlefield, there is great cause for rejoicing when the righteous see the sudden removal of these madmen from the citadels of power. It like bloody soldiers marching over the corpses of their foes. The downfall of wicked politicians fuels joy and increases faith in the wonder of Providence.

11 So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

The imagery in this text expresses the inner joy of an ancient marine as he marches back from the slaughter of his enemies. Imagine a soldier stepping over carcasses with his feet stained in the blood of his enemies. As he quietly meditates on the miracle of victory, he shines with new confidence: There is “a God that judgeth in the earth.”

“Whoever duly considers these things, will diligently seek the reward of righteousness, and adore the Providence which orders all things aright in heaven and in earth” — Matthew Henry.

Psalm 59 - The Steel Beam Confidence of David

“But I will sing of thy power”



David authored this psalm.

The background of this psalm is found in 1 Samuel 19:11: “Saul also sent messengers (spies) unto David’s house to watch him, and to slay him in the morning.”

The fear of being hunted and assassinated left an indelible impression of David. So much so, he penned his struggles in a poem to commemorate the near-death experience.

This is a teaching psalm encouraging all of God’s children to seek Him in times of trouble.

A Prayer for Deliverance

Psalm 59:1 <To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him.>

This prayer was offered, and later written down, when Saul’s staked out David’s house with a plan to kill him in the morning.

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me. 2 Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.

The word “Deliver” is mentioned twice. It expresses the intense, immediate need for the young general.

David’s enemies were government assassins — “bloody men” and “workers of iniquity”; that is, lawless men under the command of a king at war with God’s law-order.

A Description of His Enemies

3 For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD. 4 They run and prepare themselves without my fault: awake to help me, and behold.

“lie in wait for my soul” suggest covert operations of Saul’s corrupt police force with the intent of murdering David.

“mighty” suggest these were strong, healthy, killing machines. David was not fighting shadows on a wall or an unseen evil spirit, but – EKO Cobra Commandos made of flesh and blood that traumatized David.

“not for my transgression, nor for my sin, O LORD” informs us not only of David’s innocence, but that these “mighty” men had no scruples . . . no conscience . . . and no morals – that is, they had no probable cause to hunt David. He had done nothing wrong. He broke no law, and he

had done no wrong. The order was issued by his faithless king who was fast approaching the state of a psychopath.

“They run and prepare themselves without my fault” shows us these men did not question the unlawfulness of Saul’s command; that they were eager to obey orders handed down to them by the government; that David was innocent and didn’t deserve any of this malicious treatment; that he was a victim of petty jealousies and party politics.

“awake” is David’s call for God to show His power to protect him in these unwanted circumstances.

5 Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

“O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel” -- David’s lifted his prayer to the Captain of Heaven’s armies, the Commander of the sun, moon, and stars; the Captain of the angels; and the Protector of the nation of Israel.

“be not merciful to any wicked transgressors” is David’s cry for God to arrest these men, summon them to Court, and to punish them for their wicked deeds and malicious intent.

6 They return at evening; they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

David describes the SWAT operations of these assassins . . . under the cover of darkness . . . like scavenger dogs sniffing for scraps of food. Barking out war-whoops, they were packed together eager to carry out the king’s kill-on-sight orders.

7. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords are in their lips: for who, say they, doth hear?

The word “belch out” means “to boil ” or “to gush out” like a water fall or an artesian well. Like trolls they irrupt obscene, profane, or scurrilous language common to assassination squads.

A Description of His Defender

8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision. 9 Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: for God is my defence.

“laugh” (sachaq) means “to mock” and “to deride.”

David derives confidence based on the character of God. He knows. He sees. He laughs at these mercenaries with contempt knowing this death squad could bark but not bite under his restraining hand.

This text expresses the steel-beam confidence of David that all the pompous tactics of these cutthroats would be crushed by His all-seeing, all-powerful, ever-present Protector and Defender.

This appears to be the main lesson of the psalm. O, to have pure unbridled confidence that God will provide a way of escape in times of deadly-trouble.

10 The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see my desire upon mine enemies.

The word “prevent” means “to come to the front,” or “to go before the troops.”

Though David faced the “king of terrors” (death), he possessed a precious and rare confidence that the God of mercy would come from behind to the front of the battle to confront these covert attackers.

11 Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield.

“Slay them not, lest my people forget” seems to imply that David wanted protection but not the immediate destruction of these attackers. He saw in this attack an opportunity for God to teach the people about the wickedness of Saul and the corruptness of his administration.

The meaning of this seems to be, do not destroy them at once, lest, being removed out of the way, the people should forget what was done, or should lose the impression which it is desirable should be produced by their punishment. Let them live, and let them wander about, as exiles under the divine displeasure, that they may be permanent and enduring proofs of the justice of God; of the evil of sin; of the danger of violating the divine law

Praying for the Destruction of His Enemies

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.

David charges these hostile forces with four transgressions: pernicious speech, pride (self-law), cursing, and lying (libel or false charges).

“cursing” refers to taking oaths and breaking them – a violation of the Third Commandment.

13 Consume them in wrath, consume them, that they may not be: and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

“Consume” does not mean “to burn” but to bring this horrid affair to an end. Such vicious contempt ought not to exist among decent men.

“them” refers to Saul’s hit men.

“let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth” is the remedy for lawlessness, blasphemy, and cut throat politics. Where men do not acknowledge the sovereignty of God and their duty to him, no man is safe.

14 And at evening let them return; and let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city. 15 Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.

This is the voice of triumph. Let these armed spies come like barking dogs, but when they come they will find no prey. Let them make their plans for blood and dream of death, but they will be greatly disappointed because God will save me.

Praise to His Defender

16 But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.

When the spies grieved over their disappointment, David was singing praise to God for the exercise of His power to save him.

“morning” is when the assassination “hit” was planned, but God frustrated their deadly schemes. Instead of rejoicing in the death of David, they groaned over their defeat. David sang of God’s mercy and protection.

17 Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God is my defence, and the God of my mercy.

David did not boast about his skills to avoid capture or credit himself for his escape and evade tactics, but to the intervention of God to save him. Whatever the means of rescue, David traced his getaway to the agency of the LORD.

Psalm 60 – Seeking the God of Recovery

Feeling Rejected?

“Turn Thyself to Us Again.”



Have you ever felt like God has rejected you and that God's does not hear your prayers?

This is a psalm scripted by a shunned saint informing us about how to respond to the God Who chastises us.

Psalm 60:1 <To the chief Musician upon Shushaneduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aramnaharaim and with Aramzobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.>

This song was sent to the choir director and was meant to be sung. The term “Shushan Eduth” means “upon the lilies.” The meaning of the word “mikhtam” is an unknown, technical term.

This is a strange beginning of a psalm for a nation at war. The hymn was composed during the Syro-Edomite War (2 Samuel 8) -- blistering times for the nation of Israel.

After the disaster of Gilboa, David inherited a divided and defeated nation because of Saul's humanistic reign. As soon as David was appointed king in Judah, a civil war broke out. Death and assassinations followed. After seven years of war, the northern tribes reluctantly accepted the God-appointed, shepherd-king as the legitimate ruler of Israel.

Bonded like a jigsaw puzzle, self-interest and petty jealousies threatened to break the twelve tribes apart. Only David's powerful leadership could keep the nation from fracturing into small states. But, not only were there schisms within, there were invasions from without. In the west were the prickly Philistines. In the east, the Moabites challenged David's patience. In the north, David's armies were locked in conflict with the Syrians. Sensing weakness in the nation, the Edomites decided to attack from the south. With the Syrians in the north partially subjugated, David marched his best general, Joab, hundreds of miles into the unbearable intense heat of the Salt Plains south of the Dead Sea to confront the opportunistic Edomites marching north from the mountains of Petra intent on plundering southern Judah.

Only sly “twelve thousand” is the language of defeat . . . of an incomplete victory . . . of being routed by the Edomites.

Where was God in all of this conflict and strife?

O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.

What a statement! God, "You have rejected us." Friction within and fights without were evidence that God's favor no longer shined on the nation. Could their circumstances be blacker?

To be rejected by God is the worst plight that can ever face a people. It is a desperate situation when God rejects a man, but it far worse when God rejects a man and he does not know it. Rejection is temporary for the one who seeks God and repents, but rejection is permanent for one who is rejected and does not know it. David, however, assessed Israel's desperate situation correctly: "You have rejected us; You have broken us; You have been angry with us; you have made the land tremble; you have split it open."

Where was God in all of this division and strife?

2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.

In the midst of the internal strife and bitter wars, David saw the providence of God. "You made the land tremble," says David. Nothing happened by chance. Behind the volcanic political scene was Almighty God.

The nation was divided because their affections were divided. Israel was at war with the nations because the nation was at war with God. Israel was like a puddle on a sidewalk—superficial, shallow, and temporal in their love for God. He compares the internal strife and division to an earthquake dividing the land and splitting the people. Nothing was stable. Nothing was secure. No one was safe. Everything trembled. Why did it happen? Answer: Because the nation displeased the Lord.

In times like this, what did the nation need? Bigger armies? Wiser generals? Better diplomats? Crafty politicians?

"David knew the nation needed to return to God and prayed, "Heal it breaches (fractures);" i.e. mend its cracks.

And, to Whom does David pray? The chastened did not pray to the Creator per se, but to the Chastiser. Instead of rebelling against the One who appointed affliction, the afflicted moved toward the Afflicter. Like a spanked child punished for his error who snuggles into his father's lap for consolation, David crawled near to the One Who held the whip in his hand and cried for healing.

What a lesson for us! Where do we go when Heaven is silent? Where do we go when the God we love has bruised us?

Surely, the One Who makes poor can make rich; the one Who scatters is also the One Who gathers; the One Who brings tribulation is also the One Who brings consolation; and the One who wounds also supplies the healing ointment.

3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment. 4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

The sources of the nation's plight lie in the judgment of God. The nation's troubles were not for a lack of skill or fortitude or diligence. Then nation settled for a compromise, but the Lord wanted something better for Israel; and therefore, pruned the land that it might produce an abundance of spiritual fruit.

How bad was this trouble? In Genesis 35:16 the Spirit uses the word "hardship" or "suffer" (qas'hah) to describe the death of Rachel as she was giving birth to her second son. The internal strife and external wars came on the nation like labors pains and threatened the life of Israel. God brought the labor pains.

David calls the chastised, "Thy people." The rejected ones were His people. The split and divided, the attacked and the assaulted, were people belonging to God.

David compares the discipline of God to intoxicating wine, a powerful herbal beverage that made the nation stagger like a drunk man. Who concocted this bitter brew to detoxify the nation? God mixed the tart grapes to cleanse His people. Would it cleanse? Would it produce health? Would any good come of it?

Chastised by wars and purified by discipline, the text says that a people who feared God arose in the land.

Afflictions produced a holy fear to them being tutored by the Spirit. To them, the Lord gave a banner. A banner is a flag, a symbol of primary truth for which the nation stands, a guarantee of victory. When marching to war, the banner is only given to the bravest soldier. Because Israel was the home of the brave, it was destined to be the land of the free. Its most sacred treasure was not land, people, wealth or riches, but the crown jewel of all the nations, the Revelation of the true God.

Likewise, we have been given the great treasure of the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8-14). It is our sacred duty to carry the banner of truth forward and to never be ashamed of the gospel that brings salvation.

5 That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me.

"beloved" refers to Israel.

David prayed again. He prays that God's "beloved" might be delivered. This warrior-king was learning that Israel's future could not be secured by military might and the power of wealth, but in God Who is pleased with the nation.

David's name means "beloved," and in the nation there was a remnant according to grace who are the beloved of God. If it were not for their sakes, God would not send victory or give peace. David requests a mighty deliverance, "Save with Thy right hand." He begs God to attend to the prayers of His saints.

6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver; 8 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

“hath spoken in his holiness” – God is holy, true, and faithful. His holiness provides assurance that whatever He promises, He will perform.

The word “exult” or “rejoice” is a word for “triumph.” Faith is never happier than when it has a promise from God. Say what you may, but the promise of God drowns out the cacophony of discouragement and all its discordant bellows of unbelief. When Abraham heard from God after thirteen years of silence, he was energized, laughed, and leaped for joy (Genesis 17). Faith hears the Word of God and treats it as fact and not a fiction. Faith claims the promise of God and adopts it as its own.

Faith reclaims what the locust have eaten; what Satan has spoiled; what man has defiled. Faith claims and then surrenders it the Lordship of Christ.

In every life, there are pockets of resistance and hidden closets that have not yielded to the Lord. To David, Shechem was a defiant Canaanite region within the borders of Israel that stubbornly resisted the rule of David. Geographically, Shechem separated the north from the south. Located between Judah in the south and the Valley of Jezreel in the north, Shechem was strategically important. David claims the Abrahamic promise and believes that God will divide and reapportion Shechem to the godly. To be divided is to have power cut in half. David foresaw a day when faith would control this rebel region.

The Jordan River represented a natural boundary separating the east and the west. David not only claims Shechem, west of the Jordan, but Succoth, east of the Jordan. Likewise, he claims Gilead and Manasseh on the east of Jordan and Judah and Ephraim on the west of the Jordan for the Lord. David saw a day when these regions would gladly unite around Israel’s King and yield their strength to Him.

He had a right to do this because the promise of God extended “from the River of Egypt (the Nile) as far as the great river, the River Euphrates:” But, Paul corrects this limited vision to include “the whole world” (Romans 4:13). When faith is at work, it not only claims all that God has promised, it extends the rule of Christ over lives and hearts. Furthermore, when faith is at work, it unites people around the worship of YHWH. When unbelief is at work, people are divided and multiculturalism prevails.

Three classic enemies are mentioned: Philistia to the west, Moab to the northeast, and Edom to the southeast. He calls Moab God’s wash basin (footbath); that is, a tool for cleansing the feet of Israel. Faith perceived that impregnable Edom could be defeated as easily as throwing a shoe— a symbol of rejection. Unlike a sword, the shoe is not a formidable weapon. By using this analogy, David perceived the ease of victory.

“Philistia, triumph thou because of me” would be better construed as “over Philistia is my triumph.” Faith saw a day when Israel’s nemesis, the Philistines, would be totally defeated by the armies of Israel; a day when Philistine victories would come to an end; that is, a day when foreign powers would be subdued.

9 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

Faith will not rest until the center of evil is destroyed and surrendered to Christ.

One center of evil that threatened Israel was Edom in the south. The Edomites were descendants from Esau, Jacob's fleshly, fornicating brother. Herod the Great was the most famous Edomite.

A question arises in David's mind about who can lead a victory march against the rock fortress.

The word "strong" or "besieged" (matsowr) means "fortified."

The city David had in mind was Petra, the greatest, natural fortified city to Middle Eastern people. Rugged, steep cliffs and mountains surrounded the city. The only way into the city was through the Siq, a narrow trail through the Wadi Musa, which narrows to about 15 feet and which has a cliff face reaching hundreds of meters into the sky. Armies could not scale the mountains or cliffs and an army seeking to march into the Siq could easily be defeated with armed forces. Inside the Petra metropolis, people lived in sandstone caves. An intricate system of water canals carved out of rock supplied the city with an abundance of water. The Nabataeans were brilliant hydraulic engineers who prided themselves in their security and safety.

Who was going to lead an attack and subdue the Edomites? Not Joab! No human general could defeat the Nabataeans. The fortress was impregnable. The city was inaccessible and a victorious strike against Petra was inconceivable. Victory could only come if God, the One who rejected Israel, would one day march with her armies to Petra – an imaginary confrontation designed to reveal the greatness of Israel's God.

10 Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? 11 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

David returns to the made problem of the nation – that God had "cast" them off. But, David not only exposes the problem, he reveals the solution – the God of Recovery.

There may be a day in a man's ministry or the life of the church, and certainly the nation when God no longer goes out "with our armies." What do we do?

Faith understands that the One Who wounds can also heal; that the One Who brings defeat can also bring victory. David was learning that protection does not come because of natural boundaries, or great armies, or brilliant generals, but because the Warrior-King marches with Israel's armies.

Faith understands that deliverance is not in man, but in God. It confesses that the help of man is "worthless" (empty). But, through God, a righteous people shall do valiantly.

The word "valiant" means "strength" or "wealth" or "the produce of vineyards." It is translated "army" in Exodus 15:4; "goods" in Numbers 31:9; "excellence" in Ruth 3:11; "valor" in 1 Chronicles 7:7; "riches" in Psalm 62:10; "wealth" in Psalm 73:12; "strength" in Ecclesiastes 10:10; "ramparts" in Isaiah 26:1.

Faith understands that God supplies victory for the defeated; strength for the weak; wealth for the poor. Whatever you need, God can supply! He can increase your “goods” and place your enemies under your feet.

In conclusion, Israel was at war because she was being disciplined for her sins. God rejected her. But, rejection was temporary. In his plight, David sought the One Who held the rod and pleaded for restoration.

Likewise, when we perceive that providence has not shined in favor upon us, we should seek the One Who orders the discipline. His disfavor is only momentary. Faith claims the promises and believes that God can restore, heal, and repair that which is broken. Further, faith believes that God is the God of recovery and rejoices in the hope and power of God.

We ask ourselves, “Is God pleased with America?” It is not difficult to see that America is divided religiously, politically, and culturally. Multiculturalism prevails. “Happy Holidays,” has replaced, “Merry Christmas.” The courts protect slut masters and their unlawful posting of pornography on the internet, and banned the posting of the Ten Commandments in schools, courtrooms, and public places. And, we are at war with terrorism, and dozens of enemies would love to see the collapse of this nation. We are the most taxed people in American history. Is not the division and taxation and war an indication that God is displeased?

We should ask if God is pleased with our church life. Anger, division, and strife are indicators those self-interest reigns?

We must ask if God is pleased with our families. Anger, division, and strife are indicators that self-interest reign.

We should ask ourselves if there are any She hems or Edoms in the closets of our hearts that have not yielded to Christ. True faith surrenders all to Christ and allows him to have His way in our lives. Let us determine to put Christ first in all that we do, and to exalt him together in this New Year.

A Prayer: “O turn thyself to us again” and again and again.

A Promise to Claim: “So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten . . .” (Joel 2:25).

Psalm 61 - Overwhelmed

Lead Me to the Rock that is Higher than I



This psalm is ascribed to David, but we do not know on what occasion it was written. The value of this psalm is the simplicity of trust, and its reward for those seeking His mercy.

A Cry far Away from Home

Psalm 61:1 <To the chief Musician upon Neginah, A Psalm of David.> Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

“Nignah” refers to a stringed instrument.

God hears many prayers, but “hear” (shema) my prayer. Pay attention to it.

2 From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

“the end of the earth” expresses the view that that the earth is one extended plain; that it has an end; that it is not a ball. Possibly, the psalmist was far away from home longing to be near the courts of the Lord.

The word “overwhelmed” means “covered” like a seed under the earth; like a man under the cover of darkness; under a calamity.

David employs the metaphor of a “rock” as an emblem of shelter and protection. He had no strength to depend on and prays for an infusion of muscular power and hope — “Lead Me to the Rock that is Higher than I.”

Oh, that all men might have this prayer buzzing in their heart.

Under the Coverture of thy Wings

David relies upon past victories as a ground of hope for present troubles.

3 For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy.

Because God was a shelter and strong tower in past troubles, he prays that God would protect him now. He prays to an unchangeable God who acts consistent with his desire to show mercy.

4 I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

The tabernacle is the sacred tent erected by the Levites as His temporary home; that is, David’s home is where God is. Unhappy in the market place of men, David longs to be near God’s house.

Switching metaphor from a rock higher than I, David sees himself as a little bird, “I will trust in the covert of thy wings” – a helpless bird seeking shelter under a mother bird’s wings as young chicks are known to do.

His Confident Hope

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.

“vows” are a means of securing God’s blessings. God protects those who commit themselves to His protection. Somehow, David had assurance that God heard and received his vows; and, upon this foundation, David claims the inheritance of those that fear Thy name. Though we are not “inspired” as David, Christians seem to have the assurance that God hears their prayers of faith and that they too can enjoy the assurance of more answered prayer.

6 Thou wilt prolong the king’s life: and his years as many generations.

“prolong” = “Days upon the days of the king wilt Thou add.” This is not a promise for a “long life,” but a promise he will live many days after this present crisis.

7 He shall abide before God for ever: O prepare mercy and truth, which may preserve him.

Though driven into exile and hiding, David possesses a confidence God was with Him and would continue to be with Him — that God’s paths (Psalm 35) are mercy and truth — that because He sought the Lord, God would preserve him with mercy and truth.

God did not leave Abraham destitute of mercy and truth (Genesis 24:27), nor will he leave us destitute of mercy and truth.

His New Commission

8 So will I sing praise unto thy name for ever, that I may daily perform my vows.

Vows should be rare. Because of the weakness of man, the wise avoid over-enthusiastic vows. However, there is something about deliverance and protection that deepens our commitment to speak well of the Lord and to join the chorale of people praising God. Vows or no vows, godly men possess daily habits that lead to a life of blessing.

Psalm 62 - My Only Rock

“unto Thee belongeth mercy”



Psalm 62:1 <To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.>

This psalm purports to be a psalm of David and there is no reason to doubt his authorship.

This is another psalm about trusting God. Trust in Scripture is introduced to us by David — something learned from his grandmother Ruth (Ruth 2:12) and developed by David as the fundamental response to the Lord. The word “trust” (batach) is used 50 times in Psalms and 57 more times in the Tanach. The adverb “only” limits the action; that is, David limited his trust to the Lord.

The value of this psalm is its encouragement to trust God and not to trust statesmen, lawmakers, legislators, or political grandstanders.

A Commitment of Trust

Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.

David inventoried his own resources to live life successfully and concluded he did not have the wherewithal to prevail against the schemes of ambitious men. Consequently, he sought the Lord, and he found Him to have all that he needed to triumph over those who plotted his destruction.

“Truly” means “absolutely,” “for real,” “in fact and not theory” -- perhaps, unconditional surrender to His sovereignty.

“waiteth” implies that his trust was tested by injurious circumstances and the deadly, political climate of his day.

“salvation” includes deliverance from the crooks and criminals of his day, but it may be expanded to include New Testament enemies: Satan, sin, and death.

2 He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.

“my rock” is David’s favorite metaphor for God as his strength, power, and salvation. Stand on this rock and the floods of evil cannot reach you.

The adverb “only” (ak) is used in the restrictive sense, and limits the verb “is”. It means “surely,” “howbeit,” or “only.” There is no duplicity here. Moreover, the word “only” is in the emphatic position in Hebrew. “only” implies an exclusive, uncompromising, unadulterated trust in the Lord.

God is able to save men from every dark, devilish, dishonorable deluge that comes against them.

An Indictment of his Enemies

3 How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence.

The “ye” refers to multiple miscreants opposing David.

“mischief” (hathath) refers to depraved schemes to assail, injure, steal, harm, mar, and destroy. David is not referring to casual insults or plots to kill him, but to criminal assaults by gangsters on his body and person.

“against man” (ish) refers to David (an ish) or to men in general even though it is used in the singular.

David needed to be saved from the treacherous schemes of outlaw-thugs. Not all men trust God. He required protection from the criminal cabal in the seat of power during his day who had no qualms about killing, slandering, ambushing, and gutting him with Arabian swords.

“ye shall be slain all of you” is a Pual stem implying intense action upon these gangland figures . . . even being murdered by other felons.

“all of you” is in the plural indicating a coterie of opposition; that is, David’s enemies are plural in number. They run in packs.

“as a bowing wall shall ye be, and as a tottering fence” – David does NOT empower his enemies or attribute to them more skill and clout than they actually possessed.

“like a teetering wall” refers to the vulnerability and weakness of these mobsters. He sees this political cabal as doomed, defeated, and destroyed . . . and not triumphant and successful!

The lesson here is for us to stop sanctioning political opponents and crediting them with more power than the LORD God. Speak of their distress, and not of their progress; of their bereavements, and not their achievements; of their adversity, and not their prosperity; of their insufficiencies, not of their monopolies.

4 They only consult to cast him down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.

The nature of political ruffraff has not changed! This coterie of criminals practiced the politics of destruction – treachery on steroids.

“They only consult to cast down from his Excellency” – “This is the object of all their counsels and plans. They aim at one high in rank – and their sole purpose is to bring him down” (Barnes).

“consult” means “counsel” or “advisement.” It involves a conspiracy to injure, maim, and destroy.

“only” – The bloc of wicked men lived “only” to wreck the lives of God-fearing men. David served the Lord only. The wonder of David is that he lacked duplicity. There was nothing duplicitous about the soul of this prince – a rare mark among men.

“cast down” describes the single power that officialdom has, and that is to devastate, demolish, desolate, decimate, and dismantle all that is good and noble. The only ambition these low lives have is to destroy their political opponents and run roughshod over the common man.

“they delight in lies” – Nothing has changed. Reprobates love lies, fictions, fables, myths, superstition, and utopianism. At the same time they hate truth, law, goodness, veracity, realism, and factualism.

“they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly” – New politicians are like old politicians. Don’t believe what they say, believe what they do. They profess goodness, but love evil; profess truth, but love lies; profess love for life, but love death; profess devotion to the public welfare, but are chained to self-interest, self-promotion, and self-enrichment. They smile and profess love for you, but inwardly they want you dead and in the grave.

The American Indian learned it well: “white man speaketh with forked tongue.”

A Second Statement on his Trust in God

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him.

“My soul, wait thou only upon God” is a command to his own soul. It implies that David looked to God to save him from the wickedness of his age . . . from the schemes of those who did not trust God . . . from those that plotted to do him harm. This text implies that David troubles were so great that no friend, parent, brother, or sister had the power to help him. His trust was “only upon God.”

“wait” implies patience under trial. The exhibition of virtue though surrounded by vices.

“my expectation” refers to all of David’s hopes, prayers, and wishes. In this case, deliverance from the wicked devices of thunderous men in positions of power. It is the God of peace who defeats these evil miscreants (Romans 16:20).

“only” implies that David did not pursue purposes common to men. Perhaps, the pinnacle of Christian maturity is believing and trusting His power though He sometimes restrains His power to relieve our stress. In times of deprivation, we do not pursue another source of perceived power like Saul who in his latter hours sought help from a woman in the occult (1 Samuel 28).

“only” – David did not trust God and gold, Christ and currency, the Spirit and silver! He was fully invested in the Lord.

6 He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved.

David employs the metaphor “rock” as the icon of salvation, protection, stability, and fortification.

“I shall not be moved” (mowt) expresses steel-confidence that he would not be shaken or left teetering in doubt and bewilderment. There is no fear of famine, helplessness, weakness, destitution, or destruction by David. Such assurance does not stem from one’s talents and resources, but from knowledge of the character of God.

7 In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.

“salvation,” “glory,” “rock,” “strength,” and “refuge” define the marvelous benefits of trusting God.

An Encouragement for Others to Trust God

8 Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.

“Trust in him at all times” is an exhortation to all people, men and women, young and old, rich or poor, black or white, tall or short.

“at all times” includes good times and bad times, sickness and health, in war and in peace.

David reviewed the character of God and found him worthy of trust. Therefore, he exhorts all men to test God and to place their confidence in Him to discover His power, mercy, and faithfulness. He feels like all those who trust God will find Him worthy of their trust.

“pour out your hearts” is an exhortation to fully and completely trust Him. There is no problem, no difficulty, and no circumstance for which He does not have a remedy. Because He does not show favoritism, there is hope for you . . . for me . . . and for all men. Test Him, trust Him, and find Him true to His promises.

9 Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity.

“Surely men of low degree are vanity” can be literally translated, “vanity are the sons of Adam” – a reference to all of humanity.

“men of high degree” refers to kings, princes, and nobles. The great matters that concern man cannot be resolved by engineers, scientists, doctors, or politicians. Their powers are way over estimated. “men of high degree are a lie.” The elite cannot help us. To trust them is to trust a spider’s web . . . to walk on cracked ice . . . to build a house on crackers . . . to cling to a twig . . . to stand on a broken leg . . . to secure one’s precious all with a safety pin.

“laid in the balance” – literally means, “they do not go up;” that is, they have no weight or value or mass or density or ponderosas.

Having no substance “they are altogether lighter than vanity” or lighter than air . . . or space . . . or a puff of wind. To trust them is like trying to stand on the clouds. They have no power to save us. So, why do men seek help from the rich and “powerful”? Are not they the cause of poverty, famine, and war?

An Admonishment Against Misplaced Trust

10 Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart upon them.

David romances the diamond of trust against the black velvet of oppression. There is power and gain in exploitation and robbery, but this is the path of felons. Only criminals exaggerate promises and take advantage of the naive.

All men need money of exchange to purchase needs . . . but there is a danger of making this one's life ambition.

“set not your heart upon them” – The opposite of trusting God is trusting riches. Aware of the soul-sucking power of wealth, David warns those who succeed in increasing their assets to not trust them, rest in them, or rely upon them instead of the Lord.

The Sustainment by the Trustee

11 God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God.

“twice have I heard this” is a literary technique used by the psalmist to stress the importance of the truth that “power belongeth unto God.” Power does not belong to the stealthy, wealthy, or to the healthy. It does not belong to the imminent or the intelligent. It does not belong to the strong or those that do wrong. None of these can supply the real needs of men. Man is a sinner who needs a Savior. Only God can save men.

12 Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

Governments are not known for their mercy.

“unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy” educates us that God is not only powerful but merciful; that He not only has the ability to save men, but the willingness to do so. He not only has the power to destroy, but to redeem; to kill and to rescue; to crush and keep alive. Though He has the terrifying strength of a lion, he has the gentleness of a lamb. He is the Lamb of God who “takes away the sins of the world.”

Blessed be His name. He saves those who believe and punishes those who do not believe.

“for thou renderest to every man according to his work” informs us that the Lord is not only a God of mercy, but a God of justice; not only a Savior, but a Judge. He not only saves those who trust Him, He is an impartial judge Who dispenses justice towards wrongdoers. His power, mercy, and equity constitute a reason why people should commit their precious all to the Lord. Having all power to save, being plentiful in mercy, and being just and fair in his dealings with men, all can possess a confidence that in Him all the interest of the universe will be secured (Barnes).

Psalm 63 - The Pentecostal Psalm

“in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice”



This is a Pentecost psalm, the longing of every heart inhabited by the Spirit of God.

This psalm is called a Pentecostal psalm because it commemorated the “Feast of Weeks” and the coming of the Spirit upon men in Acts 2 enabling them to preach the gospel and to keep the law.

It is read in many churches on the Day of Pentecost and at revival meetings. On this day in 32 A.D. men cried, “Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?”

Be careful for what your hunger, for you will become the sum total of your desires.

That this is a psalm written by David has little doubt.

It shines light on the heart of a fugitive hiding in the wilderness of Judah from the sword of Saul.

Though marked for destruction by a government official, the Spirit is pleased to reveal the man who was being maligned as a traitor in the gossip columns of the Jerusalem Journal — a man destined to be the Anointed King of Israel.

Let’s take a look at this spiritual man and the miracle that occurred in his heart. The miracle of a man seeking God, and not gold; God, and not the power of government; God, and not girls.

Psalm 63:1 <A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.>

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

Before us is a mighty miracle — a man in search of God — not a man in search of gold or bigger and better government. Selah.

The prayer is addressed to Elohim, David’s “El” or strong one. “Soul” and “flesh” embrace the whole man. Driven by a furious desire to know God, he was up before dawn seeking Him – a marvel for a busy king.

In the book “The Agony and the Ecstasy” author Irving Stone shows us Michael Angelo whose artistic achievements were accomplished by an artist burning with an unquenchable passion to paint and sculpt.

All men are motivated by desire for something, but David’s furnace was fueled by an insatiable desire to see God’s power and glory — a desire compared to a parched man staggering through a sun-baked desert craving a drop of water.

2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

What does it mean to see God's "power" and "glory" in the sanctuary? The temple complex was a quiet and peaceful place.

Surely, it wasn't the goat-skinned tents of neither the tabernacle nor the crafted marble stones and columns in the grand complex of Solomon's temple that later Israelites enjoyed that fueled this flame.

What did this man see in the sanctuary that would resemble anything of "power" and "glory?" Was it thoughts of royal authority resting above the ark? His stored kinetic energy restrained by His mercy?

What makes hardened men weep, and men long addicted to habits of sin willing to abandon their iniquities and turn to God?

Consider the "power" here as God breaking the arrogance of man . . . of repentance that makes angels sing for joy.

The scene on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) of proud, haughty sinners confessing Christ and bowing the knee to Him as Lord was a striking exhibition of the power of God. To calm the fury in the heart of man which is like a storm created by roaring, savage winds morphing into mountains of angry waves, painted silver by terrifying electrical strikes upon the shivering sea of ambition, is a miracle indeed!

"The winds and sea obey Him," but insolent sinners? Nothing shows more clearly the thundering "power" and lightening of the "glory" of God than to see men whose hearts used to be as hard as bricks and dark as death, presently worshiping Christ beside veiled wives, fidgety children, and worn Bibles.

The true Pentecost is not men shaking uncontrollably with babel on their lips, but men trembling before the Word of God ready to obey. The spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets, and the first fruit of the Spirit is "self-control."

Those who have seen the power of God at work directing the feet of sinners onto the path of peace and salvation long to see the "power" and "glory" of God again as they "have seen" it "in the sanctuary."

This salvation power includes redemption, forgiveness, healing, provision, protection, mercy, and all that men need to sustain them on this journey through life (Psalm 103).

3 Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

The Spirit opens heaven's door so we can see the fuel that fed the fire in this man's heart – the limitless, inexhaustible love of God – the royal *hesed* called "Thy lovingkindness" – the golden treasure of all the saints.

"Here is love, vast as the ocean,
loving-kindness as the flood,

when the Prince of Life, our Ransom,
shed for us His precious blood.”

The idea here is that life is man’s ultimate value . . . even an idol of men. But, to the godly man, God’s lovingkindness is better than life — better to suffer in His will than to live with a carnival of delights a slave to sin; and, if push comes to shove, it is a thousand times better to die in God’s favor doing His will than to live under His animus chained to a sinful habit or as a slave to government.

4 Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

Surrounded by hucksters peddling their idols, David announces his course in life: I will bless the Lord; I will swear by His Holy Name and live out my oath under His law by His strength.

5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips:

Knowing this was the right decision, David expresses assurance that his days will be filled with the finest of wheat and the sweetest of wine — a feast luxurious and dazzling, intellectual and alluring, overly lavish and luscious. Like lame Mephibosheth who was invited to sit at king’s table, the children of God “feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights” (Psalm 36:8).

When we consider the bitter blasphemy spewing from the mouths of lawless protesters, we observe another miracle in this psalm — a soul adoring the beauty of Another with lips uttering sweet praise to God.

These lips do not complain, curse, gripe, grumble, swear, moan, or groan. A miracle indeed! The result of the “power” and “glory” of God at work in the man.

6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.

The Spirit reveals another miracle — genuine, mature devotion to Elohim. Not only does this precious saint start his day seeking God, he ends his day chewing on the cud of His precious Word. He is not only a God-seeker in public, but a God-seeker in private; a man in pursuit of royal *hesed* during the day, but a soul in pursuit of His love at night.

7 Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

The psalmist is pursuing the “power” and “glory” of God Who not only provides, but protects. Like frightened baby chicks, He hides trembling saints, not under tablets of stone, but under His warm feathers close to His heart.

Past victories in yesterday’s battles are a reason for future confidence in tomorrow’s conflicts. The God of the past is the God of the future. When wolves howl, dogs bark, and lions roar, there is a safe, warm shelter under the shadow of His wings. The God of the past is the God of the future. What he did yesterday, He can do today. No generation can exhaust the “power” and “glory” that flows like a river from the ocean of His infinite love (*hesed*).

While we are not living in an age of miracles like at the time of Moses, Elijah, or Christ and the apostles, Christians are not locked out of His sanctuary. There are battles yet to be won, and promises that need to be claimed for today's conflicts.

8 My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

What a miracle – a soul pursuing God!

This is no fair weather Christian. He is not a sprinter, but a marathoner in pursuit of God. He does not over simplify the difficulties of this course or mitigate the need for patience during the contest. He is honest. The God-seeking life is a long, hard, narrow, uphill climb. The fierce hunt takes place in rugged terrain on rocky trails, slippery slopes, and protruding branches that can knock the runner into canyons below.

What confidence! No matter how deep the pit, God's love is deeper still. His grasp on God may be weak, but God's grip on him is unbreakable: "Thy right hand upholdeth (tamach) me." This is the same word used to describe Hur supporting Moses while he was holding up his staff as Joshua fought Amalek on the battlefield (Exodus 17:12).

9 But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

David was not only a king but a military commander with boots on the ground. In his mind, defeat was impossible! But, the trouncing of his enemies – God's enemies – was not only possible, but probable!

The verb "shall go" expresses certainty! Their defeat is as real as dirt. His adversaries already had one foot in the crypt. It was just a matter of time before they would be dead, grey corpses lying in a mass grave surrounded by rotting flesh.

10 They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.

The imagery of bone-crushing defeat continues. With the eye of faith, he sees his enemies gutted, speared, disemboweled, and beheaded with foxes and jackals gorging themselves on the limbs of unburied cadavers.

We have double assurance here: "They shall fall . . . shall be food for foxes."

11 But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

The psalmist switches to the third person as if David is outside of himself looking at himself as the king rejoicing in the God he trusted. David was a warrior king. It takes a man like that to write a psalm like this.

He describes his enemies as liars, deceivers, slanderers, and fraudsters from whom a steady drumbeat of pounding lies, distortions, and disingenuousness proceed.

Bubbling over with confidence, he assures future Pentecostals who have sworn allegiance to Elohim that they cannot exhaust the "power" and "glory" of God in their effort to obey His law. They too will experience victories. He is everlasting. No generation can exhaust the sin-smashing power of this Savior.

The boasting of future liars like Goliath, Absalom, and Ahithophel will be stopped “dead in their tracks” by future God seekers pursuing His “power” and “glory.”

Psalm 64 - The Ways of the Wicked



This is a psalm written by David intended for public worship.

People of all ages are concerned about the expansion of the wicked. This psalm along with many more testifies to the judgment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous — a truth that can be claimed in every generation.

Every Christian can expect, in part, to see with their own eyes the judgment of public figures in high places: “the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it” (Psalm 37:34). But, you have to look for it.

The Christian man not only studies the ways of God; He studies the ways of the wicked in order to learn about their “the politics of destruction.”

The War whoop of the Righteous

Psalm 64:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

“voice” – This appears to be an audible prayer.

The word “prayer” can mean “musings,” “lengthy thoughts,” or “discourse.”

“the enemy” is either Saul or Absalom. Their hunt for David’s life would be the occasion for panic. These fears were not “what if” worries or imaginary distresses. That Christians are not to be alarmed over real oppression seems biggity in light of potential harms. We don’t want to become a prey to fear, but neither do we want to be naïve, Pollyanna, or super spiritual.

We reject silly worries because we do not want to be controlled by anxiety. We recognize actual dangers and commit those matters to the Lord as David did.

2 Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:

“Hide me” – more accurately, “Thou will hide me.”

“secret counsel” (me-sode) literally means “divan,” or “couches” where friends sit to discuss private matters.

“insurrections” is a translation of the Hebrew word “regesh” which means “throng” or “company” — most likely referring to the political plots and schemes of David’s enemies to dethrone him and kill him in order to take over the kingdom. This is a reference to the politics of destruction motivated by intense hatred of David.

Every pastor would do well to pray that God would protect him from reckless whispers in circles of gossip.

The Ways of the Wicked

In this section we observe the politics of destruction. The wicked refers to either Saul or Absalom. Saul was bordering on insanity whereas Absalom was seized by the spirit of pride and ambition — both of which had their hearts set on killing David and securing the kingdom for themselves. God, however, intervened ending the political career of both men. Every age and every organization has its share of deranged members and ambitious charlatans eager to spread their notions of what is right and wrong.

3 Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words:

(a) Superheated political rhetoric including slander and violence — “whet their tongue” means to sharpen their tongue like blacksmiths forge a sword; that is, the wicked are quite adroit at mouth-to-mouth combat in a political debate. Their tongue is the main weapon in their arsenal of destruction. They choose words that maximize the amount of damage to opponents and use innocuous terms when referring to themselves to cover their own iniquity. Political strategies haven’t changed in three-thousand years.

(b) Clandestine tactics — “arrows” are long range weapons; that is, the schemers prefer to launch their arrows of character assassination at a distance while hiding behind a bush like a rifleman. Beware of snipers in the church.

4 That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

(c) Covert operations targeting honest men. These political assassins prefer to do their killing in secret . . . at a distance . . . and behind cover.

(d) Sharp, abrupt, impulsive ambushes of a political opponent — “suddenly do they shoot at him . . .”

Words matter. Depending on your political point of view words like twaddler, imbecile, lunatic, treason, anti-Semitism, anti-vaxxers, deplorables, irredeemables, mutton-head, election deniers and the like are powerful propaganda tools.

These miscreants were driven by a perpetual desire (libido-dominandi) to control people and circumstances -- even killing them.

“libido–dominandi. Noun. (uncountable). The will to power; the desire to dominate; the lust for government” . . . the lust for power . . .

(yourdictionary.com). This may be the original sin in the garden. Certainly, Eve wanted to control her own life . . . and her husband’s.

(e) Callous and reckless — “fear not.” Moreover, they have no conscience in regards to character assassination; that is they are habitually callous. Fearless is a brother of recklessness, carelessness, and maliciousness. These sins roll out of tongue as smooth as butter.

5 They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of lying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?

(f) De-individualization; that is, they seldom act alone; i.e. they are groupies.

“encourage themselves in an evil matter” means “make themselves strong.” These political assassins rely upon the power of groups and can easily hide behind the recklessness of a committee. They love democracy because they never have to accept responsibility for their “votes.”

(g) Subversive and underhanded — “lying snares privily” means they are masters at deception, fraud, and cunning.

“privily” (taman) means concealed or buried. These zealots practice the politics of destruction covertly, undercover, behind the scenes, in secret meetings, under clouds of darkness. As tenured members of the “cloak and dagger club,” they are the masters of stealth, secrecy, and political assassination.

(h) False confidence — “Who shall see them?” These mobsters are not only confident that their victim will not see their snares, but that no one will see them or identify them as members of the cabal.

6 They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.

(i) Unlimited playbook of skullduggery — “search out iniquities” means these criminals “explore” the caverns of evil to develop new strategies to kill, maim, and steal. These lawless ones seem to have an endless list of dirty tricks.

“inward thought” refers to the inexhaustible energy of the cabal to create new and effective traps to snare their opponents.

“the heart, is deep” means these Mafioso’s exercise great profundity in exploring and employing the cruel-art of deception, destruction, and defamation.

Warning for pastors: If you are good man pursuing holiness, don’t be naive about the nature of men. Include growing in knowledge about ambitious men and the politics of destruction.

The Ways of God

7 But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.

“Instead of their being able to carry out their purposes of shooting the arrows which they had prepared against others, God will shoot his arrows against them” (Barnes).

God is 100 % accurate. He may take His time, but He NEVER misses!

Note the certainty David has that God will foil the deadly schemes of these evil fraternities.

“In the moment of their imagined success, their deeply-laid schemes just on the point of ripening, a sudden Divine retribution overtakes the wicked, and all their calumnies, invented with such cunning, fall back on their own heads” (Ellicott).

8 So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

Because political lunatics do what they are accusing their opponent of doing, their accusations and threats shall boomeranged against themselves to their own wounding. God is at work frustrating the plans of miscreants causing them to miscarry and backfire.

“When God brings upon men the mischiefs they have desired on others, it is weight enough to sink a man to the lowest hell” (Matthew Henry).

“all that see them shall flee away” — or separate themselves from the ruin and punishment either because they are participating in the naughtiness or out of fear of being associated with such people.

The Ways of the Righteous

9 And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

“all men shall fear” means that perceptive men shall see God’s work and proclaim it.

10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

When God frustrates the plans of the wicked and acts in judgment against them, the righteous shall have cause for rejoicing. Many will come to the Lord and glorify him. When this happens, the upright magnify the Lord.

The righteous do not rejoice when the wicked fall. They do not take joy in the punishment of miscreants or take pleasure in seeing others suffer. Rather, they are glad when they recognize God at work in the arena of politics.

“Not glad of the misery and ruin of their fellow-creatures, but glad that God is glorified, and his word fulfilled” (Benson).

Psalm 65 - The New Year's Psalm

"Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness."



This psalm of David is also called a "song." It is a song for the New Year as it sheds light on the powers of God at work in this world. In despair and need hope? This psalm is for you.

Most of us start the new year thinking about skinny, but King David began the new year thinking about the fatness of the earth provided by God (v. 11). What do you think about?

Moreover media pundits stream predictions about the new year filled with waterfalls of doom and gloom. Others live in Utopia placing their faith in government that it will straightened out the wreckage caused by last year's administration.

Scripture, not horoscopes or AI, guided David. Faith, not fear led him into habits of praise. Because he tapped into the character of God, the future was filled with hope for the new year.

Blessings You Can Claim for the New Year

The Blessing of Deliverance

Psalm 65:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm and Song of David.> Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

David, performing the duties of a drum major, marches to the front to make notice to the Director of Worship that the temple is furnished, the people assembled, hearts prepared, the choir in place, and the service is ready to begin.

"Praise waiteth for thee" — literally, "Silence praise to Thee" —

Because God will answer prayer this year, praise awaits the Lord in Zion.

This text, however, is a challenge to translate.

"shall the vow be performed — better, "is the vow paid?" (Ellicott) —A question stirring the assembled worshippers; or, "to thee shall be paid the covenant of peace vow." More probably, people prayed for some kind of deliverance and exchanged vows for the promise of deliverance.

"The sacrifices and thank-offerings, which thy people vowed unto thee, in the time of their danger, when they were supplicating deliverance, and other blessings, at thy hands, shall be faithfully paid" (Benson).

“To thee are quiet and praise, i.e. submissive expectation till the deliverance come (Psalm 62:1), and then exulting praise” (Ellicott).

“Waits in expectation of the mercy desired; waits till it arrives, that it may be received with thankfulness at its first approach” (Benson)

Let us consider that people waited in silence for God to deliver them from some crisis; that “silence” is a form of praise . . . of honoring God . . . of believing His promises.

If you are waiting in silence for God to provide deliverance, your silence honors Him.

The Blessing from the Hearer of Prayer

2 O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

“O thou that hearest prayer” – literally, “The One hearing prayer, ” or “the Hearer of Prayer.”

That God sees, hears, and understands our flawed prayers is of the utmost concern to men. Nothing encourages us more than the assurance that God humbles Himself, bows His ear to hear our prayers, graciously overlooks the weaknesses of our person and prayers to show us good, kindness, and forgiveness. Where else can we go? In Him are the words of life.

The Blessing of Forgiveness

3 Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

“Iniquities prevail against me” – literally, “Words of iniquity prevail against me.” The meaning seems to be that the accusations of his enemies prevailed against Him; i.e. he could not drown out the shouts of condemnation from within or without blasting away at his soul. All words screamed “guilty as charged!”

“transgressions” may refer to shouts of condemnation regarding matters of iniquity.

“against me” may be a literary device using the first person to express the iniquities of the nation; that is, the “me” represents the voice of Israel. In Zechariah 3:1-7 we see Satan accusing Joshua of being unclean and unfit to represent the people. The author of Hebrews refers to the voice of guilt shouting in our conscience that we are unworthy to be near God (Hebrews 10:1-17).

“As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away” – and He did. Thank God for the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7). Thus, we claim the benefits of the cross and begin this year with a clean conscience – “Blessed be the name of the LORD.”

The Blessing of Fellowship

4 Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

“There is none that seeketh after God” except the man whose heart has been touched by God. The elect seek him; attend church; and, join the choirs of Almighty God. Unbelievers do not.

Consequently, it is a marvelous blessing to be chosen of God, to believe in His Son, to frequent His House and to worship Him and to enjoy communion with the saints.

Use of the term “holy temple” has caused some to conclude David did not write this psalm and that it was composed in the temple period. But, this is not conclusive. David erected the tabernacle in Jerusalem and it was not uncommon to call this earthly tent a temple.

The Blessing of Answered Prayer

5 By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:

“By terrible things in righteousness” — When God answers prayer, He does it in a “dynamic” way to impress the mind. His mercies are new every morning and they come to us in wonder and power.

“confidence” (mibtach) means “refuge.”

“who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth” — All the philosophers who have ever lived ended up contemplating the wonders of God and attributing the miracles of life to Him . . . howbeit vague and misty. From east to west, north to south, to the vast mountains in Tibet to the warm Islands in the Pacific there is evidence of His existence, of His salvation, and of his lovingkindness to men.

He is the Source of trust of all men though we dare not suppose all men actually place their trust in Him, but . . . let this not be true of us. He is the hope of those on the earth and the hope of mariners on the sea. Let us enter this new year with renewed trust, a deeper trust in the living God Who is the Confidence of all the ends of the earth.

The Blessings of Stability

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power:

Mankind enjoys a stability on earth.

“girded with power:” mountains seem to be wrapped in power like a mighty man girds himself with sword and buckler.

The word “setteth fast” means fixed or firm. The mountains cannot be moved because they are girded with the power of God. The media doomsdayers that report Armageddon is upon us; that the world is going to burn up or blow up; that the mountains are going to fall into the sea because so-in-so is in office are wrong. They are driven by fear and not by faith. If there is a reason for hope and optimism, this chapter captures it.

7 Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

What seaman has not been deafened with fear from the roaring waves of the sea? From the Book of Jonah, we learn that God sends waves and crushing sounds of ocean storms upon seamen. This text confirms that it is God, not nature, that stilleth the “tides of Neptune” to make the sea calm.

The use of the word “tumult” (hamown) informs us that the Lord oversees the rush and roar in the terrifying sea of politics. He not only has power over insentient objects but over “free agents” who seem hell-bent on displaying their lunacy to the world. He exalts some and puts down others. He resist their madness and shoots “at them with an arrow” mortally wounding their ambitions (Psalm 64:7-8). This is not to say these madmen cannot do evil; rather, the Holy Scriptures teach us that all these nutcases are on a leash; that they cannot achieve all their evil intentions because God resists them.

Psalm 76:10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

The Blessings of the Revelation of His Existence

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.

“uttermost parts” — The light of God’s righteousness and kindness reach to the end of the world.

“afraid of thy tokens” — signs, wonders, and spectacles which demonstrate His power, authority, and loving care over His creation.

“Thou maketh the mornings and evenings to rejoice” — The allusion is to sunrise in the east, and sunset in the west. Who hasn’t been impressed with God’s light show at dawn and dusk? Both are bonaza, red-light spectacles! Each displays His royal majesty.

Harold St. John quoted this verse on his deathbed. There is joy to be found in our youth and in our old age; in the sunrise and sunset of our lives. But, we have to look for it.

The Blessing of Rain

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

Every drop of rain from thunderstorms and every blanket of dew from the morning mist provides evidence of the power of God and His kindness. From the Roe River in Great Falls Montana to the Nile River in Africa these waters of life provide wheat and corn for the hungry masses and precious streams of water for birds, mammals, and fish.

The abundance of water on earth informs us that God is super-rich in mercy, goodness, and kindness. The winter snows, spring showers, summer cloudbursts, and fall rains that support the rich golden harvests of barley, olives, and grapes inform us that these blessings are from Him.

10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

“Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly” appears to refer to the furrows made by the plow — little valleys that catch the rain for thirsty seeds.

“thou makest it soft with showers” refers to the stiff ridges of the furrow that are groomed by the rain making the ground soft and prepared so the soil can yield “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:26).



The Blessing of Prosperity

11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

“the year with thy goodness” can literally be translated, “year of thy goodness.” The green grass, the glowing flowers, the gilded crops, and the golden harvest are evidence the Lord

has crowned the year with goodness. Every drop of rain, every white lilly, and every ear of corn provides evidence that God is kind and merciful to His creation.

“Fatness” is a sign of health . . . of bounty . . . of plenty.

“thy paths drop fatness” refers to blooming fertility, pharonic production, treasured beauty, and the handsome abundance of life on earth due to the mysterious weather patterns that God has graciously provided for our good.

The verb “drop” can literally be translated “trickle” or “drip” fatness — an obvious reference to the abundance of dew, gentle rains, evening showers, and to the processes so numbly described as evaporation, convection, condensation, and precipitation.

What ever country God visits, He leaves behind opulent crops, beautiful blossoming flowers, and a copious amounts of life-producing plants. God is good and He provides good things for His creation. He does not take. He is not stingy. He injures no one. He desires to bless all men with His kindness. But, men are theives robbing God of His glory, robbing men of truth by attributing the marvels of the earth’s abundance to an impersonal, impotent, non-existant, imperial force banal men call “Mother Nature” — an idolatrous doctrine from the pits of hell which starves souls and leaves depraved minds in its wake of alledged enlightenment.



12 They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

“They drop” refers to clouds of water.

The term “wilderness” does not refer to evergreen forests in the mountains, but to the dry rocky, sandy, cliffs and ravines of a Sahara-like desert. Even here there is evidence of God’s goodness: desert sun flowers, small fern-green plants, and pools of water. Water vapors from the sea, dew from the night mists, and occasional rain showers are evidence God visits these barren places

to supply the needs of dwarfed olive-green plants and small desert creatures. Clumps of meadow dew grass appear and provide forage for the ibex, goats, and camels. Thy paths drop fatness.

In addition to the text, deserts provide man with valuable minerals and metals such as copper, iron, and uranium -- all of which contribute to a country's bounty.

"the little hills rejoice on every side" refers to the happy parades of life on small hills and in obscure valleys; that is, the tablelands sprouting rye-grasses seem to be brimming with happiness and joy. Can you see the desert dandelion, the California poppy, and the desert marigolds dancing in whistling "winds that shake the barley" (Irish song) to the glory of God?

The Blessings of Abundance



13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

"The pastures are clothed with flocks" – As a shepherd, David admired his flocks in the rocky hills near Bethlehem and observed his sheep huddled together resisting deunification yet slowly spreading across the hills imitating an imperial cloak on the shoulders of a Viking-king.

"the valleys also are covered over with corn" – From the mind's eye of this shepherd-king, the waiving grains of paradise looked like flowing costumes on an Arab belly dancer swaying to the al-jadid.

In these common places everything seems to girate with joy shouting glory to God. All this moving and shaking in these valleys of swaying wheat add complementary evidence to the fact that God clothes the hills with golden grass for sheep and goats that beautify the earth to the joy of all mankind.

How terrible are the engineers, teachers, and scientists that rob little boys and girls of the marvels of God's kind abundance; intentionally instilling fear into children that God does not exist; that mankind is at the mercy of infinite, impersonal forces in a galaxy governed by the cruelty of chaos; that their lives are meaningless – like a grain of sand on the seashore – a product of time plus chance.

How wonderful are the people that teach our sons and daughters about how God kisses the earth with His sunshine, bathing it with water, and clothing it with dancing golden-grains necessary to enjoy and sustain life.

A Warning: David is not suggesting that God is all sugar and no salt. The One who shows His love by endowments also shows His love in chastisements.

May God bless your new year and shower it with the marvels of His mercy. In a world hammered with political negativity, you will have to listen to the evidence of His goodness provided by the lillies of the field.

Psalm 66 - The Need of the Nations

A Call to Worship

"All the earth shall worship thee . . ."



This psalm addresses the supreme need of the nations which is to come and study the work of God in the history of redemption — not to read into what they want to see, but to come as students to learn theology.

We don't know the name of the author nor the exact time the psalm was composed.

Some commentators make a good argument that this is a post exilic psalm though this assessment is not totally conclusive. We do know, however, it was written after some personal calamity (10-12). Possibly, the pronoun "I" is a literary device to represent Israel's troubles and deliverance.

We despise trouble, but trouble has a way of driving us to the Lord for help. Since this be the case, trouble is not an enemy as much as it is a gift of God that leads us to the "still waters" of answered prayer and a calm soul (19).

A Call to Worship

Psalm 66:1 <To the chief Musician, A Song or Psalm.> Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:

We have in this text a call to worship.

"noise" means "to shout."

"lands" means "earth" – the earth is personified; that is, this is a call to all people in every nation to praise God for what He has done for His people.

2 Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.

Worship includes singing, honor, praise, intensity, and artistry. There is nothing casual and "ho-hum" about worship. The psalmist calls for our best; that is, to employ our finest talents and skills to honor Him.

The term "glorious" includes the idea of abundance, splendor, and reverence.

"Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness." Dress up and clean up. Get rid of casual. Take off the hats (men). Adorn yourself with a headcovering (woman). Sing your best, read your best, be alert and wholehearted in church.

3 Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

“Say” (amar) is an imperative.

“terrible” (yare’) means “fearful,” or “awesome.”

“submit” (kachash) has a large range of meanings. The context supports the idea of “submit,” or “cringe,” or “yield because of some defeat.”

“greatness of Thy power . . . submit to thee” — implies that the nations will be forced by the raw power of God to bow the knee to the Lord, or will necessarily and miraculously submit to Him having seen His power at work among the nations.

4 All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah.

History is headed toward the kingdom of God and nothing will stop the universal worship of the LORD God. Thus, the need of the nations is to turn to the God of Scripture and worship Him.

“worship” is a Hithpael verb (reflexive) inferring that the people of the earth will act on themselves to bow the knee to the LORD.

“sing” is a Piel verb. It implies intense action. All worship and singing should involve the whole man.

It is God’s will that men voluntarily surrender to His authority. By His grace the elect will confess His authority and arrange their affairs under His government.

A Call to See the Works of God

5 Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men.

This verse begins with two imperatives: “come” and “see;” that is, come and see what God has done in history and is doing in His work of providence. Let your hearts be stirred by His doings — particularly His work in delivering His people from Egypt (v. 6) . . . and more importantly the exodus He provides at the cross.

“terrible” (yare’) means “fearful,” or “awesome.”

6 He turned the sea into dry land: they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

Deliverance at the Red Sea demonstrates His power. They didn’t tread through mud, but walked and pulled their carts on dry land.

7 He ruleth by his power for ever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

Because He reigns, every generation has access to His power of redemption. But, be warned: His power can and will be exercised against rebels in every generation.

The Hithpael verb “exalt” contains the idea of rising up in rebellion against the law of the LORD God. The adverb “not” negates the verb; i.e. do not allow the spirit of rebellion to seize hold of national leadership. Nations ought to exercise self-restraint and not plunge into liberalism while granting to themselves a license to do evil.

A Call To Bless God for His Grace upon Israel

8 O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:

“bless” is another Piel imperative.

“make” is a Hiphil imperative meaning “cause” your voice to be heard.

9 Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

Two reasons to bless the Lord are provided: His protection and preservation.

“in life” means “among the living.”

“suffereth not our feet to be moved” refers to God’s power working in our lives to prevent us from stumbling while walking on the road to the Celestial City.

10 For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

“proved us” means that God tests the reality of our faith with trials and troubles.

“tried us, as silver is tried” implies repetition and intensity. The holy zeal of God for our perfection and separation from sin involves profound and blistering heat that causes imperfections to rise to the surface in order to make us like His Son.

11 Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidst affliction upon our loins.

“Thou” refers to the Lord God. He is sovereign over the good and bad of our lives.

God permits us to be drawn into the net to be captured, enslaved, and even abused. Sometimes God allows enemies to succeed — possibly a reference to the Babylonian Captivity (605-536).

“thou laidst affliction upon our loins” — The people were tested to the core of their being . . . as much as their strength could endure; that is, they were tried to the breaking point and then delivered. In so doing, they came out their affliction stronger, better, and improved in holiness.

12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.

The psalmist doesn’t let go of his theme. He wants us to know that the nation was subjected to the whip, to slavery, to the will of another.

“fire” and “water” differentiate the trials. Fire burns; water chokes; i.e. the trials were hot and the people choked in the flood of captivity.

“wealthy place” means “refreshing” or “comfortable” place.

“but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” informs us that God does not leave His people in the furnace or the flood; that He provides relief, rest, and reconstruction. There is a

path out of trials, but God has to show the way. A willingness to stay under pressure until we are refined may be the ultimate test of sincerity and devotion.

Know, however, that God will provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

A Promise to Pay Vows Made During the Time of Trouble

13 I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows, 14 Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. 15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams; I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

“burn offerings,” “sacrifice of rams,” “incense of rams,” and offering “bullocks with goats” are expressions of intense worship, devotion, and commitment to the Will of Heaven (Leviticus 1-6).

In begging God for deliverance, many people made vows of devotion . . . to make changes in their life after deliverance. Here the psalmist, representing the nation, commits himself to pay his vows and devote himself to the absolute God.

“I will” is promised twice — a double commitment to pay his vows.

A Call to Hear What God has Done

16 Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

Again, the “I” may be a literary “I” speaking for the nation — a type of true personification.

The audience are those that “fear” God — true worshipers of Elohim.

“soul” literally means “for my life.” The phrase embraces all that God has done to protect and preserve the nation. Another clue, that the psalmist may be reflecting on the nation’s deliverance from Babylon.

17 I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

“my mouth” may include the voices and prayers of the whole nation held captive in Babylon.

“was extolled with my tongue” should be translated “shall be lifted up with my tongue” — the volitional jubilant response to God’s marvelous deliverance.

18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:

The psalmist references the name “Elohim” (God) eight times in this psalm, and the name “Adonai” (Lord) only once (v. 18). The title “Adonai” means “Master.” How can man claim to follow the Lord and not obey him? Either start obeying Him or stop calling him “Lord.” Amen?

The verb “regard” (ra’ah) would better be translated “perceive,” “possess,” or “cherish.” All Christians know that sin acts like a peddler soliciting customers, but the pious rebuke these appeals. No man can discharge sin from his unregenerated being, but he can deny it power.

Fellowship with sin means hinder-fellowship with the Lord; to agree with sin is to disagree with God; cooperation with sin is opposition to Him. The one unwilling to disassociate with sin cannot commune with the Lord: “Why do you call men ‘Lord, Lord’ and do not what I say?”

19 But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

God delights in rescuing His children and delivering them from danger. Apparently, the psalmist had evidence of answered prayer which increased his desire to be wholly-devoted to the Lord.

20 Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

Because God mercifully answered his prayer, he could not help but erupt with praise, “Blessed by God”; that is, may his name be forever honored by me.

Though he had turned away from sin to God, there is no claim of merit. He simply acknowledges the mercy of God.

Psalm 67 - The World Evangelism Prayer

The Farmer's Cry

"... let the nations be glad and sing for joy"



Perhaps, this psalm is the most magnanimous, dilated psalm in the Royal Hymnal. The mind of this psalmist lacks the parochial perspective of modern, cultic, racist Jews. The healthy perspective of this regenerated Hebrew is blessed with a vision for world evangelism -- a figure of spiritual health.

Q: How do you know if you are a healthy, spiritual Christian?

A: When your heart hums with this purpose: "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving salvation among all nations."

Psalm 67:1 <To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm or Song.>

"To the chief Musician," occurs at the beginning of 53 psalms. It means "to lead."

"Niginoth" refers to stringed instruments. The subject of this psalm takes a champion maestro to compose and conduct this carol.

A Prayer for Mercy and Favor

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.

As the people neglected God, God withdrew his tokens of favor upon the people. This is a prayer for mercy, not justice; favor and not fairness – for His sunshine to fall upon a weak and flawed people.

There is an allusion to the language in Numbers 5:24-26 – A benediction that the Lord would lead, guide, and bestow blessings on the people despite their many failures.

The Purpose of Prayer

2 That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

"thy way" refers to the laws of the LORD God, His rules, His government, His truth, his justice, His mercy, and what He loves and hates.

"health" refers to "salvation" which would include his power to provide earthly blessings and eternal salvation for the soul. More specifically, this is a prayer that men might come to know Jesus (Yeshua the Savior) who "is the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). This is not a prayer, however, that men might become more religious, more loving, and less hateful.

This is an evangelical prayer. The purpose of all prayer is that friends and neighbors might come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to live for Him (praise). This is a prayer that an evangelical awakening might visit mankind and that the whole world might hum with hymns of praise to God.

A Prayer for the People

3 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

“the people” refers to Israel . . . to God’s people – the church.

“praise” must be viewed in its uttermost operation -- a soul that thinks about and talks about God’s works, righteousness, holiness, justice, mercy, love, law, Scripture, Christ and His gospel.

The personal name “LORD” is not used in this psalm. Rather, the appellation “God” is used six times. This is not an omniscient creation of man. This text addresses the God of the Bible, the Creator of Heaven and earth.

“praise” is a general term referring to Godly conduct, a God-centered focus, and a mind occupied with the glories of the Creator.

The purpose of God is set in stone – that the whole earth be filled with His glory.

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14).

Because men are prone to complain, praising God is a miracle in the heart. This is a prayer that all men might perceive God’s grace upon them and to lift up their voices in thanksgiving and praise to Him. Praise releases clouds of blessings to rain life upon the earth (Psalm 50:23).

A Prayer for the Nations

4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.

Nothing is more needed among the nations than for men to perceive the government of God and to surrender to it.

“shalt judge the people righteously” – God injures no man. Men injure men because they are in rebellion against God’s law-order. The gifts of His government are not only fair and righteous; they are wrapped up in ribbons of mercy.

When men contemplate the law of the LORD, they will burst into song with gladness of heart singing praises to God for His wisdom, justice, and mercy. Nothing will bring more joy to the world than for men to seek God and to discover His goodness and righteousness.

5 Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

This evangelical psalmist expresses his ultimate wish – that all people in America, China, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East might be so occupied with the greatness of God they cannot help but praise God and to live for Him.

You may hear a politician say, "God bless America," but, you may never hear one say, "Let us Praise the Lord!" However, that day is coming.

A mind caught up with the wonders of God will not be burdened down with the wretchedness of his fellow man.

The Blessing Prayer Brings to the Nations

6 Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.

"Then" means "at that time" men shall see. A lack of praise means a minimal harvest; praising hearts opens the flood gates of heaven for an abundant harvest. Believeest thou this?

When men are freed from their sins and pray to God, the earth is liberated from its grief and is inclined to yield its increase. Right now the earth surrenders its harvests sparsely because of drought, blight, storms, pests, mildew, and frost. The abundance of the harvest on earth appears to be in proportion to the exuberance of grateful prayers lifted to heaven.

7 God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

Because God has blessed us, the Christian wants to bless others. He goes forth into a cold world preaching to chilly hearts, "The Lord reigns" (Psalm 97:1) and with it blesses the world.

Making Him known is the highest favor that Christians can bestow on the world. This work is given to men and not angels. Evangelism is the greatest work of men on earth as blessings from Heaven are commensurate to the praise offered to God by converted men. Blessed are the feet of them that preach the gospel!

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Psalm 52:7).

Gill has this to say: "The Holy Spirit blesses with regenerating and renewing grace; with faith, comfort, joy and peace, by shedding abroad in the heart the love of the Father and the Son by applying precious promises; by testifying adoption; by making meet for heaven and happiness, and working up for the selfsame thing eternal glory . . ."

"God shall bless us and all the ends of earth" is the evangelical voice of faith – the highest calling of Christians.

[Note: The United Nations' doctrines of sustainable development are creations of conniving, devious, reprobate creatures bankrupt in virtue and poor in spirit. None see God as the Provider and Sustainer. All models of production are based on meager harvests and a non-existent Creator. O, that men might wake up and see that God reigns . . . that He can cause rain to fall and crops to grow. . . . to see His hand in the affairs of men and to realize the potential of earth to yield charitable harvests for the good of mankind.)

Psalm 68 - Rejoicing in the Ascension of Christ

“Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever.”



The ascension of Christ into heaven marks the grand consummation of His ministry on earth and the beginning of His session on His heavenly throne.

The early church saw the ascension of Christ as so important they included it in the Apostles’ Creed, which affirms that Jesus “is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.”

The ascension brought our Lord much joy, and this psalm sheds light on why we should rejoice in our Lord’s glorification and session at the right hand of God (session: from Latin “session” meaning “act of sitting” at the table in order to do business.”

Consider the greatness of David – a king with a vision to center the nation around the worship of Yah and not the workings of politics – a king with a vision to build the house of God and not the military.

Psalm 24, Psalm 68, and Psalm 132 are dedicated to the glories of the ark coming to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6).

1 (To the chief Musician, A Psalm or Song of David.)

There is no good reason to doubt this psalm was written by David and sent to the Chief Musician in the Levitical Choir, a title given to 53 psalms.

The ascription “Chief Musician, is derived from (nâtsach), which means “to shine,” but the ascription is not used in the Hebrew Qal verb form. In the Piel form, the title is intensified to mean “conspicuous; to be over anything; to be chief; to be superintendent” 2 Chronicles 2:2, 2 Chronicles 2:18; 2 Chronicles 34:12, and then it means to lead in music (Barnes, Psalm 4).



The first phrase in the psalm, “Let God arise . . .” directs us to consider the glorious procession of the Ark of the Covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem (Zion) in 2 Samuel 6.

The first administrative act of King David concerned the ordering of Israel’s golden treasure, the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of the Throne of God, to be

transported to the nation’s capital.

What a scene! Levites carrying the golden ark with its iconic cherubim, golden mercy seat, the tablets of law inside, while covered in badger skins. The military procession created the largest celebration in David's generation. Can you see in your mind's eye soldiers marching with lifted spears, swords clanging, trumpets blasting, crowds cheering, people dancing, women trilling, tambourines jingling, Levitical choirs singing as the winding cavalcade marched proudly into the City of David? What a parade!

To enhance the joy of this occasion, David penned Psalm 68 to provide convincing reasons why the people should celebrate this transfer of power from the hills of Kirjath-jearim to Mt. Zion.

Moreover, the value of this psalm is that it provides arguments justifying a Christ-centered family, church, and nation as opposed to a man-centered government.

A Prayer for God to Arise



Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

The phrase "Let God arise" is derived from the masculine, military prayer of Moses in Numbers 10:35 where He called upon God as the nation's Commander and Protector to scatter, crush, and subdue His enemies.

Moses understood what few high-ranking officers seem to grasp: that only the power of God can overcome man's enemies; that only the greatness of Christ can unite a nation and keep them from splintering into various factions.

"Rise up" is human language designed to awaken the reader to how terrifying God's regiment of justice must be towards His adversaries (Hebrews 2:3).

His enemies are designated as those that "hate Him." Hate is a catch-all term for disinterest, neglect, lawlessness, idolatry, and contempt for the LORD's authority and His law-order.

The character of His enemies are listed in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as the unrighteous: fornicators, Idolaters, adulterers, effeminate boys (transvestites), homosexuals (male and female), thieves, defrauders (coveters), drunkards (drug users), slanderers (fake news, injurious reports), and extortions (robbers, swindlers). And, His enemies are my enemies, and my enemies are His enemies.

The wish for God to rise up announces **Code Red** for rebels. Wake up eyes wide! Stand trembling! Breath deep! Feed your fears! Gird on your sword! Shake like Jell-O! Sweat blood! Hear the drum roll in a death march that announces pending doom! Prepare to die!

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.

The prayer continues. As easily as the evening breeze pushes campfire smoke into the sky and fire melts wax, blot out the blasphemers quickly and completely.

The Call for the Righteous to Rejoice

3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

The occasion for gladness was the festival surrounding the cavalcade escorting the ark to Jerusalem.

To intensify and prolong the joy of the redeemed, David mentions “rejoice” twice to amplify the appropriate response for the occasion. Rivers of joy flow out of a heart that delights in God’s presence and power. Subjects of His sovereignty should robe themselves in garments of gladness . . . with *ululation, increpuere, magna arte clara* . . . Latin for howling, rattle, huge, bright and shining.

The Apostle Paul understood the human condition and exhorted the Philippians with double commands: “to rejoice, and again I say rejoice!” (Philippians 1:18, 4:4). Because breaking free of the ice pack of God’s frozen chosen serves the honor of God, the apostle references rejoicing eleven times in his epistle to the Macedonians.

But, the enemies of God should shake like condemned prisoners facing a death panel; and, during all this doom and gloom on the wicked; the righteous should beam like sunflowers in August.

4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

To assist his people to celebrate the entrance of the King to Jerusalem and to enter into the grandeur of the moment, David commands his people “to sing.” He issues the imperative twice (sheru = sing; zamar = sing praise) in order to jar the heart loose from chilly dispassion so the redeemed could embrace the joy of the celebration *acer* (energetically), *vehemins* (vigorously).

The word “praise” (zamar) means to “pluck the strings” or “to make music on the harp.” A Piel imperative, it adds intensity to the order, “Strike up the band;” March *fortiter* (manly); Sing with *crescendo*³ and *fortissimo*⁴ and not for *calando*⁵

Negative commands require emotional restraint. Positive commands require chilly hearts to light a fire in their furnace. Since the psalmist issues positive commands, singing and praise knows no bounds.

The word “extol” (calal) is **not** another command to praise God. Rather, it means “to lift up,” or in this context to repair your highway so the Lord of Hosts can come to you. Like inhabitants of a city would go out to their road, clear the rocks, and fill the potholes before the Emperor would ride on his golden chariot leading his entourage through the city gates, believers are to prepare

³ Crescendo: increasing loudness.

⁴ Fortissimo: very loudly

⁵ Colando: gradually increasing tempo

the way for God to work in their lives by removing all obstacles that hinder His holy work (See Isaiah 40:3).

Practically, the command “extol” means to clean up your act; to forsake your sins and to start practicing righteousness; that is, to prepare your heart to receive the King by faith, praise, confession, and obedience (See Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20).

Praise unfolds the reason for our existence. And, since the Lord dwells between “the praises of Israel” (above the ark), we should approach Him humbly and thankfully if we want God to dwell happily with us (Psalm 22:3).

Praise is a requisite that releases the power of God on behalf of His people. God loves it; the Devil hates it. Praise attracts the Lord, and complaining attracts the Devil. (See Jehoshaphat 2 Chronicles 20; Psalm 50:23; Jonah 2:9).

“rideth upon the heavens” crashes head on with the rules of translation. The word “rideth” should be translated “marcheth” as a military column. The idea is not so much of riding as it is leading or marching at the head of the column. The Commander and Chief leads the charge as Jesus rides a white horse conquering souls by gospel proclamation (Revelation 19).

The word *araba* is translated “heaven” but it refers to a “desert” and never to “clouds” or “heavens.” The metaphor reflects on the LORD leading Israel from Mt. Sinai through the desert in the days of Moses, to the Lord as the Commander of Israel riding from the south towards His northern enemies in the character of His name “YHWH.”

“by his name YAH” – God (Elohim), the Creator of Heaven and Earth, has a name. In this text, His name is “Yah,” short for “YHWH,” used in later psalms to delicately and beautifully facilitate the pronunciation of Hebrew syllables in a cadence that creates a high water mark for the mood and theme of the text – in this case to “rejoice” (exult) before His face as David did when he laid aside his royal robe and danced before the ark. The first use of “JAH” is found in Exodus 15:2.

“It is found in combination, or in certain formulas - as in the phrase Hallelujah, Psalm 104:35; Psalm 105:45; Psalm 106:1. The meaning here is, that God went thus before His people in the character of the true God, or as Yahweh” (Barnes).

All this rejoicing before “YAH” calls for positive energy.

The full name of “YHWH” is not in the original text. But, the context calls us to identify His sacred name (the Tetragrammaton” or “LORD” in English) revealed to Moses in Exodus 6:3.

Reasons to Rejoice in the Lord

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 those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land. 7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

What a stunning statement! It seems out of place. In the midst of this military motif with war whoops of slaughter and carnage, military field drums, soldiers marching step in step swords clanging at 120 steps per minute, the Spirit announces that this uncompromising, bone crushing Commander has a gentler side who men love and fear. He is the lion-lamb, tough and tender, leather and silk, steel and velvet.

Though He is majestic in His power and rides the tempest of the storm, His soldiers love Him because of His tender mercies toward them. Not only does the name YHWH strike fear into the hearts of His enemies, it conveys grace and kindness to His friends. He not only scatters His foes, He releases prisoners. He not only quails adversaries, He gathers sinners and debtors together to save and bless them with eternal riches.

This “God of War” bombarded Egypt with air strikes from heaven to devastate the Egyptian economy, and then tenderly led His people to the Promise Land.

During the Civil War General Robert E. Lee ordered his barefoot troops to flee the approaching blue coats near St. Petersburg, they scurried out of there as fast as their feet could hit dirt . . . but the general wasn’t with them. Dismounting his horse, General Lee picked up a little bird that had fallen out of its nest. Placing it back in its home, the good General immediately remounted his steed dodging bullets to rejoin his troops.

8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. 9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

While in the wilderness, heaven rained manna and quail for the children of Israel. To illustrate the LORD’s tender care of the nation the psalmist compares these provisions to black thunderclouds dumping buckets of rain from the convulsing heavens, and to a rigorous, rocking, rumbling earthquake ripping up tectonic plates.

10 Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

The scene shifts from wilderness wandering to God providing a homestead for Israel in Canaan. The word “congregation” (chayah) refers to a flock, herd, or troops. As a shepherd cares for his flocks, God cares for the weak. He provides for those that have no resources of their own.

11 The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.

The themes in this psalm emanate from the ark and its glorious history. The provisions and victories of the people are credited to the command of God.

“great was the company” (feminine) should be translated “the women publishing it were a great host” with *ululation*.

12 Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

The psalm begins with the command for the Lord to rise up and scatter His enemies. Now the psalmist reflects on the historical record when Israel’s enemies did in fact flee before the armies of Israel and afterward the women joyfully divided the spoils of war.

13 Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold. 14 When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon. 15 The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan; an high hill as the hill of Bashan.

Before us are images of victory and glory.

A difficult phrase to interpret, “Lien among the pots” could refer to Israel’s neglect of the ark, or it could be translated “when you lie down between the borders” highlighting the privilege of occupying the land God gave them.

The Spirit compares Israel’s redemption from Egypt and occupation of the Promised Land to the beauty of a dove in flight where its wings glitter like silver and gold when touched by the rays of the sun.

DeWitte renders it, “When ye rest between the cattle-stalls” which expresses the same idea of quiet repose as among the herds of cattle lying calmly down to rest (Barnes).

“Scattered kings” reflects images of triumph in battle. When God commands victory, enemies scatter. Afterward God’s people enjoy the benefits of victory and peace.

“White as the snow of Salmon” could refer to pure cleansing power of the snow or to dry, bleached, white bones of fallen soldiers on the battlefield.

The “hill of God” refers to Zion where David placed the ark. Consequently, the presence of the ark in Jerusalem made Mt. Zion more glorious than the lush forests of Bashan, the northern mountain region of Israel stretching to Mt. Hermon — Mt. Hermon being to Israel what the Rockies are to America.

16 Why leap ye, ye high hills? this is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell in it for ever.

The mountain being a metaphor for pagan nations, leaping high hills identifies the pride, jealousy, and contempt other mountains had for Mount Zion when Israel brought the ark to Jerusalem. In their insolence, surrounding nations spoke disparaging about Mount Zion as if the presence of the ark in Israel’s capital was of no great importance.

George Beverly Shay use to sing, “I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold . . . ” While Jesus means everything to the believer, the pagan press treats Christ snobbishly.

17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.

While the nations looked at Mount Zion mockingly and wished for its ruin, David reminds the nation that the chariots of God with angelic charioteers are quite capable of defending Zion against infidels. As Israel was undisturbed in Mt. Sinai, David anticipated that Israel would be protected by God’s presence on Mt. Zion; that is, with God on the throne overseeing the care of His people, His flock would be safe and secure.



18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.
19 Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah.

Now we come to one of the key thoughts in the psalm. The musical term “Selah” has come to mean “to stop and think about this.”

The idea here is that God not only scattered His enemies, but He took captives, not to impoverish them, but to enrich them; not to shame them, but to bless them with safety and prosperity.

The term “benefits” is not in the original. The term “loadeth” should be translated “lift up” as to lift up a stone (Zechariah 12:3) which conveys the kindness of a Champion assisting a defeated, wounded foe.

What kind of King is this that captures the poor, lifts them out of spiritual poverty, and adorns them with golden charms (Ephesians 4:7-12)?

As the ark journeyed from Kiryat Ye’arim to Zion, so has Christ ascended into glory. He is the true Ark of the Covenant with the law in His heart, and the true Mercy Seat sprinkled with His own blood. Therefore, we rejoice in our Lord’s finished work at Calvary and His ascension to the throne at the right hand of God. Unlike pagan kings that stripped their captives naked, and paraded them through arches of triumph to be sold in the slave market, our LORD captured sinners, clothed them in royal robes of righteousness, and gifted them with jewels and pearls from His treasury in heaven.

Moreover, we rejoice that His work is finished and that His shame and humiliation have ended; that He has ascended into heaven; that He is with the Father robed in kingly apparel enjoying the presence of holy hosts. Whatever makes Him glad, makes us glad.

What does Christ’s ascension and session at the right hand of God mean for us? Quite simply, it means everything! While we Americans gloat about living in a socialistic democracy, Christians live in a kingdom that is actively ruled by the King of kings and Lord of lords. His kingdom is not future, but now! Because He reigns yesterday, today, and forever we can pray, “Lord, rise up, scatter your enemies!”

There is one huge lesson here for us. While all Christians wish to see Jesus face-to-face, it is better for us that He is not here. Jesus said it was expedient (necessary) that He go away to take His place on the throne at the right hand of God so the Comforter would come to perform His comforting work in us and among us. Today, every Christian has the Holy Spirit and is being enriched by His ministry (John 16:7).

20 He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord belong the issues from death.

David begins his psalm with a cry for God to scatter His enemies, but now he inform his people that their God is a God of salvation, deliverance, emancipation, redemption, pardon, and restoration.

The word “issues” should be translated “escapes” from death; that is, not only does He save His people from physical death from invading armies as in the day of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 18), He has provided eternal salvation and a door of escape from the grave by virtue of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Savior.

21 But God shall wound (crush, crack) the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

While David informs his people that the LORD is the God of salvation for all who trust Him (28:20), He passes sentences on lawbreakers. The metaphor of “wound the head” and “hairy scalp” informs the reader that God is a terrifying, bone-crushing, skull-cracking Adversary to rebels; that this all knowing, all powerful just Judge knows the secrets of all men and will hold them accountable for their trespasses against His law.

22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea: 23 That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

There is an allusion here to the victory achieved over Og, king of Bashan, in the time of Moses, Numbers 21:33-35. As God delivered His people at the Red Sea from the chariots of Pharaoh and their conflicts in the desert, Israel’s Commander is ready to deliver His people from future foes and dangers.

God’s will includes crushing rebels under His feet; that His people stain their sandals in the blood of their enemies; and that stray dogs lick up the blood of Israel’s adversaries on the killing fields.

24 They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. 25 The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels plying with timbrels. 26 Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

“Seeing Thy goings” points to the pomp and circumstance which acclaimed the victories achieved by God as the Ark was paraded into Jerusalem.

David appears to grow in understanding that this victorious God was “his” God and “his” King. Historically, David was so impressed with the glorious triumphal entry, he took off his royal robes and danced with the singers, musicians, and women banging on their tambourines.

So glorious is the God of Israel that the psalmist calls upon his people to “Bless God;” not to enrich Him, but to awaken to their new found wealth in Christ Who is the Fountain of all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

27 There is little Benjamin with their ruler (ruling them), the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.

As David gazed with pride and joy at the procession, he noticed that Benjamin, the smallest tribe, led the parade of singers and dancers as its grand master. Representatives from larger tribes like Judah, Zebulun, and Naphtali followed in the cavalcade.

28 Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.

The entrance of the ark into Jerusalem sounded a high note in the nation's history. Such a glorious occasion called for "thy strength;" that is, "full participation" and a total "turn out" of every man, woman, and child to rejoice in the military parade.

While the coronation ceremony was well attended. David wished for overflowing joy. David prays that the joy of the occasion might be celebrated by more and more with intense enthusiasm. Religion is either a dull habit or an acute fever. David prays the whole nation might hum with gladness that the LORD God made Jerusalem His residence.

29 Because of thy temple (palace) at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee. 30 Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, till every one submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people that delight in war. 31 Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

Not only does David call all the people to celebrate "God with us," he anticipated that kings and dignitaries from every nation would make a pilgrimage to Mount Zion to be instructed by Israel's King and to learn His law. Princes from Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sheba were sure to make the long expensive journey to bow their knee to the King of kings.

"the company of spearmen" -- The meaning of the whole verse, though surrounded by difficulty in interpreting the particular expressions, is, that the most formidable enemies of the people of God, represented here by wild beasts, would be subdued, and would be made to show their submission by bringing presents -- by "pieces of silver," or, with tribute.

32 Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah:

The Spirit issues an imperative to the Kings (kingdoms) of the earth to arrange their administrations under the authority of the LORD God and to gladly sing His praises; that is, David invites the nations to harmonize their will with God's will.

33 To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice. 34 Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds.

The word "rideth" paints a picture of the LORD mounting His war horse with glory and majesty as He saves and wages war throughout the whole earth (Psalm 18:10). "Send out His voice" is a reference to thunder designed to increase man's awareness of his majesty and power. As men stand at attention during piercing thunderclaps and spears of lightening thrusts towards earth in stove-black thunder storms, men are to proclaim the glory to God -- the duty of Spirit-filled men.

“Ascribe” or “give” is an imperative ordering God-seekers to acknowledge His authority, majesty, and power; that the God of Israel dwells on Mt. Zion (heavenly Jerusalem) and not on Mt. Ulura in Australia, nor Mt. Kailash in Tibet, nor Mt. Ahkka in Sweden, nor Mt. Olympus in Greece. Nor is the King of kings in carnal Jerusalem in the modern “other” Israel.

But, by His Spirit He dwells in the temple of His church.

35 O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel is he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.

David addresses his God. Thou art “terrible” should be translated “feared.” Because of God’s thundering power and bone crushing conquests, men should fear and tremble before Him. But, He is more than a skull cracking gladiator, He is a tender Shepherd, a Father of the fatherless, that gives strength and power to His people. Here stands Israel’s holy Champion engaged in His people’s struggles are absent from any accusation that He is weak and feeble; casual and aloof; distant and uncaring. A glorious King on a throne, He has authority to richly bless His people; a tender Shepherd, He acts graciously toward the weak. This is David’s way of telling us that the God of Israel saves and rescues those who trust Him.

David’s first administrative act after he was anointed king over the entire nation was to transfer the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem so that the nation’s hope would not be in its civil government and weak kings, but in the presence and power of God as symbolized by the ark and its tabernacle services. What a concept — God as the center of the nation’s affection — the Levitical ministry of reconciliation as the focus of the people’s attention . . . and not the civil government! Oh, that more administrations would consider the wisdom of King David!

Diversity is not strength; it is a weakness to overcome. With all the conflicts that divide a nation, no civil administration is capable of uniting people of different races and political ambitions without the use of force. Only the attributes of the Living God are strong enough to link a diverse people and cause them to rest in peace. Let us, therefore, rejoice in the ascended Christ. Again, I say, rejoice!

Psalm 69 - In Deep Waters

A Prayer that God Would Deliver Us from Our Enemies



Psalm 69 is an imprecatory prayer.

An imprecatory prayer is one that calls upon Heaven to judge the enemies of righteousness.

Enemies is plural, not singular. The wicked are gang creatures that hunt in packs.

“O God, break the teeth in their mouths (plural); tear out the fangs (plural) of the young lions (plural), O LORD!” (Psalm 58:6).

We shouldn't discount this psalm and say it has no application for Christians today. This psalm is quoted in the New Testament by Christ (John 15:25), Peter (Acts 1:20), and Paul (Romans 11:9).

Yes, our Lord taught us to forgive our enemies, but he also taught us to resist the Devil's agents that devour the innocent.

By virtue of God's law order, all good men are members of the *posse comitatus* with a duty to expose criminals and bring them to justice (James 4:1-17; 1 Peter 5:7).

When man's institutions fail to purge evil from society, imprecatory prayer becomes duty!

While we are called to forgive our personal enemies when they seek our forgiveness, there is a place for petitions to the Supreme Judge to abate the evil schemes designed by the wicked. The forces that threaten the health of society must be stopped. The church militant should be able to conduct its mission without being shackled by meddling power-hungry authorities.

1 Timothy 2:1-2 – “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.”

We don't pray that God would “bless” our leaders. We pray that God would restrain their evil plans and frustrate their power-grabbing schemes so the church can be left alone to serve the gospel ministry.

Imprecatory prayers are not invocations calling down curses on irritating neighbors, but prayers against movements that are anti-Christ, antinomian, and anti-humanity (Luke 17:1-7; Thessalonians 2:15).

When corruption infiltrates human institutions backed by corrupt judges, psychopathic legislators, and tyrannical officials, holy men have authority to petition the Supreme Court of Heaven to crush the plans of the wicked.

A Plea for Abatement

James 5:4 “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.”

If you are burdened by Godless movements that have metastasized to governmental powers, Psalm 69 is a prayer for you. Moreover, this prayer sheds light on the Son Who “endured such opposition from sinners” (Hebrews 12:2-3).

A Plea from a Man Suffering from the Wrongdoing of Others

If you ache over the sins of the age, it is because you are righteous. When holy men grieve, prayer is conceived. Pain, therefore, is the path toward prayer and the prevention of perversion. The acorn must crack in order for the mighty oak to sprout.

1 (To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, A Psalm of David.)

This prayer has the scent of David all over it. Though we don’t know on what specific occasion David prayed this prayer, the grime of the Absalom revolt and the betrayal of Ahithophel shadow this psalm.

Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.

The word “waters” is a metaphor for a torrent of troubles and heavy storm clouds raining on David’s career. Finding it impossible to hold on to the keel, David fell overboard engulfed in a sea of strife. Facing floods without and torrents within chilled him to the bone. Modern man would say, “I’m up to my neck in problems.”

David shares his anguish so we might understand the holy cause of his imprecatory prayer. In law, a Plaintiff must be able to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. Injured by the slander of his enemies in a coups d’état, David presents his plea.

Save: We not only need to be saved from our own sins, but the sins of others who war against the kingdom of God and our peace in His pasture.

2 I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

David describes his soul as being in the mire, a pit, and a sea of trouble — as one tossed overboard in the stormy currents of an ocean swell— as wreckage floating ashore.

3 I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

The metaphor changes from the surf and foam of the sea to the anguish of bone-dry thirst under the desert sun. The red trials blistered his soul. His enemies are bigger than he is. He is tired of being tired. Weary of being weary! Sick of being sick!

Use of the descriptive “dried throat” references David’s dehydration and the cracking, choking feeling of total exhaustion that chilled his will to live.

He compares his pain to eyes blistered by overexposure to UV rays from the burning Sun.

Synonyms for “Mine eyes fail” are indistinct, blurry, fuzzy, hazy, misty, foggy, shadowy, smoky, faint, unclear, vague, indefinite, unfocused, obscure, lacking definition, ill-defined, and nebulous – a reference to David’s confusion and depletion of faith and hope.

4 They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.

Christ quoted this verse (John 15:25).

“They” is a reference to Absalom’s followers – the fickle masses governed by quixotic expectations, cry-baby temper tantrums, and razor-sharp rantings against his administration.

“without cause” means they prosecuted him in the court of public opinion without probable cause; i.e. David had injured none of the Plaintiffs.

David’s enemies are not named. This isn’t personal. A military coup sought to remove him from office by every means possible. The phrase “more than the hairs of mine head” refers to a well-organized movement opposed to God’s law-order.

5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.

David is not so foolish as to think that he is as innocent as a lamb and everyone else is a raving wolf. He does not play the victim while performing as a predator. Absent in this man is a “holier than thou” attitude: “my sins are not hidden from You.”

While he understands that he is a sinner, he also knows that he has clean hands — that he has injured no man. Unlike the opposition, David renounced the way of transgressors and walked on the path of righteousness. This horde of rebels invaded the dominions of Christ to disturb His peace. The coup d’état had to be stopped.

Clean hands is a legal doctrine — an equitable defense in which the innocent defendant argues that the plaintiff has no claim upon which relief can be granted because the plaintiff acted unethically and in bad faith. David knows he is not perfect, but he also knows his adversaries acted recklessly with malice aforethought.

6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.

Knowing that he was a weak, flawed man . . . and God’s anointed, David prays that his frightened supporters might not grow weary because of the strength of the opposition. Behind this good faith petition are fears that his failures might impair the perspective of the righteous. Aware of his own depravity, he prays the pious might not lose faith because of political reversals. Oh, that all of us were so careful.

A Plea that His Just Cause Might Prevail

7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.

David’s enemies are God’s enemies. Because he was a friend of God, he felt the full fury of those that hate the Lord –the “reproach” of the rebels. The venom on the tongues of his foes poisoned

the joy of his service to God. Under a cloud of accusations, the darkness blocked sunshine from reaching his ministry. The doom and gloom of his enemies cast a deep shadow over his own soul so that “shame” covered his usual cheery countenance.

8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother’s children.

The terms “stranger” and “alien” describe David’s isolation. He was the sheep among goats; the innocent among prisoners. Like a Jew in a mosque, he felt out of place.

One of the difficulties of being a Christian is that feeling of being alone and misunderstood. God’s people are wonderful, but most can’t understand the loneliness that frequents the soul of a dutiful, pious Christian. When ease and prosperity are high values in the minds of Christians, you cannot expect them **not** to reject true disciples of Christ.

Those who expect others to understand their sorrow are setting themselves up for disappointment. There is something about people that shy away from emotional pain. Men are into “positive” energy. Many are all mouth and no ears. Few have the capacity to comfort an aching heart. Some are “miserable comforters” that cannibalize the weak and shoot the wounded.

Protect yourself. Lower your expectations. Keep your grief to yourself, and don’t expect more of people than they are capable of giving. Grow in grace. Be ready to hear the heartache of a hurting soul. Be all ears and less mouth. It is not what you say that relieves stress, but the fact that you listen and care.

9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

Zeal is a praiseworthy devotion to preserve something precious.

Because of his faith in God, David has foes. He is a candle consumed by its own flame; the soldier standing alone against an advancing army; the wounded warrior bleeding for his Captain; the hungry man so busy with his work he forgets to eat; the long tail cat in a room full of rocking chairs. You get the point.

10 When I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.

The psalmist is a man washed out to sea by his own tears. The literal translation would be, “And I wept (away) my soul with fasting;” that is, I gave myself so much to fasting accompanied with weeping, that my strength was exhausted (Barnes).

11 I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them. 12 They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I was the song of the drunkards.

In Eastern custom, mourners clothed themselves in sackcloth. The metaphor enhances the sorrow and loneliness he feels.

Like the militant media mock their political opponents, the psalmist was the theme of late night comedians — of the bar dribble of drunkards — the butt of the jokes — the twisted topic of the spinsters — a true victim of village gossip.

13 But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O LORD, in an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.

How should a person respond to the crushing waves of criticism crashing on his shore? David provides the answer, "As for me," I pray to the LORD.

God's man did not swear nor complain. He prayed. He kept up his religious disciplines: self-control, Bible reading, devotions, confessions, and prayer. He did not give into fear, anger, and depression. When his rivals mocked him, he prayed. Normally, a good man will defend himself against careless remarks, but this will not work against a well-organized insurrection.

The acceptable time to pray is when we are in trouble; when savage wolves pack together to devour God's sheep — when carnal churchmen call for your resignation -- when politicians advance evil by statute (Psalm 94:20).

A Plea for Personal Deliverance

David submits his complaint to Heaven's Supreme Court. God saves many people from painful problems, but this psalmist prays, "Deliver me!" These jussive verbs behave as motions to the Court to quash his enemies and to grant relief where relief can be granted.

Moreover, we hear the heavy breathing of the Son as he faced the opposition of sinners to His Messianic mission (Isaiah 53:1-6).

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 overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me. 16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies. 17 And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily. 18 Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.

The Reasons God should Grant his Plea

19 Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee.

Reason one: God knows the damage these devils did to his reputation. Their slander and lies pierced his heart like poison darts. As a result of the rumors and lies circulating about him, friends were lost and trust vanished. Society broke down and every man did what was right in his own eyes.

Imprecatory prayer is **not** telling God what He does not know. This is a plea for God to make him whole and to repair the wreckage in his administration. It is a plea for the Court to adjudicate the case and to pronounce the Defendants "guilty as charged" — a plea to grant him relief because he provided the Court with sufficient evidence of the plaintiff's wrongdoing and bad faith.

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.

Reason two: Because all human efforts failed to stop the rebellion, David begged for Divine intervention. Because David exhausted his administrative remedies, it was time for the Court to act.

Aspersions, calumnies, and slander were the weapons of choice by David's cowardly enemies. Slander is a subset of prohibitions under the command, "Thou shall not kill;" that is, the hearts of David's enemies were filled with spite and malice. Turning their tongues into sharp swords, they sliced up his reputation like Italian pepperoni.

21 They gave me also gall (hemlock) for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

Reason three: Because the crimes of his adversaries were wanton, malicious, and inexcusable conduct, the Court is obligated to grant his motion for relief. Great societies are built on the rule of law, and not the rule of men. Righteous men believe that justice will prevail; that good will triumph over evil; that wickedness must be crushed and that Christ will reign for ever and ever.

"hemlock for meat" implies His enemies intentionally, willfully, maliciously, and inexcusably attempted to incapacitate him -- a serious violation of the principle, "do you neighbor no harm."

Good men give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and care to the sick; but, David's enemies gave him cyanide to eat, hemlock to drink, and then deserted him.

It is the duty of all citizens to support the Lord's anointed especially when they are weak (1 Samuel 24). But, these rebels took advantage of that weakness and drove a wedge between the King and his subjects.

A Plea that God would Destroy His Enemies

Imprecatory prayers are not about personal revenge, but stopping evil!

22 Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.

"Their" refers to his enemies who sought his ruin.

The word "table" refers to the supply of food, clothing, and shelter. Here it refers to the supply lines that supported the rebel movement and fires of contention that fueled distrust and division among the people. Because they tried to destroy David's career with treachery and deceit, he asks God to confuse their plans and to disrupt their supply of wealth; that in their pursuit of wealth and prosperity, they would be ensnared like vermin in a mousetrap.

23 Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

"Eyes" speak of the wit and skill of rebels which enabled them to succeed in their war against David. He prays the Lord will blind enemy troops, damage their optics, scramble their communications, and shake their confidence. Blind soldiers are useless on a battlefield. Prayer releases God's psyop weapons against the enemy.

24 Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

This is a plea that God would step in to this fight, administer justice, and batter his adversaries. “Wrathful anger” refers to God’s burning wrath. This is David’s way of asking God to abate the threat and to immediately dispense vigorous justice to quash the lawless rebellion.

25 Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.

The words “habitation” and “tent” refer to the dwellings where his adversaries work and rest. Because they sought to displace David from his palace, he prays that God will render equal justice and dispossess them of their houses and lands.

26 For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

While under the chastisement of God for his own sins, his enemies added to his anguish by withholding comfort and assistance from him in his God-given calling. In addition to their treason was their failure to stop and render aide to the injured.

27 Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.

This is a difficult text to interpret correctly.

The Lord is not only a great Redeemer, He is a great Restrainer.

“Add iniquity to iniquity” is David’s way of asking the Restrainer to remove His mantle of protection from his adversaries, and to let their sins mature so God’s plenary justice will be swift and severe.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

Because his enemies sought to kill him, he petitions God to crush his adversaries and to take their life. This is David’s way of asking God to kill them and to send them to hell.

Confidence the Lord Will Save the Righteous who Love Zion

Imprecatory Prayers are about the honor of God’s name and prosperity of His people.

29 But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. 30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. 31 This also shall please the LORD better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs. 32 The humble shall see this, and be glad: and your heart shall live that seek God. 33 For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

What marvelous, practical faith! Modern man appears to have very little faith in the Lord. When push comes to shove, people tend to follow their emotions instead of their convictions; their feelings instead of their faith. But, not this agonizing saint. He marched forward with praise in his heart, promises on his tongue, and the prospect of victory on his mind.

“We must cease striving and trust God to provide what He thinks is best and in whatever time He chooses to make it available. But this kind of trusting doesn’t come naturally. It’s a spiritual crisis of the will in which we must choose to exercise faith.” Chuck Swindoll

A Plea for the Praise of God and the Prosperity of the People

34 Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein.

Praise is the goal of the universe.

The verb “praise” is a Piel verb, jussive in meaning; that is, the Psalmist urges the church militant to join the heavenly choir at *fortissimo* in praise. In using the terms “heaven and seas” the psalmist calls upon all things, animate and inanimate, to focus on the virtues of the Creator. However, it is much easier for heaven and earth to look to God than it is for self-centered man to escape the vortex of his own existence in order to focus on the glories of God. The Piel jussive implores men to exert themselves.

Praise is to God what complaining is to the Devil. Satan is no match for a singing saint. (2 Chronicles 20).

When Christians whine, fear triumphs over faith, but when Christians worship, truth triumphs over troubles.

35 For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession. 36 The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

David begins his prayer journey with a soul weighed down by the power of his enemies. He ends his prayer with a light heart and weighty confidence in the power of God. Instead of being a bitter man, he became a better man.

Having prayed shakily that God would save him, he closes the psalm with certainty that God will save Zion. His immediate concern was that he might not be dispossessed of his inheritance, but his ultimate concern shifts to the assurance that the people of God will possess their inheritance.

Psalm 70 - Hurry Lord, to Help Me!



This psalm is an exact replica of the latter part of Psalm 40:13-17 with only a few minor variations.

Apparently, the composer cut and clipped that portion of Psalm 40 and adapted it to fit his purpose here. Like modern pastors, who section off portions of the psalms and adapt them for a particular service, even slightly modifying them to make it more readable or memorable, so did the composer of Psalm 70.

Therefore, from a scholarly perspective, noting the alterations seems most important.

Psalm 70:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance.> Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

“Make haste” replaces “be pleased” in Psalm 40:17. It means “to hurry.”

“O, God” replaces “O LORD.” Why? We do not know.

2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

Psalm 70 omits the word “together” and “to destroy it” in Psalm 40:17.

“Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt” corresponds (in the Hebrew) entirely with Psalm 40:14 even though the English translation differs slightly.

3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.

“Let them be turned back” replaces “Let them be desolate.”

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.

In Psalm 70:4 the editor added the conjunction “and” in the second line. Psalm 40 leaves it out.

5 But I am poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: thou art my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

Psalm 40 puts it this way, “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.

“make haste unto me” replaces “yet the Lord thinketh upon me.” “God” replaces “Lord” or Adonai.

“Thou art my help and my deliverer” in Psalm 70 is the same construction as Psalm 40.

None of these slight alterations affect the sense of the passage to the truth conveyed.

Most likely the composer of the psalm used the literary “I” or “We” and adapted this song so the whole congregation could sing it as a prayer — a prayer for the punishment of the wicked and a prayer for the prosperity of the righteous.

The editor understood David’s fear that he might be put to shame by his sins, but his prayer is, let my enemies, who have not repented, be ashamed (disappointed) and “confounded” (surprised and distressed) — jussive in meaning; that is, this is not a wish. David testifies of their destiny: “They will be ashamed and confounded.”

Turning from prayers of punishment for his enemies, he prays for the prosperity of the pious.

For a full understanding of this psalm see the author’s notes on [Psalm 40](#).

Psalm 71 - The Old Age Psalm

The Senior Citizen's Prayer



There is no title to Psalm 71.

It has come to be known as the “Midlife-Crisis Psalm” or “The Old Age Psalm,” but it really applies to young and old.

The psalm can be divided into three parts:

- Confidence of Youth,
- Concerns of Old Age,
- Care from Youth to Old Age.

Because we live in a youth-worship culture older people are often treated with contempt, and they feel more than others the need to pray this prayer.

In a dispose-all society, seniors may feel like God has also tossed them away like an old rag.

Thus, we have a prayer from a veteran saint who pens his worries in a soothing hymn that rejuvenates the soul.

The Confidence of Youth (71:1-8)

Psalm 71:1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.

The psalmist addresses his prayer to the LORD. It presupposes trust and commitment, the acceptance of covenant responsibilities, and the benefits of that relationship.

A “trust” is a deposit of valuable property into the hands of a strong man tasked with the duty of protecting property. The believer is the trustor or beneficiary; and, the Lord is the Trustee. This senior made a decision early in life to trust God as His Savior and Lord.

Therefore, he prays, “Let me never be put to confusion.”

The word “ashamed” means to be disappointed or confused. It presupposes knowledge of disgraceful behavior. Thus, this is a prayer that the Psalmist might be protected from the denuding effects of sin.

Shame buries the naked with the cold chills of their critics. The psalmist hopes that God will not disappoint him and that the Lord will prove His reliability as a Trustee; that the wicked who trust in their own powers and in their fictional gods will be the disappointed ones.

Living in a raw age of sensual delights where there is no blush, we desperately need this prayer. Nakedness, adultery, and the husking of vile behaviors shadow mankind defiling all.

When the first couple tasted the apple, they knew they had sinned . . . and, it is time to pass the fruit again!

Sin shames the man! Therefore, this saint seeks God's protection from sin and the humiliation it causes.

2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me. 3 Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.

Sin comes to us like a Dodge V-8 SRT Hellcat Charger with howling subwoofers that overwhelm the cashmere of our soul. We are no match for Satan. There is no natural remedy for hemlock infecting the heart from the Poisonous Tree.

Therefore, the psalmist pleads for the assistance of One greater than himself. The verbs "deliver, cause, incline, save, and be strong" are a series of Hiphil imperfects and Piel imperatives appealing to the LORD to employ His hammer and muscle to deliver him from the thundering horsepower of sin at work in his soul.

Who can hunt down his own sins and arrest them? We need the power of Another.

This veteran says God has "given commandment" to save him. This Piel perfect verb emphasizes the intensity of the command; i.e. God ordered, shouted, and demanded his salvation.

This is no passive Savior. The Father employed His sinewy salvation when He sent Jesus to save His people from their steel sins. This muscular Savior earned the title "the arm of the Lord" in Isaiah 53:1.

4 Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

The psalm expresses rich metaphors for God: "rock of refuge . . . strong fortress . . . my rock . . . my fortress . . ." and now, without imagery, the Psalmist simply refers to Him as "my God." Rocks are noted for their strength. God is our immutable rock, and our eternal, unchanging fortress. What a privilege to call Him, "my God."

If our personal sin is not enough of a handicap in life, think of the ravenous wolves that wander through our pasture. The "wicked" are totalitarian, psychopathic politicians that seek to capture and control our spirit, mind, and body.

The covetous liars, thieves, and moral predators want a piece of us. Lawless legislators rise to power. Grinch-like predators, with hearts two-sizes too small, plot to steal everything we have without leaking a tear. These professional criminals called "government" seem to have their hand in every pocket. From unscrupulous business men to sophisticated State officials, powerful hucksters want our house, our car, our possessions, our money, and OUR SOUL!

5 For thou art my hope, O Lord GOD: 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 Let my mouth be filled with thy praise and with thy honour all the day.

This prayer is personal. He reminds His Master that he has trusted Him from His youth . . . and that his trust and pleasure in the Lord God continues.

The term “wonder” means “sign” or “miracle.” Onlookers were puzzled by His devotion to the LORD. Acquaintances considered his life and success a miracle; that is, bystanders thought, in light of his humble talents, that he should have “bit the dust” and “gone up in smoke” a long time ago.

The psalmist, still standing, attributed his modest fortune to the greatness of God’s sustaining power.

1 Peter 4:4 “Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:”

This section ends with worship—a self-exhortation to put the honey of praise on his lips and the sugar of thankfulness on his tongue.

The Concerns of Old Age (71:9-16)

9 Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. 10 For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, 11 Saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him.

The verb “cast” means “to throw off.” It is a Hiphil imperfect, causative in action. The psalmist wasn’t getting any younger. He felt the vulnerability that time gives every man. He knew the pains of old age would be upon him. Dementia, frailty, deafness, and general loneliness seek the aged like pickpockets in a Barcelona market.

He was concerned that in his weakness and defilements, God might throw him away like an old rag. This fear appears to be caused by his circumstances. Surrounded by a wolf-pack, the howls of predators aroused fear in his heart.

Perhaps, he thought barking enemies represented the voice of God, or that his bleak circumstances bore witness of God’s abandonment. Depleted finances and loss of youthful energies increase the volume surrounding the theme of desertion. The cannons of his enemies thundered the same gloomy message, “God has forsaken you!”

The word “forsake” in verse eleven (11, 18) is the same word used in Psalm 22 which was quoted by our Savior on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22:1)

The imperative “persecute him” flowed so easily from the lips of his enemies, and their howls came at a time of his personal weakness. It is so easy to kick a man when he is down, and the ungodly seem to have a knack for doing so.

Prosperity teachers leave us with the impression that if God is on our side, the path of the godly will be as smooth as butter. But, that is not so. Many of God’s finest have walked a hundred

miles of bad road. Finances fizzle. Health fails. State marauders seize assets. It is during these times the voice “God has forsaken him” screams like 9/11 sirens. All seems hopeless.

12 O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help. 13 Let them be confounded and consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered with reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.

Two more concerns of Christian veterans come into the light: (1) the fear that God might distance Himself from him in his aging frailty; and, (2) that the LORD might be dilatory in His assistance to him.

After a brief prayer, he pleads his case against his adversaries and asks God to “confound” them; that is, to shame them and to expose their evil deeds. Like the first couple, he wants their fig leaves stripped away and their in-the-buff nakedness exposed.

14 But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. 15 My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. 16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.

Like the first stanza, this section also ends in praise. You have to love this psalmist. He is swimming in a sea of troubles, but clearly has his head above water. Holding on to a life jacket, he postures himself to hope, to praise, to speak of God’s salvation “all the day.” His theme of deliverance is inexhaustible, “I know not the numbers thereof.” His confidence is not in his own goodness, but in the righteousness and power of Another.

Taken prisoner, John Knox rowed as a galley slave for nineteen months, making at least two trips from France back to St. Andrews. When he was asked on the ship if he recognized the port in the distance, Knox replied: “Yes, I know it well, for I see the steeple of that place where God first in public opened my mouth to his glory, and I am fully persuaded, how weak that ever I now appear, that I shall not depart this life, till that my tongue shall glorify his godly name in the same place.”

The lesson is clear. During trials, let us be Christ-centered, not self-centered; let us not search our own hearts, but the heart of Christ; not our own worth, but the worthiness of Christ. Let us not boast in our meager moral victories, but in the manifold victories of the Savior; not in our righteousness, but in the gift of righteousness given to all who believe (Rom. 5:17-18).

Men of God do not listen to inner voices or impressions, but the Word of God. Likewise, let us not search our past for some reason God should love us, but search the Scriptures to understand His love toward sinners. We know that God loves us, not because of what we do, but because of who God is—a God of love.

We do not seek to be more worthy in order to be loved, but consent to be loved though we are unworthy.

Our joy is not in our own goodness, but the goodness of Christ.

For this reason, the psalmist said, “I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine ONLY!”

Care from Youth to Old Age (71:17-24)

17 O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. 18 Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. 19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

Again the psalmist rehearses God’s attentive care during his youth, and his commitment to proclaim the wondrous works of the LORD.

“O God” is used four times. He prays again that God would not abandon him when his hair turns gray; that God would not forsake Him because of his shaking fingers, bent spine, and crackling voice. Lacking is any sense that God will censure him.

There is no self-flagellation here or penance or inordinate listing of sins. We come away with the impression that while the psalmist is not perfect, his sins have graciously been absolved by an act of God.

Rather, his prayer is for sustenance during his senior years—years wherein time cruelly strips men of the strength of their youth.

His prayer is not for himself alone, but for the younger generation. He sees himself as a billboard displaying the power of God to youth. Here is a man caught up with the symmetry of Almighty God and the greatness of His accomplishments.

20 Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

This senior citizen has traveled a narrow, deep rutted, uphill trail, and admits his “great” and “sore troubles.”

He does not blame himself or others for his difficulties. His trials are not random but hand-picked for his good. God controls all the details of his life, not Satan. “Troubles” were appointed by the LORD and the psalmist received them from His hand. He is both the Source of his difficulties and the Solution for them.

Someone has said in regard to old age, “The LORD saves the hardest part ‘til last!” He does. Old age is not for sissies. Seniors play the 4th quarter of the contest injured and sore . . . but not alone!

Possibly, there is a hint of resurrection here. Even in death there is hope and victory.

21 Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

This psalmist chased pessimism out of his mind. He expresses confidence that God will bring him out of the valley of despair into the dazzling beauty of flowering mountain meadows.

Three verbs are employed “increase . . . surround . . . and comfort me.” The verb “comfort” (nacham) is Piel verb expressing intense confidence God will not only relieve his stress, but increase his happiness.

There is no negativity here! The future feels warm and bright!

22 I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel. 23 My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing 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 confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

At the end of a stanza, this elder commits himself to lead an orchestra of praise with violins, trumpets, and drums -- a fitting way to spend our final days on this earth.

This one-man orchestra employs fingers, throat, lips, soul, and tongue in his chorus of praise.

Notice the themes that occupied the mind of this veteran saint: truth, God’s holy character, redemption (gospel), and righteousness (law).

Moreover, he anticipates the crushing defeat of his enemies: “confounded,” and “shamed.” The word “confounded” means “disappointed.” According to BDB the Hebrew word “shamed” (chapher) is “like caravans looking for water.”

Genesis 26:18 “And Isaac digged (chapher) again the wells of water . . .”

Job 39:21 “He paweth (chapher) in the valley . . .”

Job 39:29 “From thence he hath sought food (chapher)” (YLT)

This veteran is not looking inward, but outward; not at self, but at Christ; not at his crisis, but at his Captain.

This self-talk with the grand theme of the Holy One of Israel is a wonderful way to spend one’s retirement. This reservoir has an inexhaustible supply of streams and rivers to explore.

Seniors cannot change the world, but they can change their tunes!

Why not spend our final days on this earth beholding the glory and beauty of Another? Write hymns; sing praises; make music; write; listen, talk, and make melody in our hearts to the Lord. Announce the defeat of God’s enemies for without Christ they shall be “pawing in the valley” of hell for water.

Let us be at rest. God will be with his aged saints . . . and, he will deal with the enemies of Christianity in His way, in His time! He is righteous and He will shame the wicked. Rest, soul! Rest!

Psalm 72 - David's Final Prayer

Thy Kingdom Come

The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.



We have the final prayer by David for his son Solomon centered around the North-Star glories of the coming King.

The psalm concludes with the phrase, "The prayers of David are ended."

This fact causes us to conclude this prayer involved a vision of David's greater son, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. The psalm beams with Messianic overtones. Here David gained a glimpse of the kingdom of God on earth and the blessings to follow.

The prayers of all men end, sort of speak, when they see the climax of history and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth in and through the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The arrival of kingdom of God in its first fruits form in Christ is the major message of the New Testament (Matthew 4:17). That God reigns is the gospel of the Old Testament (Psalm 97:1).

Enough of statist flim flam with their misleading rhetoric, name-calling, tacit assumptions, and mud-slinging that do nothing to make this this world safer or freer or more just. Governments' wrongdoings, lies, power grabs, brutality, meanness, inhumanity, immorality, greed, corruption, debauchery and tyranny have exhausted the patience of the righteous.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord. Amen!"

A Prayer for Solomon

Psalm 72:1 <A Psalm for Solomon.> Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

The "king's son" refers directly to Solomon and indirectly to the Messiah.

"judgments" refers to making executive decisions in government that promote righteousness, responsibility, and freedom for the people — something modern democratic despots in the graveyard of corruption seem unable to do.

"righteousness" is a big word that includes goodness, conformity to law, truthfulness, and faithfulness to duty.

"God" (Elohim) is the first word in the Hebrew stanza. "Give" is an imperative — the language of prayer.

The name "God" (Elohim) occurs three times in this psalm. The Tetragrammaton is used only once (72:18).

To rule over a people having whirlwinds flowing through the mind for their good and to make decisions that sweeten the daily life of the people is a gift of God. Most overlords make decisions that cheer their handlers, increase their own profits, and provide \$\$ privileges to their supporters.

A Prophecy About the Blessing of Messiah

2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

Contrast this hope with our times where we endure self-seeking politicians lying about legislation, starting wars, and introducing sophisticated, immoral aberrations into society that bamboozle the common man.

The king-son judges the people according to fixed standards of righteousness instead of willy-nilly impulses sprouting like thorns from the Poisonous Tree of utopian ideals.

Use of “the poor” implies the king is consistent; that is, He applies the same standards to the poor as he does the rich.

3 The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

In using the term “mountains” and “hills,” David may have in mind bandits that hide in the terrain to attack and plunder vulnerable travelers. Under the policies of the New King hills hum with peace with blossoming flowers begging for attention.

“peace to the people” refers to judgments that make victims of crime whole again.

4 He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

A good administrator saves the poor by purging evil men from society through a consistent application of law. Righteous kings scatter the proud like casting dice on the table in order to relieve stress in the middle class. Correct applications of law heal victims of oppression as well as crush the oppressors. Righteous judgment makes men whole, not the government rich.

5 They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

The key to this king’s success is the fear of the Lord . . . a consistent, abiding discretion that shrinks from that which offends His holiness.

David employs the metaphor “as long as the sun and moon endure” to emphasize the enduring blessings of the Messiah’s administration. The windfalls from godly kings are short lived, but the salvation-bounties of the Messiah-King endure forever.

6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.

David compares the reign of the Messiah to an abundance of gentle rain that refreshes cut grass. How much more will quality of life revive when the Messiah reigns upon the earth as the King of kings?

7 In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

The reign of this king (the Messiah) shall scatter the wicked like feathers in the wind and cause the righteous to flourish like cedars bathed with continual kisses of rain.

International Blessings of the Messianic Reign

8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

The word “dominion” (radah) could be translated “may he tread down” rebellious nations from sea to sea. This hyperbolic wish for Solomon became a reality in the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to the throne of Almighty God.

“from sea to sea” stretched the faith of Hebrews to believe ancient Israel could have sovereignty from the Red Sea in the south to Mediterranean Sea in the north . . . even to the Euphrates River. Ultimately, however, this vision extends to the reign of the Messiah from sea to sea, from shore to shore, from the North Pole to the South Pole; and, from heaven to earth.

Zechariah 9:10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.

9 They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

The term “wilderness” (tsiy’iy) is better understood as “wild beasts.” They that “dwell” (pa’nah) can be translated, “They that face wild beasts” – a reference to nomadic tribes that live in the desert – rugged, barbaric, traditional enemies of the nation.

David employs the metaphor “lick the dust” to express the death of the wicked.

10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

“kings of Tarshish” refer to nations (isles) east of Israel as far away as Mediterranean Spain. “kings of Sheba” appear to represent southern Arabian nations; and “kings” of “Seba” (Saba) represent African countries south of Egypt.

But, this was as far as the Hebrew mind could stretch. The text obviously refers to the global rule of Messiah Whose authority extends to the four corners of the earth.

“bring presents” refers to worship – to the esteem and appreciation nations will have for Israel’s Messiah-King.

11 Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

In case the reader is in doubt about this extravagant promise that reaches for the stars, David repeats it a second time for assurance.

Solomon, a type of the Messiah-King, saw kings from the east and west acknowledge His talent and authority. The Queen of Sheba marveled at his wisdom. However, this is a prophesy regarding David’s greater son and the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Even the Jewish expositors understood it of the kingdom of the Messiah” (Matthew Henry)
Even now there are men in every nation on earth who raise their hands to Christ as the Most High. In every nation, to the end of time, men will swear by His name and open their lips to praise Him.

Judicial Blessings of Messiah

12 For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

Contrast the following hope with the corruption of our age: preferential treatment for the rich, oppression of the poor by the police state, taxation into poverty, cruelty with prison terms, State robbery, ruthless feminist leaders, propaganda, lies by government officials, censorship, bribes, secret spy agencies, and promotion of depravity.

In our time we have seen Hitler’s Germany, Stalin’s Russia, Mussolini’s Italy, Mao’s revolution in China, and Obama’s “Yes, we can.” The rise of strongmen and demagogues, the ascendancy of profit-driven politics over deep-seated principles, the warring of race-baiting politics that divide and conquer infuriate us. Our time is one of callous disregard for basic human rights with politicians claiming war is the means to peace.

The “needy” and “the poor” refer to vulnerable youth and to feeble senior citizens. The fame of His merciful government shall spread like happy smiles causing many to bow to His rule and to model his mercy and justice.

The imperfect verb “deliver” means “to rescue, to snatch, or to free” from oppression. The Messiah sees the injustice and shall deliver those that cannot help themselves.

The cross that saves the poor is the opening pledge of his glorious redemption by blood.

13 He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

Unlike modern elected leaders to whom money is everything, this highly exalted Messiah-King is not out of touch with the struggle and stresses of the poor. His mercy extends to the dirty slums and cement ghettos of this world. He not only saves the souls of those who know they need Him, He protects and provides for them.

This conquest of the poor is not by armies having steel tanks with scorpion stings in their tails, but with an abundance of tender-humane principles smothered with fragrances of mercy and grace picked from the Tree of Life.

14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

The psalmist identifies the problem with this world and the reason for the affliction of the poor – fraud and violence from brain-boiled trolls in government — fraud in taxation, fraud in banking, fraud in commerce, fraud in medicine, fraud in advertising, fraud in the courts, fraud in history and the sciences; and, violence by officers in the executive branch of the State apparatus.

The term “deceit” refers to commercial scams and oppression. “violence” refers to the cruelty and tyranny of psychopathic leaders.

“and precious shall their blood be in his sight” alludes to the Messiah’s protection for those who trust Him. “- He will rescue their lives from the hands of tyrants who practice deceit and oppression. The death of the saints is precious to God . . . and precious to us (Psalm 116:15-19).

Men are lied to about history, science, religion, and commerce. The reign of the Lord Christ will be one of truth with utter intolerance of “black hat” schemes to deceive, brainwash, trap, and plunder the poor.

The Blessings Showered Upon Messiah

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.

What does a perfect society look like?

There was a time in England when curtains in every home were closed because fathers read Scripture and had devotions with their families before they headed to work. There is coming a day when men will be eager to find new ways to express their thankfulness to the LORD.

The Scripture informs us that those who are benefactors of His protection and provision will love the Messiah so much they will bring thank offerings out of their golden treasure chests to present to Him.

True prayers shall ascend into heaven with frankincense, “the sweets of the gods,” to the delight of the Lord. No longer will men rise and rush off to work to earn a shekel. Rather, men will rise early and live to praise Him, thank him, and to adore Him.

Let the redeemed say so . . . and start now!

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.

“handful” (piccah) = “abundance.” The idea here is that even nature will respond with energetic thanksgiving to the Messiah by yielding bumper crops of corn on the earth. During our day the earth grieves and grudgingly yields its fruits. But, there is a day coming when crops will beam like sunflowers with smiles of gratitude for grace given to man by the King.

Even the mountains and valleys will shout for joy and supply golden cereals for men to enjoy.

The problem today is not global warming or a shortage of fertilizers but a paucity of praise and thankfulness in the hearts of men.

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.

Oh, the blessedness of His name. Jesus is the “sweetest name I know.” Just the mention of His name causes men to sprout seeds of honesty, integrity, and generosity. In Him is life, and His life is the light of men (John 1:4).

Because He lives, we will live; Because He is the Source of all things sweet, men are recipients of the honey-coated gifts of nature. To the end of time, redeemed men shall hum praises to His name. Happiness will sit down at every meal with those blessed by the Christ of God.

Blessings on the LORD God of Israel

18 Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

“wondrous” (pala) refers to something extra ordinary, something that surpasses human possibilities – of butterfly strength to lift buckets of silver.

The noun “only” (bad) is a term expressing separation, uniqueness, and something set apart from man’s abilities – like immortality, or advanced intelligence, or the mysterious blessing of His omnipresence.

Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for showering his struggling people with the golden blessings of His presence. The redeemed shout, “Blessed are you Lord, our God, King of the Universe who brings forth bread from the earth.”

How much more shall the new Israel of God in Christ bless the Heavenly Father for giving them the riches of kingdom of God with all “spiritual blessings” in heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3). Solomon was a type of Messiah, but Christ turned shadows into realities. Blessed be His name. For all that He has done for men at Calvary, the church ought to inspire hearts to praise and to bless our Eternal Redeemer.

19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen.

“blessed be . . .” could be translated, “Let your glorious name be blessed forever.” “Amen” is used twice for certainty and emphasis.

The adjective “glorious” describes Hashem which fuels our imagination to consider His platinum attributes, His rose petal excellence, the aroma of the healing powers of His name that wages war on man’s moral enfeeblement.

“And let the whole earth be filled with his glory” — As the kings of Tarshish and Sheba brought gifts to Solomon, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Let the redeemed honor him with their words, works, and wealth. Let every heart be filled with the praises of God. Amen! Amen!

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

The Pual verb “ended” is the first word in the Hebrew stanza — an intense passive of the Piel stem in the emphatic position: “Ended! are the prayers of David, the son of Jesse.

After he saw with eyes of faith the Christ of God and His kingdom established on earth, the prayers of David ended . . . not literally of course, but spiritually. With his coffers full, David rested.

Rest, Soul, rest!

Book 3 (Psalm 73-89):

Psalm 89:52 records, "Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen."



Psalm 73 - Wrestling with Regret

For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.



This psalm begins the third book of the psalms which is characterized by strong Levitical themes.

It is one of 12 psalms attributed to Asaph — most likely the Levitical composer of these psalms.

It is the story of a Levite who chose to walk a holy path in order to please his Lord. Saying “No” to temptation, this pilgrim was overcome with envy, doubt, and regret.

Filed with a constellation of troubles called “God problems,” darkness blocked out the light. When he saw the prosperity of law breakers, He questioned his choice of strict obedience to the law, and began to edit his own soul.

“We have in this psalm the record of the Psalmist’s struggle with the great standing difficulty of how to reconcile the unequal distribution of worldly prosperity with the wisdom and providence of God” (MacLaren).

The psalm is about a pious man’s spiritual struggle, his wrestling match with doubt, and his victory through faith by going deeper into truth — truth connected with the temple.

His struggle is our struggle. The man who picks up his cross to follow Christ walks in the shadow of death while other men seem to bask in the sunshine of the “high life.”

If you are disturbed by the expansion of anarchy and your growing difficulties, this psalm is for you.

So human is this struggle, and so glorious its conclusion, the Levite penned a poem to commemorate his journey so others could learn from his experience. In a conspiracy of silence surrounding the neglect of God, truth sounds like cannon fire.

The Psalmist’s Conclusion

The author states the conclusion of his spiritual journey first.

73:1 (A Psalm of Asaph.) Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.

Asaph states his conclusion first: “God is good to Israel.”

“God is good to Israel” should be preceded by the adverb “surely,” “truly,” or “yet.” The idea here is that the psalmist was thinking about the holiness of God and the sins of the people . . . that God is good to the righteous in heart and concluded, “Yet, God is good to Israel” — a

blemished people. Even though Israel was not as pure as the driven snow, God was still good to the nation; that is, they were still beneficiaries of His grace, goodness, and mercy.

While practicing righteousness does not save the soul, the Lord is a friend to the righteous — in this case God was good to Israel, a flawed, fractured, fallible people who struggled with the call to righteousness.

“Good thoughts of God will fortify against Satan’s temptations” (Matthew Henry).

The Psalmist’s Confession

2 But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.

Asaph was a Levite in the priestly class; a man with all the ambitions of manly males: the desire to conquer, provide, control, and succeed in life. But, he was also a sinful man who faced all the temptations that men face: avarice, envy, lust and the like.

Asaph humbles himself and talks personally about the state of his own soul. Though he trusted God, he almost stumbled . . . almost slipped; that is, he came close to allowing doubt and jealousy to conquer his soul and to join the dark side. Rubbed raw by the prosperity of the wicked (v. 3), he almost changed course. Instead of being a pillar of faithfulness, his soul became malleable like water.

Even the best of saints in their humble state have their confidence tested when they see the wicked eating filet mignon and themselves scrounging for crumbs; when they see the ambitious wearing the finest of clothes and they themselves repairing holes in their socks. The faith of good Christian men comes to a breaking point during times of hardship and trouble. It is hard to believe God is good when the cupboards are empty and children are crying for hunger . . . and, yet, many a servant of God has stared at poverty and “faked” assurance that God is good and will provide.

3 For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

“envious” (qana) means “jealous” — a state of being extremely covetous of another’s prosperity.

Those bad men should prosper and good men should suffer grated against Asp’s soul.

Shakespeare: In Othello, Iago warns Othello: “Beware, my lord, of jealousy; it is the green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat it feeds on.” Thus, we get the phrase, “green with envy” — the art of counting the other fellow’s blessings instead of our own — one of the seven deadly sins. Jealousy and regret are not minor flaws like dandruff in the soul. Rather, it is more like having a knife in the lungs. If not removed, it will drive your soul to rest under the Poisonous Tree.

“foolish” is another word for sinners — a person who lacks good judgment — who fails to factor in eternal matters in choosing his course during this life. Fools rise to positions of power and the foolish world loves them. And, they seem to have a Midas touch where everything turns to gold.

The word “prosperity” (shalom) means “the peace of the wicked” more than it does the accumulation of assets; in part because of their security in shekels, and in part because of the lack of trouble they experience in climbing up “the ladder of success.”

To his credit, Asaph owns his sin of regret and takes responsibility for it. In taking the problem to the Lord, he found a remedy.

Ease in death

4 For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.

The word “bands” means cords, ropes, chains, or pangs. From Asaph’s perspective these prosperous Cretans enjoyed a life of ease. Even their death was painless. They die as they lived free from misfortune and worry.

“but their strength is firm” — They were not weakened by disease or financial troubles. They had no downs — only “ups”; that is, they had the “tiger by the tail” and lived without fear.

Fewer troubles

5 They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.

Most people struggle with finances . . . employment . . . housing . . . health . . . and providing for their families, but not these prats. They did not share the financial and relational struggles of the pious . . . of the working man . . . of the laborer. They seemed to rise above the grit and grim sliding into power without resistance. They had no callouses on their hands and yet they prospered. With bank accounts and cupboards full they enjoyed a life free of fear . . . of poverty . . . of obscurity . . . of serious health problems.

Pride

6 Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.

“chain” and “garment” are metaphors depicting their bondage to pride. The use of the word “violence” indicates how they became prosperous — through fraud, corruption, and the strong arm tactics of extortionists.

While Asaph was struggling to put food on the table and doubting his calling, these wealthy villains were bursting with self-confidence, sporting a positive attitude, and oozing with self-esteem. Because they enjoyed the comforts of life, pride stood out like a pearl necklace on a black hog.

Plenty

7 Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

“fatness” — The idea here is that they had no wants, no worries, no troubles, and no concerns about where the next meal was coming from. Their fat faces revealed they had a full stomach, stood portly with no health problems, and that they were in total control of their destiny.

“They have more than heart could wish:” The verb “have more” is better translated “to pass over.” It most likely means that there were no obstructions, no hindrances, or obstacles standing

in the way of their ambitions; their success came easily; their purposes were accomplished as easily as passing the salt across the table.

Pomposity

8 They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.

Asaph wants us to know the kind of people he envied and how close his soul was to ruin. He did not envy God's humble servants, but corrupt, depraved men — scoffers, doubters, skeptics, mockers — violent men who thought nothing of crushing another man's life as they climbed the "ladder of success."

The word "corrupt" means "to mock or to jeer."

"speak wickedly" means "badness" (ra): mocking, jest, threats, intimidation, extortion, hounding, hoarding, terrorizing, harassment, badgering, and derogatory speech.

"oppression" means "to extort money" or to "injure" someone in the process of achieving goals.

9 They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

"set their mouth against heaven" refers to bragging, boasting, bitter invectives; blasphemy, sacrilege, impiety, irreverence, mocking, and profanity.

10 Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

"Therefore his people return hither" -- refers to the popularity gained by self-applause. Ellicott comments, "a cup full of adulation and flattery are sucked out by them." Benson takes another course, "the prosperity of the wicked, are sore grieved, and enforced to shed tears in abundance."

The word "are wrung out" (mātsāh) - means to "suck" or "to suck out" implying to drink vigorously . . . of an intoxicating cup (Benson). Perhaps, the idea here is one of unrestrained greed and addiction.

Critical of the Christian faith

11 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

Asaph, after waking up to the nature of these boasters observed they possessed a low view of God; that is, they questioned His omniscience . . . not to learn, but to cast doubt and to infect others with unbelief.

Prosperity

12 Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

Asaph appears to be ashamed of his spiritual weakness for envying the ungodly and their wealth. Here we see a good man perplexed and embarrassed by the fact that the wicked are prosperous and happy (Barnes).

The Psalmist's Confession of Regret

13 Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

Consider the clean hands doctrine: The psalmist claims he injured no man; that he acted ethically, equitably, and in good faith. In contrast, the “wicked” acted injuriously, unethically, and in bad faith toward their fellow man.

In stating he washed his hands in innocence, the psalmist claims that he took steps to get right with God and to be reconciled to Him as required by Levitical law. The question that interrupted the silence was, “Why aren’t I prospering?” “Since I follow the Lord, while is my life filled with so many struggles?”

The Reason for his Regret

14 For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

Shouldn’t righteous men have fewer troubles than the proud? Even though the psalmist walked in obedience, he seemed to have more problems than ordinary men . . . and these set of problems were like a “burr under his saddle.”

We owe Asaph for accurately depicting the nature of a godly life: troubles . . . pains . . . difficulties . . . struggles . . . insecurity . . . poverty . . . a life of prayer . . . of insecurities . . . of rejection . . . of silence . . . of loneliness; and, all for taking up the cross to follow Christ.

“chastened every morning” has truth in it, but may be a bit exaggerated. His mercies are also new every morning. Nevertheless, this is the way he truly felt.

Why the Psalmist did not Speak about his Doubts

15 If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.

Of a truth, a man struggling with doubt cannot share his fears with other believers because they do not have the capacity to understand nor can they be trusted to guard privileged information with care and integrity.

16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;

He longed to tell others about his doubts and regrets and to receive their comfort, but he was restrained by a heavenly force — the fear of stumbling others. Therefore, he kept silent and projected an image of confidence — but, it was an act; that is, he faked contentment — the right course of action under these circumstances.

The Psalmist’s Solution to His Regret

17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

“Until” indicates a pivot in the mind of Asaph — a change in direction — a change of ideas — a correction in this Levite’s thinking.

Doubt and envy was the “elephant on his chest” . . . until he spent time in the holy place. Then he saw . . . and his soul revived because of truth.

He solved this problem not by introspection or by human reasoning, but by going to the sanctuary and fellowshiping with the LORD; that is, his correction came from communion with God.

What did he come to understand?

Asaph wanted to climb the ladder of financial success until he found out he was leaning against the wrong wall — the wall of lawlessness — the wall that rogues and wrongdoers climb.

Possibly, he remembered the LORD is Ruler of all . . . holy . . . a God of law and justice that required blood to redeem the souls of men. Animal's throats were cut. Blood was sprinkled on the altar. Hands were washed in the brazen laver in a methodical, regular, accurate way as commanded by the Lord. Such considerations must have been high on the list of Theological meditations (Hebrews 9:22)).

“end” = the end of this life.

The Psalmist's New Realizations

A New Knowledge about the State of Unbelieving Men

18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

The “them” refers to the ungodly in verse 12: proud men, rich men, lawless men, practical atheists and agnostics.

The adjective “slippery” (chelqah) is translated “ground” and “smooth” or “slippery.” The footing of the wicked are like deer on ice . . . like men walking on smooth, slick rocks or snow covered ponds . . . like Pennzoil on a steel beam.

“Thou castedst them down into destruction” -- Having no heavenly passport, these people walk the road to destruction . . . to the edge of the cliff into eternal damnation. They are not there yet, but they are happily walking on the highway to hell. They do not choose hell! Life is not a matter of choices. God will “cast them down” to destruction, desolation, and devastation for the demolition of the man due to his revolt against the Lord.

Consider the slippery vulnerability of men's bodies. With 30,000,000,000 cells in the body with zillions of chemical and electrical exchanges taking place every second, what could possibly go wrong?

Consider the slippery vulnerability of men occupationally, economically, environmentally, industrially, socially, religiously, and psychologically. Bodies break down, rent and utilities have to be paid, cars and equipment need repairs, relationships must be maintained and are easily subject to acts of Providence.

Consider the slippery vulnerability of nations and all the factors that are included in success: competent personnel, education, political structures, leadership vacuums, food production, energy resources, agricultural necessities, industry, industrial supplies, resources, expenditures, money supply, bank stability, trade, and sensitive economies — slippery places indeed!

19 How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

The word “desolation” means “horror” or “terror.” And the word “moment” (rega) comes from the root word “wink of an eye.” But, only those with open eyes can perceive the fate of the wicked and behold their end which can take place in the blink of an eye.

20 As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

The LORD is omnipresent . . . near . . . and very patient. He may appear to be asleep, but when He awakes, He is right beside the ungodly and able to squash them with one blow of His anvil-like fist. The real problem is not that God is not awake, but that believers are not aware of the on-going judicial work of the Lord in history. All sin. All die.

“It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment” — Hebrews 9:27.

A New Knowledge about Self

21 Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.

“reigns” refers to one’s inner being.

The psalmist suffered from ignorance and a bad case of spiritual myopia — a lack of perspective; and, he suffered with the cancer of regret multiplying in his soul. Going to the sanctuary and contemplating the greatness of God expanded his understanding and provided a remedy for his regret. Consequently, grief about his ignorance and his embrace of envy pierced his soul like the sting from the Queensland gympie-gympie plant that can leave victims suffering for weeks.

22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.

The psalmist did not come out of his spiritual funk thinking all men are born good. He did not grow in self-esteem, but Christ-esteem. Seeing the light exposed the darkness that clouded his own soul, and he repented of it.

He compares his ignorance to that of cow (beast). But, he does not plunge into self-pity or take out “the beat stick” to denigrate himself.

23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

“Nevertheless,” may be the most precious word in this psalm — the hinge on the door of hope — “I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff comfort me.”

Despite the sickness working in his soul, the Lord did **not** cut him off. Better yet, the Lord lifted him up and nursed the man back to health. Not only did the psalmist see the sin in his own heart, he experienced the forgiveness of God . . . faithfulness of God . . . and the love of God.

What is amazing in this psalm is not Asaph’s slide into regret; all of us do this, but the Lord’s patience, graciousness, and gentle touch on this man’s tender soul.

When he went into the sanctuary, the Lord took him by the hand and personally instructed Him on the fate of the wicked and the benefits of faithfulness. He forgave this Levite and strengthened his heart to be faithful to His instructions.

A New Knowledge about his Treasures in the LORD

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

The Hebrew text reads, “By thy counsel, thou shall guide . . .”

He came out of this sanctuary-course with confidence that God would counsel and guide him with advice and instruction. . . and afterwards receive him to glory “with honor.” The thought is not of reward . . . or eternal life . . . but that of honor (Ellicott). Oh, to hear from the Lord, “Well done, my good and faithful servant!” The hope of all pious men!

“thou wilt open my eyes to understand; and principally by thy Holy Spirit, sanctifying and directing me in the whole course of my life” (Benson).

25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

“And there” — better, “Besides thee I have no delight on earth.” Thus, this Levite invested his precious all in the promises of God.

26 My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

The psalmist began his journey envying the treasures of the wicked, but on the way he learned that knowing God and being right with Him was his treasure.

A New Knowledge about the Future of Unbelievers

27 For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

“For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish” — Those that forsake the Lord and who love this present evil world shall face the punishment of God. Those who ignore God will perish.

“all them that go a whoring from thee” — those apostates who profess religion but lay down like a whore before riches, fame, and pleasure shall be destroyed.

A New Conclusion about his own State in Life

28 But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

God will not suffer his people to be tempted to make them bitter, but to make them better.

If His grace were not sufficient to sustain the tempted, He would not permit men to be tested. But, because there is no other way to make men strong, He ordains trials to make men tough . . . and, to make them tender.

Asaph concludes that his stressful circumstances and his wrestling with the monster of envy make him stronger; that communion with God made him good; “that all things work together for good to those who trust God” — (Romans 8:28).

Thus, Asaph became a witness to the goodness of God and an evangelist calling men to repent and seek God.

How do you know when you are healed? When you become a witness for the truth upon which Christianity stands.

See the psalmist’s conclusion to his spiritual quest in verse one.

A New Perspective

The Christian life is the most difficult life to live because it involves denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ.

-It is no great decision to turn down the worst the world has to give. The test for a true Christian is to turn down the best the world has to offer, to pick up the cross, and follow Christ.

-Doubt is the mother of all evils.

-Beware of crucifying yourself between two thieves: (1) Regret for walking by faith in the past and (2) fear of following Christ in the future.

-Envy is the art of counting the other fellow’s blessings instead of your own. (Harold Coffin)

-The envious die slowly, painfully, miserably.

-Difficult conflicts are the Spirit’s call for us to go deeper into the knowledge of Christ.

-Be careful for what you hunger, for you will become the sum total of your desires.

-He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose (Jim Elliot).

-“No reserves. No retreats. No regrets.” William Borden — a man about the Father’s business.

A Poem by Edwin Arlington Robinson illustrates the vanity of envy:

Richard Cory

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
“Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich—yes, richer than a king—
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Psalm 74 - A Cry from a Castaway

A Prayer for God to Intervene (1-3)



This is one of the didactic psalms designed to give instruction to God's people. It has the feel of a captivity psalm following the destruction of the temple ("sanctuary") where every surviving Jew was asking "Why Lord, why?"

This is not a touchy, feel-good psalm. It is one of the toughest, most heart wrenching chorales in the Book of Psalm to read and admire — a prayer that can only be appreciated by those in hot pursuit of holiness.

"Arise, O God, plead thine own cause"

Question One and Two

Psalm 74:1 <Maschil of Asaph.> O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

"Maschil" means "didactic." "of" can mean "for"; i. e. the psalm was composed for or by Asaph, the chief musician to create a chorus appropriate for the psalm.

If one has never felt forsaken by God due to his trials, he has to question if he is walking by faith. The question is not asked because of ignorance, but so the reader can go deeper into the theology of Divinity. "Why" questions are the types of questions that force one to step back and think more analytically.

The verb "cast off" implies being rejected, set aside, or put on the shelf — the ultimate nightmare for a flawed God-seeker.

"anger smoke" is a metaphor referring to a smoldering log that keeps burning — a reference to the wrath of God.

"sheep" refers to Israel as a flock. Why would a shepherd with a flock purchased with his own currency be angry against his harmless, defenseless sheep? Such a condition seems preposterous and unimaginable; i.e. it is not in conformity with the natural order.

2 Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

"Remember" is the psalmist way of asking God to step in and provide relief for His people that he purchased by blood; that is, a people redeemed from Egyptian bondage.

"purchased of old" – A reference to being purchased by the blood of the Passover lamb. Blood, not shekels, is the currency of the Spirit world and the means of redemption.

The word “rod” literally means “stick or crook or staff.” Metaphorically, it implies “inheritance” or to one “endowed with authority” to live as a free, sovereign man.

“Mount Zion” is Jerusalem, the seat of authority – a reference to the temple from which God ruled over the affairs of the nation.

3 Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

The psalmist perceives the LORD to be at the rear of desolations crushing the nation. “Lift up thy feet” is plea to the Lord to pick up his pace and to advance to the front of the column to personally inspect the severity of the enemy’s breach into the holy city . . . even to the sanctuary. Possibly, this is a reference to the Babylonian invasion of Israel.

“wickedly” simply means “badly” which implies harm and ruin. Because God’s property was being damaged by assailants, the psalmist expected God to protect the temple . . . but He didn’t . . . and this perplexed not only the psalmist but the whole nation.

Reasons for God to Intervene

4 Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns for signs.

“Thine enemies roar” refers to war whoops and battle cries. “Roar” also has a reference to wild animals like lions, wolves, and cougars. When war cries replace the praise of God, you know the infrastructure of the nation is seriously threatened. The meaning here is, that political factions cried for bloodshed in the very area which God had appointed as the place to meet with His people. Injured to the core, the very existence of the nation was in doubt.

“They set up their ensigns for signs” refers to signs, slogan, and symbols that enemies posted to rally their miscreant soldiers to raze the temple complex at the heart of the nation’s pride and joy.

5 A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees. 6 But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

The idea here is that men famous for speed and strength in axing down a proud tree are now applauded for their skills in destroying the Jews’ magnificent temple.

“One sees the axe glitter on high, as one cuts wood in the forest” (Luther).

Instead of having intelligent, careful sensitive men in power, the nation was under the control of invading brutes and thugs taking pleasure in using a wrecking ball to demolish the pillars of the temple.

7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

The meaning in this text is that intruders burned down the sanctuary as did the Chaldeans in 586 B.C. That which was holy was defiled, demolished, and destroyed by the sweat and strength of God-haters.

8 They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

The purpose of wrecking the temple was to destroy the people; ruin their religion, and to destroy the foundations of the nation.

“Synagogues” refers to assemblies or meeting places of people. Destroy a nation’ religion, land, language, or racial cohesion and you can decimate a country which is what happened during the Chaldean attack on Israel in 539 B.C.

9 We see not our signs: there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long.

The idea here is that all symbols, icons, and familiar emblems that united the people around the worship of YHWH were ravished to the ground. With no emblems of worship, no prophet, and no word from God, the people were scattered and confused.

With no divine teacher, who could “save” the people, or who could “prevent” these desolations? Matters had deteriorated to the point that all divine interference and protection appeared to be withdrawn. The nation seemed to be abandoned to a ghastly fate by a negligent Deity.

Question Three and Four

10 O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?

The exhausted psalmist is tired and terrified by this calamitous invasion and asks, “is there no end to this devastation?”

Likewise, afflicted Christians ask, “Will my trials never end?” “How long do we have to endure this pain and suffering? The answer, of course, is “just enough.”

Question Five

11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck it out of thy bosom.

The psalmist prayed, and the heavens shook with silence. The question, “Why doesn’t God act to save us?” has flogged every saint throughout the ages.

“pluck it out of your bosom” is the psalmist way of saying, “Lord, get your hands out of your pocket and do something . . . now . . . immediately . . . or we die.

When madmen are in office and wickedness abounds, we demand that God do something . . . anything but remain silent.

The psalmist is not a rebel . . . or a complainer . . . or a quitter. He is a devoted sheep in God’s flock who is deeply troubled by the howling of wolves and the shocking absence of the Shepherd.

12 For God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

That all of God's sheep confess God as their king and are loyal subjects of His Majesty is offered as the main reason why God should arise out of His slumber and act to save His people.

13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters. 14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

The psalmist reminds the LORD that when Israel was trapped between Pharaoh's chariots and the Red Sea that He acted dynamically to split the waters and to provide a means of escape on dry land through the walls of water.

"brakest the heads of dragons" and "leviathan" refers to crocodiles . . . a reference to the pursuing Egyptian army and to Pharaoh the head of the nation. God literally broke Egypt at the Red Sea. Metaphorically, the memory of drowning charioteers became a spiritual meal for His children to enjoy on their journey through the wilderness to the Promise Land.

15 Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.

"cleave the fountain" is a reference to when Moses smote the rock and out came a well spring of water to satisfy the thirst of man and beast.

"driedst up mighty rivers" refers to God splitting the Jordan so Israel could pass over into Canaan.

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.

Deliverance at the Red Sea and mighty provision in the wilderness are not strange events because God controls the Sun during the day and the stars at night; the cold of winters and the heat of the summer. By His order the sun marches across the sky and sharing its light to the world. By His decree the earth enjoys the changing seasons and varied temperatures to the delight of all.

The idea here is that God has dominion over the sun by day and the moon by night. Therefore, He should not have difficulty rescuing His people from their present troubles.

18 Remember this, that the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and that the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

The psalmist reminds the LORD that the enemy has challenged his authority, criticized religion, and blasphemed His name; that the enemy boasted that God was not able help His people. He reminds the LORD that the enemies of Israel are the enemies of God; that this was not just their war, but His battle.

19 O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked: forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.

The psalmist compares Israel to a defenseless, harmless turtledove — a helpless bird that needs his protection from the cruel bird trappers. This is the psalmist's way of reminding the LORD his timid, gentle people are under attack and in need of His protection.

20 Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.

The psalmist initiates a legal argument reasoning that the LORD has a contract with Israel that requires His intervention to save and protect the covenant nation — a people He promised to shield and preserve.

21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.

The psalmist reasons that if His people are defeated and shamed, how could they possibly boast about God? Let the poor and oppressed have reasons to praise the name of the LORD and to glorify Him.

22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.

The psalmist lists his reasons why God should intervene and save His people, but here He urges God to make their affliction His cause. This Israelite reminds the LORD that man's destructive reproach against God's sheep was malicious contempt against God himself.

23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

The enemies of Israel clamored for its destruction. The psalmist prays that God would bring upon their enemies what they deserve and in so doing would rescue His people giving them another reason to praise Him.

There is no closure to the psalmist's dilemma . . . but, in reading the rest of the story in Ezra and Nehemiah we learn that God miraculously delivered His people from the clutches of Babylon by the Persian Messiah, Cyrus the Great in 539 B.C.

The psalmist asks "Why?" And, we know the answer. The Tanach teaches the captivity in Babylon was a punishment for idolatry and disobedience to Yahweh — a difficult but blessed discipline designed to purge idolatry from the nation and to purify His people.

Oh, the seriousness of sin! When feeling abandoned by the Lord, the God-seeker would do well to do a self-check and to repent deeply of any sin in his life. There is always hope for penitents:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Psalm 75 - The Wine is Red

For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red;



God treads the grapes of wrath and the wicked must drink the terrifying brew of God's red wine.

The wine is ripe and ready to be poured.

Before us are lambs laughing at staggering drunks.

This is a song for saints who perceive the final judgment of the wicked and the glorious destiny of the righteous.

Here the virgin mocks her attacker, laughs at his impotence, and marvels at his intoxication. Like in a brawl, the psalmist taunts, jeers, jabs, and "trash talks" his inebriated opponents.

Holy faith dares to flaunt God's sovereignty and power in the face of his proud, flushed adversaries.

Happy are those that can sing of God's greatness.

Happy is the Christian who can laugh at the absurdity of evolutionists, the idiocy of liberal loons, the roar of feminists, and the shrill of steel tyrants tanked with lies and presumption.

The Preface

Psalm 75:1 To the chief Musician, Altaschith, A Psalm or Song of Asaph.

Some see this psalm as pertaining to the days of David. Many see it as composed during the captivity, and others see it as a post-exilic psalm. It fits well with the post-exilic period, particularly the events of the Maccabean Period, but the poem appears to be written prior to the Babylonian Captivity (605-535 BC). It fits well with the fall of Sennacherib's Army in the Lion's killing fields (Isaiah 36-39). It may refer to David's coronation as it is a coronation psalm.

The Psalmist Speaks

Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.

The appellation "God" (Elohim) stands in the emphatic position. The key thought to grasp is that "God" is at the epicenter of history – a truth so simple many overlook it. The LORD is the Prime Mover of all the wondrous works of history.

The Hebrew word for, "give thanks" means to "throw up the hands."

Imprisoned, the psalmist speaking for the people gives thanks to God in advance of their emancipation. He recognizes that political deliverance comes from Elohim and not from man —

not from the Babylonians or Egyptians or Greeks or the Medes – not from politicians or presidents or congressmen or the United Nations or from the People, but from God.

Secondly, the psalmist rejoices because God's name is NEAR — a present help in the time of trouble. The nearness of God is always a reason to give thanks.

God Speaks

2 When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.

The "I" refers to God or a king representing God. He is the speaker from verse two through verse six, and He is pleased to respond to the steel-faith of this saint. Using God as a speaker is a literary device, a kind of Theo-dictation or prosopopoeia. Such rhetoric is inspired by the Spirit to enhance the triumphant message of the psalm.

The King James Version falls short of the correct translation here. The thought in Hebrew is that God will take correct judicial action in His own timing as the following translations demonstrate:

New International Version

You say, "I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge with equity.

New Living Translation

God says, "At the time I have planned, I will bring justice against the wicked.

English Standard Version

"At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity.

New American Standard Bible

"When I select an appointed time, It is I who judge with equity.

God injures no man!

3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.

The word "dissolved" (*muwg*) could be translated "melt" or "teeters." *Muwg* is in the emphatic position. The ESV translates this nicely:

"When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars.

Selah"

A shaking earth is a metaphor for political upheaval and an unstable zeitgeist. Big problems call for acts of God, not acts of the state. This wording provides evidence the speaker is God.

When volcanoes roar, mountains tremble, sea levels rise, giant asteroids circle the heavens, tornadoes touch the earth, hurricanes drench the coast, tidal waves bash shorelines, celestial bodies threaten devastation, and when political tyrants threaten death and destruction, there is nothing to fear. God fortifies the pillars of the earth. It belongs to Him. God reigns! The LORD secures the foundations of the earth, and limits the powers of madmen. Therefore, "fret not thyself because of evildoers." (Psalm 37:1).

4 I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:

“I” is in the emphatic position.

The term “fools” and the “wicked” refer to criminal politicians and plausible psychopaths.

The command “deal not” is the Hebrew word “halal” from which we get the word “hallelujah” (praise the Lord). It means “to shine forth” or “to praise.” The adverb “not” negates “halal;” that is, God calls these fools to stop all their boasting power and direct the people to trust the LORD.

The second word “lift not” refers to “to exalt,” “to rise up,” or “to promote” one’s agenda. Politicians and judges seek to be a god that can control the world and mold it into their own image. The lesson here is that political leaders, in competition with true religion, seek the praises belonging to God for themselves.

God addresses political rulers and parliamentarians as fools, morons, birdbrains, blockheads, nitwits, madmen, tyrants, and psychopaths possessing an inflated view of their self-importance while strutting their power to change the world. “Change” is always the promise made by candidates. “Yes, we can,” boasted one American president. But, politicians do have as much power as they think they have (John 19:11).

The Lord orders these depraved, crazy-in-chief regales to come to their senses and to suppress their pride. This is necessary because most leaders live near the island of Utopia out of touch with reality.

But, things are not out of control, even in the most irritating times. The sovereign LORD God restrains these extremists and prevents them from wrecking humanity with their self-promoting, half-baked, rash political policies; that is, God limits the ambitions of these power-hoarders.

This thought is fully expressed in the next psalm, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (76:10).

5 Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff neck.

The word “horn” refers to the power of political will.

The term “stiff necked” refers to the unyielding pride and stubbornness of rulers — those responsible for the death, torture, and maltreatment of tens of thousands of individuals.

God commands these gasconades to control their tongues and to restrain their political swagger. Arrogant boasting within ear-shot of God is a form of insanity. Such hubris invites the lightening rod of God’s justice . . . and like Haman the Agagite, they will find themselves hanging from the gallows they planned for their political opponents.

6 For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.

The word “promotion” has a variety of implications: rising up, shining forth, lifting up, growth, spreading, increase in wealth, raise, lift, and set on high. Moreover, this term may refer to deliverance.

The Assyrians may be in mind here. In relation to Israel, deliverance will not come from the Medes (East), nor the Greeks (West), nor the Egyptians, Phoenicians, nor Arabians (South), nor from the north. Because of what they did to God's people, these statisticians would taste the bitter wine of God's judgment and then stagger like drunkards on a city wall.

The lesson here is that our hope is **not** in government, but in a right relationship with God.

A change in administrations seldom produces the prosperity promised by political candidates.

These rulers failed to learn the first rule of success: *be humble or stumble*. The hopers promise the rainbow but shortly into their administration the skies turn dark gray from the coal factories of burning greed.

The Psalmist Speaks

7 But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

"He putteth down one, and setteth up another" - "This one he humbles, and this he exalts" (Barnes).

"setteth" means "lift up" or "to promote" in the sense of success or status.

Whether we are talking about individual men or nations, God is sovereign. He is behind the processes that humble and honor men.

He chose Jacob and rejected Esau while still in the womb (Romans 9:13).

He demoted Moses in Egypt and then appointed him to be His prophet to humble Egypt (Exodus 2-5).

Consider God's appointment of Pharaoh: "For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth" (Romans 9:17).

He chose Nadab and Abihu to be His priests, and then removed them from being priests (Leviticus 10).

He demoted Saul, and He promoted David.

He humbled the family of Eli the priest, and appointed Samuel to the position of priest.

He promoted, humbled and restored Nebuchadnezzar to his throne; and raised up Cyrus to be His Persian messiah over Babylon (Daniel 4: Isaiah 45).

He humbled Vashti, and raised up Esther to be Queen of Persia (Esther).

He was the force behind the hanging of Haman, and the power behind the promotion of Mordecai (Esther).

He installed Pilate as governor of Judea in the time of Christ (John 19:10), and He removed Herod by sudden death (Acts 12).

Psalm 22:28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations.

Jeremiah 50:2 Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

The psalmist wants his readers to know that God is the Judge; that His seat is not vacant; that He never sleeps or takes a vacation; that He reigns; that men should not interpret His delay as abdication of authority or dereliction of duty.

The Lord Jesus Christ is exalted to the right hand of God and reigns now. He is King yesterday, today, and forever. His sovereign acts of judgment can be seen in history and does not wait for the arrival of some alleged future millennium. Empires rise and fall by His decree. Kings reign by His good pleasure. They end when God says, "Enough!" Syria was squashed by Assyria; Assyria by the Babylonians; the Babylonians by the Medes; the Medes by the Greeks; and, the Greeks by the Romans.

8 For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.

The psalmist instructs us through a metaphor – a Cup of Red Wine.

Red is the rich color of fire and blood. The very color of red implies vigor, danger, intensity, passion, anger, fury, and heat. Ripe red wine is a symbol of ambitious vengeance.

The word "mixture" refers to additives with a spicy pungent from nuanced herbs and delirium plants like peyote.

This red wine is not a Bordeaux blend Cabernet Sauvignon, but a ruby-red opiate that comes from a vineyard filled with gnarly old vines and hallucinogenic herbs. One sip leaves the inebriated naked of virtue and vulnerable to the steel sword of justice. This chalice is filled with a cocktail of judicial wrath eager to be poured out on seats of power for their shocking smugness and pompousness.

Moreover, the Cup of Red Wine is **not** for God's people, but for the wicked (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Who are these "wicked?" They are kings of the earth, presidents, congressmen, and judges who neglect God and arrogate to themselves wealth and power.

Because these political rulers rejected His feast at the table of grace, they will be dragged with chains to the Bench of Law and forced to drink the red wine of perfected justice – the wine of divine recompense foaming with vengeance mixed with fiery wrath and heated displeasure for the idolatry of kings, their blasphemies toward Heaven, and their cruelty towards men.

Take a look at the red wine God gave Nebuchadnezzar to drink.

Daniel 4:28-33 All this happened to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later, as the king was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon, he said, "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" Even as the words were on his lips, a voice came from heaven, "**This is what is decreed for you, King Nebuchadnezzar:** Your royal authority has been taken from you. You will be driven away from people and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes." Immediately what had been said about Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled. He was driven away from people and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

9 But I will declare for ever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

The "I" is that of the psalmist which could be King David as a newly installed king.

What a contrast! The faithful who adore the God of all grace, and who sing and proclaim the praises of God, stand in juxtaposition to the pompous potentates drunk with self-importance and self-determination – rulers who are destined to drink the red wine of God's staggering justice.

The title "God of Jacob" reminds the soul that God helped Jacob . . . that He is a God of grace . . . the God Who helps the weak . . . Who helps those abused by power-mongers.

"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13).

The believers sing like songbirds while the wicked moan in sorrow like Burmese cats. The righteous sing because grace has conquered their hearts; and, the wicked groan because they are conquered by the intoxicants of the red wine in the chalice handed to them by the Judge of All Men.

10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

This text would be better understood if it was prefaced with "who says" as the NIV translates the thought:

"who says, 'I will cut off the horns of all the wicked, but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up.'"

The verse ends with a summary: The wicked proud will be banned from the kingdom of God and will drink the Ripe Red Wine of God's Wrath in the fires of judgment; but, God's lambs will be exalted for they are destined to feast at the table of salvation in the kingdom of God.

If you have been seared by the hot steel of anti-Christian critics, Sing! Rejoice! Boast of your salvation! Your adversaries will have to drink the ruby hues of the red wine of Divine justice.

Rest, Soul, rest!

Psalm 76 - Hope in Political Turmoil

“Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”



Reviewing the headlines today is like reading the obituary of Christian causes.

Voters who appear to be suffering from traumatic brain disorders are electing criminal gangs into office. Immigrants swarm across the border like trails of ants searching for goodies left over after at an American

picnic.

Images of violence, murder, and riots fill the evening news. Communists, feminists, and Sodomites demand center stage in the American theater. Drag queens are invited to read books to children in school libraries. Woke America doesn't know the difference between males and females, between XY and XX chromosomes. Steak lovers are expected to give up eating meat in order not to offend soy-vegetarians. Crazy politicians are wearing double masks and threatening truthers with forced drug therapy. Warmongers in CONgress talk about surviving a nuclear war as if it like recovering from the common cold. Is there any hope?

Tares are among us — an enemy has done this . . . and, the problem is bigger than any one of us (Matthew 13:28).

Here is a psalm bursting with assurance that God has command of politicians in rebellion against His law-order. The psalmist gives us assurance that the lunatics in power are limited by the steel arm of God's sovereign power.

The background of this psalm is the Assyrian invasion of Jerusalem under Sennacherib circa 701 B.C. Before us are the lessons the songwriter wants us to learn.

Psalm 76:1-2 To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm or Song of Asaph.

The composer delivered this psalm to the Chief Musician after the Assyrian invasion into Judah during the reign of Hezekiah. It is called a “Song of Asaph,” the father of Hezekiah's secretary (2 Kings 18:18).

A poem set to music, this liturgical sonnet knuckles down on the dominion of God over tyrants and their imperialistic agendas.

Like a war-time correspondent, the psalmist publishes his triumphant report:

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.

Do you want to know God? Where should you begin your search? Where can you find Him? China? Tibet? India? Mecca? Not hardly.

The grand truth of this psalm is that God can only be known by revelation . . . that He has revealed Himself to men . . . that ancient Hebrews were the steward of this light.

The search for God begins and ends with the record of the LORD's dealings with Abraham and his descendants? God is known in Israel, and nowhere else . . . until this era the birth of the true Israel of God (Christ) . . . and His representatives, the church.

[Note: Do not confuse modern Ashkenazi so-called "Israel" (fake Jews) with ancient Israel, a polity of Hebrews.)

The adjective "great" emphasizes the wonder of the manifestation of God among the Hebrews and the reverence they had for His Name.

(Ancient) Israel became His station to telegraph the knowledge of God to the nations. While all people on earth have access to the knowledge of creation, only this nation became the trustees of His special revelation to mankind.

The composer gives four metonyms to identify the locus of the knowledge of God: Judah, Israel, Salem, and Zion.

No man will find God in a Tibetan cave or some Buddhist Pagoda in Asia. But, He can be found in the history and theology of the Hebrews . . . and their NT counterparts.

The name "Israel" was the name given to Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes. Judah was the ruling tribe with its capital in Jerusalem a.k.a. "Salem" which means "peace" — the ancient name for Jerusalem. Zion is the high hill in Jerusalem—the place where Solomon built the temple. Zion is simply a metonym for the temple or the presence of God in the capital city.

The Glory was pleased to dwell among his people in that nation from 1440 BC to 586 BC, and in and through the personal visitation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament era whose body was the temple of God (John 2:19-20).

3 There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

"There" refers to the landscape of Jerusalem.

With blazing fury, the Assyrians smashed the nations crushing opposing armies in the Levant. When they advanced to the gates of Jerusalem, knees knocked and teeth rattled. The veteran Assyrian infantry seemed undefeatable. Controlling all the roads, they shut Jerusalem in like "a caged bird." Their breath smelled foul and death wafted through the air.

The psalmist wasted no time in rifling his message to the people:

"There" at Jerusalem, God broke the arrows . . bow . . . shield . . . sword. . . and the battle! The word "brake" is a Piel verb intensifying the meaning that God "crushed" and "smashed" the proud Assyrian Army.

The story of the Assyrian invasion and the events surrounding their defeat is described in 2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chronicles 28-32; and Isaiah 37-39.

In this account, God's destroying angel massacred 185,000 Assyrian soldiers during the night. When sunlight kissed the eastern walls of Jerusalem, the watchmen saw nothing but corpses in the Assyrian camp (Isaiah 37-38). Instead of being ransacked, Hezekiah's people plundered the Assyrians.

4 Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey.



Stunned by God's work, the psalmist burst into praise.

A few days before the smashing victory, the refugees in Jerusalem shook like leaves in the wind while considering the power of the invaders. No doubt the headlines in the "Jerusalem Post" read "City of David Faces Genocide By Assyrians." A dark cloud of negativity settled on Jerusalem as the people faced the pragmatic reality that the greatest army on earth had surrounded Jerusalem eager to kill, capture, and plunder.

The "mountain of prey" refers to the territory belonging to the "Lion of Judah." It was in the Lion's killing fields

wherein the hunter became the hunted; the victim became the victor; and the predator became the prey.

After the crushing defeat of Sennacherib's army, the nation stood in awe of the glory and excellence of their God.

The psalmist teaches us a lesson that we should walk by faith and not by sight; that is, to stand confident in His power and grace even when we hear the thunder of war-rumors, soldiers marching, and drums pounding. Wait on the Lord, and barricade rashness and impetuosity.

5 The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands.

The "stouthearted" refers to the impressive Assyrian army.

"They have slept their sleep" publishes their devastating defeat.

"None of the men of might have found their hands" describes the helplessness of the Assyrian troops to fight against an angel of God.

When the fury of God's death angel struck the republican guard of Sennacherib's army, a strange stupor seized them so they couldn't even grasp their swords to defend themselves against the destroyer. Like bar-room drunks, they staggered through their tents unable to find their weapons . . . and, even if they possessed a sword, what good would it do against an angelic Spirit?

6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

Chariots and horses on those ancient battlefields were like an infantry facing a German Leopard Tank with sticks and stones.

God did not stop the Assyrian meat grinder from leaving Nineveh, or stop them on the killing fields of Phoenicia, Syria, Egypt, or Moab.

But, when they came to the gates of Jerusalem, the sovereign LORD God of Israel issued His command. Enough! Like the Egyptian charioteers were buried at the Red Sea, Assyrian corpses littered the treed landscape around Jerusalem like masses of poisoned ants.

When secular man seems to have gained the upper hand in the battle between good and evil, the Christian must remember that God is sovereign and that the wicked are crunched like crackers under His feet.

7 Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

There is a classic riddle that asks, "What is black and blue and red all over?" In our mind appears the loser of an Irish bare knuckle street fight.

What is the answer to the question, "Who may stand when once Thou art angry?" The only fitting answer is . . . "No one!"

The pronoun "Thou" is used twice in the Hebrew making it emphatic: "You, and only You, O Lord, are to be feared!" We don't fear man, we fear Christ. We don't fear the condemnation of government; we fear the condemnation of God.

Barnes: The repetition of the word "thou" is emphatic, as if the mind paused at the mention of God, and remained in a state of reverence, repeating the thought.

It is an error to publish how great evil has become in society instead of how great "God is in the generation of the righteous" (Psalm 14:5).

Instead of slogging through the swamp of despair in the dark everglades of politics, we tread the highway of righteousness illuminated by the promises of God.

Instead of focusing on the muscle mass of swamp critters, let us gaze at the authority and power of the Lion of Judah Who commands victories for Jacob in His killing fields (Psalm 44:4).

Considering the might of the enemy instead of contemplating the historical conquests of Christ does nothing to increase confidence associated with faith. Faith does **not** lead to victory, it IS the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4).

"Now faith IS the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

God is more interested in our study of Him than in our assessment of the strength of our opponents. Declaring the might of the enemy is to have more faith in the enemy than in the power of Christ!

To fear the wicked is to have more faith in man than in Christ. The only fear permitted in the Christian life is fear of Him who has the power to cast into hell (Luke 12:5).

God limits the power of the wicked (v. 10); unbelief limits the power of God.

The reason for this fear is the anger of God, an ominous virtue that demands expression against the unrighteousness of man.

Study God. Know God. Believe God. Those who challenge His authority will end up being black and blue and red all over.

8 Thou didst cause judgment 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.

Judgment (diyn) refers to God's intervention into history to punish the Assyrian troops with plunder on their minds and murder in their hearts. The roaring discharge of Divine justice pierced every ear. The earth shuddered. All stood at attention stunned by the devastation of unleashed anger on the Assyrians.

Attributing human characteristics (fear) to the earth is a figure of speech called personification.

The "meek of the earth" are the quiet souls in the land that do no harm. When dark clouds gather and naked fear invades souls because of the waves of injustice crashing on the shoreline, Christians know that when their Captain gives the order and says "enough is enough," the heavens are silent and the earth is mute.

The verb "arose" is an anthropomorphism alluding to the fact men wake up from a sleep. Figuratively speaking, when our Captain awakes and shouts His command, the roaring sea of maritime powers gives way to peace and calm.

10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Which of us hasn't felt utterly exasperated after listening to the evening news? The world is dangerously over populated with reporters that slant the news toward their defeated humanistic perspective. The depravity of politicians seems to have no boundaries. Psychopaths seem to be in charge of powerful Western countries. We know there is a limit to intelligence, but there doesn't seem to be a limit to the madness of God's enemies.

"Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe." (Albert Einstein)

"Power is okay, and stupidity is usually harmless. Power and stupidity together are dangerous". (Patrick Rothfuss, *The Name of the Wind*)

"Never argue with stupid people, they will drag you down to their level and then beat you with experience." (Mark Twain)

Is there an anchor for the soul that can keep us together while lunatics captain the ship?

The conjunction "surely" (kee) announces the main lesson of the psalm—a detail about the sovereignty of God, that if grasped, can cause us to experience calm in the midst of political storms.

The phrase "wrath of man" refers to all the insane, imperial ambitions of politicians and social engineers.

Not all psychopaths are behind bars. Maniacs are in power and hold key positions in the apparatus of government institutions. Madmen run for office. Voting fails. Money talks. Justice broken. The status quo in the hands of unaccountable bureaucrats makes ordinary citizens feel as helpless as ants to stop the elephant stampede of lunacy thundering across the land.

“shall praise thee” (todah) means “to throw up the hands.” Ellicott says, “Possibly we should render, *‘and those who remain from their wrath shall celebrate a festival,’* since the suggested emendation is the word used in that sense.”

The Cambridge Bible adds, “All rebellion against God’s will must in the end redound to God’s glory: it serves to set His sovereignty in a clearer light” ([Exodus 9:16](#)).

The Pulpit Commentary considers man’s wrath “shall give occasion for great deeds on God’s part – deeds which will bring him praise and honour.”

The word “restrain” in Hebrew means “to fasten one’s belt” or “to gird” with a sash (Exodus 12:11; 29:9). God restrains these nutcases. Like guard dogs, they are on a leash.

Benson: “thou shalt put it on as an ornament, which the girdle was; thou shalt adorn thyself with it as a conqueror adorns himself with the spoils of his enemies.”

Barnes: “It is not that there was anything in the wrath itself, or in their plans or intentions, that was in itself “adapted” to honor God; but that it was overruled by him, so that he took “occasion” from it to display his own character.”

Timothy, in his battle against heresiarchs in Ephesus, faced “madmen” (anoia) like the sorcerers, Jannes and Jambres, Pharaoh’s magicians. See 2 Timothy 3:9-10. In this passage Paul assures his son in the faith “they will make no further progress;” that is, there is a limit to what these lunatics can accomplish because God restrains them.

The great question for the godly is, “How much evil must these tyrants do before God shackles them?”

The answer is, “just enough;” that is, these belligerents are not capable of carrying out all their wicked schemes against innocent people. God limits the plans of those intent on world dominion.

The term “remainder of wrath” refers to the frustrated devices of ambitious politicians — evil plans they cannot legislate — cannot mandate — schemes and dreams they are precluded from executing while in office.

The trusting Christian is not in a panic because he knows that God has these devils on a chain. These criminals that appear to be unrestrained in their folly will be used for the glory and praise of God.

The problem with man is not something from without, but from within.

Jeremiah 17:9 “the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?”

No man knows the depth of his own wickedness. No man is as evil as he can be because God restrains evil.

And in our story, the might of Sennacherib and his army fell as corpses in that ancient theater in order to demonstrate the crushing, bone-breaking power of the Lion of Judah.

The invasion of the Assyrians to Jerusalem and their stunning slaughter resulted in praise to the LORD; their retreat from Jerusalem demonstrated how God restrains the wrath of man.

Now we come to the main application of the psalm.

11 Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.

Since these heads of state are bridled, and God is the only One to be feared, believing men should fear God and obey Him Only! Godly men feed faith and starve doubt; proclaim the power of God and scoff at the illusory strength of rebels.

The psalmist calls upon God's people to stay the course; to keep their vows to Him; to not be unraveled by the lunacy of these political clowns . . . to not retreat out of fear . . . and, to stand up for righteousness.

12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes: he is terrible to the kings of the earth.

The psalm ends with a great promise. The word "princes" refers to politicians and civil rulers.

The Hebrew word for "cut off" means "to lop off" like a vinedresser prunes a vine (Leviticus 25:5; 11). It is the first word in the sentence, the emphatic position, assuring us tyrants will be pruned.

The Hebrew word "terrible" (yaw rey) is translated "phobeo" in the LXX meaning the LORD is the fear of kings. An evil prince with standing armies is no match for an offended God.

The psalmist leaves us with a promise. Political leaders like Lenin and Stalin who seem so unrestrained by empathy or guilt, and those modern political leaders that are driven by unrestrained pity to spend a nation's resources trying to solve all the world's problems, shall be "cut off;" that is, God will terminate their ambitions and bring them to an end!!

Just as the LORD God was terrible to the Assyrian army, He will be terrible to modern rulers. He is to be feared because He has them ALL on a leash. He can defeat their imperial ambitions. And, he will subject their evil plans to His will. He will cut down the antagonists and destroy them forever. It is not God's will that humanistic regimes succeed. Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Mao Tse Tung, Pol Pot, Stalin, Idi Amin, Saddam Hussein and their dictatorial ambitions are dead.

These mighty monarchs that thunder on earth for a time have a *terminus ad quem*, but the kingdom of God shall endure forever. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

Onward Christian soldiers, onward!

Forget being “safe.” We live in a maximum liability universe where living life involves risks!
Don’t leave the battlefield. Be true. Be strong. Be free. Take risks. Believe God.

Psalm 77 - Lessons from a Sleepless Soul

The Man with God Problems

"In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore (yad) ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted."

Before us is a hymn written by a psalmist so troubled he could not sleep or speak.

It is a lesson for generations to come on how troubled souls can find rest and peace from barking dogs of doubt and storms of unbelief that threaten the faith-confidence of afflicted saints.

Psalm 77: 1 (To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of Asaph.)

Twelve psalms are credited to Asaph. Acquainted with suffering, this composer's musical style often touched the minor key.

"Jeduthan" is the name of a Levite, the chief musician.

This psalm shows the author as a true saint feeling the heat as sparks fly from God sharpening the man's steel faith on the grind stone of His promises.

I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.

Like many psalms, the psalmist introduces the conclusion of his quest first. God heard my prayer! What success!

But, this is not where the composer began his pilgrimage.

2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore (yad) ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.

"The day of trouble" comes to all men.

The Hebrew word for trouble (tsarah) means "narrow," "stress," or "distress."

We are not told what kind of trouble knocked on his door. Maybe it was the wolf of want, or the lions of lust, or the silver gulls of sickness, or the foxes of famine, or the cranes of a corrupt government howling for a piece of the man. Whatever it was, the fierce-burden weighed heavy on his feeble soul. His legs buckled and he collapsed to the ground.

The word "sore" (yad) should be translated "hand." The author is not addressing his painful burden as much as he is addressing his prayerful stance before the throne.

Luther translated it, "My hand is stretched out at night."

The psalmist folded his hands in prayer, and he did not relax his vice grip on God the entire night — and “ceased not.”

“And refused to be comforted” means he resisted all trite, utopian clichés that men offer to comfort the distressed; that is, he waited on God for a remedy that would deliver his soul from the fear stalking his faith.

3 I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.

Some translators have tried to soften the bluntness of this text by translating it as, “When I am troubled, I will remember God.” But, the KJV gives the true idea: thinking about God enlarged his troubles. Selah!

In addressing his problems, God was at the eye of his hurricane. He tried to run the race set before him, but Providence handed him a sack of bricks to carry, and the man didn’t have the strength to put one foot in front of the other.

Sweet thoughts about Jesus usually quench a pilgrim’s thirst, but this psalmist experienced chronic fatigue and nail biting anxiety thinking about theology.

His problem was not with men, but with a sovereign God who ordained his troubles.

Possibly, he wondered why a God of love would give him bitter herbs to poison his soul; or why a God of wisdom handed him tangled trials to unravel; or why this all-powerful God did not prevent the predators from stalking his soul in the first place; or why this God of Light abandoned him in subterranean darkness; or why the God of riches seemed like a stingy, grasping, penny-pinching, cheapskate.

Spiritual Novocain like “God is in control” or “everything will turn out alright” only wearied the mind of this mature pilgrim.

The best of men who study the Bible find themselves naked of hope while locked in a dark cellar questioning the love, wisdom, and power of God. Forced on his buckled knees with hands cuffed to God’s promises, many a Christian has had to wait for the Sun to shine and for God to unlock the doors of his stinkin’ prison.

4 Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.

The stabbing pain in his soul found no comfort in the sugar-pill placebos offered by spiritual fraudsters.

This was not a paltry inconvenience, but a bone-crushing trial that robbed him of rest. His body begged for sleep, but God’s sentinels kept him awake.

Sleepless and speechless, this believer stuttered trying to put two sensible words together to make a complete sentence.

His prayers resemble more of a sob than a speech; more of a cry than a coherent conversation; more of a disjointed groan from a pauper than a discourse from a prince.

Words fail the man who feels disappointed with God. Mystical matters make men mute. While strenuous circumstances stretch men's faith; and, it is the silence of the sovereign God that scourges the soul.

5 I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.

Sleepless and speechless, all this sullen saint could do was to lift up his heavy eyelids and reflect on the history of redemption.

Troubles are good if they drive us to truth (amet) — the Aleph and Tav of knowledge. Tired travelers can often find relief from present troubles by reviewing the trails other saints have trodden. Yesteryear's light can become today's lamp.

6 I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.

Sleepless and speechless, the psalmist's weary mind drifted toward the songs that lifted his soul out of sorrows that battered his ship in past storms. In his darkness, he couldn't utter a word in prayer, but he could set his compass by the starlight of Scripture.

7 Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? 8 Is his mercy 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.

Now we get to the substance of the hymn writer's sorrows. Like an old rag doll in the attic, the man felt "cast off forever."

Hearing the barking dogs of doubt yapping doom in the darkness, the psalmist felt disowned by the LORD — "favorable no more?" The Hebrew word for "favor" is the Hiphil imperfect verb of *ratsah*. The Hebrew verb has to do with cause and effect of birth, productivity, prosperity, and fruitfulness. The use of the imperfect tells us the psalmist faced an uncertain future.

The first word in Hebrew is a long word that contains the root "forever" (olam). As his difficulties lingered like a long winter, he wondered why a loving, God would hand him a sack of bricks to carry on his journey to the celestial city.

Collecting his thoughts, he marshaled a series of questions to his Commander. Though covered in a shroud of doubt, his questions reveal a mustard seed of faith.

God seemed to have rejected him for a season, but was His cold-shoulder permanent?

The Lord pardoned the psalmist in the past, but had the well of mercy run dry, "has God forgotten to be gracious?"

What man has not felt that his sins are so great that he has exhausted the love and mercy of God . . . that there is nothing left in God's storehouse of virtues but anger and justice?

10 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.

By “infirmity” the psalmist is not referring to a physical weakness, but to the mental treadmill of trying to understand the theology of Providence. This matter clogged the gears in his mind; that is, this theme was bigger than his capacity to resolve the contradictions that agitated his soul.

Remembering “his right hand” refers to reflections on the power of God. In Isaiah 53, we learn the right arm of His power is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

Having muddled through his query, the psalmist set his mind on the task of remembering redemptive history — specifically the works of God in delivering His people from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1-15).

Exodus 3:7 And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction (only: poverty) of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters (nagas; tax collectors); for I know their sorrows (ma'kob: pain);

The phrase “wonders of old” comes from the Hebrew word *palah* which is first translated “hard things” in Genesis 18:14, “Is anything too hard (palah) for the Lord;” that is, the psalmist sets his mind to remember how the LORD tackles “hard things” — that He is the God of the impossible — the God that could lift his load.

Perhaps he remembered how God took childless Abraham and gave him priceless Isaac; or took Jacob from being a penniless to being prosperous ; or took Joseph as a prisoner and made him a governor.

The Hebrew word for “meditate” is *hagah* which means “to moan, groan, growl, muse, or meditate.” It is the same word used for a lion growling over his prey in Isaiah 31:4 and Psalm 1:2.

Here is a saint chewing on truth and growling over God’s Word. When is the last time your spouse has heard a lion roaring over the Bible in your home?

13 Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?

The word “sanctuary” (kodosh) in this text should be translated “holy;” that is, “your way is holy.” (the word for “sanctuary” is *miqdash* (Psalm 73:17) and not *kadosh*. The word *kodosh* means “holy,” “separate,” and “apart.”

In going down memory lane, the psalmist remembers Exodus 3 and the intriguing story of Moses at the burning bush. There, God spoke to Moses,

“Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

The story of redemption from slavery in Egypt began when Bedouin Moses encountered the holiness of God. There he learned about “holy ground.”

In typical Eastern custom, guests showed their respect for the host by taking off their shoes before entering the home, the Bedouin camel-hide tent, the “house of hair.”

Likewise, the LORD required Moses to honor his holiness by removing the sandals from his feet.

Before Isaiah entered his ministry, he heard the seraphim cry, “holy, holy, holy is the LORD God Almighty” (6:1-3). Holiness is so important, it is the only attribute of God that is mentioned three times in a row.

Deliverance begins when desperate men understand (stand under) the holiness of God.

After Moses saw the holiness of God, the nation saw the greatness of God!

Pharaoh asked the most important question ever asked by a prince, “Who is the LORD that I should obey him? Pharaoh learned the LORD was great in judgment. Israel learned that He was great in love, in wisdom, and in power.

14 Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. 15 Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

The psalmist acknowledges that God did the “hard things” by judging Egypt, breaking the will of Pharaoh, and protecting the Israelites from the Nile plagues. Redemption from Egypt was by the blood of the Passover Lamb (the price of redemption) and by power wherein the muscular arm of God split the Red Sea delivering Israel and drowning the armies of Pharaoh.

“Declaring thy strength to the people” includes not only the Israelites, but the people in the surrounding nations. The fear of God went before them; that is, the stunning news knocked the wind out of the Canaanites before Israel ever crossed the Jordan River.

He defines “Thy People” as “the sons of Jacob and Joseph.” A reminder of the breach between these tribes with a slight hint that God redeems “the good, the bad, and the ugly” among us.

16 The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.

The psalmist now contemplates one of the hard things God did in the exodus. Trapped between Pharaoh’s chariots and the Red Sea, the LORD split the sea into two terrifying towers of death, dried up the ocean floor, and led ALL his people out of Egypt on dry land. And, to everyone’s astonishment, the Judge of All Men collapsed the twin towers crushing Pharaoh’s army. The floating corpses touching the shore carved a message in the sand the nation would never forget: “the LORD is a man of war” (Exodus 15:3).

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 heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

This text may refer to the staggering events at the Red Sea or more likely the shock-and-awe of the electrical storm at Mt. Sinai that preceded the thundering downpour of holiness in the LORD's presentment of the Ten Commandments.

19 Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

"Thy way" refers to the power of God in parting tons of water at the Red Sea and leading his people between the towers of death on dry ground. Afterward, He covered His tracks under the roaring waves so they could not be traced. God's ways are vast like the ocean, and like the ocean His ways cannot be fully discovered.

20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Leaving the lightening judgments in Egypt, the violent surf at the Red Sea, and the crackling thunder at Mt. Sinai, the psalmist thoughts shifted to the pastoral scenes of quiet country life. His thoughts drifted from an ocean-splitting, War-Lord Redeemer to that of a wise, tender Shepherd leading and feeding his flock (Psalm 23).

This mighty sea-splitting Savior was also a gentle Shepherd Who employed the Prophet Moses and Aaron the High Priest to lead His children through the hostile Arabian Desert.

This psalm begins with the psalmist fretting in a storm of conflict, but ends with the psalmist finding rest and hope in God's pasture — not because his circumstances changed, but because his soul reclined on three pillows: the love of God (in Egypt), the power of God (at the Red Sea), and the wisdom of God (at Mt. Sinai).

Likewise, our souls can find rest at Calvary, the climax of his love, power, and wisdom. Have God problems? Consider His love for you at the cross.

Psalm 78 - The Apostasy of Ephraim

“They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law.”

This is a psalm of Asaph, a Levite — possibly a musical family within the tribe of Levi. It was composed after he carefully considered why the Northern Ten Tribes were defeated and carried away captive to Assyria.

The psalm was composed after the time of David . . . after the civil war and political division in 1 Kings 12. The nation split over the issue of taxation, but this political issue was only the fruit of a deeper sin — the lust of the king for shekels, and the idolatry of the north.

The background of this psalm is Ephraim’s revolt against Rehoboam and the formation of a new government with its golden calf worship erected at Dan and Bethel; that is, the apostasy of the ten northern tribes called “Israel,” “Samaria,” or “Ephraim.”

The purpose of the psalm is to warn the nation of apostasy. Apostasy is the deliberate, willful denunciation of the faith. Thus, this psalm exposes backsliders contemplating desertion from Christ and the gospel. It establishes the fundamental argument for being faithful to the Lord and for avoiding unbelief, complaining, and backsliding.

Secondarily, it shows us why a nation (or church) must defend its fundamental principles. If leaders do not protect the country’s cardinal values, it will drift into the sea of idealism, humanism, utopianism, communism, feminism, and equalitarianism. All offense and no defense is a loser’s strategy. Ephraim had bows and arrow for its military might, but they dropped their shields when it came to defending the nation’s religious base.

The value of the psalm is that it explains why God rejected Ephraim (the Ten Tribes). It does not tell us why He was pleased to choose Judah to lead the nation in its theocracy. The reason God chose Jerusalem is wrapped up in the eternal promises of God and not the virtue of Judah.

Thus, this psalm contains the most important, fundamental lesson Christians can ever learn.

Asaph’s Call to Remain Steadfast to the Faith

Psalm 78:1 <Maschil of Asaph.> Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

See notes below on the word “maschil” which refers to wise instruction.

“Give ear” is a command by a king or ruler or priest, or even Asaph to stand at attention and pay attention. What he says has the force of law because his instructions are grounded on the Word of God.

2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

Asaph's wisdom reaches back into antiquity; and, his method of conveying wisdom was by storytelling.

3 Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

This tried and trusted wisdom was handed down from generation to generation by wise fathers.

4 We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.

Asaph speaks for the people and renews the commitment of his generation to be faithful in passing on the praise (gospel) of the LORD to future generations. Indeed, God will strengthen and purify His people for this very purpose.

The Lord's Command to Be a Theocentric Nation

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:

"testimony" refers to the two tablets, the Ten Commandments, in the Ark of the Covenant, a "law in Israel."

"Jacob" is another name for Israel. The "law" was given not as a mediator between God and man, but as a rule to produce a happy, safe, productive society governed by the rule of law.

The bedrock of a nation's strength is Christ-centered families.

God's purpose is to redeem men in every nation of the world because He is not willing that any people group in the world be without hope of salvation. Consequently, Israel was His beach head or base of gospel operation to reach the world with the good news of Who He is and what He had done from men through His Son at Calvary.

"And appointed a law in Israel" – The LORD gave the law to Israel, an act of Sovereignty and love, to the Hebrews on Mt. Sinai. Their laws were not man-made statutes, but authoritative rules for all people. There are few things more derelict than the notion that Christian men are at liberty to choose the law which they will serve. The Word of God, not the Constitution, is the highest law in the land. The Ten Commandments and relevant case law is a direct reflection of the character of God.

The word "testimony" is a reference to the "Tabernacle of Testimony" which contained the "Ark of Testimony" which contained the two tablets which were called "the Testimony" – the law which was the objective testimony of God's character.

Exodus 25:21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony (the Ten Commandments on tablets) that I shall give thee.

Exodus 25:22 And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony,

Exodus 38:21 This is the sum of the tabernacle, even of the tabernacle of testimony . . .

“that they should make them known to their children” — The purpose of God is to create a godly generation and this is primarily accomplished through the family. It is the duty of every parent, every Christian, and every church to teach and train their children in the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His law-order.

6 That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:

It is the duty of every generation to pass down the history, wisdom, and maxims of law to secure the spiritual prosperity of their children and grandchildren.

Note that when liberals talk about the need for change they are advancing rebellion against God’s law and the principles that make nations great; that is “change” is the term used to advance a secular revolution . . . and, fools fall for it. “Change” introduces a movement towards the gods of chaos so legal anarchist and political subversives can make man into their own image. The first building block of revolution is “separation of church and state” so they can build society on their religion of feminism, humanism, secularism, and the other religious isms without calling it a religion.

The hope of the world is not in children, but in parents with an ambition to train their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

7 That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:

A generation that builds society on “hope in God” exhibits health: “We are endowed by our Creator with unalienable rights”, but a society that builds its society on man commits suicide.

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 steadfast with God.

Israel’s history contains a rebellious segment, and Asaph exhorts his generation to reject the gods of chaos for self-evident reasons.

Consider the Apostasy of Ephraim

Refusal to Defend Their Brethren

9 The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

“Ephraim” is a hypemnym for the northern tribes a.k.a. Samaria.

“Turned back in the day of battle” – that is, these rebel tribes refused to do their duty to help the nation to defend itself against political enemies . . . and . . . to defend its lawful, theocratic government in Jerusalem.

“being armed, and carrying bows” informs us that Ephraim failed to join the national battle to defend the solidarity of the nation not for lack of military might, but because of willful rebellion. Secondly, “bows” may imply the nation trusted in its own military resources to defend itself, and that they felt no need to rely upon the unseen powers of the living God to protect them.

Moreover, they refused to defend the nation’s religious foundation or the nation’s constitution formed at Mt. Sinai. Not only did Ephraim not defend Israel’s theocracy, it did not rally to defend the nation’s theology. Ephraim revolted, and then liberalized the northern tribes by tolerating and practicing Baalism in Dan, Samaria, and Bethel. Baalism, the belief that the State was the source of law and that the highest good was to die for the State was the State religion of neighboring countries. Baalism is a hypernym for State worship, emperor worship, patriotism to the State regardless of its character.

That is, Ephraim did not stand by their brethren, or assist them in defending their country. They refused to defend their brethren, and gave themselves to their commercial interest; that is, they willfully and intentionally declined to join with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin in defense of the nation’s lawful government.

Unfaithfulness and Breach of Trust

10 They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;

Ephraim’s political revolt was more serious because it involved rebellion against God . . . a breach of the covenant . . . a breaking away from their contract and agreement to obey — an act of infidelity, disloyalty, betrayal, perfidy, and treachery.

Willful Forgetfulness

11 And forgot his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.

“forgot” does not mean Ephraim casually failed to remember the LORD and what He did for them, but that they deliberately, intentionally, and maliciously refused to read, cite, quote or practice the law; that is, they willfully enacted a policy of separation of church and state. They revolted from the faith and set a bold new course of self-reliance for the nation which ended up in its demolition by Assyria.

When people are driven by lusts, they develop amnesia.

Americans would do well to remember the apostasy of the Supreme Court in 1947: The Separation of Church and State: *Everson v. Board of Education* — the opening of Pandora’s Box: teen pregnancy, abortion, pornography, feminism, Sodomy, and transvestism.

Consider the unreasonableness of Ephraim’s rebellion in light of god’s goodness.

Asaph rehearses the marvelous history of the nation, its deliverance from Egypt, and their treacherous journey through the wilderness in order to expose the unreasonableness, thanklessness, and ungratefulness of the ten tribes.

In this section, Asaph uncloaks the senseless treachery of Ephraim — an unforgiveable sin. Furthermore, the psalmist sheds light on Ephraim's apostasy and how they deserted the faith like the murmuring unbelievers did in the wilderness after the exodus.

This section contains a list of marvelous things God did for the Hebrews and a list of the senseless, illogical rebellion of the ten tribes.

Consider the Unreasonableness of Apostasy

12 Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan.

Ephraim apostatized from the faith despite God's judgment on Egypt and His preservation of Israel.

13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as an heap.

Ephraim apostatized from the faith despite God's miracles at the Red Sea.

14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.

Ephraim apostatized from the faith despite His gracious guidance by the pillar of fire at night and the cloud by day.

15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths.

Ephraim apostatized from the faith despite His miracle of providing water out of the rock.

16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

Ephraim apostatized from the faith despite God's abundant provision to supply of water out of the rock at Horeb for two million people and their livestock.

Consider the Nature of the Apostasy

Sin and Rebellion

17 And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the most High in the wilderness.

The word "sin" (chata) means "to miss the mark."

The word "provoking" (marah) means "to be contentious," "to resist in a way that disturbs His peace. It is the same word used referring to the "Water of Marah" (Exodus 15).

Tempting God

18 And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

“tempted God” is much like what like the whining of a toddler that cries until it gets what it wants.

19 Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

The key here is the word “against.” They unreasonably challenge the powers of the Creator. The One Who created the heavens and the earth surely has the power to provide “a table” in the wilderness.

Doubt, Unbelief, Complaint, and Blasphemy

20 Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

Again, they challenged the powers of the Creator. The One Who can do the impossible caused water to pour out of a rock. Likewise, He buried the people in three feet of quail.

“A wind set in motion by GOD swept quails in from the sea. They piled up to a depth of about three feet in the camp and as far out as a day’s walk in every direction. All that day and night and into the next day the people were out gathering the quail—huge amounts of quail; even the slowest person among them gathered at least sixty bushels.” (Numbers 11:41-35)

21 Therefore the LORD heard this, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

God cannot only provide water out of rock, His wrath can cause rocks to burn (Numbers 11:1-4).

Unbelief and Distrust

22 Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

Israel saw mighty miracles, not because of their faith, but because of their unbelief and stubbornness of heart. A man can believe and see miracles – for his joy and edification, or he can whine and see God’s provision – a result which shrivels the soul (Psalm 106:15).

Consider the Unreasonableness of Unbelief and Apostasy

Stubbornness Despite God’s Goodness

23 Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,

He provided rain in the desert; that is, God has solutions to impossible problems.

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25 Man did eat angels’ food: he sent them meat to the full.

He rained manna from heaven.

26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. 27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: 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: for he gave them their own desire;

He provided the people quail to eat – so much so the quail covered the camp three feet high.

Lust and Greed

30 They were not estranged from their lust. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, 31 The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel.

“not estranged from their lust” means they were not separated from their sins. The sad result of experiencing the miracles without faith is that these wonders did not motivate the people to forsake their sinful lusts. God’s testings are designed to improve the man, to separate Him from his sins, and to increase his confidence in the Lord.

The GREATEST TRAGEDY in life is to go through troubles and not be separated from your lusts; that is, not to reap a spiritual benefit from your trials.

“The great tragedy of the Christian life is not that we suffer, but that we fail to profit from our pressures” – Augustine.

For example: It would be stupid for a man to carry a hundred pounds of rocks up a hill and then demand that God level the mount. An intelligent man would take the rocks out of his backpack, and then continue his climb. Likewise, a pious Christian going through affliction will separate from his sins and continue his course.

More Sin and Unbelief

32 For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

Unable to place their faith and their precious all into the hands of Almighty, they continued to sin . . . even after seeing these mighty wonders.

Consider Their Response to God’s Judgment

Forty Years of Death and Trouble

33 Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

God tested Israel ten times; and, each time they failed the test. Consequently, “their days did he consume in vanity.”

Benson says it this way, “In tedious and fruitless marches hither and thither, sometimes forward and sometimes backward . . .” that is, they failed to reap an eternal benefit from their pain and suffering.

34 When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. 35 And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

The “they” refers to the survivors of God’s judgments. Only when they saw the cold face of death, did they turn and seek His face.

What is about men that only a near death experience can cause them to cast off their sins and seek Him?

Men forget God until they need Him. In this case, He was pleased to be their Redeemer and their rock of Salvation.

Duplicity and Hypocrisy

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

“Nevertheless” is a translation of the Hebrew Vav . . . and indicator that over time the people hid behind a hypocritical mask.

“flatter him” is a Piel verb implying intense deception and duplicity; that is, they “talked the walk, but failed to walk the talk. In modern vernacular, they became liars instead of truth tellers; deceivers instead of doers; retractable instead of reverential.

Disloyal, Treacherous, Faithless, Perfidious

37 For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.

The word “right” means “firm, steadfast, or fixed.” – the opposite of being “steadfast” or dutiful to the obligations of the covenant.

Betrayal in light of His Goodness

38 But he, being full of compassion, 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 For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

While these tribulations revealed the hard heart of man, they also revealed the tenderness of God.

“full of compassion” is a Piel verb; that is, this is an excellent translation revealing that the Creator-Judge is more prone to care than to scorn, forgive than to condemn, to bless than to blame.

Contention and Intentional Rebellion

40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert!

The words “prove” and “grieve” inform us that the people’s behavior touched the heart of God in a negative way. God is a sentient Being. His heart is not a Sherman tank nor is it made of steel. He has feeling and emotions. He was hurt and injured by what Israel said and did.

41 Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

The word “limited” (tavah) means “to pain, or to grieve.” It is translated “scrabble” in 1 Samuel 21:14 – a reference to David departing from his sentient reasoning and acting like a madman.

The English word “limited” means “a restriction on the size or amount of something permissible or possible.”

How can you limit the Almighty? These people grieved God and limited His power by turning away from His will and doing the opposite of what pleases Him.

Willful forgetfulness of His Judgments on Egypt and His Salvation of Israel

42 They remembered not his hand, nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

“his hand” refers to His redemptive power and works – a reference to the miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea.

“not” negates the verb “remember” (zakar) and it is the first word in the sentence meaning that it is emphatic.

How could these people not remember His power in Egypt and at the Red sea? The answer is that they were so fixed on feeding their lusts; they could not or would not reflect on God’s love for them or on His power. When people are addicted to their sins, amnesia sets in like a London fog.

From verse 44-56, the psalmist recalls the mighty miracles of his hand that these people forgot.

Most of us would remember rivers turning to blood, millions of frogs jumping down the street, clouds of locusts, hails that prunes all the fruit off trees and levels fields, hail the size of baseballs the killed cattle and sheep, the sudden, inexplicable death of all the firstborn in the nation, the splitting of the Red Sea, water out of the rock, bread (manna) delivered to your doorstep, and the day you woke up covered in 3 feet of dead quail, the thunder and lightning around Mt. Sinai, the fall of Jericho and the staggering defeat of the Canaanites, and joyful be handed free houses, lands, and cities . . . **but, not these people.**

44 And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink. 45 He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them. 46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust. 47 He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost. 48 He gave up 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, by sending evil angels among them. 50 He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

52 But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. 53 And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. 54 And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased.

55 He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents. 56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

The psalmist uses the word “tempted” three times in this psalms, and “provoked” twice to emphasize nature of the rebels and the effect of their sin. The opposite of tempted and provoked are praise, submission, and obedience.

Consider the Unfaithfulness of Ephraim

The question on the mind of every faithful Hebrew was “Why did God permit the Assyrians to kill, conquer, and destroy the largest tribe in Israel?” The psalmist doesn’t explain why He saved Judah, but he does clarify why God ordained the destruction of Ephraim (a.k.a. “Israel,” “Samaria,” or “the Northern Kingdom”)

“Behold the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22).

Rebellion

57 But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

“turned back” refers to apostasy. “unfaithful” refers to their treachery.

Reckless Idolatry

58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

“high places” refers to the small hills in northern Israel where Ephraim set up altars worship to false gods . . . where every man did what was right in his own eyes.

“jealousy” is a praise worthy zeal to preserve something precious; that is, Israel’s idolatry aggravated the anger and jealousy of the LORD.

Consider God’s Response to Apostasy and Rebellion

Anger

59 When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel:

It takes a lot to stir God’s righteous anger, but Ephraim managed to do with their idolatry. Asaph refers to His anger twice to emphasize the response of God to idolatry. Furthermore, the psalmist adds the adjective “greatly” to add to the intensity.

Abandonment

60 So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed among men;

“Shiloh” is where the tabernacle was set up during the Period of the Judges. Today, this site is known as Khirbet Seilun or Tel Shiloh.

Captivity

61 And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy’s hand.

The Ark is a symbol of power. During the time of Eli the High Priest God permitted the Ark to be stolen by the Philistines – a shame for Israel.

Likewise, Ephraim was considered the military strength of Israel (his glory). After the ten tribes plunged into idolatry, God assigned Ephraim to be destroyed by the Assyrians.

War and Death

62 He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance.

Asaph informs the reader that Ephraim’s captivity and death by the sword was the result of Ephraim stirring up God’s wrath due to their apostasy.

63 The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage.

“their maidens were not given to marriage” should be translated, “Their virgins were not praised in nuptial songs.”

To further emphasize the extent of God’s fiery anger against Ephraim, Asaph highlighted two of life’s great tragedies: the death of Israel’s young men and the absence of nuptial songs or choruses sung at weddings – a highpoint in every woman’s life. With young men dead and society destroyed, young virgins were destined to be old maids.

Intense Penetrating Judgments

64 Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.

The priests here have to be the priests of Baal in Samaria, Dan, and Bethel. Not only did the false priests die, so did their widows; that is, the ravages of war prevented surviving widows from performing the customary practices of lamenting their husbands death.

This rhetoric may be a reference to the death of the wife of Phinehas who died in child birth after learning of the ark being stolen by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4).

Consider the Goodness and Severity of Providence

Awake in Anger

65 Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.

Asaph compares God’s wrath to the emotions of one suddenly awakened from his sleep and to a mighty soldier exhilarated by wine.

Pursuit of Apostates

66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.

Asaph compares the wrath of God to an angry, energetic soldier pursuing fleeing adversaries and stabbing them with a sword in the back. Moreover, the death of Ephraim is compared to the shame of being killed while running away from advancing soldiers. It is the duty of soldiers to stand their ground and to defend their country. But, Ephraim ran away like scared rabbits. The word “coward” comes to mind.

Dismissal of Ephraim

67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:

Thus, the main warning of this psalm: God rejected Ephraim because they chose to sin against God like the apostates in the Wilderness.

Election of Judah

68 But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.

No reason is given. The reason God chose Jerusalem to be the Capital of the nation rests in the heart of God — not in the character of the people or the virtues of David.

The Blessing of a Skilled, Caring King-Shepherd

69 And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, 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 great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

Asaph shines the spotlight on God’s favor toward Judah. Unlike Ephraim that perished, God elected, ordained, and established Judah as the object of His love and the heirs of His grace.

Pastoral Care of God over the People

72 So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

O, the foolishness of Ephraim to reject the grace, mercy, love, strength, kindness, guidance, compassion, and provision of the Lord God.

No wonder Asaph penned this lesson for all to learn the benefits of being faithful to the Lord.

Application

Americans would do well to learn Asaph’s lessons and apply it to their churches . . . and to their nation.

“Behold the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:22).

Notes:

1) on the term “maschil” from Barnes:

The word “Maschil” in the title – מַשְׁכִּיל *maškîyl*, is derived from the verb – שָׁכַל *śakal* – meaning properly “to look at, to behold, to view;” and then, to be prudent, circumspect; to act prudently or circumspectly, as one does who looks attentively and carefully at objects; then it means to be intelligent, prudent, wise. The participle, which is the form used here (causitive of the Hiphil), means “making wise or prudent,” or “conveying instruction;” and this title is given to this psalm, as well as to many others, as conveying the idea that the psalm was adapted “to make wise,” or to impart instruction; and the sense would be well expressed by our phrase, “didactic song.” The title is prefixed also to the following psalms: Psalm 42:1-11; Psalm 44; Psalm 45; Psalm 52:1-9; Psalm 53:1-6; Psalm 54:1-7; Psalm 55; Psalm 74; Psalm 88; Psalm 89; Psalm 142:1-7.

On the Difference in these terms:

What is the difference between an Insurrection, a Rebellion, and a Revolution?

Insurrection – a violent uprising against a legitimate authority or government.

Rebellion – an act of violent or open resistance to God’s established government or ruler.

Note: Rebellion in the Bible is strictly against a God-ordained authority. It is not possible to “rebel” against a tyrant because the tyrant is the one rebelling against Heaven’s Will. Resistance to tyranny is service to God – not rebellion.

Revolution – a forcible overthrow of a government or social order.

Psalm 79 - A Lament Over the Destruction of Jerusalem



This psalm was written by Asaph or one of his Levitical family members.

The time of the composition is uncertain. Some scholars think it was written during the time of Antiochus Epiphanies, but it was most likely written after the Babylonian Invasion and ruin of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.).

This is not a comfortable psalm. It behaves more like a funeral march than a victory parade. It is a groaning-prayer that comes out of the darkness of the death and destruction of Jerusalem. Asaph's prayer is a cry from a broken heart . . . a conquered Jew bearing a flicker of hope that God would intervene in the hour of the death to save the nation.

Little did Asaph know that God was using the Chaldeans to judge the nation for their profound sins; that the Jews would be in well-treated slaves in Babylon; that Babylon would fall to the Persians; that God would use the exile to purge the nation of idolatry forever; and, that the Jews would experience the greatest comeback in history.

How do you correct a nation infected with idolatry . . . a nation that worships idols on every hill and under every green tree (Jeremiah 2:20)? A nation where every man has his own god and his own law-order (Jeremiah 10:14)? A nation where every man lusts after his neighbor's wife (Jeremiah 5:8)? A nation governed by odious women (Isaiah 3:10-12)?

God has a way to resolve the fruits of idolatry. It is called Babylonians, death of the idolaters, deportation, and enslavement by foreign powers. Before the exile, the Jews were the most idolatrous people on earth; after the exile they became the most monotheistic people on the planet.

Therefore, we give thanks for the chilling disciplines of the Lord as well as for the charming delights of God.

A Review of the Terrible Destruction of Jerusalem

The Heathen Have Come

Psalm 79:1 <A Psalm of Asp.> O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

Asaph describes the invasion of the Chaldeans and their demolition of the temple (589-586) – a profound mystery and stunning experience for every surviving Hebrew.

Dead Bodies Everywhere

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

Asaph describes the carnage of unburied bodies all around Jerusalem. What a terrible sight – rotting corpses, broken limes, severed heads, and vultures pecking at body parts! Who could forget?

A Bloody Slaughter

3 Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them.

Though death is not uncommon in war, the ease at which the Babylonians slaughtered the people and the lack of help by the Lord bewildered the Jewish mind. Where was God?

Ridicule and Derision

4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

Not only were the Jews stunned by the ruination of the nation, the surrounding nations were solemnly amused by the leveling of the nation's capital.

A Prayer for A Reversal of Circumstances

5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? 6 Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

That God was angry with the Jews, all knew! The question was, “for how long?”

Asaph reflects the mindset of all surviving Jews. It's one thing to experience a defeat, but total annihilation? In the mind of the Jew, God was supposed to protect His people and to crush their enemies. But, it appeared God protected the Babylonians only to ravage Judah. Why? How long would God's anger boil against the people?

Reasons for the Prayer

Jacob Devoured

7 For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place.

The Babylonians not only attacked Jerusalem, they devoured God's lambs like ravenous wolves. No Jew could understand this or believe that good would come out of this slaughter and the dismantling of the nation.

Jacob Humbled

8 O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low.

The exiles were quick to conclude God ravished the nation because of their sins. What they could not understand why their appeared to be no mercy in the conquest. No people left in the land, no temple, no priesthood, no capital city baffled all the Jews. Where was the tender mercy of God?

Divine Glory at Stake

9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

People can boast of God's power and goodness in times of plenty, but how could the survivors boast about God having the foundations of the nations demolished? Somehow, someday, Asaph prayed for deliverance from exile and that God scrub the nation clean of its sins.

10 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.

Restoration was not only important so Israel could continue in the faith, but God's glory and reputation among the nations was at stake. How could the ravishing of the nation cause the heathen to be impressed with Israel's God?

Prisoners in Danger of Dying

11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;

This is a prayer that God would see the tears and hear the cries, groaning, and sorrows of the exiles . . . that they might still find hope in God – that God would be moved by the suffering of His people to act on their behalf.

Justice Demands Retribution

12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

Disturbed by the victory dances of the pagan nations over Jerusalem's downfall, Asaph prays that those rejoicing in their defeat as proof that God was unable to protect them and that their faith was false felt like plagues in their bosom – kind of like having to wear a dead chicken around their neck.

A Flicker of Light

13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

This psalm has melancholy written all over it; but, there is a flicker of light.

The "we" is the remnant or "thy people."

How do you respond to the death of your loved ones and the destruction of your beloved city? Asaph lights a candle and shows us the way: praise God and give thanks.

How could anyone give thanks seeing dead corpses in the city, blood in the streets, and Babylonian soldiers stabbing men, women, and children with grins on their faces? But, God's white sheep did.

The righteous give thanks in all things: in the good times and the bad times for the Scripture says, "In everything give thanks." God's sheep do not flee to the comforts of the world but into the comforting arms of the Shepherd. Asaph is not seeking the Creator as much as he is encouraging his people to seek their Chastiser.

Surrounded by war whoops, blood, and groans from the dying, His sheep found safety in patterns of thankfulness. And, not one of those bearing the mark of the Tav (t) on their forehead died in this slaughter (Ezekiel 9:4ff). All were preserved. Idolaters died. Praise and thanks being expressions of trust and faith, those that gave thanks and praised God survived.

There are two ways to improve a nation: (1) Conversion by the cross; and, (2) the death of the wicked. In this case, God destroyed the tares and preserved the wheat. There is no other way.

Give thanks and live, or complain and die with the idolaters.

"But since correction lieth in those hands, Which made the fault that we cannot correct, Put we our quarrel to the will of Heaven, Who, when he sees the hours ripe on earth, Will rain hot vengeance on offenders' heads." (Shakespeare, Richard II, Act 1, Scene 2).

Psalm 80 - Turn Us Again, O God of Hosts

“Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine”



This precious psalm by Asaph bears a strong resemblance to Psalm 74 and Psalm 79:1-13; and, it is touched by angels for it has the fingerprints of cherubim all over it.

It appears to be birthed in Israel’s Babylonian captivity where Jews were asking “Why?” The “why question” is in place to cause people to think and to carefully analyze the theological dynamics that took place under this traumatic chastisement.

To perceive the dynamics behind history and to lift the veil to understand the Lord’s perspective on political concerns one must work with angels and priests. Asaph pulls back the veil to show us the real remedy to the world’s problems.

Reading the psalms is like taking a trip to heaven. It is the need of the hour . . . the need of every Christian . . . of every church! If you want man’s perspective on life, listen to the news; if you want God’s perspective on life, study the psalms.

If you are searching for a remedy to all the madness in the world and carnality in the church, spend time with Asaph the priest.

This is a priestly invocation-prayer entreating God to rise up and save His people. Those who think man’s future is determined by man’s choices, votes, and the decisions of government are dreadfully mistaken! God must turn the people. Do not trust princes (Psalm 118:8-9).

The key to understanding this psalm is to rid yourself of all hypocrisy and duplicity, and to become a simple, humble apprentice priest at the feet of Asaph.

A key word in this psalm is the word “turn” (shuwb). Used four times, it is an appeal to this sovereign God to use His muscle and might to “turn the people” back to Him — a Calvinist perspective on life that Armenians have difficulty appreciating. The emphasis in this psalm is upon God turning us and not upon our effort to turn ourselves to God.

The key title for Elohim in this psalm is “the LORD God of Hosts” — the Source of Salvation. It takes the armies of God to turn sinners away from the Poisonous Tree to the Tree of Life.

Christians are very concerned about changing the world — something no one can do; but, God is interested in perfecting His church, not changing the government — Judgment must begin at the house of God. He seeks to make better men, not bigger corporations; to make better Christians, not fatter wallets. Correction lies in His hands, not in our choices.

Blessing comes from God through priests to the nation. *The faults that we can barely detect, only He can clearly correct. “Turn us, O God!”*

The First Prayer for God to Turn and Save the People

Psalm 80:1 <To the chief Musician upon Shoshannimeduth, A Psalm of Asaph.> Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth.

“Shoshannimeduth” is used in Psalm 60, 69, and 80. It is translated “lilies” in 1 Kings 7:22 and 1 Kings 7:26 -- most likely a musical instrument.

“Give ear” is an invocation for God to hear this prayer-song.

Asaph addresses the Lord as “O Shepherd of Israel” — an appeal to God’s tender, gracious, caring, compassionate character as the Pastor of “his flock.” Let us remember to direct our prayer to the Lord who is “the Good Shepherd,” (John 10:11), the “Great Shepherd,” (Hebrews 13:20-21) and the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4).

He could have called God a Vineyard Keeper as this theme also arises in this psalm.

“led Jacob like a flock”: Jacob called God his Shepherd — the one who guided Him all the days of his life (Genesis 48:15; 49:24). Therefore, rescue your flock from the wolves trampling through your vineyard.’

“the flock” is Israel, the remnant, the exiles, true Israelites indeed. The NT equivalent would be “the disciples,” “the people of God,” “His sheep,” “the remnant,” “the New Israel,” “the True Israel,” “Christians,” or the “church of the Firstborn.”

“thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth” is not a poetic gesture, but a perceptive appeal to the Throne, to the Seat of Power, to the Lord’s authority as the King of Israel — a lying hold of the throne of grace of a people seeking shelter under the “Wings of the Cherubim” as little chicks seeking refuge from the storm under the wings of their mother (Hebrews 4:16; Matthew 23:37).

Blood is on the mercy seat. “shine forth” in power . . . in mercy . . . for the good of Thy people who live in darkness. Let your mercy which is “higher than the heavens” reach us (Israel) — a not so subtle rebuke regarding the golden calves erected at Dan and Bethel in 931 B.C. by Jeroboam.

“Shine forth — Out of the clouds, wherein thou seemest to hide thyself. Show forth thy power and goodness to, and for, thy poor oppressed people, in the face of their enemies” (Benson).

2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us.

The reference, “Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh” is an appeal to unity and better times when these three diverse tribes marched together as if descendants of the same mother: See [Genesis 46:19-20](#); [Numbers 2:18-24](#); [Numbers 10:22-24](#).

3 Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

This Calvinistic prayer for God to “turn” (shuw) the nation around is pleaded three times in this psalm, and once for God to turn Himself to the nation (3, 7, 14, 19). The prayer does not say, “Let us turn” to the Lord. Revival is of God, not man.

“Turn us again” implies the tribes were headed in the wrong direction — that they were divided from the Lord and each other. Restore us to an unblemished position of love and favor.

“again” implies God must do this work again and again in our lives. Sometimes, the entire army of God must be employed for deliverance. It was at the cross. Sometimes we need deliverance from the giants of avarice, pride, lust, jealousy, sloth, megalomania, anger, and gluttony.

“Turn us again” implies the nation had a chronic stiff neck disorder due to the depravity of man (Exodus 32:9; Deuteronomy 9:6, 13) — a spiritual posture that mimics stubbornness, abstinence, hardheadedness, unsearchableness, and willfulness. These steely, ossified conditions can only be broken by the power of God.

Asaph praise God would reach down, re-align Israel’s backbone, and bend the tribes away from their deep-seated sins, their spirit of independence, and their self-reliance.

“cause thy face to shine” is a portion of the priestly benediction in Numbers — an invocation for their Captain to rise from His throne and shine His light and grace upon the people: “the cloud covered it by day, and the appearance of fire by night” (Numbers 9:15;) — an appeal for God to change His disposition and to deal with them favorably.

Consider the Aaronic Blessing — the Lord’s Prayer of the Old Testament. Note the Source of Blessing and the ternary use of “LORD” and the sestet blessings: provision, preservation, illumination, graciousness, favor, and shalom.

“The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The Lord make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” (Numbers 6:22-27)

“and we shall be saved” — saved from political turmoil, impending dangers, division, discord, and from the evil effects of their sins on the nation’s welfare. Blessing comes to the people through the priests . . . the pastors . . . and the churches, and do not come through congressmen, presidents, judges, armies, bureaucrats, voters, or protestors.

[Note: the primary problem with every nation in decline is not the economy, shortages of energy, or corruption in government, but sin and rebellion against the LORD God and His law-order. And, the nation refuse to believe this. The answer to the secular mind is always more money, bigger government, increase in military spending, and additional legislation. Christians must stop believing that the economy is the problem! The problem is spiritual, not financial; likewise, the solution is spiritual and not commercial.]

A Second Prayer for God to Turn the People and to Save Them

What are the evidences of God being angry with His people? Consider the following:

4 O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?

Asaph changes His focus from the Lord as a Shepherd, the Lord as the Captain of battalions of soldiers.

In this prayer, Asaph addresses His Sovereign as “LORD God of hosts”; i.e. “the God of Armies” – an appeal to His sovereignty as Ruler of the hosts in heaven and the armies of Israel on earth – an appeal to the Covenant Keeping God – to the absolute authority of Israel’s Captain and Commander to rise up, go before the people, and to defeat their enemies.

Numbers 10:35 And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.

His strength as “LORD God of hosts” invigorates believers: “Little ones to him belong; they are weak, but he is strong;” “His strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:8); “If God is on our side, which can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Barak said of Israel: “Behold, the people shall rise up as a great lion, and lift up himself as a young lion: he shall not lie down until he eat of the prey, and drink the blood of the slain” (Numbers 23:24). May this be true of the church.

The word “angry” (ashan) means “to smoke” or “to burn with anger.” Because the LORD did not answer their prayer, they assumed that God was angry with them. With the LORD, anger is one of His virtues. The question becomes, “How long will this continue?”

5 Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

“Thou feedest them” is good . . . but with tears?

So grievous was this chastisement, Asaph pictures God’s people eating meals and drinking cups of water salted by tears. Great grief and disappointment are signs that God is angry at his people.

The word “great measure” (shāl’ysh) refers to a measure of grain as in a third of an ephah (a bushel or 56 pounds).

Notice God’s grace and the limited nature of His anger.

Yes, He may be angry at his people, but they will never face a full bushel of His angst – a third maybe, but never a full bushel. God is good and His anger is good! How else do we learn what pleases Him? How else do we realize the seriousness of sin? Yes, Christians may experience painful discipline for their sins . . . but they will never experience the wrath of God because His entire wrath against sin was poured out on Christ. If He paid for all of our sins, how many sins are left for us to pay for?

6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.

“laugh” refers to mocking, jeering, jesting, and scoffing at God’s people.

“neighbours” here refers to surrounding nations. Strife with men is another indicator of God’s displeasure against His people. Mocking the faith is another.

Proverbs 16:7-31 When a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

Sometimes, but not always, contention with other sheep indicates we have "rough edges" that need to be smoothed out.

However, strife is not always an indicator we have done something wrong; sometimes strife indicates we have done something right.

John 7:7 The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil

Psalm 44:22 Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are considered like sheep for the slaughter.

7 Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

This second prayer ends with "Turn us again." This is a second request for God to "turn them around" . . . to him . . . to each other. Asaph inserts the title, "O God of hosts" — a reference to the sovereignty, authority, and power of God as Captain over all creatures — an indicator of greater sincerity by Asaph.

This appeal is to the "God of hosts." Asaph uses this title here a second time — a request for God to rise and shine and to save the people — a priestly benediction of the priests in Numbers 6:34-27.

"shine" is used three times in this psalm — the remnant of priestly blessing referring to the warmth of affection, benevolence, and goodwill.

It is impossible to feel the glow of God's countenance when our backs are to Him — Lord, turn us around so we can see and feel the warmth of your smile.

A Third Prayer for God to Return and Save the People

This prayer is based on God's gracious historical dealings with His people.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

Asaph calls Israel "a vine out of Egypt" — a dormant grape vine capable of being replanted in another field — a propagation procedure.

"Thou hast cast out the heathen" — a reference to the Canaanites during the time of Joshua.

9 Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

"Thou" refers to the work, care, and superintendence of the Lord over His vineyard Israel.

Grapevines that are cut 8 to 16 inches long with three or four buds can be replanted with three buds in moist soil to grow a vineyard. God planted the 12 sons of Jacob in the land to uproot the Canaanite kings and to take possession of the land.

10 The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars.

Asaph employs agricultural metaphors to express the growth of Israel.

So effective was the planting of Israel in the land that its boughs were everywhere — the cities of 12 tribes stood out like large cedars; that is, God’s plan not only made progress but prospered to the point of maturity agriculturally, spiritually, and civilly. It became a true nation with a constitution, law, government, and industries that were self-sustaining.

11 She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

The metaphor of a growing vineyard continues with an emphasis on expansion.

12 Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

The theme suddenly switches from one of prosperity to one of plunder. God removed His hedge of protection and foreigners came across its borders as an army of pirates to steal the nation’s wealth.

The “thou” refers to God’s intentional demolition of His vineyard — a tearing down of the economy that was so complete that foreigners plucked what was left of the country’s riches.

13 The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

“doth waste it” means to cut down or cut off; to devour; and to trample down. The invaders are compared to wild pigs that ravage the vineyard devouring and stealing everything of value due to the intentional neglect of the Foreman.

14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

“Return . . . O God of hosts” is used a third time, and it implies that God intentionally, deliberately left His vineyard to be trampled on by illegal aliens. Asaph issues the plea to “return” (shuwb) four times in this psalm. This time it is a plea that the “God of hosts” — the God of armies . . . the Vinedresser might return — an appeal to the people’s Sovereign to come back and to reverse the nation’s fortunes — to restore His favors — to employ all His powers to reconnect with His people.

“turn” and “look down” are the verb; the implied “You” or “god of Hosts” is the subject; and the implied “Yourself” is the direct object; and to “us” is the indirect object.

Where is the Owner? Return, O God of hosts. Restore, repair, and renew your vineyard. Protect us. Revive us. Save us.

“visit this vine”: The strength of any nation is in its “priests” who enter behind the veil to pray prayers that touch the heart of God and unlock His power for the good of the people (vine). Good does not come because of voters or government leaders. Good comes from God.

A Fourth Prayer for God to Turn and Save His People

15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath 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.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Asaph continues to describe the devastation and destruction of God's choice vineyard comparing it to a vineyard set on fire to burn deadwood, weeds, and other pests.

"right hand" refers to God's special power and love in planting Israel in the land.

"fire," "cut down," "perish," and "rebuke of thy countenance" refer to the severity of God's chastisements upon the nation.

17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.

"Let thy hand" refers to an act of sovereignty.

This is the fourth prayer that God would turn the nation around; that God's hand might be "upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself." It is a plea the Lord would sustain the nation's leadership; that God would strengthen the government and its chief officials to act wisely for the good of the people.

18 So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

"we not go back from Thee" — Asaph, speaking for the people, expresses the "should be" unbending, unyielding, uncompromising commitment of the people to the Lord. This commitment appears to be dependent on God delivering the people.

But, human desire and human choice is not enough. God has to provide the quickening (chayah) — the condition requisite for calling upon His name is that God infuses life into the people.

"quicken us" is a prayer for God to revive the people — to renew the people's devotion to the Lord. Reformation, revival, and spiritual renewal always precede an economic recovery. You can't plan it; God must provide it.

19 Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

This is the fourth time Asaph prays that the "God of hosts" would intervene and use His authority to turn the nation from their sins and empower them to surrender to His command. To turn the people toward holiness and devotion to His will so He could shine on them and treat them with favor.

Sin severs fellowship, and only by forsaking sin, can His people enjoy the sunshine of His favors. "Turn," therefore, is the mission of this psalm.

The subject of the sentence is "You" (the LORD of Hosts); the verb is "turn"; and the object of the action is "us."

That is, all this pruning and devastation of God's vineyard is because the nation turned its back on the Lord. The remedy to backsliding is in God and not human choices. He has to turn men to Himself — to face Him and to accept His law-order.

Asaph prays that God would do the turning . . . that He would be pleased to change His countenance and to shine on the people with favor. If God acts, "we shall be saved"; that is, the remedy for hardship and trouble is in the Lord and not in man.

Oh, to be fully turned from sin and restored to God! It is so much easier to play Christian than to perform as a Christian; to talk holy than to be holy; to waiver rather than to labor; to dither and dally than to be devoted to Him; be playful rather than faithful; to chase after the urgent instead of the important; to feed our sins instead of forsake our sins.

The impatient, pragmatic, Armenian Christian will say, " I prayed this prayer and it didn't work!" Well, it worked for this priest who prayed this prayer circa (586 B.C.) and saw the dynamic answer 50 years later in the return of the Jews to Israel in 536 B.C.

O, how much better the world would be if we waited upon Him to revive us. Then He would turn our foolishness into holiness. Oh, for the strength to forsake the darkness and to find His light. Only the love + of Christ can deliver us from the sins we love. Turn us, O God of Hosts. Return and make Thy face to shine upon us . . . your people . . . the sheep of your pasture . . . your church! Amen!

Psalm 81 - Behold the Goodness and Severity of God

"He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee."



This psalm was composed for Asaph to create a chorus for the nation to sing at festival seasons — a “warning” psalm reminding the nation of their blessings, duties, and missed blessings due to their disobedience.

The Apostle Paul commanded the Romans to “Behold the goodness and severity of God” (Romans 11:33) and we would do well to consider this theme.

The Duty of Praise



Psalm 81:1 <To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm of Asaph.> Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

The lesson here is let all the musical instruments and the talents of men be employed in praise to the LORD God. Praise is good, complaining is bad; praise comes from faith, complaining comes from fear; God loves praise, and the Devil hates it. The Devil loves complaining and criticism, and God hates it. Praise God every day to keep the Devil away.

4 For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.

Praise and rejoicing in the Lord are not great options; this is law! — a great duty incumbent on all men. God has one basic household rule, *you must be happy and sing and rejoice being in His kingdom-home!* Complaining and criticizing other family members is strictly forbidden. Be happy or get spanked! When we rejoice in God’s salvation, we fulfill His will for our lives.

During our Bible Camp days we avoided a long list of Do’s and Don’ts. We established one rule: *You must be happy and to make sure other people are happy by the way you behave.* Make the cooks happy, the counselors happy, and fellow-campers happy, and we will have a good week at camp. It was easy to enforce and easy to correct aberrant behavior among campers.

Behold the Goodness of God

5 This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: where I heard a language that I understood not.

Promises fulfilled: Leaving Egypt was prophesied by Joseph and realized in the Exodus event where the people traveled out of Egypt unmolested.

Preservation of their language: “I heard a strange language,” refers to the Egyptian language in contrast to the original Hebrew of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — a language perfectly preserved during Israel’s captivity in Egypt.

The use of “I” is a literary device to communicate truth. The author transports Himself to the time of the exodus as if he was one of the slaves in Egypt struggling to understand the Egyptian dialect surrounded by complex polytheism and multiculturalism.

6 I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.

Freedom from slavery: “removed” implies deliverance and freedom from bondage.

“shoulder from the burden” and “pots” refer to the work of slaves carrying water and slats of bricks to build Pharaoh’s cities.

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.

Answered prayer: “trouble” refers to Israel’s bondage in Egypt.

“callest” refers to the nation’s prayers that produced a Moses to lead them out of Egypt.

“The secret place of thunder” is an allusion to Mt. Sinai, an isolated, desolate mountain.

“the waters of Meribah” was at Mt. Horeb where the LORD tested their faith and proved to them that He was the all-sufficient God by bringing water out of the rock.

The Duty of God’s People to Hear

8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

The imperative “hear” (shema) appears in the emphatic position. It is the most fundamental duty placed on men . . . something Israel found difficult to do.

God gave us two eyes, two hands, two feet, two ears, and one mouth. Unfortunately, the mouth is open more than the ears; and, the mouth does more work than the hands or feet.

Knowing the tendency of men to be yakky doodles, the great Catholic Monk, St. Benedict required monks to follow the rule of silence.

Epictetus, the great stoic philosopher noted, “We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”

Blindness separates people from material objects; deafness separates people from God and man.

The Duty of Fidelity

9 There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.

The word rendered “strange” (zār) refers to an alien or to a person foreign to a nation. God placed a duty on men not to worship gods or adopt the laws of foreign nations. Since gods are the source of law, the permissive and cruel gods of the nations competed for the attention of the Israelite. “No other god before me” was the first and foremost law of the Hebrew commonwealth.

“no” – This negative command requires man to restrain his impulses and to refuse to comply to the lawlessness of liberalism. Israel crumbled, **not** because they refused to obey their government, but because they complied with government’s addiction to liberalism (2 Kings 17: 8-21:).

2 Kings 17:8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen . . .

The Duty to Receive His Love

10 I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

A positive command: This one absolute God with one absolute law redeemed Israel from Egypt and had made one, absolute demand on His people — to be exclusively devoted to Him. Blessing was associated with loyalty and obedience.

“Open wide your mouth” is an analogy referring to young chicks that open their mouth so their mothers can feed them. This is God’s way of instructing Israel to open their ears and to hear him only; to open their mouth to let God meet their needs. The meaning is clear: “I am the all-sufficient One. Do not go to other gods, other religions, or other counselors.

Don’t go to psychologists and the great university professors for guidance. I am able to meet all your needs and satisfy all your wants” Selah!

“Open wide”: This positive command requires positive energy; that is, for men to stoke the fires in the furnace of their hearts to seek God.

Behold the Severity of God Due to Dereliction of Duty by Israel

11 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

Israel refused to hear the LORD; i.e. they spurned the LORD and refused to find all their happiness in Him.

Missed Guidance

12 So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust: and they walked in their own counsels.

“heart’s lust”: God withdrew and turned them over to the hardness of their hearts; that is, to let them go their own way to suffer its bitter consequences.

Missed Blessings

13 Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!

This passage shows us the blessings that Israel missed because of their hard heart and complaining.

14 I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

Missed Victories and Conquests over their Enemies.

15 The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured for ever.

Israel missed the happiness, joy, and blessings which God intended to be perpetual. But, sin and rebellion against God, without exception, is the ruin of all people. See the three most common sins of people in 1 Corinthians 10:6-10 and flee from them as fast as your sandals can slap.

Missed Harvests and Honey

16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

In traveling through the wilderness, Israel complained and grumbled — this childish petulance is one of the three sins of the nation that resulted in 40 years of discipline.

God tested the nation ten times. Once they responded by committing idolatry; once they plunged into immorality; and, eight (8) times they “grumbled”; i.e. were peevish and choleric (1 Corinthians 10:6-10)

In grace, God provided them with manna and water. The great question, therefore, is what would have happened if they did not grumble? The answer is that God would have provided them with gourmet wheat in the desert and Manuka Honey out of the rock; that is, they got what they needed when they complained, but missed God’s best for them by not being thankful and waiting on Him.

Blessed be the Name of the LORD.

Psalm 82 - A Charge to Magistrates

“How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked?”



We do not know the time or the occasion for this psalm, but we are very familiar with corruption in the courts and the reason for God addressing magistrates on earth.

Judicial administrators have the same problems as all men. Some are lazy, many are swayed by public opinion, and others are open to bribes.

A Statement about the Supreme Judge

Psalm 82:1 <A Psalm of Asaph.> God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

“God standeth in the congregation of the mighty” means that the Supreme Ruler of the Universe has standing to issue directives to judges in the courts of men. They are responsible to His law. Further, the Supreme Chief Justice holds these magistrates accountable to Himself and His law. These arrogant jurists will give account of their manipulation of law to enrich the State.

A Probing Question

2 How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

Can you say “bias, prejudice, corruption, and conflicts of interest”? Just as fraud and bribery dominated the agenda of the courts today, so did they in the psalmist’s time.

“A comprehensive analysis of nearly 57,000 corruption cases in federal courts spanning 30 years revealed that fraud and bribery dominated the types of conduct underlying criminal cases, accounting for 76% of the lead charges in cases resulting in convictions” (National Institute of Justice)

A Charge to Magistrates

3 Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

Duty One: It is a duty of magistrates to defend those who cannot defend themselves. It does not mean ruling in favor of the poor against the rich, but to see that right is done to them regardless of the favors being offered to a judge by the wealthy.

Two vulnerable defendants are mention, the poor that do not have the resources to defend themselves and the fatherless that are ignorant of the judicial process and do not have a father-attorney to intercede on their behalf.

4 Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.

Duty two: Deliver the poor and needy from the oppressive power of the sophisticated dexterity of those who would crush the weak.

The “wicked” would be rich, powerful plaintiffs.

A Word about Weakness Among Magistrates

5 They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

The psalmist addresses corruption in Israel’s courts.

Many judges suffer from tunnel vision; i. e. they can’t see the forest for the trees. But, in this case, these magistrates were willingly ignorant about religion, God’s law, and the rules of the court. These judges not only manufactured void judgments due to malicious prosecution, they had no desire to judge fairly. These vultures sitting on thrones of power took no pains to learn the facts or the law before they rendered a judgment.

A Warning to Judges

6 I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.

The appellation “gods” refers to the status of judges. Because the fate and destiny of men are in their hands, they have the power of gods.

The Lord gently reminds these surrogates that their status among men is temporary; that in time they will suffer the fate and destiny of common, unbelieving men.

7 But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

He reminds these stuffy, nose-in-the-air magistrates who considered themselves superior to the common man that they are mortal like all men – *that they put their pants on one leg at a time.*

A Prayer Directive to the Supreme Court of Heaven

8 Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

“inherit” is the Biblical word for jurisdiction. The Creator has jurisdiction over what He creates.

Rather than take these matters to the courts of men, the psalmist appeals to the Supreme Court of Heaven to review these matters. “Come forth and see that justice is done on earth as it is in heaven.” The Judge of all men has a duty to do so seeing that He claims title over all nations.

Psalm 83 – Be Not Still, O God



This is the last of the thirteen psalms of Asaph.

It is a priestly prayer by Asaph who intervenes on Israel's behalf.

The beauty of this psalm is Asaph's respectful approach to the Lord, his accurate intercession for the nation, and his evangelical spirit towards the nation's enemies.

A Prayer for God to Wake Up and to Provide Emergency Relief

Psalm 83:1 <A Song or Psalm of Asaph.> Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

This prayer is directed to Elohim. His designated covenant name "LORD" (YHWH) is not used until verse 16 and 19. This is a basic prayer. However, Asaph is not praying to an unknown "god." He is praying to a particular God Whose name is the LORD.

There are three verbs in this sentence: "Keep," "hold," and "be still." Each is negated by the adverb "not."

The verb "keep" (demi) means "to pause, be quiet, or to rest."

The verb "hold peace" (charash) means "to cut, engrave, or to plow." It is negated by adverb "not."

The verb "be still" means "to be undisturbed, quiet, or at rest." It too is negated by adverb "not." All these verbs are gentle jussives and not loud commands.

The nation is an emergency and God seemed to be indifferent to their crisis. Asaph gently knocks on God's chamber doors and calls Him to wake up out of His slumber and to intervene in this emergency.

"Plead for us, not by words, but by thy actions; hold not thy peace" (Benson).

The National Emergency

2 For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

"For lo" (hegey) means "to wake up and take notice." It explains the reason for the prayer. Thy enemies of the Lord roar like the sea.

"thine enemies" — "Wicked men wish that there might be no religion among mankind" (Matthew Henry).

"tumult" (hamah) means "roar, growl, rage, disquieted, murmur, noise, and clamorous" — a serious political conflict motivated by "hate" and its brothers, "anger," "rage," and "reckless."

The main idea in this text is that the heathen have been aroused like a lion pacing back and forth in a wild and restless manner eager for the kill. “tumult” is also analogous to the restless roaring of the raging, untamable sea.

“lifted up the head” is a metaphor for the body language of pride, insolence, boldness, confidence, and defiance. The heathen sharpened their tongues as well as their swords. Bells sounded. Cries for war ran through the streets.

“hate thee” — Nothing unites people more than the possibility of a holy war against an opposing religion — especially against a religious people that believe there is only one God and one way of salvation; against a people who will not socialize or eat with you; against a people who are intolerant of religious pluralism, feminism, relativism, humanism, polytheism, and omnism.

“Wicked men are commonly noisy, roaring out their blasphemies against God, belching out oaths and curses, and breathing threatenings and slaughter against the saints” (Gill).

3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

“crafty counsel” refers to a conspiracy to trap and devour the innocent in Israel. Caravans reported to the Jews the blasphemies, curses, and threats of their neighboring nations.

“Whereby they have showed both their implacable rage and malice, and their great assurance of success . . . They have laid aside all their private quarrels and animosities, and agreed together against thee” (Benson).

“hidden ones” refer to a well-protected people that are not easily routed (Psalm 17:18; 27:5; 31:20).

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.

“Come” refers to a call to the nations to join the coalition to smash and desolate Israel’s foundations.

“cut off” refers to slaughter, extermination, and genocide of an entire nation.

“That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance” — refers to extinction . . . the death of a race . . . of a religion . . . of the Messianic nation . . . of the light of the world -- a plan not to plunder their wealth and to make them slaves, but to make them dead.

Pious Christians would do well to remember the world will tolerate impotent religion but they will not tolerate a faith that claims to be the only way to God (John 14:6).

5 For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:

The terms “consulted,” “one consent,” and “confederate” refers to international solidarity of these diverse states.

“confederate” literally means “to cut a covenant.” A reference to an international agreement or contract with nothing but death and killing on their minds — an anti-God, anti-Christ, anti-Christian, antinomian, anti-humanity agenda.

So much of what the world does is to humiliate, abase, humble, and even stifle, choke, and smother the gospel. Think legislation like separation of church and state, censorship of hate speech; of morals even confusion regarding genders, marriage, and sexuality.

A Description of the Invaders

Asaph mentions enemies from the south, east, west, and north: Edomites, Ishmaelites in the south; Moabites, Hagarenes (Arabs), Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek in the east; Philistines in the West; Tyre and Assyria in the north. The children of Lot, Ammon and Moab, appear to be the driving force of this conspiracy.

6 The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes; 7 Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre; 8 Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

A Prayer for God to Intervene

9 Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: 10 Which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth.

This prayer builds on the victories of Barak and Gideon.

Let them be overthrown like the Midianites (Numbers 31); and like Sisera the general of Hatzor, and Jabin the king of Hatzor (Judges 4-5) — Canaanites that perished near Mt. Tabor.

“dung for the earth” is a metaphor describing a massacre — a field of dead, rotting, mangled corpses that ended up being fertilizer to enrich the soil.

“All who oppose the kingdom of Christ may here read their doom. God is the same still that ever he was; the same to his people, and the same against his and their enemies” (Matthew Henry).

11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

Oreb and Zeeb were princes of Midian slain by Gideon.

Judges 7:25 And they took two princes of the Midianites, Oreb and Zeeb; and they slew Oreb upon the rock Oreb, and Zeeb they slew at the winepress of Zeeb, and pursued Midian, and brought the heads of Oreb and Zeeb to Gideon on the other side Jordan.

12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

"houses" is better translated "pastures" or "meadows" or "sheep fields."

Asaph prays that God would overthrow their present enemies as He did past enemies -- powerful ancient enemies that marshaled all their military powers to conquer the "holy land." The land was "holy" because God's house was literally and physically in Jerusalem; but, the land is no longer holy because Christ is not there. He is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. The aim of the wicked is to neuter the church militant on earth.

A Prayer that the Enemy Might Be Overthrown

As a Wheel, as Stubble

13 O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

"like a wheel" refers to a "rolling thing" (galgal) like a chariot wheel.

"as the stubble" may refer to a tumble weed that is easily blown away by the wind.

The word "wheel" is used in Scripture to "refer to a chariot wheel that is easily moved. Ezekiel 10:2, Ezekiel 10:6; or a wheel for drawing water from a well, Ecclesiastes 12:6; then, a whirlwind, Psalm 77:19; and then, anything driven before a whirlwind, as chaff, or stubble, Isaiah 17:13." (Barnes).

The idea is that God would easily and quickly remove these thistles as a mechanic changes chariot wheels.

As Fire

14 As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

Asaph beseeches the Lord to release His flaming arrows and to rain down fire on Israel's enemies. Few things arouse more fear in men than mountains on fire.

As a Storm

15 So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

"persecute" means "to pursue" in the sense of unyielding self-defense . . . to scare them away — a wish that God would send a powerful message to these enemies with an inescapable, raging storm that pelts the land with hailstones decimating fields and striking fear into man and beast.

Disappointment

16 Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

"shame" (galown) refers "to regret, embarrassment, and disgrace" and not the pale face of death — that they would be filled with awe at the power of God and His love for His people.

"they may seek thy name, O Lord" shows the intent of this prayer. Asaph prays, not that the enemy would be annihilated and obliterated, but that the nations would be eternally impressed with the power of God.

This is not a malicious, hostile prayer for God to marshal his forces and to crush these nations. But, that God would deal with them in such a way as to impress them with the power, truth, and mercy of the LORD — to strike fear in their hearts that they might seek the Lord and discover His graces.

Here we see the beginning of prophecy . . . the dawn of the Messianic hope . . . the unfolding of the evangelical spirit to win men to Christ . . . the ambition to convert the nations . . . the merciful unfolding of the kingdom of God into history.

Confused and Alarmed

17 Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

“confounded,” “troubled,” “shame,” and “perish” are terms of disappointment and humiliating defeat.

“confounded” (buwsh) refers “to shame, confusion, and disappointment.” Resist them . . . may they be baffled by the obstacles you place in front of them. May they be confused like chirping birds . . . like a flight of dark shadows . . . like rabbits in a thunderstorm.

“troubled” (bahal) refers to being disturbed with “alarm and terror.”

“yes, let them be put to shame” by utter failure in their schemes . . . by their inability to activate their plots . . . by the roadblocks you put in their in their path to victory.

The Intent of the Prayer

18 That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.

The spirit of Asaph shines with evangelical goodness. In this prayer, mercy and truth meet together (Psalm 85:10). May they know that you are truly God . . . the true God . . . the “Most High God over all the earth.” See Genesis 14:19 where Abraham lifted up his hand to “the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth.”

Asaph prays for the defeat of Israel’s enemies, but in a manner that would cause Israel’s enemies to come to know, admire, and respect the God of Israel. He wants the neighboring nations to know there is a difference between the LORD that exists and their gods that don’t exist; between truth and fiction; that there would be such a manifestation of power that the nation’s victory could only be traced to the intervention of the LORD God. He wants the nations to know there is only one, true God . . . and, that He dwells in Israel.

Psalm 84 - How Wonderful Are Thy Tabernacles

When Passing Through the Valley of Baca (Weeping) Dig Wells



Before us is a poetic masterpiece that provides friendly wine not too sweet for thirsty souls.

The taster of truth would do well to sip on every phrase till it excites his spiritual tastes buds.

This is a Hebrew poem about the blessing of being near God and obtaining His blessing.

It was penned by a healthy soul in pursuit of God who after tasting the richness of communion with the LORD of Hosts in the Temple was compelled to share the sweetness of his experience with us so that we too might taste the wine of His presence.

The Blessed Tabernacle in the Nation

Psalm 84:1 <To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.> How lovely are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!



This is a great psalm written by a great man who delivered it to a great composer to be scored into a great melody and sung by the nation's greatest choir.

An excellent psalm written by an inspired king with such a noble theme required the skill of a master composer—the chief Musician (a Levite and son of Korah) to scribe this into a bright and happy melody.

Afterward, it was sung by the Temple choir during the celebratory fall festival called “sukkot”, or “the feast of booths,” or “the Feast of Tabernacles.”

In the LXX, “Gittith” is translated “winepress” informing us that this song had a festive melody associated with the joy and relief of the wine harvest where exuberant men and women would roll up their leggings and playfully stomp barefooted on grapes in the wine vat to the delight of amused spectators.

Think of the joy at this national festival. With the harvest completed, grain in the barns, and wine fermenting in clay vessels, thousands of Hebrews would trek to Jerusalem to pitch their tents and to light their camp fires while visiting with family and friends, sharing news, and telling stories to the delight of all – a national Bible conference celebrating the presence of God among the nation.

Sounds of joy rippled through the evening air. Smiles adorned every face. Children raced around giggling and plying tag. Laughter endured long into the September nights.

Everyone participated in the week-long festivities repeating again and again to each other, “how wonderful are Thy tabernacles . . . the Creator dwells among us . . . on earth . . . in Jerusalem . . . in his temple . . . and He has blessed our harvest . . . let us praise the LORD!”

“lovely” or “amiable” is the affectionate term “beloved,” the object of love by one attracted to the beauty of Another. The beauty of the tabernacle / temple was the presence of the LORD God dwelling among them — too wonderful for words.

The Blessed Heart

2 My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.



This psalm is credited to King David because of its noble theme and insights. David’s fingerprints are all over this psalm, but another may have penned this masterpiece.

Being perfectly transparent, we are permitted to see the man . . . and his naked soul . . . a healthy heart hungering for the nearness of God.

Here is a kingly man pressed with national responsibilities, administrative duties, and international burdens. Yet, at the end of the day, his heart burned to know God, to be near Him, to hear Him, and to secure His blessings upon His life . . . and upon His people.

Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E’en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee.

Unlike modern anthropocentric politicians, this is a Theocentric prince. Before us stands a man hungering for God . . . and not riches or fame or power.

“Beware of what you hunger, for you will become the sum total of your desires”
–BRS

The Blessed Sparrows

3 Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

As this composer studied the temple complex, he could see where the sparrows built their nests on top of the sanctuary . . . and parents fluttering back and forth to provide for their young.

He considered these feathered creatures blessed to be so near His God and His King.

He affectionately called his Maker “the LORD of Hosts (sabaoth)” – a reference to the LORD of the armies, a possible allusion to heavenly, angelic warriors. Probably, it was used here because of the thousands of worshipers camped outside of Jerusalem. The title is used 261 times in Scripture. The name “LORD” is the Tetragrammaton—a reference to the covenant making God acting faithfully to fulfill His promises to His not-so-faithful people.

The Blessed Priests and Levites and Temple Workers

4 Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

The word “selah” is a musical notation, but it is common practice that when we see it, we should “stop, stand at attention, and listen.”

As the birds were blessed to build their nests on the roof of God’s house, this worshiper considered the priests and Levites and sweepers and gatekeepers blessed to serve God in this holy place. Possibly, this verse is intended to include all those who walk with God.

The verb “still praising” Thee means “shining.” The adverb intensifies the action informing us that those near God burst forth shining and gleaming with wonder and awe.

Imagine what it was like to have God on earth . . . in Jerusalem . . . in the temple . . . among them.

Yet, we know that today God does not dwell in temples made with hands, but among His people, the church — the living, breathing, walking, moving sanctuary of God – a reality more precious than a carnal temple (Ephesian 2:21).

The Blessed Pilgrim

5 Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them.



The psalmist moves from the plural to the singular, from the group to the man, from the corporate to the individual, from temple servants to the common man.

Not only are “they” blessed who dwell, work, and worship in Thy house, but the individual man who trusts God is also blessed.

Blessings flow from the throne of God to the man who seeks God and His strength. He gives power to the manual laborer involved in pruning, brush pulling, weed eating, grape plucking, cane tying, wire pulling, leaf cutting, and all other vineyard duties — to the farmer and farm hands who pursue Him and His law-order (ways) for their life. He is not the God of arrogant nobles, but of humble peasants.

3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.



This architect of hymns is not a dreamy poet sitting on a lily-pad of luxury theorizing about utopian ideals.

He understood the pilgrim journey in this life is not all song and no sorrow; all laughter and no tears; all smiles and no frowns.

The Hebrew word “Baca” means “weeping.” It is not a place or location in Israel, but the human experience of suffering on earth.

The author understood there are days when the earthly pilgrim feels pain, grief, anxiety, trouble, trials, difficulties, setbacks, and heartaches on the sin-stained soil of this earth.

Therefore, the psalmist expands the meaning of the “blessing” in verse five.

Blessing does not infer the absence of affliction.

The “blessed” have many woes as they wander through the Valley of Weeping . . . but somehow, somehow, with the help of God, the faithful are able to turn deserts into desserts, tears into thanksgiving, water into wine, troubles into triumph, resentment into refreshment, bitters into sweets, cursing into blessings, evil into good, poverty into power, rejection into correction, and setbacks into spiritual advances.

Though the arid Valley of Baca is the lowest, hottest place in the human experience, there is rain that sustains life.

Canteens full of water bind us to pretenders, but at the bottom of an empty can we can find Jesus.

There is something that shines in the sand, something that sings in that silence, and something that refreshes thirsty souls in this valley of dry bones.

“Through” – the Valley of Baca is **not** the end of the Christian life. It is merely a region we pass through on the road to the Celestial City.

7 They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.

Many of God’s greats have staggered and stumbled through the Valley of Baca.

But, the psalmist observed that those near God, when passing through the Valley of Tears, got stronger instead of weaker, better instead of bitter, happier instead of sadder.

Because they dug deeper into Christ, they left wells of water to refresh thirsty souls traveling through this hot lowland. Songs came out of their sorrows; light peeked through their darkness; and, comfort came to the weary in the Valley of Weeping.

“No pit is so deep that He is not deeper still; with Jesus even in our darkest moments, the best remains and the very best is yet to be.” – Corrie ten Boom

There is an exit from this valley. At the end of this journey the Zion-dweller appears before God to the delight of the one longing for His courts.

Bless Me!

8 O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

The song writer observed the blessings of the little sparrows flitting happily above the temple complex, the blessings of temple workers, and the blessings of individual saints who are near God. Now, he seeks to secure those blessings for himself:

“Hear my prayer!” Oh, Lord, you blessed others, bless me. You have heard the prayers of men better than me, but hear my prayer. Shema, O Lord. Shema!

He switches titles from “LORD of Hosts,” to “O, God of Jacob;” that is, instead of appealing to God’s power, he appeals to His grace. Thus, this is a song every pious Israelite could sing.

The title “God of Jacob” references the goodness of God rather than the goodness of the man. Here is a hymn writer that is aware of his weaknesses; and, therefore, appeals to those attributes within Jehovah that seeks and saves sinners; those attributes that show mercy, forgiveness, and kindness to the undeserving.



9 Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

In seeking the blessing of God, the psalmist calls Elohim “our shield;” that is, he sees the LORD as the Provider and Protector of the flock.

The word “behold” means to stop and see, to hear and heed. Therefore, he pleads that the God of Jacob would look personally with particularity upon this lamb in the flock.

You looked at saints in the past, look at me now. But, overlook the weaknesses of this man and the scratches and stains on my scripted prayers.

From the word “anointed,” we get the term “messiah.” Either this is David, the anointed king, or this is a reference to God’s chosen people, or to this one chosen lamb. He reasons that since God armors the nation, God should protect him and his family as they pass through the Valley of Tears.

The Blessed Doorkeeper

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.

Here is a man of God with perspective. He observed that one day in the temple was better than a thousand days on a vacation cruise in the Mediterranean or in some golden palladium in Pestana Porto Santo.

The psalmist bears his soul. He made a choice. He'd rather be a humble doorman in the temple charged with protecting a gate than to be a powerful Bedouin king with legions of servants and concubines serving his carnal pleasures.

11 For the LORD God is a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

Though this saint zigzagged his way through the Valley of Weeping, he was not cynical or bitter. To our delight, his optimism shines like light through stained glass windows into the cold cathedrals built by man.

Instead of being depressed and in despair over the sorrows on this grim journey, he shares a clear, comforting, confident truth. God is a sun; that is, He gives light, sunshine, warmth, clarity, and direction to those seeking His help while walking in the lowland. God is the shield and shade on this journey. Grace and glory are the inheritance of the saints.



The Valley of Baca is like Death Valley with high temperatures, scorched sand dunes, and bleached bones protruding from the desert floor. Instead of hearing him list his complaints, we hear him rejoicing in God as the light in the darkness and shelter in this hot experience.

Further, having spent time in the temple complex and hard time in the Valley of Weeping, he concludes that “no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” His trek through

the valley was dreary but not destructive. He lost his grip on sins that embittered his heart, but **not** his grip on true riches that sweetened his soul.

To his delight, the psalmist learned that his Heavenly Father was neither poor nor stingy. He was tough, but never out of touch — a Provider and Protector that lightened the load, lifted the burdens, and loosened his chains.

The Blessed Man

12 O LORD of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee.

The psalmist wants all who hear this song to understand the value and virtue of trusting God; that is, don't just listen to the melody, hear the lyrics, heed the lesson. All who trust God will be blessed!!

Spurgeon said, “A trusted God will be a preserving God.” Likewise, a trusting saint will be a blessed saint.

Though your journey is parched and dry, your path filled with thorns and your eyes with tears, trust Him. There is water . . . even pools of water to refresh the soul traveling through the Valley of Baca — rain for the man who seeks His strength.

Psalm 85 - The Revival Song



"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

This is a psalm of contrasts, of truth and mercy, of righteousness and peace, of exhaustion and salvation.

A post-exilic psalm, it was most likely written after 520 BC. Delivered to Israel's musicians, the inspired text was added to God's prayer book. It is sometimes called the "Revival Song."

Crushed under the weight of chastisement during the captivity, this psalm lays the groundwork for revival and restoration.

Psalm 85:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.> LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

A post-exilic psalm, the phrase "brought back the captivity of Jacob" refers to the surprising return of the Jews to Jerusalem under the Order of Cyrus, the Persian Messiah (539 -516 B.C.), and a marvelous return to favor and prosperity on the land in ancient Israel.

The perfect verb "favorable" (ratsah) means "to be pleased with" or "to show pleasure in" - a reversal in the mind of God towards the captives.

Like many songs in the hymnal of God, the result of prayer is mentioned first. The author did not begin his prayer with this glorious conclusion, but grew in his understanding that the grace of God had returned to the nation after the bitter exile from the Holy Land. His prayer begins with "Turn us" in verse four. The seventy years of captivity was not only a discipline on the people, but upon the land of Israel itself. Because Israel did not keep the Sabbath year rests, God ordered 70 years of rest on His land (Jer. 23:17; 2 Chron. 36:21). The earth belongs to the Lord (Psalm 24:1). With rains refreshing the region, the psalmist perceived God's favor hovering over the nation.

2 Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

The Jews were held captive in Babylon for seventy years because of the sins of their fathers. We can only imagine the heartache of these people: parents dead, Jerusalem in rubble, the temple destroyed, deported to Babylon, and surrounded by foreigners.

These captives participated in the sweet favor of God as they realized He forgave and covered their sins.

The term "forgiven" (nasa) means "to lift up and carry away;" that is, God removed the sack of shame and guilt off the shoulders of the captives. When God forgives sins, he removes the wretched baggage as far as "east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12).

The word "forgiven" (nasa) is a word used on Yom Kippur in connection with the azazel goat sent from the tabernacle into the wilderness (Day of Atonement-Leviticus 16:22).

"Thou hast covered all their sin" means God did not impute the nation's sins to those who responded to the call to rebuild Jerusalem in 536 B.C.

The word "covered" (kasaw) is used in Genesis 7:20. As Noah's flood covered the mountain tops with water so the peaks could not be seen, God hides our sins from His presence. *Kasaw* is also used in connection with the Day of Atonement. The priest was required to cover the mercy seat with incense. The incense represented the fragrance of Christ. God not only sends our sins away, He legers the merits of Christ to our credit (Romans 4:5ff).

The forgiver is God; the forgiven are His people. That men need "to forgive" themselves is a statement of pride condemned in the Scriptures. Man is not the judge. He has no authority to forgive himself any more than a prisoner has the power to abate his sentence. Though these sins were taken away from the people, they were eventually placed on Christ at the cross. God cannot just cancel the debt of sin and be just. But, when Christ paid for the sins of men, fierce-justice and gentle-mercy kissed each other.

3 Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger.

When God forgives men of their sins, He withdraws His violent-storm of wrath and foaming-anger from them. If Christ paid your outstanding debt for sin at Calvary, how many sins are left for you to discharge? If the Father poured out His boiling-wrath on the Son at the cross, how many drops of wrath are left for you to endure? If you "feel" that God is angry with you, maybe it is because you are not appropriating the generous-benefits of the cross by faith and not taking sufficient comfort in the promises of grace.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

The psalmist teaches us the cause of this new found blessings upon the nation. He informs us that the blessing of **forgiveness and removal of God's wrath began with this prayer**: "Turn us . . . and cause they anger toward us to cease." And, we need turning!

This is a motion by the captives to the Court to not only close the case and make it a matter of *res judicata*, but to send them out with a blessing.

Being forgiven and enjoying that forgiveness are two different matters. Forgiveness is an act of God – a fact to know; enjoying that forgiveness is a matter of faith – a fact to claim by the individual man. Maybe this is why the Spirit orders the forgiven to focus on rejoicing and not being melancholy about failures of the past.

"Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart" (Psalm 132:7)

The imperative "turn us" seems be a pleading that God would not only forgive them thoroughly; but to change them completely, to convert them absolutely, and to save them effectively. Forgiveness from sins is one matter, salvation from the power of sin is another;

acquitting a guilty man is one grace in the vault of salvation (justification), and cleansing and perfecting the sinner is another grace offered to His children (sanctification).

The prayer is **not** one where the psalmist begs the people to turn from their sin, but for God to turn men from their sin. Turning is a work of God and not of men.

5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

Matthew Henry states it well, "The sense of present afflictions should not do away with the remembrance of former consolations. The favour of God is the fountain of happiness to nations, as well as to particular persons. When God forgives sin, he covers it; and, when he covers the sin of his people, he covers it all." His mercies are new every morning.

Matthew Henry stated the truth, but the reality of the matter is that God's dander hovered over the nation so long, it seemed like it was forever. This is a plea that not only would God turn from His heated-wrath upon the psalmist's generation, but that He would be tenderly-merciful to future generations.

6 Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

This is a question.

The word "revive" is made up of two words in Hebrew: turn and live. Will you not turn that we may live?

The adverb "will not" is in the emphatic position and moves the action from probability to certainty; from impossibility to inevitability; that is, there is **NO** way that God is **NOT** going to revive the quiddity of His people. It is just **NOT** possible that God will **NOT** return that His people may possess the joy of life in Christ. The dying do not rejoice, but those recovering do. Remember His mercies. Revival nestles in the wings eager to dispense grace.

The word "live" is a Piel imperfect verb expressing intense restoration -- an infusion of Divine-life into the tired-souls of the fatigued-captives.

"You" is the subject of the verb "revive." Only God can revive tired men. Revival seldom comes out of planned revival meetings. Revival is not of man, nor the work of a preacher. It is not the result of some godly, ambitious church program, nor the result of new legislation of Congress. The election of a new president will not create revival. Revival is God's work and is dependent totally and completely upon Him.

The object of the verb "revive" is "us" - the fatigued people of God. Revive is NOT a reference to resurrection, but to restoring the life-power of one who is weak and sick. You can't revive the dead (the unsaved), but you can revive the sick (backsliders).

You can't revive a sinner. You can only revive a living soul. It is exhausted believers that need this work of the Spirit. And . . . when God's people see the light, the pagans will feel the heat.

We can call this a "spiritual healing." But, what is "spiritual healing." First, revival is not emotionalism or a letting go or speaking in tongues or being slain in the spirit or any of the false, fraudulent, pseudo pursuits of the wayward Charismatic Movement. Second, spiritual

healing is restoration to spiritual health; that is, a return to God's Word as one's absolute authority (2 Tim. 3:15-17) and a return to obedience to God's Word (John 15:10; Revelation 22:9). Healing is the ability to obey God's law and to be Christ-like. It is restored ability to "love," "obey," and "cleave" to the LORD thy God (Deuteronomy 30:20). Healing occurs when the fruits of the Spirit begin to sprout in one's life; that is, spiritual healing is growth in integrity, love, virtue, self-control, sensibility, sweet reasonableness, patience, and self-sacrifice (Galatians 5:22; Titus 2:1-7).

Moreover, we must distinguish between revival and reformation. The two are not the same. Reformation has to do with doctrinal correction; with a return to the Bible as the source of truth. Revival has to do moral correction and the renewing of one's spiritual energies. Here, revival is stressed.

7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

This is another fresh-breath of prayer from a saint still reeling from the downfall of Jerusalem, the deportation to Babylon, and the disparaging-captivity. Trials have a way of hanging on. Feeling like the bitters would never go away, he prays again for relief. "Show us thy mercy" that we may live to see Your blessings again.

"Show us Thy mercy . . ." First, the Psalmist prayed that God would turn His people and remove his wrath. Now he prays for mercy. Israel felt every spark of God's anger in the hot caldron of judgment. Alone, abandoned, impoverished, the psalmist as member of the nation prayed for mercy. He did not pray for justice. God acted in justice and Israel felt the rod. Justice demanded punishment; but, mercy overlooks a thousand faults.

The Lord is the King of mercy and His vault is filled with an abundance of grace for his straying saints. Israel had no righteousness to plead on the ground of justice. Her future depended on the mercy of the Court. Men must return to Calvary, and see the world afresh through the eyes of Christ. When the infinite compassion of Christ fills the heart, the passion evoked by Calvary demands our all and all as the fruit of His sacrifice.

8 I will hear (shema) what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

He pleaded for mercy. Then the psalmist had to wait for the LORD's answer. Though he was sure God would speak peace to His people, he wanted to hear it; feel it; and be a part of it. Benson adds this insight: "The state of mind here is that of patient listening; of a willingness to hear God, whatever God should say."

The most fundamental command in Scripture is for men "to hear" (Shema) – Deuteronomy 6:4.

Revival begins with hearing . . . listening . . . understanding, and responding to God's Word. Many people do not listen and cannot listen; that is, they only listen to be polite. They only listen long enough to give an answer. People are prone to talk rather than listen; prone to think about what they are going to say rather to listen and understand. Most preachers would do better if they took classes on how to listen rather than how to preach – a "complex, effective, cognitive, and behavioral processes."

“People do not listen to understand. They listen to reply. The collective monologue is everyone talking and no one listening” (Stephen R. Covey).

Knowing that precious peace (inner and outer) would come, he speaks for all the remnant: "Let them not turn again to folly." All sin is folly, and great sin is great folly (Spurgeon). This Divine return to the people of God not only needed to include awareness of right and wrong, but intense-power to pursue righteousness (Romans 8:4).

9 Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

The psalmist expresses confidence that salvation was near. Revival is called “salvation.” The human requisite is now introduced which is “the fear of the Lord” —a gift of God.

If salvation is near to them that fear Him, we must grasp the meaning of the term “fear.” What does it mean to fear the Lord? Simply put, to fear God means to obey His Commandments. The remnant under the rod of discipline seemed ready to trust and obey:

Deuteronomy 6:2 That thou mightest **fear** the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

With the eye of faith, the psalmist sees a day of national restoration -- a day of heavenly-salvation when "the glory" (Ezekiel 8-10) would return to the land. And, it did in the arrival of the Son in history: Simeon could say, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luke 2:30). The apostle John concurs:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14).

10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

To the metaphysical mind, truth and mercy, righteousness and peace are polar opposites.

How can justice and mercy occupy the same house? How could Melchizedek be the king of righteousness and also be the king of peace? How could the King of kings give double peace to His fledging disciples?

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

The answer lies at the cross. God was just in punishing the Son for the sins of mankind, but at the same time, He was merciful in providing His people a substitute Lamb to pay for their sins. In this way, Calvary declared the justice of God (payment for sins) and the mercy of God (forgiveness of sins). There, the law was vindicated and His mercy displayed. At the cross we have a wedding of heaven and earth; of justice and grace; and, of righteousness and peace. He felt the cold kiss of death that we might experience the warm kiss of life. Because the black shroud came upon Christ, the white garments of righteous are made available to all who believe in Him.

Here is Love - Welch Revival Song

On the mount of crucifixion
fountains opened deep and wide;
through the floodgates of God's mercy
flowed a vast and gracious tide.
Grace and love, like mighty rivers,
poured incessant from above,
and heav'n's peace and perfect justice
kissed a guilty world in love.

11 Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Truth is depicted as a young, green seedling breaking through the dark, black soil. Because the remnant received the mercies of God, new life, new hope, and a new devotion revived souls. Righteousness shines like the morning sun upon its children who are filled with conviction and purpose; justice and mercy; with love for God and hate for sin.

12 Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.

The progression of this psalm is from struggle to peace. Because the captives were revived and devoted to righteousness, the LORD could give good gifts to His children and restore the prosperity of His people. Rebels abuse goodness, but the recipients of mercy embrace responsibility.

The 70 years of captivity ended in 536 B.C., but the 70 years of desolation didn't end till 520-516 B.C. Blessing began on the date the remnant began to rebuild their temple under the preaching of Haggai and Zechariah (circa September 21, 520 BC).

Haggai 2: 17-18 'I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month even from the day that the foundation of the LORD'S temple was laid, consider it.

13 Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his ste Psalm

The Spirit testified of John the Baptist:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." [Matthew 3:3](#).

When Christ was on earth, He walked on the white-brick road of righteousness. He could say, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill (the law)." (Matthew 5:17)

Believers cannot produce revival, but they can prepare the way for it by walking on the white-brick road of righteousness. When our eyes are fixed on the LORD and His law, blessings follow. When men confess their sins and sing of God's love, revival is near. Where God works, His righteousness and His mercy incite the tongues of men. While men are not saved by law,

they are saved and revived in order to keep the law. When men walk in obedience to His law, God ministers to them (Psalm 37:18). He answers prayer because His children forsake their sins and obey Him (1 John 1:5, 9; 2:1-5; 3:22).

The Psalmist does not require men to pull themselves up by their own "bootstraps," but to depend on him who promised, He "shall set us in the way of his steps;" on the narrow, white-cobblestone road of "mercy and truth," and "righteousness and peace."

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

If you ever feel like you are under the dark clouds of judgment, don't doubt or lose hope. Look up and see God Almighty. He revives. He restores. He blesses the land.

Psalm 86 - Reasons God Should Answer My Prayer

"Lord, teach me to pray"



This psalm purports to be a psalm of David, and there is no good reason to dispute it.

This psalm buckles to no subdivisions.

The value of this psalm is that it provides reasons why God will answer prayer. Christians without stories about answered prayers is not normal.

"We have here a sheaf of arrows out of a good man's quiver, shot into heaven"
(MacLaren).

The great lesson of this psalm is that we should offer reasons why His answer to our prayers will glorify Him. Perhaps, this psalm provides missing parts to the power of prayer. The ideas enclosed are not unique as they are quotes from other psalms, yet when combined into one psalm, their power unites us to men of old who cried out to God and were graciously answered.

Lord, teach me to pray (Luke 11:1).

Learn the lesson this psalm provides, and God will be delighted to charter your ambitions to glorify Him. This prayer is very personal. Therefore, let us personalize this masterpiece to our own circumstances with the use of "me," "my," and "I."

Answer my prayer because I am poor and needy

Psalm 86:1 <A Prayer of David.> Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I am poor and needy.

Need is a basis for all prayer. God's ears are always open to the cry of the poor and needy. Since I am poor and needy, I know that God is predisposed to answer my prayers.

Are you poor and needy? Then, you are a candidate for answered prayer.

Needs may be material or spiritual.

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

"for" can be translated "because"; that is, the preposition provides the reason God can answer prayer.

When praying use the names “LORD,” “Lord,” “God,” and the precious name of “Jesus. “ To pray “in His name” is a means of relying upon His great and infinite character. After all, “Jesus” (Iesous) is the sweetest name I know.

John 16:24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

Answer my prayer because I trust in You

2 Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

“Preserve my soul” — Sanctify and beautify my soul with joy and confidence because You answer prayer.

That “I am holy” is a reason God should answer prayers; that is, God answers the prayers of His holy ones, His called ones, His chosen ones, His justified ones, His separated ones, and His sanctified ones. Claim your *position* of being a “saint” in Christ; and, **not** your *condition* of imperfect holy development.

“I am holy”; i.e. I am one of your chosen ones . . . pious . . . declared “righteous,” and devoted to You. I am a member of Your covenant people. You called me and set me apart to live in dependence on You. Therefore, I have a right to be here and to pray to You — my covenant-keeping God.

“trusteth in thee” — How can God resist answering prayer for a child that truly trusts Him? You are the Grantor; He is the Trustee. Trust Him. He cannot fail.

Claim your legal standing in Christ as one united with His victorious history (Romans 6:1-16).

“I am one whom thou favourest, hast set apart for thyself, and made partaker of sanctifying grace” (Matthew Henry).

Answer my prayer because it is in Your character to be merciful.

3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

My poverty, needs, and wretchedness qualifies me for mercy. Therefore, I call to You daily pleading for mercy.

The person who continually knocks on the door will eventually have the door opened. The one who regularly stands before his throne is seen as a friend of the Court.

God answers prayer because it is His nature to be merciful . . . to supply my needs . . . to love me and to be to me what I need Him to be. Mercy, not justice, is the foundation of all prayer. The ground of perfected prayers builds on His mercy and not my merits. Therefore, I work to be consistent and not intermittent in offering prayer to my Lord and Savior.

Answer my prayer because answered prayer would make my soul joyful.

4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

The conjunction “for” or “because” introduces a new reason for God to answer my prayers.

Perhaps there is nothing more pathetic on earth than a defeated, depressed, downcast Christian-soul. A happy saint is more effective than a depressed, confused one. Answer my prayer that I might overflow with joy in You.

Moreover, I do not go to another. You, Lord, are my only remedy; my joy, and my only hope.

“It is God only that can put gladness into the heart, and make the soul rejoice; and it is the privilege of his servants to have joy, as well as peace, in believing; and they may pray in faith, not only that God would preserve their souls, but that he would rejoice their souls, and then the joy of the Lord will be their strength” (Benson).

Answer my prayer because You are good, forgiving, and merciful

5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Answered prayer provides evidence God is good, forgiving, and plenteous in mercy.

He does not demand perfection to receive answered prayer. He forgives imperfection, weakness, and sin due to the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). Claim the power of His blood.

My sins haunt me. Your answer to my prayer would be proof that You are “ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy” to sinners who call upon Thee.

Claim the promise that God is near to those who call upon Him (Psalm 145:18).

6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications.

Lord, you hear many prayers, but hear my prayer. This is my pilgrimage on earth . . . my time. Hear my supplication.

Answer my prayer because You promised to answer prayer in the day of trouble

7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

In Psalm 50, God orders men to pray to Him in the day of trouble. In the day of trouble, plead the command; plead the promise.

Psalm 50:15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

Lord, I am in trouble. Trouble is an opportunity to pray and to see You work. Hear my pleading, and You will be glorified.

Answer my prayer because You are the only God Who can do so

8 Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works.

The background for this verse is in Exodus 15:11 — “Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

When praying, God's people stand on the truth that there is only one, true absolute personal God; that He is **not** one among many, nor are all religions a path to God.

"None so wise, so mighty, so good; none so able and willing to hear and answer prayer" (Benson).

I am not calling on a dead, man-made, wooden idol or a figment of man's imagination. But to YHWH — the God Who IS. There is nothing that the gods of the nations have done that can be a ground of confidence. Your works, Your Word, and Your character, Lord, are my ground of confidence that You can and will deliver me.

Answered prayer is proof of Your existence to those who profess no god and no hope.

Answering my prayer strengthens me to encourage agnostic men to put their trust in You. Answered prayer enables me to witness about Your grace to those who do not yet worship our Lord Jesus Christ.

Answer my prayer because it is consistent with your purpose that all come to worship you

9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

The final vision of the universe is where all nations come to worship You. Our Lord introduced us to the power of His kingdom, and it continues today. Answered prayer is consistent with Your desire and purpose that all men bow the knee to You and look to You as their God.

Answer my prayer now because it conforms to your kingdom objective (Psalm 72:11, 17; Psalm 82:8).

Isaiah 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Isaiah 66:23 And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.

Answer my prayer for doing so is consistent with Your unique wonders

10 For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.

Men should wonder and ponder your greatness and marvelous works.

"The greatness and the power of God are reasons why we should appeal to him in our weakness, and in our times of trouble" (Barnes).

Because You have done wondrous things in the past, You can do wonders for me today.

My circumstances are difficult. Only Your wonders can provide a way of escape; and, it would be a privilege for me to see Your wonders. Answering my prayer provides an opportunity for me to prove there are no limits to Your goodness, mercy, and power.

Answer my prayer for doing so makes me more united with You

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

As You have taught me by Your Word, teach me by your Spirit. As You have taught me objectively Your truth, help me to subjectively experience Your truth. May my mind, words, and deeds conform to Your truth.

Answered prayer is a means of teaching me the ways of God . . . of helping me walk in Your truth . . . of increasing my love and respect for You.

“Unite my heart” — i.e. unite all my knowledge and powers and devote them to Your service.

Answer my prayer for it will be an occasion for me to glorify Your name forever

12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

Answering my prayer will increase my praise and admiration of You . . . of doing so with all my heart . . . of increasing the power of this witness to glorify You now and forever more. Lord, give me bragging rights!

Let me praise You with all my heart, mind, emotions, and will. Use my body for Your holy service and renew my mind in holy matters (Romans 12:1).

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Answer my prayer for it is consistent with Your mercy and purpose for my life

13 For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell (sheol).

Answered prayer is consistent with Your merciful work of saving my soul. You rescued me in the past from violence and death (v. 14). Do so again. Didn't You save me to experience Your power, love, and goodness? Do it again!

Answer my prayer for enemies are real and substantially stronger than me

14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them.

Answer my prayer because the people who oppose me oppose You. The people who are proud and ambitious trample down my rights and violent men have attempted to ruin my reputation, ministry, and confidence in You. If You answer my prayer, this answered prayer will be evidence that You are **not** like my enemies who seek my harm and defeat.

Lord, if you do not answer my prayer, my experience will be no different than that of an atheist . . . of an agnostic . . . of those who pray to false gods. Answer me that I might have a rejoinder to those who doubt and mock Your power.

Answer my prayer because to do so is consistent with Your character

15 But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

God is not poor, broke, or destitute . . . nor stingy, miserly, or chintzy . . . nor reluctant, indisposed, opposed, or unwilling to answer prayer. He is a king with wealth to give. He sits on a throne and has the authority to provide all that I request.

David's assurance that the Lord will answer his prayer is firmly grounded on the character of God. He does not claim his own goodness as the reason God should answer prayer. Rather, he claims the goodness and treasures of God. He answers prayer because He is good, not because we are good. You answer prayer because of Who You are — a God of love; and, not because of who I am.

As a mother loves her children, You will have compassion on this child of Yours.

Furthermore, there is no thought here that God is indifferent, resentful, short-tempered or stingy with mercy and truth. To David, God answers prayer because He is "full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth;" that is, He is predisposed to be attentive and generous. It's in His nature to be merciful to answer my prayers.

God desires to give you the best, but you must sometimes wait for it. Waiting is an expression of praising the Lord.

"He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee" (Psalm 81:16).

Notice how positive Jesus was about prayer.

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:

"If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" (Luke 11:11).

Answering prayer to men in need is consistent with all that I know about You, O Lord. It is not in Your character to deny, harm, or deprive people of what they truly need. Answering my prayers is consistent with Your compassion, grace, patience, mercy, and truth. Because You are on Your throne, You have authority, riches, and power to answer my prayers; and, because Your throne is a throne of grace I have confidence You will overlook my weaknesses and the weaknesses of my prayers.

Answer my prayer and show me you have answered my mother's prayers

16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

"handmaid" — a reference to David's godly mother and grandmother Ruth.

In my present state it appears that You have turned away from me and that you are indifferent to my needs. You have taught me your mercy is higher than the heavens. Your answer to my prayer would be an act of mercy and by it your servant will be strengthened. Answering my

prayer would show me that you heard the prayers of my mother . . . and my grandmother who prayed to you to guide me, to provide for me, and to strengthen me.

Answer my prayer so my enemies may see that it is You who help and comfort me.

17 Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

Answered prayer is a sign of your goodness to me, and it is a means of rebuking those that hate me . . . that hate You. Answering my prayer would bolster my confidence in You and humble my adversaries. You have helped me in the past, help me now. You have comforted me before, do it now, in the name of Jesus for Your glory.

David is not teaching us that God is one, great-big Supper Daddy eager to spoil His people. The Lord is also a holy God zealous of holiness — a Heavenly Father Who disciplines His children so they can be partakers of His holiness. Yes, He is compassionate and merciful, but He is also zealous for our perfection.

Deuteronomy 32:15 But Jeshurun (Israel) waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

Effective prayer is a mixture of confession, forsaking sin, and lying hold of His willingness to bless. This psalm seeks to correct our flawed theology, and does not deal with how to manage our flaws. Therefore, if you are wrestling with God in prayer, you must repudiate your sins as well as claim and proclaim reasons God should answer your prayer.

“No!” is also an answer to prayer. Blessed be Thy Name. A “not yet,” is not a “No!” Waiting on God in silence is also a means of praising Him.

Psalm 87 - The Glories of the City of God

"All my springs are in thee."



Song writers around the world have fallen in love with big cities and the experience of being a part of them. Frank Sinatra, inspired by the Big Apple wrote and sang his metrolyrics, "New York, New York." Many Americans, however, would prefer jumping over a cliff before visiting the "Hong Kong on the Hudson."

In contrast to the dark, fleshly cities of man, this psalm shines the light on Zion, the City of God – a shadow of Heavenly Jerusalem, the true City where Christ is its King.

All Hebrews valued the honor of being born in Jerusalem, considered citizenship in the city a great privilege, and hoped to be buried there. Because attendance at the festivals in Jerusalem was the high point of Hebrew life, it is no surprise some inspired songwriter penned a hymn to celebrate the fires of joy that burned in the hearth of the Hebrew hearts because of their capital city.

Psalm 87:1 A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah.

The noble theme of this song demanded the skills of the sons of Korah, the elite composers and guardians of Israel's repertoire of hymns, the nation's premier conservator.

His foundation is in the holy mountains.

"The holy mountains" refer to the mountain range surrounding Jerusalem.

"His foundation" – The "His" refers to God. Jerusalem is called "His foundation" because the Holy City was God's base of operations. Consider the glories of this city:

- The temple and religious life;
- The dwelling place of the LORD God, Creator of Heaven and Earth;
- His throne – the Ark of the Covenant and the holy furniture;
- The two Mosaic Tablets – The Ten Commandments and the Law of the Lord God;
- The altar and forgiveness through blood; i.e. reconciliation to God;
- The station of civil government;
- The home of the nation's judiciary;

The theater where throngs from Israel celebrated the festivals, prayed, offered sacrifices for sins, worshiped, sang and danced, enjoyed Levitical celebrations and choirs, deposited gifts to the poor, and met up with family members and longtime friends.

2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

The gates in all ancient cities in Israel were four or six chamber gates where the people met to conduct business, barter, debate, conduct disputes, make agreements and contracts, and where general business occurred.

“the LORD loveth the gates of Zion” –The imagery here is that of thousands of people pressing through the gates eager to participate in the worship services at temple feasts and festivals.

What joy it must have brought the LORD to see crowds of worshipers squeezing into the temple complex to be near Him, smiling and singing and communing with one another – all eager to learn His law and to know His will. We learn that our Lord looked with great pleasure upon the assembly of His people more than any other event in the nation (Psalm 78:68).

Imagine what is what like from a human perspective to be at the temple at night during festivals under four giant oil-fed candelabras standing 75 feet high like pillars of fire illuminating the mid-eastern skies, All male Levitical choirs robed in white standing on the fifteen steps interfacing the Court of Women and the Temple Proper singing the Song of Accents (Psalm 120-134) with scores of people watching, singing, dancing, and celebrating their history. Beginning in lower tones the Levitical choir moved up the scale ending with songs in the higher range. Oh, how the pilgrims must have delighted in the festivities lasting long into the night.

We know little of this kind of religious intensity in our nation today. The closest analogy we can compare would be the excitement of crowds at the World Cup Soccer Match, or the World Series, or the NFL Super Bowl. Who can imagine what it would be like to be in a nation that had that kind of passion for the Lord?

Israel had a totally different social order than modern man. While modern man is organized around work and recreation, Israel’s social life was ordered by the law of the LORD God, the epicenter being the temple and its yearly festivals. And, it was the gathering of His people at the temple complex that brought the LORD so much joy.

If this is what brings Him joy, imagine what brings him sorrow. Who can understand the grief that must fill His heart over man’s neglect of Him?

3 Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

“Glorious things” – The word “glorious” means “heavy, weighty, important, noble, and honorable.”

God was listened not only to the prayers and praises of His people but also to their conversations with family and friends. These discussions contained reports about the grace of God in the lives of these agrarian people.

The psalmist heard many of these conversations and anticipated hearing the words of the joyful among them. Oh, how he must have marveled at the quips, quotes, rhymes, questions, answers, analogies, metaphors, and insights men gained at the temple about the LORD, His law, and His mercies.

Participating in those festivals must have been a joy for the spirit, a feast for the mind, and a comfort to the heart with a cathartic and nourishing effect. Who didn't go away inspired, energized, cleansed, rebuked, corrected, and instructed?

4 I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there.

The psalmist heard men bragging about where they were born, and he felt compelled to mention the names of these famous cities. No doubt, men boasted about being born in Rahab (Egypt), Babylon (the center of urban culture) in Philistia (western Israel), Tyre (the great commercial center of the Mediterranean), and Ethiopia (the headwaters of the Nile).

5 And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her.

Though a faulty shadow of the True Jerusalem, earthly Zion had its days of glory because the God of glory was in her midst. Since the LORD was the Source of Zion's prosperity (establishment), it was an honor to born there, to be near God, and to be protected by Him. Among Israelites, being born in Jerusalem was a cause for boasting.

This, of course, is not true today seeing the LORD is no longer in the city. Modern Jerusalem is certainly not holier than London or Los Angeles. Any attachment to carnal Jerusalem today is misdirected affection. Earthly Jerusalem is where our Lord was crucified by the Jews and is compared to "Mt. Sinai," in Arabia, the city of Hagar (Galatians 4:24).

It does not matter where a person is born. No city is more important than another. What is important is whether a man is "born from above" (John 3:3), has entered the kingdom of God; and, has his "citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus" (Galatians 3:20).

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there. Selah.

So important was this city, the psalmist informed us that God himself would "write up" the people born there in His Registry. This is the Spirit's way of informing us about the true Jerusalem (Revelation 21) and the paramount importance of having our names recorded the Heavenly Registry known as the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 3:12; 20:12; 21:27; 22:18-19).

Revelation 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is new Jerusalem*, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him my new name.*

St Augustine wrote a book called "The City of God" wherein he contrasted the City of Rome with the Heavenly City.

"The glorious city of God is my theme in this work . . . I now proceed to speak, as God shall help me, of the rise, progress, and end of these two cities; and what I write. I write for the glory of the city of God, that, being placed in comparison

with the other, it may shine with a brighter lustre (St. Augustine, the City of God, Book I, IV).

There are only two cities: the City of God and the City of Man. There is no such thing as dual citizenship. No man can serve two masters or two cities for that matter. You are born in one or the other. Your joy is Above or Below. The great issue of life is not where you were born, but have you been born again (from above)? Is your joy in the City of God with the Lord as its King, or the City of Man with its “lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15).

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there: all my springs are in thee.

The imagery here is that of a triumphant procession. This cavalcade of choirs and singers leading the cortege was much like lavish modern military parades with squads and platoons in formal gear headed by a Scottish bagpipe band marching rank and file.

A study of Roman arches, statues, medallions, reliefs, coins, and paintings, scholars conclude the Roman Empire celebrated over 350 military parades.

The idea here, though, is not military victory but of worshipers marching proudly in a triumphal procession proclaiming the glories of God’s presence among them. Who can fully appreciate the honor of having one’s name registered in the City of God?

“All my springs are in Thee” inform us that the hope of the psalmist was in the Lord, not humanity; in truth, not fiction; in His mercies, not in his own righteousness; in the City of God, not the City of Man. Similarly, the anchor of the Christian hope is tied to Calvary and the sacrifice our Lord made to redeem His people. All who cling to the cross enter Zion’s gate to find their “springs in Thee.”

“All my springs are in Thee” — My salvation, my life, my purpose, my Savior, my hope, and my joy are in Zion.

Let me also glory in the City of God.

Psalm 88 - The Toughest Psalm in the Bible

"My soul is full of troubles"



Heman is proclaimed the author of this psalm.

He was from the family of Ezrahites — grandsons of Judah: Ethan, Heman, Zimri, Calcol, and Dara mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:6 — Judah-Tamar, Perez, Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara, five in all." Possibly, this Heman was a great, great grandson of Judah and David (1 Chronicles 2).

Heman shares the pain of the Babylonian Captivity. Keep in mind this man was marked with a Tav (Ezekiel 9:4); that is, God saved the man from death only to experience the horrors of the exile.

A Psalm for the Darkest Nights

Warning: This psalm is not for the weak of heart. It was written after the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple during midnight hours of the Babylonian Captivity. A primary interpretation works from this base.

It belongs to devoted saints enduring unanswered prayer and shattered promises in severe trials.

If you are in pursuit of the best the world has to offer, you will not appreciate this psalm.

If you are entrenched in the health and wealth prosperity gospel, this psalm is not for you!

But, if you are in pursuit of God, and can't find him, you are welcome to camp near the toughest psalm in the Bible.

Do you feel like you have been traveling 100 miles on a bad road?

This is a tough prayer delivered to a tough saint in tough terrain by a tough God.

The idealist cannot grasp it; the rich do not welcome it; and, the successful cannot understand it. But, the afflicted are glad it is scored in God's hymn book as it highlights the iron grip of a disappointed soul upon his silent Master.

The Psalmist's Elegy

Psalm 88: A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah, to the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

What a task given to the sons of Korah, but written by a Jew from the tribe of Judah! It is much more difficult to accurately express sorrow in music than to score choruses of celebration.

This is a psalm never preached by prosperity preachers. They simply don't understand suffering or appreciate its work in the best of saints. Wealth, health, fame, honor, and success is the cry coming from the apostate pulpits today. Modern Christians have lost sight of the value of suffering, and therefore lack the capacity to appreciate this psalm . . . or minister to the weak of heart.

But, for the cross-carrying Christian this psalm offers heavenly hope.

The Psalmist's God

1 O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee:

The psalmist is a saint; a chosen one; a beloved son in the family of God; one who has experienced the grace of God through saving faith; and, one who is surrendered to the law-order of the LORD God.

Yet, the composer is an afflicted child—a true Israelite depressed by the disciplines of his Master. Like a boiling tea pot, he whistles out prayers pleading to the God of his Salvation to turn down the heat. This God saved him from sin; now he pleads that this same God will save him from one of life's great horrors.

This is not a happy saint or a happy psalm, but a necessary one—a psalm the Spirit was pleased to include in the hymnal of Holy Writ.

In an age where prosperity-teachers abound and Christians believe that wealth and health mark God's obedient children, this psalm seems anathema (a curse). But, those whom God esteems the highest, He assigns them tough journeys through the lowest valleys in the thickest fogs on the darkest of nights.

Affliction is good if it binds us to Him. It is a good thing that suffering will not let us rest if we spend our restlessness in search of Him (Spurgeon).

The Psalmist's Prayer

2 Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;

This is not a public prayer, but a private demurrer—my prayer! My naked, personal prayer pleaded before my silent Potentate.

Yes, there may be obstacles that muffle my prayers in my Lord's hearing. Yes, my prayers are fragile and weak. Yes, they are cracked and flawed. But nevertheless, "let my prayer come before thee."

Because my God is a King, He has the authority to grant my request. Because my King sits on a throne of grace, He is tender to overlook the defects of my person and the defects of my prayers (See Hebrews 4:16).

The Psalmist's Terrifying Troubles

3 For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.

Now the psalmist describes his soul-troubles and lists the reasons why God should hear his prayer.

“No man careth for my soul” (Psalm 142:4).

Again, the background of this psalm is the dark cloud hanging over the exiles in Babylon.

It is one thing to walk on a path crawling with lizards, but it is quite another matter to hike on a trail slithering with poisonous snakes and deadly predators.

The psalmist is nauseated because of the vinegar filling his cup. If a little trouble dampens our spirit, what are we to do when our heart is filled to the brim with seagull wine?

The psalmist describes his private hell. He is closer to death than to life; closer to a casket than the cradle; closer to midnight than to sunrise. Death appears to be a savior rather than an enemy and a robber.

Will God order his precious saints to ride in the saddle with blisters on their bottom? Yes, He does. And, the psalmist begs for relief.

The Psalmist's Pit

4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength:

There are all kinds of pits: the pit of poverty, a pit of misfortune, a pit of despair, a pit of sickness, a pit of failed expectations, and a pit of death.

A wounded man, attendants placed the psalmist in a coffin before he was dead. No one believed he would live. Mourners gathered to discuss his funeral; to script his eulogy; to select his pallbearers; and, to dig his grave. He could hear the clock ticking down to the last few minutes of his life.

Here wilts a flower. God's rose dried up in a unwatered pot. In darkness, his ruby cheeks faded to corpse gray. His mind blurred. His emotions spent. His body weary. His faith attacked. Like the last leaf on a winter's limb, he clutched tightly to his Only Branch of Hope.

Drooping with exhaustion, he spends his last hour publishing his weariness.

The Psalmist's Grave

5 Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.

To further enlighten the reader to his agony, the psalmist compares his affliction to the fate of an abandoned soldier lying mortally wounded in a ditch on some bloody battlefield. Alone and bleeding out, he anticipates his death. Soon to be a rotting corpse, he feels abandoned by God and man. There is nothing fellow soldiers can do but watch him die. To this afflicted one, death appears as an unwelcome savior—a deliverer from the pain pulsating through the core of his being.

The Psalmist's Dark-Pit

6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.

He does not blame his plight on advancing armies or on his own mistakes. He did not choose this battle. He sees his circumstance as something God ordained, "Thou has laid me in the lowest pit . . ."

He wants his readers to know that he lingers in a dark dungeon . . . in an abandoned mine shaft hidden deep below the earth . . . black as coal . . . robbed of light . . . and that God caused it! Selah!

In this cavern, there were no exits; no light for the soul; and no relief for the spirit. God was not there! Silence polluted the air. He struggled to breathe. Choking . . . and coughing . . . he gasped for oxygen. Light disappeared Hope faded away. The psalmist felt pinned between two boulders where he was crushed by the promises of God on one side and the absence of God on the other.

The Psalmist's Storm

7 Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.

Like a mariner on the waves on a savage sea, the psalmist feels the chilling spray of the colliding surf upon the water-soaked deck of his broken ship. Treacherous swells splashed upon him. A Cape Horn chill entered his bones.

Wet in a freezing rain, the psalmist attributed his passage in this treacherous storm to Almighty God. He felt like his Lord stirred up the lawless waves because of his sins, and that his Captain threw him overboard to let him drown under the swells of His wrath.

He did not feel like "goodness" and "mercy" would follow him all the days of his life, but that cold punishment and iron justice was his fate.

The Psalmist's Loneliness

8 Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.

At this point the reader might be looking for that seed of faith that springs up from the bedrock of hope, but the psalmist continues to describe the pain from the sword that pierced his gut. Not only had God abandoned him, his fellow sailors deserted him. When he needed a fellow marine, he discovered his shipmates were AWOL.

Shallow friends need but a little excuse to vacate their duty. When Christians love wealth and health more than suffering, they cannot be expected to stand by you in your trials. Most Christians would rather visit the house of dancing than the house of the dying.

He had no companion to wipe the tears from his eyes. He was not only misunderstood and under appreciated by his contemporaries, he was an abomination to them; that is, they didn't like his stands; didn't appreciate his opinions; and didn't tolerate his holy values.

His heart pounded inside his chest as he heard the rumblings of advancing armies.

Like there was no room for Christ in the inn; no room for Him in the temple; no room for Him in Nazareth; no room for him in Jerusalem, there was no room in this ugly world for this beautiful saint. Like the Savior, he was made to feel “despised and rejected of men” (Isaiah 53:3ff).

The Psalmist’s Grief

9 Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

The psalmist now describes the effect of this affliction on his eyes.

Black bags, deep circles, and salty tears gathered like a winter storm around his teary eyes. Like mourners dressed in black wailing over the death of loved one, his two eyes stared at the coffin that begged for his soul.

The mortal wound festering within was the realization that though he had prayed day and night. . . his God remained silent!

Where is the living God when I need Him?

There was no word of comfort, no sense of His presence, no realization of his promises—only the whistling sounds of pale death. Like tiny bits of grit biting the weathered boards of an abandoned windmill, the realization of unanswered prayer sand-blasted his soul. He bowed. He stood. He raised his hands. He pleaded. He begged. But, heaven was as indifferent as a black jury to a white man’s plea.

Thus, the greatest agony that any soul will ever experience is the silence of God. Abandoned by men we can barely understand, but abandoned by Him who is faithful and true is beyond comprehension. The former bruises our fellowship with men; the latter bashes our faith in God.

The Psalmist’s Deductive Argument

10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah.

The psalmist dons his lawyer’s robe to advance his case before an adversarial Jurist. With impeccable wisdom, he marshals his best logic to query his silent Judge. Because His glory is at stake, he argues his cause to shake this Court loose from its judicial indifference. His inductive argument offers a strong premise on which to base a conclusion. Since the dead don’t praise Thee, keep me alive so I can sing Thy praises.

To this pilgrim, there is no glory, no praise, and no honor in death. Death is an enemy. It is the end of the journey. He needs God . . . in this life . . . in this circumstance . . . at this moment!

He needs answered prayer NOW! He does not ask for miracles after his death, but for God to move immediately and to show himself faithful in the present. He longs for his Lord to move in his hour of need so that he can praise Him and boast of God’s saving power.

How can a man rejoice in his Creator when He is silent and indifferent to the pain of His children? If God doesn't move and answer his prayer, what is the difference between the LORD God of Israel and the idols of Egypt? How can a man glorify an indifferent, uncaring, impotent deity that remains stone cold, bored stiff, and anvil-hard in a time of need?

"Selah" to many means to "stop and think about this."

11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction?

There are no hymns, no songs, and no choruses in a sepulcher. Praise belongs to the living gathered together in halls of worship — not mourners staring at death. There are no beams of light in the shadows, no dew on the desert sand, no rain over the bottom lands.

Likewise, there is no praise among the dead, among the defeated, among the destitute, or among men ruined by unanswered prayer and failed hopes. Worms and maggots devouring his corpse is a not a testament to the greatness of God.

While our psalmist lacks the perspective of men living on this side of resurrection Sunday, it is a powerful argument; and, the psalmist uses it to jar loose this reluctant Deity.

12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

Men need light to see. Needles are threaded and blankets are weaved during the day. Daytime is the time to plow the field, to plant grain, to water crops, to reap the harvest, and to market commodities. Great inventions and public announcements are made under spotlights, not in dark shadows and dingy alleys.

A living dog is better than a dead lion. A happy child is better than a dead warrior.

Likewise, the psalmist argues he would be in a better position to glorify God with answered prayer than in a dungeon of unanswered pleas.

In an age when men conveniently forget God, will a record of unanswered prayer by those who seek His presence glorify him?

People develop amnesia when they focus on sin and not the Word of God.

Will the exit of this saint from the stage of life give Him more representation and more honors?

Will the silence of this psalmist cause more men to worship and glorify God?

No, says the psalmist. No! No! No! Righteousness is not enhanced by the forgetfulness of God among men. If God remains silent, and the psalmist has no evidence of God's faithfulness, how can he glorify his Father in Heaven before a jury of skeptics?

This is a powerful argument, and the psalmist uses it.

The Psalmist's Unstoppable-Pleading Continued

13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

This psalmist was not devoted to idols, or stone carvings, or strange urban-philosophies. He was not an unfaithful, perverted, whining sheep trying to get the attention of His Shepherd. He was not in search for power from mother earth or good omens from an alignment of the stars. He did not run to a psychotherapist for comfort. He cried to the living God, the true God, to YHWH the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Yes, he was a weak, flawed saint, but nevertheless he was a saint going to the right God.

Despite the silence and cold indifference of his Shepherd, he did not resign from pouring out his personal, private petitions to His God. The coldness of his circumstances did not chill his passion for prayer.

Because he was Jehovah's sheep, he could not help but bleat . . . and bleat he would until God answered his prayer. Trapped in a thicket of thorns, all you could hear from this little ram was "Baaa . . . baaa . . . baaa."

This was no fair-weather Christian. The psalmist's commitment to God was not like Jell-O nailed to the wall. He did not have all chocolate syrup and butter-cream pie in his soul. A true Israelite indeed, the man chewed on the rawhide of Scripture.

What we have here is a contest between a scrappy servant and His tough unyielding Master—a championship wrestling match more exciting than two warriors contending for the coveted belt of the WWF . . . more thrilling than a match between Hulk Hogan and the Rock; between the slamming power of the Undertaker and raw, bone-crushing holds of the Terminator.

Like Jacob, the Heel Grabber, the Wily Weasel from the Wilderness of Beersheba, the Grand Slam from Padan Aram, this psalmist determined to throw an ankle lock on the King of kings, a.k.a. the Lord of lords and the Lion of Judah. He placed a headlock on his Challenger and was not going to let go until His Champion blessed him.

Like the disciples, the psalmist persevered, "Where else shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Thus, we have the main lesson of this psalm. We do not have a promise of deliverance to claim or an example of answered prayer to praise, but a life—a life of one saint who modeled to us, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15).

Silent He may be, but prayerless I will not be!!!! I will not give up! I will not resign. I will not quit until he blesses me!

The whole argument can be summed up by this—if the believer dies naked and in despair, how will God's honor be preserved?

An argument for the glory of God is impossible to resist by the One who exhorted us "with one mind and one mouth to glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 15:6).

The Psalmist Inductive Argument

14 LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?

Now we come to one of the toughest questions in Scripture: “Why do you cast off my soul?” It is a deceptive argument. Here is my conclusion supported by the following facts.

This is not a question for the fainthearted. There is no room for human pride in this query. “Why” questions are designed to hold another accountable and are usually inappropriate to be asked by the creature to the Creator. But, not in this storm.

This question can only be raised by a saint seeking perfection and holiness; by a child of God ready to judge his bosom sins. It is quite possible that the all wise, all holy, all loving Savior is seeking to expose some small defect in the soul that prevents His blessing, or it is possible the One perfect in holiness seeks to develop a virtue in the heart of the chastised that commands His attention. Moreover, it is possible that His delay will bring more glory to Himself than an instantaneous answer.

Will You Who lead me to the Savior in my youth not guide me now in my old age? If you chose me in eternity past, will You now reject me in present time? Will You Who called me to the marriage supper of the Lamb now write out a bill of divorcement? What kind of God encourages us to trust Him and then drops his child through His hands to be broken on pavement below? Why do you hide your face from me?

Thus, the psalmist lays hold of the character of God. The very character of God and His reputation is at stake — another powerful argument.

15 I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

What a long trail of tears!

His affliction and disappointment with God had lasted so long he could not remember a day without anguish. But, more than fear and anguish, his experience felt like something out of the Twilight Zone . . . like the terror of being swept overboard during a savage storm at sea. The oceans swells and howling winds across white-capped waves aroused shock and panic.

In fact, we get the idea that the more the psalmist prayed, the deeper he sunk into the mire; the more light he sought, the darker the night; the more he struggle, the tighter the chains, the more he rowed the more the crashing waves forced him to the ocean floor. Here is a saint experiencing the opposite of answered prayer – the terror of being abandoned by God.

“Alone on a wide wide sea:

So lonely ’twas, that God himself

Scarce seemèd there to be” (Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 1834 Text).

16 Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. 17 They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

His days were not lamb chops and sweet corn, but beans and rice. Like a man overboard in the cold tempest sea, the psalmist sinks beneath the waves in an ocean without shores. He owes his bitter state to the wrath of God upon him. He is in a hell abandoned by God.

But, though his perceptions are correct, his conclusions are wrong!

The One who poured out all His wrath for our sins upon His Son at the cross has not one drop of wrath left for you and me. Disciplined severely, yes; objects of His wrath, never!! Overcome by grief may be the portion of some saints, but overcome by waves of His wrath it shall never be! A child of God may indeed find himself swirling in maelstrom of a dark, blue sea, but he will never find himself abandoned by God.

“I will never, never, no, never, never forsake thee” promised the Lord (Hebrews 13:5). There are five negatives in this verse and it is the strongest way in Greek to stress a negation. Selah!

The Psalmist's Unresolved Troubles

18 Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

Surrounded by sunshine-Christians and fair-weather friends, the psalmist sees himself caught in a riptide carried out to an endless, lonely sea away from the safety of the shore and the fellowship of men. He loves the church, but local churches do not love him.

The psalm has a strange ending . . . in fact, there is no ending at all.

There is no closure, no conclusion, no relief, and no grand lesson to apply.

The last glimpse we have of this troubled man is ON HIS KNEES beseeching his reluctant God to solve his troubles. He does not drop out or pull out. He does not quit, resign, or vacate. If necessary he will die pleading his case. He is the unstoppable iron-man.

The problem is that we are connoisseurs' of movies and childhood stories wherein nearly all “live happily ever after.” When we find ourselves in the pit of despair we are stunned and shocked. Potholes in the road of life do not fit our fairyland model of golden superhighways.

Consequently, when we have a “Disneyland” view of life, we are unprepared for the trials on the journey God has prepared for us.

Thus, this psalm is a reality check; that is, if you find yourself praying day and night for relief from some difficulty, you may not be on the wrong road. In fact, you may be right in the middle of God's will for you . . . the exiles were.

If you feel like you are lost in a dark storm being sucked under by a violent sea, know that your experience is not an isolated case; that the finest of saints have cried, “all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me” (Psalm 42:7); that God's best have been refined in the furnace of affliction (Psalm 48:10); that diamonds are formed under intense pressure; that those God uses mightily, He bruises deeply.

The one consolation we can gather from this psalm is the Lord Jesus drank the full cup of the wine of the wrath of God that not one drop might fall on you and me. Jesus knew the ultimate darkness and despair and abandonment expressed by the psalmist. And, if we are in this storm and feeling forsaken as we are sucked under the waves, know that the Great Shepherd of the Sheep is allowing us the privilege to fellowship with Him in His suffering who endured the cross to save us from our sins.

Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

The dearest saints have endured the darkest nights. The insights they gained and the consolation they felt, have become our comforts.

If we have no troubles, we would have no triumphs. Not tests, no testimony!

But, it is not troubles we fear, but His truancy in the midst of those troubles that breaks our heart. Jesus asleep in the boat is one matter, Jesus on the distant shore while we are in a storm is quite another.

If you feel like God's blessing has evaded you like skinny on a fat lady, then pray this prayer.

It is in the deepest, darkest pits that our faith is tested the most. If we learn nothing else from this psalm, let us model the psalmist and strengthen our grip on the only One who can answer our prayer and give us rest.

Hast Thou No Scar

by Amy Carmichael

Hast thou no scar?

*No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand?
I hear thee sung as mighty in the land,
I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star,
Hast thou no scar?*

Hast thou no wound?

*Yet, I was wounded by the archers, spent.
Leaned me against the tree to die, and rent
By ravening beasts that compassed me, I swooned:
Hast thou no wound?*

No wound? No scar?

*Yet as the Master shall the servant be,
And pierced are the feet that follow Me;
But thine are whole. Can he have followed far
Who has no wound nor scar?*

Psalm 89 - Merry Christmas to the Exiles in Babylon

“My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.”



This psalm is entitled “Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.”

Strong’s says the word “maschil” refers to a poem of contemplation or instruction.

“Ethan” is proclaimed the author of this psalm. He was from the family of Ezrahites — grandsons of Judah: Ethan, Heman, Zimri, Calcol, and Dara mentioned in 1 Chronicles 2:6 — Judah-Tamar, Perez, Hezron and Hamul. The sons of Zerach: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara, five in all.”

If these were the persons referred to, then the period of the composition of these psalms was early in the history of Israel — before David. But, this doesn’t seem plausible. Most likely it was written by a grandson with the same name who composed this psalm sometime around the exile. Compare with 1 Chronicles 2:6-12.

David was a precious, powerful king and the Hope that the Messiah, David’s Greater Son, was the Expectation of Israel — a hope choked in the dust of the Babylonian Exile.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was the darkest period in the history of the nation. The deportation to Babylon threatened the precious promises made to David. His “crown” had been “profaned” and “cast to the ground” (89:38-44). Though this promise appeared to be completely abrogated, Ethan underscores the Davidic Promise as still in effect!! Ethan, a descendent of Judah, rises in faith to instruct the defeated Jews that God will, in some miraculous way, fulfill the Davidic Covenant.

In one sense, this is Ethan’s “Christmas Message” to the captives during their long winter in Babylon. It shows the miracle of Christmas, the anticipation of the Messianic Promises given to David. Ethan romances the diamond of the Messianic Promise against the black velvet of the Babylonian captivity.

To appreciate this psalm one must perceive the wonder of the Messianic Promise given to David (2 Samuel 7:1-17) and the thundering threat the Babylonian Exile had on this precious Pledge. Dark, thick, clouds with thunder and lightning rolled in like a hurricane during the captivity forecasting death and doom over the Messianic Hope.

Luke 1:28-32 And the angel came . . . and said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be

called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

Matthew 1:6 And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias . . .

Matthew 1:17 So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

Acts 15:16 After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:

Ethan's Christmas Message to the Exiles in Babylon

The Diamond Promise Made to David Regarding the Messianic Hope (1-37)

Psalm 89:1 <Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.> I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

The mercies of the Lord encompass the coming of Christ and the "sure mercies of David" (2 Chronicles 6:42, Isaiah 55:3-9, Psalm 132:1, Acts 13:34).

Yes, the exile dumped cold water on the fire of the Messianic Hope, but it did not nullify God's faithfulness, mercy, or ability to fulfill His promise to David!

"sing of the mercies of the LORD" is Ethan's way of instructing the defeated Israelites to walk by faith (in the Promise and Power of God) and not by sight (in the chains of captivity).

2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

Ethan assures the people that the Davidic Promise is written in Heaven . . . that it is as unshaken and unvacillating as the sun, moon, and stars.

3 I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,

"covenant" and "sworn" refer to God's oath to raise up the Messiah through David. David was the "chosen" one; that is, the promise is inextricably, indivisibly, and intrinsically bound to the eternal, indestructible, unchanging character of the LORD.

4 Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

Terms like “establish for ever” and “build up” and “to all generations” confirm the immutability of the Promise. Ethan pounds his finger on 2 Samuel 7 saying, “God said it. It must be true. It will be done! He is under an oath to fulfill this promise.”

5 And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.

Yes, the captivity cast shadows of doubt over the Messianic Promise, but this Promise is proclaimed by the invariable heavens testifying to the unchanging nature and eternal faithfulness of the LORD.

6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?

Ethan appears to apologize for comparing the faithfulness of God to faithfulness of the heavens, but it was the best he could do. In reality nothing can be compared to the fixed, invariable, permanent, eternal, enduring, uniform, persistent, unwavering, lasting, and undeviating character of God. Israel’s circumstances had changed for the worse, but God does not change for better or worse. Therefore, His promise to David was still in effect!

7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

Ethan instructs his brethren that they are not to fear there is a breach in the promise because of their bitter circumstances, but to fear God and to rely on His faithfulness.

8 O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

Because He is the “LORD God of hosts,” the God of Heaven’s and earth’s armies, His power will resurrect the buried Promises and fulfill them; that is, all His power is still available to fulfill the Messianic Hope.

9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

If God can still the waves of the raging sea, He can calm the political storm that walloped Israel where the tsunami of judgment swept them away to Babylon; that is, He can bring Israel back to the land. And, He did!

10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

“Rahab” refers to a storm or a mythical sea monster — a metonym for Egypt or Pharaoh.

He broke Rahab and led Israel out of Egypt to the Holy Land; and, He can do it again from Babylon!

11 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.

If God can dispose of the heavens and the earth as He wills, He can intervene in the muddled world of politics to fulfill His covenant with David.

12 The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

Because He created the north and south and everything in between, He controls all that is going on in Babylon. In the end, Mount` Tabor and Mount Hermon will rejoice in the coming Messiah. And, they did in our Lord's visitation to earth in His day.

Mt. Tabor in the west and Mt. Hermon in the east, both objects of majesty and grandeur, were created by God. Since He controls what he creates, He controls not only Israel, but Babylon. As the mountains honor His majesty and power, so the exile in Babylon will end up glorifying the LORD.

13 Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand.

Utilizing anthropomorphism as a literary device, Ethan assures His defeated people that they are still in the palm of His hand; still under His power; that His hand is still in control of international affairs.

14 Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

Since justice, mercy, and truth are the foundation of His throne, God will use His position and power to fulfill the Messianic Promise.

15 Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

Those among His people who hear the joyful sounds of His justice, mercy, and truth will smile in the face of death and walk in the light of His powers . . . and, not live in despair because their circumstances changed with the exile.

16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

Their joy was not in their circumstances in Babylon, but in the Name of the LORD God . . . in His character . . . in His righteousness and faithfulness.

17 For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.

"glory" = ornament; and "horn" speaks of the power of a king.

This is Ethan's way of instructing his brethren to rejoice in the strength of the Lord and not worry about their weakness in figuring out how to return to the Holy Land. Eventually, in God's timing, He will exalt our cause. The Messiah will appear and deliver the people.

18 For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.

Ethan informs his people that the LORD is their defense; that the Holy One of Israel is their king . . . not Nebuchadnezzar . . . that the King of Israel is in control of world affairs and not the governments of this world.

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

Ellicott and Benson agree that the “holy one” refers to Nathan, the Prophet, who delivered the Messianic Promise to David.

Ethan reminds his people that God gave the Messianic Promise to David through Nathan the Prophet and other prophets by means of dreams and visions.

20 I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

Saul was chosen by the people. David was chosen by God.

It was God who found David among the sheepfolds, taught him, and anointed him to be king of Israel. David did not obtain power by political prowess or the lawless methods of assassination, but by the election of God — an inference that the Lord would usher in His Messiah in the land of Israel in His time; that is, the Jews will return to Palestine and rebuild the nation.

21 With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.

Since God chose David, and appointed him to be king over the nation, it was God who strengthened him, protected him, and provided for him. Therefore, God will do what is necessary to fulfill His Promise to David. And, He did on that first “Christmas” morning (Luke 1:28-32).

David was a type of Christ. What He did for him, He will do for His Greater Son, the Messiah.

22 The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

“exact” (nasha) is a commercial term relating to usury or the exaction of a debt.

Babylon will not profit or exact a profit by its extortion of Israel. Though treated as slaves in Babylon, God would not allow the Babylonians to treat them as debtors or act as debt collectors trying to extract a debt one cannot pay.

God’s purposes are not weakened, threatened, hindered, or frustrated by the belching and boasting of government officials or the ups and downs on the sea of politics. Nebuchadnezzar’s deportation of Jews to Babylon did **not** disrupt the LORD’s Messianic Agenda. “You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Genesis 50:20).

23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. 24 But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

Beating “down his foes” is a reference to destroying David’s enemies.

Ethan reminds the people that God made a promise to David to defend him and protect him, and that He will defend and protect the promises made to David even though he is now dead. The protection he provided for David, He would provide for the Jews in Babylon. Since Babylon is an enemy, the remnant could expect to see God’s plague upon this Euphrates nation sometime in the future.

25 I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.

Ethan uses a commercial metaphor of exacting payment of debt like a creditor pushing a debtor into “the sea” or “to the rivers” to demonstrate that no matter how ruthless Israel’s creditors become “exacting debt to the last inch” of a man’s capacities, God will protect, preserve, and provide for His people . . . even in usury- driven Babylon.

“rivers” = the Mediterranean Sea, Euphrates and Tigris Rivers.

26 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. 27 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

David was a type of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is called God’s Firstborn (Colossians 1:15-18).

“firstborn” – a reference to David being the first and foremost of Israel’s faithful kings . . . of the earth’s great kings . . . a man beloved in the eyes of the Lord . . . a man favored above all the earth’s kings.

David accomplished a touching conquest over all these territories because He looked to God as His Father . . . a foundation upon which Christ expanded His theology of God, our Father Who art in Heaven.

28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

A reference to the “sure mercies of David” — the grounds of confidence and unshaken assurance that God will do what He promised to David. And, He did in the birth of the Savior in Luke 2.

29 His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

“His seed” refers to the Lord Jesus Christ and to His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension into heaven to sit at the right hand of the Father — a fulfillment of God’s Promise to Eve, Abraham, Jacob, Judah, David, and Mary.

First, God gave the Promise to the whole world through Eve (Genesis 3)

Second, God narrowed the Promise to a nation through Abraham (Genesis 12).

Third, God identified the Promise coming through a tribe — the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49).

Fourth, God narrowed the Promise to come through a family — the family of David (2 Samuel 7).

Fifth, the Messiah was born to a virgin, a daughter of Nathan, the son of David (Luke 3) and inherited His right to be king from His stepfather, Joseph the son of David and Solomon (Matthew 1).

30 If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; 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. 33 Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

A reference that God would be faithful to David and His promises regardless of the failure of his sons to keep God's law; that is, the sins and failures of the latter kings before the exile did not and could not prevent God's intent to bless the line of David till the Messiah arrived in history.

Luke 9:35 And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

34 My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips³⁵ Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

Ethan reminds the people that God is not a covenant breaker; that in this case, the covenant to David came wrapped up in the red ribbons of unconditional promises . . . and dressed up in swaddling clothes.

When God takes an oath, it cannot be broken; that is, He puts ALL His integrity, truth, and power behind all His promises . . . especially the "sure mercies of David."

Matthew 1:22-23 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

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 a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

His seed refers to the Abrahamic seed — a reference to the world being blessed by the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who could have foreseen the coming of Christ, His birth through Mary, His death at the hands of Pilate, His resurrection from the dead, and His glorious ascension as a Faithful Witness to execute judgment on His enemies from the right hand of the Father? That the throne in Jerusalem would be transferred to heaven; that David's greater son was the eternal Son of God, Savior, and Judge of all mankind; that is, the fulfillment was greater than the promises.

Ethan romances the diamond against the black velvet of the Babylonian captivity.

Velvet = the dark cloud of the exile that hid the hope of the Davidic Promise

In the first part of this psalm Ethan revisits the bright Promises given to David. In this section, he contrasts these sunbeam Promises with the doom and darkness of the destruction of Jerusalem, the exile, and the Babylonian captivity — a perspective from the bewildered, confused, doubting eyes of the captives in exile — midnight darkness indeed.

But, Ethan was not disconnected from reality. He wasn't plukin' harps on Fantasy Island singing, "All You Need is Love." He too was trying to shake off the dust of defeat, of being homeless, faithless, and hopeless in a foreign land, under a foreign king, under foreign law. Reality smacked him in the face every day and his brethren were quick to remind Him that their circumstances in Babylon provided all the evidence they needed to conclude that God had

forsaken them. Only by reading and re-reading the inspired Scriptures could Ethan conclude the Messianic Promises were true and that their material circumstances were a lie.

Oh, the cold darkness that preceded the birth of Christ: The curse on Adam, Noah's flood, the confusing birth of Ishmael, the mistreatment of Jacob, the incest of Judah and Tamar, Israel's enslavement in Egypt, wars against the nation, Athaliah's infanticide of the royal nursery, the Jeconiah curse, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in 586 B.C., the 70 year exile in Babylon, the difficulty of the return and rebuilding of the temple, the rage of Antiochus Epiphanes, the Hellenization of Israel, the madness of Herod the Great and His slaughter of infants in Bethlehem. How Jesus the Messiah was born in history at the right time, in right place, and to the right family with His genealogy intact and free of Adam's curse is a miracle of history. Merry Christmas, indeed!

38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.

Ethan now speaks for the captives. In their minds God had forsaken them . . . in anger. Anger, yes; but, forsaken, no.

39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground.

In the mind of the survivors, God nullified, broke, and abrogated His Promise to David . . . to the prophets . . . to the nation.

40 Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.

In the minds of the captives, God removed His protection from the nation and the land . . . even destroying its defenses.

41 All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbours.

Consider the destruction of Jerusalem and its archaeological ruins.

In the eyes of the captives, they lost everything of value — their personal assets, houses and possessions; their capital city, temple, religion, and nation. In their minds, they were plundered by every pickpocket, petty thief, porch climber, prowler, and pillager on earth.

42 Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

Oh, the shame of sitting in despair, despondency, depression, and dejection watching your enemies rejoice, party, sing, boast, swagger, dance, skip, and frolic over their victory.

43 Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.

From the eyes of the captives, God abandoned their soldiers to join the forces of the enemy. Their swords missed their mark; their arrows hit the dirt instead of the enemy . . . a work of God against the people.

44 Thou hast made his glory 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.

The glory, reputation, and fame of the nation were smothered in Babylon's siege of Jerusalem. Israel was truly decimated, defanged, depleted, and defeated.

The Intense Plea for God to Restore the Messianic Hope

Though Israel's defeat was real and substantial, Ethan leads the nation to rely upon the God who struck them.

46 How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself for ever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

The question is not "if" they will recover, but "how long" till they recover. God's wrath burned for 70 years against the nation, and then the ambers of wrath died out in 536-519 B.C.

Remember, Israel's 70 years of servitude to Babylon (606-605 B.C. to 539-536 B.C.) -Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10; and the 70 years of desolation — a forced sabbatical rest (589-586 B.C. to 519-516 B.C.) – 2 Chronicles 36:19-21.

47 Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? 48 What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

The meaning is clear. My time on earth is short. Soon, I must die. If I am to see your promises fulfilled, it must happen soon.

All men are mortal. All die. There comes a time when the promises of God to men die with the man. Act now . . . in my time so I may rejoice in Your Hope. This is my time, my day, my short life. Show yourself true to Your promises in my hour of need.

49 Lord, where are thy former lovingkindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?

A question on every Jewish exile's mind was where is the kindness, mercy, and love you promised to David . . . to us. . . to the sheep of your pasture? Darkness abounds; show me the light. It's cold; where is the warmth of your love?

50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; how I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people; 51 Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

The reason for the above question (49) rested in their painful circumstances. Instead of honor, they felt disgrace; instead of respect, they felt shame; instead of comfort, they felt pain; instead of light, they were surround by darkness; instead of joy and freedom, they felt the cold rattling chains of slavery. Therefore, the psalmist prays that God might remember their affliction and restore them to a place of favor . . . of honor . . . and of peace.

"footsteps" – Where ever I go, what every I do, I hear the mocking and taunting of my oppressors . . . I feel the heavy breathing of my enemies down my neck . . . sneering at my faith . . . and criticizing my God.

"They have reproached my footsteps"; that is, they have followed me with reproaches – treading and marching along behind me insulting my religion. What advantage is it to be a God-fearing man?

52 Blessed be the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

Out of darkness and doom, out of defeat and discouragement comes a feeble rebuke of unbelief:
“Blessed be the LORD for evermore.”

Out of the Euphrates Valley come the faint sounds of the remnant, Amen, and Amen! The Psalmist is not alone! There are many others that believe God is true and that the blessed Promises Regarding the Messiah will be fulfilled; . . . and, they were on Christmas Day circa December 25, 2 B.C.

“Out of the darkness, white lilies grow.”

Merry Christmas — our Lord is the Miracle of History.

Book 4 (Psalm 90-106):

Psalm 106:48 has this final text: "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD."



Psalm 90 - A Prayer of Moses

A Glance at the Wrath of God



The psalm is attributed to Moses and there is nothing in this song to suggest it was not originally composed by him.

Barnes quotes Professor Alexander saying,

“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; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author.”

Possibly, this psalm was one of the last utterances of Moses before the Lord took him home.

The theme of this psalm is the brevity of life and the enduring character of the LORD God. It sheds light on what is really important in life and what the focus of men should be. Moreover, this psalm lays the foundation upon which the gospel is built. It features His attribute of wrath — a virtue of God and a subject of worship. It is good news that the Lord is just and that wrongdoing angers Him. That God is one, great big mush ball of sun-baked, honey-coated love-raisins comes from the cereal boxes of Modern Heresy, Inc.

The message of this psalm is that life is temporal; therefore, prepare for eternity. It is the voice of law, not grace; a prayer from a man who saw the severity of God; of a man who wished for grace but experienced wrath. The warm sunshine of grace had to await the arrival of our Lord Jesus Christ in history.

The apostle Paul commanded us “to behold the goodness and severity of God.” Here we behold the severity of God — the forerunner of the grace. Wrath jogs into the stadium in the final lap of the race, but grace kicks into gear and sprints ahead of wrath to the surprise and delight of all men.

A Message about Law, Sin, and Wrath

Psalm 90:1 <A Prayer of Moses the man of God.>

The inscription, “the man of God” is assigned to Moses in Deuteronomy 33:1; Joshua 14:6; and Ezra 3:2 as a rubric denoting that he was faithful to God; that he was a man called by God to organize the redeemed nation around the laws of Sinai.

The Faithfulness of God

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.

The title “Lord” (adonai) refers to One who is Master, Lord, Judge, and Commander. He is Lord of all men and all nations. The Name “YHWH” (LORD) is his personal, covenant name — the name used privately by those who have taken an oath of devotion to live under His authority.

“dwelling place” means “refuge,” but it is more than this. It refers to men who build their nest near the house of God — to walk with Him, live with Him, delight in Him, and to rest with Him.

“all generations” means that men and women in every age have found Him to be faithful to his promises; that they take refuge in Him from the storms of life.

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.

Going back in history as far as our minds can go, mountains come into view; that is, and mountains are the first identifiable objects of creation. But, as we look over the wall of creation as far as our eyes can see, God is there. He is the eternal, everlasting one. From eternity past to eternity future, He is there. Before the mountain came into being God was. Before the first tick on the clock of time, God is. Time is temporal, He is eternal. The wise do not measure life in terms of minutes or hours for there are no days or years in eternity.

Thou art God” or “Thou, O God.” He was, He is, and ever will be the true God, the only God, the absolute, unchangeable, everlasting, infinite, personal, virtuous triune Spirit – the God of Creation; the God of the Holy Scripture; the God of Israel / Church; and, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Frailty of Man

3 Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

The word “destruction” (dakka) means “dust.”

In contradistinction to the everlasting God and His unchangeable nature stands mortal man who morphs constantly and then dies. God is not only the Author of life; He is the Author of death. He is not only the Great Creator, He is also the Great Eliminator: “From dust thou art and to dust shall thou return;” “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

By His grace, He gives men unalienable rights at birth; and in death he rescinds those rights.

4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

Moses shows us God’s perspective of time. People want to live a long time. Methuselah lived 969 years, but in God’s mind, he did not last a single day.

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.

“flood,” “sleep,” and “cut down” are metaphors for death.

The word “carriest them away”: The verb (zaram) means, “to flow, to pour;” then, “to pour upon, to overwhelm, and to wash away.”

Moses draws upon the life cycle of “grass” as a symbol of our short-lived life. Like mowed grass rich and poor, known and unknown, educated and uneducated are suddenly cut down by the Cutter’s scythe.

The word “sleep” is chosen because man’s short life resembles sleep. While awake he works. When he gets tired, he goes to sleep. All the goals, visions, and hope for day disappear at bedtime.

The basic truth here is that death does not discriminate between men and women, rich or poor, the common man or the talented man. Regardless of their rank, condition, or status, death conquers all.

7 For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

The word “anger” (aph) refers to one with flared nostrils — an angry man or animal. The word “wrath” (chemah) refers “to rage” “to burning anger,” or “to poison.” Both His anger and His wrath are virtues of God worthy of praise and worship.

Kyrie, eleison (mercy).

Christe, eleison.

Kyrie, eleison.

Dies irae, dies illa (Day of wrath, day of anger)

Solvat saeculum in favilla (will dissolve the world in ashes . . .)

The trumpet will send its
wondrous sound
throughout earth’s sepulchres
and gather all before the throne.

A book will be brought forth,
in which all will be written,
by which the world will be
judged.

[Mozart \(Requiem\)](#)

In this psalm, Moses connects the sorrows of death with the dark cloud of God’s anger. Death is associated with the Creator’s wrath; that is, death in relation to mankind is a reflection of His wrath. Were it not for sin, there would be no death. God forgives sins, but he does not forgive sin.

All suffering is the result of sin, and death proceeds from the wrath of God. However, there is no reason this text should be applied specifically to an individual. It would be wrong to view every death as a specific judgment of God against the personal sins of individual men. We must take it generally; that is, death is the unwanted plague of all humanity.

“anger,” “wrath,” and “death” are almost metonyms.

8 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

The fact that life is so brief and man dies so soon after he is born can be explained on the supposition that God is true to his promises; that death is the result of sin as a principal working iniquity through the bodies of men; that God holds all men accountable; that all men are guilty; that there is none righteous, no not one.

9 For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

“For all our days are passed away in thy wrath”: The word “passed” (panah) means to “turn away from.” Here it means that our days come and go; they retreat from us never to return; that our days are unwilling to come back to us; that the anger of God takes away our days. The cutting off of life is proof all men are sinners . . . proof of Divine displeasure . . . proof that the whole human race is guilty of rebelling against the Creator. But, death is not proof that it is God’s judgment against the sins of the individual man.

10 The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Because of sin man’s life has been shortened to 70 years. If there be unusual vigor and vitality, some may live a little bit longer.

“strength labour and sorrow” refers to the summation of a man’s life.

The word rendered “labour” (amal) means “to toil;” that is, wearisome labor; that life with all its conflicts is burdensome; when a man’s soul is oppressed because of one’s own sin and the sins of others, he grows weary and exhausted.

The word “sorrow” (aven) means “nothingness, or vanity.” The idea here is that happiness is short lived and cannot be found in the ordinary course of life; more days does not necessarily mean more happiness. More time means more trouble and sorrow.

11 Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.

If death is the result of God’s wrath upon sin, and death is so final, who can measure the forever-nature of His wrath? What can be added to it? Thus, anger and wrath are the pallbearers that carry the casket to a graveyard that never wakes.

“The power of thine anger” seems commensurate with all that vast, eternal, and incomprehensible about God. Since God is eternal, his wrath must be eternal. Consequently, death appears to be absolute.

Fortunately, Moses does not leave God’s people in the Valley of Despair.

Focused Prayers to Pray

12 So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

The rapidity at which life passes stuns all men. Because of this fact, Moses prays that God may teach us to remember that our days are limited to that we might be able to live wisely.

13 Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

“repent” is a call “to change course.” “Return” means to reverse one’s path. Apparently, this psalm was written after some national crisis. Moses asks, how long shall your wrath burn against your people? Return, withdraw your wrath, and speak peace your people. And, He did in Christ: “Peace be unto you.”

14 O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. 15 Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.

“early” can be translated “in the morning.” Moses prays for mercy . . . for God to restrain His anger so that the people may rejoice and experience a measure of happiness during their short life.

16 Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

Moses prays that God will reveal his power and salvation to His servants and that their children might behold the glory of the Lord. And, this prayer was fully answered in Christ: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

The word “beauty” (no’am) means “pleasantness”; that is, let the beauty and grace of God be upon us.

This is not only a wish that the LORD might reveal the tender side of character to the people, but that they might see the Excellency of His character and the loveliness of His disposition.

And, He did in the Son: “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

Moses could not fully perceive the Son of God would go to the cross as our Champion to endure the wrath of God as a substitute for sinners in order that believing men might have eternal life and enjoy the beauty of the LORD forever?

Think of it. Christ suffered for our sins on the cross and endured the full heat and fury of the Father’s wrath against sin. If Christ died for our sins, how many sins are there left for us to pay for? If every drop of wrath was poured out on Christ, how many dribbles are left for us to endure?

Praise God for His mercy at Calvary!

Psalm 91 - The Soldier's Psalm

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High . . ."



This is a remarkable hymn with profound claims and extraordinary promises — promises that only Christ-lovers, cross-carriers, and covenant-keepers can feel and appreciate.

This psalm is not for light-weights, but for heavy-weights in faith. One should avoid looking at the psalm casually or linearly. A psalm quoted by our Lord, it deserves our deepest consideration, profound reflection, and sincere devotion.

David is credited with writing this psalm; that is, its inspired content was written by a man who experienced the horrors of the battlefield . . . but, it is relevant for every Christian as it expresses the work of salvation operating in the man who has filed his domicile in the kingdom of God.



The Old Veteran States His Confidence.

1 He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High (apodasis) shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty (protasis).

The old Veteran states the major lesson he learned in his fighting career: How to survive on the battlefield in deadly clashes against enemy troops.

This marvelous promise “abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (the apodosis) is conditioned upon whether one “dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High” (the protasis). It is not a promise to resident aliens visiting with a “green card” sleeping in the barracks with citizens of the kingdom.

This is no minor promise or fluky condition.

The word “dwelleth” (yashab) refers to the Christian-soldier who pitches his tent under the shadow of the Almighty. Not for a short time in a fox hole as spiritual life-insurance, but as his personal dwelling, his permanent residence, his homestead for life as a de jure kingdom citizen.

Many soldiers like to take leave and visit Satan’s Yum Yum palace, but this soldier separated himself from these pleasures in order to enjoy feeling the heartbeat of God under His wings in and off the battlefield.

The denomination “Almighty” comes from the Hebrew word “El Shaddai” (shadday). The term “Shaddai” is found in Genesis 17:1 — a cognate title derived from a term referencing a man’s muscular shoulder-chest — an icon of strength and power.

The title “Most High” (elon or el-yone) means “highest” or “most high” — a reference to the Supreme Commander of the Universe. A man will receive many orders from de facto authorities during his pilgrimage on earth, but this man listened for the orders of the Supreme Commander of the Universe in and off the battlefield. That is, not only does this soldier submit to his Captain in battle, but he is under the authority of the LORD during peace time for the whole of life.

Because he is in God’s kingdom and enjoys the life of the kingdom, he can afford to take risks. He has embraced death as part of God’s will. If it be God’s will for him to die as a hero on the front line of conflict, he knows that he has a permanent home with his Commander and Chief in Paradise.

The Young Soldier Hears and Answers:

2 I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

Based on the precious promise in verse one, the instructed soldier makes a wholehearted commitment to the LORD God: “He is my refuge and my fortress” on the battlefield and off the battlefield; in war and in peacetime; in sickness and in health, in riches or in poverty . . .

Peter expressed it this way: “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts . . . ” (1 Peter 3:15).

The Old Veteran Pledges the LORD’s Protection

3 Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence.

The experienced soldier brags about the LORD and shares his confidence to the new recruit that God will save this young marine from the fowler’s snare (enemy traps).

The adjective “noisome” refers to the covetous “desire” and the “engulfing strategies” of the enemy to capture and kill him.

The “fowler” refers to muscular enemies, scammers, and scheming politicians that seek to enslave the man and to plunder his property (Exodus 10:17).

The term “pestilence” refers to diseases, plagues, epidemics, infirmities, and battlefield tragedies. This soldier is not refusing medical assistance. Rather, he places his confidence in the sure promises of God rather than in the mutable promises of man.

Limitations: All the promises in this chorus belong to the el-gibbor (male soldier) who has made application to King Jesus for permanent domicile in the kingdom of God (shadow of his wings). These promises do not apply to nominal Christians or antinomians. They do not apply to women who put on the clothing of an el-gibbor (soldier). They belong to men (and women) who have surrendered their all-an-all to the Lord Jesus with a commitment to live under His law-order and his plan for men and for women. Rebels need not apply; that is, these promises are not relevant to the autonomous trooper committed to live life “his way” or “her way” (Isaiah 53:6).



4 He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy (big) shield and buckler (small shield).

The protection of Almighty God is compared to (a) a mother hen that shelters her chicks under her wings, and (b) to the soldier's shield and spear. The LORD is tough and tender; a gentle Savior for His helpless chicks, and an iron-fisted, Sherman tank to his enemies.

5 Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

Enemies attack during the day when one is awake, and at night when one is asleep.

The seasoned veteran shores up the promise in verse one with more assurances applicable to young soldiers

headed toward the bloody battlefield.

The terrors of the day would include attacks of advancing armies you can see; and, the terrors of the night would include cold, savage, death-raids under the cover of darkness; threats from the enemy during a battle, and the propaganda of the enemies while at rest; overt and covert operations.

The soldier under the shadow of His wings fears neither the terrors of the day nor the horrors of the night.

6 Nor for the pestilence (plagues) that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

If not facing enemies, the soldier has to deal with germ warfare, disease, contamination, and infection in the course of duty.

The term "destruction that wasteth" refers to "separation," a "cutting," or severing of arm and limb in the course of battle. Swords cut. A friend of God is not only protected, but he has superior weapons to employ against adversaries.

7 A thousand (Aleph = 1000) shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.

Hand-to-hand combat is a life and death struggle. In war, men die. The old combat soldier assures the trusting trooper that the mortal dangers of battle shall not "come near thee." While he has to be in the conflict as duty requires, the promise contains special protection.

8 Only with thine eyes () shalt thou behold (nabat) and see (ra'ah) the reward of the wicked.

Assurances continue. Without terror or danger to thyself, you shall see the "reward" of the wicked — defeat, humiliation, wounding, dismemberment, and crushed bones of men opposing the armies of God.

“Only with thine eyes” (rak ayin) is in the emphatic position in this sentence. You shall see the wicked shattered, but that evil shall not touch the one sheltered under the Shadow of His wings. You will see others fall, but the danger shall not come near you.

The word “reward” (shil’lumah) refers “to acquittal” or “retribution.”

There are two words used for perception: “behold (nabat) and see (ra’ah).” The adverb “Only” means “only, altogether, and surely;” it limits the verb. Some sins are judged now in time, and other sins are judged after death (1 Timothy 5:24). Look for it. Perceive it. Discern it.

**9 Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;
10 There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.**

The old soldier reminds the young warrior that this promise and these assurances are not for every soldier, but ONLY for the GI who makes the LORD his permanent defense and refuge.

The term “evil” does not refer to sin or moral transgression, but to the complex troubles and distresses of war.

The soldier that makes the LORD his shield and buckler can expect to be delivered in a battle from death because God will manage all his earthly concerns. Those that know God are immortal until their work is done.

This passage does not deny life’s paradoxes: A man may die young satisfied with life while the wicked man may not have enjoyed a single day of happiness in his long life.

This psalm does not say the Christian soldier will not have nights without sleep or days without hardship. The promise is for protection from destructive forces on the gridiron of conflict.

11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

This text is often used to address the subject of guardian angels, and rightly so. The soldier leaning on the everlasting arms can expect angels to come to his rescue (Acts 12).

Note: Satan quoted this verse “out of context” to Jesus when he challenged our Lord to jump off the pinnacle of the temple . . . but, Jesus put the promise in the proper context saying, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God;” that is, these promises are not for self-willed, presumptuous men. But, only for those soldiers that “dwell in the secret place of the most high” (91:1) making the “Most High their habitation” (1:9).

12 They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

“in thy hands” alludes to the tender care of a nurse carrying a baby in the palm of her hands.

“dash thy foot” against a stone refers to unseen, debilitating dangers due to the battle’s terrain.

13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder (cobra): the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

The lion and cobra are icons depicting vicious, dangerous attackers with lion-like powers and poisons of rattlesnakes. Lions can tear people to pieces; and cobras strike with deadly toxins in their fangs. Yet, none of these pernicious creatures with all their claws and venom can touch the

God-seeker until his work is done. With the power of God, he can tame the lion and defang the cobra.

As a way of application, let us remember the time the disciples came back from their mission stating enthusiastically, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." Jesus replied, "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." (Luke 10:19)

The LORD Confirms the Old Veteran's Pledge of Protection

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.

We have another abrupt change in person. God speaks! God does not speak "to him" (the young soldier) but "about him."

"The first voice said of himself, 'I will trust'; the second voice addresses that speaker, and says, 'Thou shalt not be afraid'; the third voice speaks of him, and not to him, and says, 'Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him'" (MacLaren).

These promises are phenomenal and beyond ordinary understanding because they are other-worldly. Even God-fearing men need Divine certification of the remarkable promises to empower soldiers of the cross to separate themselves from the bombastic drums of doubts blasting from carnal theaters that men can see and hear; and, to confidently purchase a ticket to heaven's opera to hear the assurances of singing angels that only faith can appreciate.

The conjunction "because" supplies the foundation of this confidence; that is, he is protected because he knows my name. The word "know" (yada) does not mean "to be informed" or "to know about" or to "possess knowledge of." The term "yada" implies to know God personally, in an intimate way. It is not about what a man claims. He may claim to know God, but the real question is does God know the man and recognize him a member of His flock (John 10:27).

This psalm ends with Divine confirmation of the old veteran's promise that the soldier who dwells near God's chapel shall be delivered in war; that is, God notarizes the old soldier's wisdom and verifies it with His spoken Word.

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.

War is full of distress, but God assures the young soldier that in his personal emergency and cries for help that "I will be with him in trouble" to deliver him.

16 With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.

The psalm ends with God's promise that the trusting soldier will not only survive, but thrive; that he will not only be supplied, but satisfied; and that he will not only have inspiration, but salvation; that the one who fears God can also enjoy Him; that the gospel not only promises eternal salvation from eternal enemies, but a measure of temporal salvation from earthly enemies.

Note #1: Is anyone more vulnerable than a soldier in combat?

This is a psalm written by a veteran soldier to a young recruit. Its special promises of protection are nothing short of spectacular.

As a literary masterpiece, Simon de Muis observed that Psalm 91 "is one of the most excellent works of this kind which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine anything more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented. Could the Latin or any modern languages express thoroughly all the beauties and elegancies as well of the words as of the sentences, it would not be difficult to persuade the reader that we have no poem, either in Greek or Latin, comparable to this Hebrew ode" (Quoted by Clarke).

Everyone has to die, but God promises eternal life to those who believe in Him (Romans 6:23).

The promises in this psalm are for protection in this life . . . in war . . . on the battlefield. We have to ask if the promises in this psalm are true and real or are they idealistic and fantastic?

The key to claiming these promises of protection and experiencing them is in verse one. These assurances for a shade of protection are not for every man in uniform. They are for the Christian man who dwells in the secret place with the Most High . . . for the young trooper who seeks to "dwell" with, make his home with, and to live under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The antagonist of trust in God is a culture that promotes, "You can do it," "Yes, we can," "Life is what you make of it," and "believe in yourself." Is there anyone in the military who will encourage a young recruit to "trust God?" More than likely, the drill instructor will say, "Trust your training."

The silver treasure in this psalm are the star light promises to the soldier who "dwells" in the "secret place of the Most High." So, what does the word "dwell" really imply?

The word "dwell" (yashab) literally means "to sit" or to be "sitting" in the secret place to study Another. It is composed of the Hebrew letters: Yod Sheen Vet.

Yod: expresses the starting point or foundation of a man's life.

Sheen: expresses the choice where one builds

Vet or Bet means house.

The Hebrew word for "Almighty" (shaddai) refers to the masculine shoulder-arm-chest of a fighter.

Thus the verbal shows us a man he has chosen to build his house of under the shadow of the Almighty; that is, to lean on the muscle and might of Almighty God.

The word "dwell" is translated "Tarry ye here for us" in Exodus 24:14, "inhabitant of the land" in Exodus 34:12, "abide at the door of the tabernacle" in Exodus 8:25, "sit in the house" in Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19, "I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights," in Deuteronomy 9:9, "shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein" in Deuteronomy 17:14, "and shall remain in thine

house" in Deuteronomy 21:13, " like a lion lurking in secret places" Psalm 17:12, and "not sit with the wicked" in Psalm 26:5.

Dwelling in the secret place with God is the same thought as found in Psalm 1:1-2.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate (roar over) day and night."

It is the same ambition found in Psalm 27:4,

"One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."

"The secret place" (*satar*) is probably a reference to the "Holy of Holies" in the Tabernacle as the Temple is called "my secret place" ([Ezekiel 7:22](#)); that is, this is a reference to the man who seeks to be in the "presence" of the LORD God. The first Hebrew letter in "the secret place" is a *sameh(s)* which is shaped like a shield symbolizing protection.

Psalm 31:20 "In the cover of your presence you hide them from the plots of men; you store them in your shelter from the strife of tongues"

The Hebrew word for "shadow" is pronounced *batsale*. The first letter in the three letter word is Bet meaning "house." The second letter is a Tsade which stands for the righteousness of the law indicating a man who builds his house on righteousness under the shadow of the temple . . . the ark . . . and the law.

It is a promise for the one whose eye is on the dwelling place of the LORD, and whose mind meditates on the law of the LORD God (the Testimony) placed in the Ark of the Testimony which was stationed in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle ([Exodus 25:21](#); [25:22](#); [34:29](#); [38:21](#)).

There is a direct relationship between the presence of God and His law. To seek God one must also seek to know and obey His law.

The Torah is the objective expression of the character of the LORD God, and Jesus is the Living Torah, the subjective representation of God to man.

The purpose of every just war is the mass application of the death penalty on rebels against God's law-order. The soldier is the ultimate law enforcement officer with a message to enemies: "surrender to the rule of law or die!" Thus, there is no protection offered to the soldier who lives a life of rebellion against morals in his personal life.

The greatest lesson in David's life was when David learned that it was not foreign armies that were the greatest threat to Israel, but the nation's sins . . . and the judgment of an offended holy God that would be the undoing of the nation. A great military had no power to protect the nation from pestilence sent by the LORD. David learned the nation's safety rested in the ministry of propitiation, shed blood, and men reconciled to God by Levitical services. In Christian terms, safety is found near the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Samuel 24).

Psalm 91 contains intense promises, but they are only applicable to the intense man with an intense desire to know God and "abide" or lodge "under His wings." To this man God promises safety and protection in combat.

Its promises are not for perfect men. Rather, the promises are for those who possesses a pure, genuine, real desire to walk with God and to please him -- on duty and off duty. Further, the promises are not limited to soldiers. They apply to all who are surrounded by adversaries and pestilence.

Moreover, though one is injured or even dies on the battlefield, it would be an error to conclude the man is not a Christian or lacked a basic trust in his Creator. Death around us is God's call for the living to go deeper into Christ (B. Stockton).

Note #2 Adam Clarke has this to say about the structure of the psalm.

He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

"He that dwelleth in the secret place "- The Targum intimates that this is a dialogue between David, Solomon, and Jehovah. Suppose we admit this, - then David asserts: "He who dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," Psalm 91:1.

Solomon answers: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust," Psalm 91:2.

David replies, and tells him what blessings he shall receive from God if he abide faithful, Psalm 91:3-13.

Then the Supreme Being is introduced, and confirms all that David had spoken concerning Solomon, Psalm 91:14-16 : and thus this sacred and instructive dialogue ends.

Note # 3 Gill's long sentence is packed with golden thoughts about the meaning of verse one in Psalm 91:

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High . . . Or the Supreme; a title of God, who is superior to all beings, the Creator and Preserver of them, God over all, higher than the highest of angels or men; see [Genesis 14:22](#), "his secret place" is his heart, his bosom, where his only begotten Son lies; and into which he takes his people, where they are set as a seal, and who enjoy intimate communion with him; which is no other than his gracious presence, called "the secret of his presence", [Psalm 31:20](#), which none but saints are admitted to, when his everlasting love, which was a secret in his heart, is made known unto them, and in which they also dwell, [1 John 4:16](#), as they likewise do in the eternal decree of election; which perhaps is meant by "the clefts of the rock, and secret places of the stairs", where the church is said to dwell, Sol 2:14, unless rather Christ the Rock, and who may be signified by the cleft of that Moses was put into, when the goodness of the Lord passed before him, is intended; and who is the hiding place from the wind: mention is made of "the secret" of God's

"tabernacle", [Psalm 27:5](#), in which he hides his people; alluding to the tabernacle, or temple, and the most holy place in it, called his secret place, [Ezekiel 7:22](#), and may refer to the ministry of the word and ordinances, where saints dwell, and enjoy much communion with God; and who are particularly under his special providence, protection, and power; which may here be designed: shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty: who is able to do all things for his people, and is "Shaddai", all sufficient, as this word is thought to signify; has a sufficiency of happiness in and for himself, and of provisions for all his creatures, and of power and grace for his own children: his "shadow" may be the same with his secret place, his power and protection, often in this book of Psalms called "the shadow of his wings", [Psalm 17:8](#), in allusion to birds that overshadow and protect their young with their wings; though perhaps the allusion here may be to the shadow of a tree, and design the word and ordinances of the Lord's house, which are a delightful, refreshing, reviving, and fruitful shadow, Sol 2:3, where gracious souls dwell, and abide with great delight and pleasure. Christ, the Son of God, is sometimes compared to the shadow of a rock, or tree, which screens and shelters from heat; as he preserves his people from the heat of a fiery law, the flaming sword of justice, the wrath of God, the fiery darts of Satan, and the fury of persecutors: under this shadow do they abide or lodge all night, safe and secure, as the word (o) signifies: the Targum calls this shadow the shadow of the clouds of glory; the Arabic version, "the shadow of the God of heaven."

Note #4: This is a Messianic Psalm. One would do well to consider how this applies to Christ and those "in Him."

Note #5: The promises in this psalm are for every Christian who seeks shelter from the evils of our age under the shadow of His wings.

Note #6: I know of an older man who is very, very poor -- so poor he can't afford insurance for his automobile. When stopped by a cop who asked for his registration and insurance cards, he handed him a copy of Psalm 91. When the officer asked him what is this, the old man responded, "This is my insurance program." Selah.

Psalm 17:8 "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,"

Note # 7: These promises are not for the American females plying soldier, but for young military men (el-gibbors) doing their job protecting their families and nation. Females plying soldiers dressing in the military uniforms with rifles-in-hand are living in rebellion against God's law-order, and are, therefore, outside the protective promises of this psalm (Deuteronomy 22:5). However, these promises do apply to all women who fear the Lord seeking to live under God's law-order (Proverbs 31; Titus 2; 1 Peter 3:1-5).

Moreover, these promises do not apply to homosexual and transvestite soldiers because they have rejected the gospel and God's law-order (1 Corinthians 6:9ff).

Note: the United States Government is at war with Christianity, has rejected the Holy Scriptures, and introduced the religion of Sodomites and Feminists to the county -- an act of treason to the LORD God. Consequently, they put American soldiers in harm's way.

Note #8: This psalm is a slap in the face to the humanistic, Armenian man that generates slurs and ridicule. Moreover, many a Christian Father and Mother have had to bury a young son killed in battle -- a predicament that generates doubts and fears. Therefore, while this psalm is 100% true, the Lord's chaplain must avoid being cavalier about the promises, and minister with a humble spirit of faith and integrity to professional doubters and to those with sensitive, wounded hearts.

Psalm 92 - A Song for the Sabbath

Great Are the Works of the Lord



This is called a “Song for the Sabbath,” but the word “sabbath” is not contained in centerpiece of the hymn.

Moreover, we don’t know who composed this psalm or in what time of history it was composed, but it is certainly fitting to be sung on the “first-day Sabbath” or any occasion the saints gather together to worship God.

A man happy in his work and whose delight is in the Lord will be glad to worship in His house on the first-day Sabbath (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

The Blessedness of Thanksgiving

Psalm 92:1 <A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day.> It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High:

In Hebrew, the word “good” (tov) is the first word in the sentence; that is, the word “good” is emphatic. Only God has the right to define good, and it is good to give thanks to the Lord. It is good for us and for the world. Men are made better when their eyes are off themselves and focused on the Most High. Want to be a better person? Give thanks more often.

The word “give thanks” means “to throw up the hands in thanksgiving” or “to launch praises” to the LORD. Thanksgiving is the central pillar of all prayer, the cardinal duty of prayer, the beginning and ending of all prayer.

We live in a negative world where the whole goal of commerce is to make the consumer dissatisfied with his or her looks, weight, and what they possess. Because sad news sells, the media only reports bad news. Giving thanks, therefore, is God remedy for all the horrendous negativity we are fed day and night.

“Most High”: Abraham swore an oath of devotion to the Most High. He is higher than our friends, higher than our government, and higher than world rulers. It is a greater privilege to serve Him than to be an ambassador in the apparatus of perverted government. To serve the State is a step down. To serve the Lord is a step up because He is the Most High God, Creator of Heaven and Earth.

2 To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

“show forth” means “to celebrate” and revel in the Lord’s loving-kindness.

It is good to give thanks in the morning because the Lord has saved us from the dangers of the night. Life is a gift. Every day we wake up alive is a conferment of grace. The opportunity to

live another day deserves praise. Moreover, giving thanks is not only a good start for the soul; the exercise prepares us for the challenges of the day.

It is good to give thanks at night and to consider God's faithfulness to us during the day . . . for the promises enjoyed . . . and for the promises delayed to be enjoyed another day.

3 Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

This stanza encourages man to employ all his gifts, all his instruments, and all his energies toward the privilege of worshiping God.

4 For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

The happiness of living and the gladness we enjoy in our six-day work week ought to yield a harvest of praise to the Lord. When each first-day Sabbath week begins with praise, each work-day ought to produce reasons to praise God with thanksgiving.

The Grounds of Thanksgiving

5 O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep.

"great are thy works": As the psalmist considered the immensity of God's doings, he was overwhelmed with the depth and breadth of His involvement in our lives. He is great in wisdom, great in power, great in mercy, great in righteousness, great in judgment, and great in salvation.

"thy thoughts are very deep" applies to the original creation, the maintenance of that creation, and the works of Providence. His plans and purposes are so profound no man can understand them all. It would be easier to decode one DNA molecule than to diagram one thought in the mind of God.

6 A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

The opposite of a thankful man is a brutish man — a beast-like character with the brains of a beetle-bug. Apparently, there are many people like this that don't have the mental capacity to consider the blessings of God upon their life. Grunting and groaning through their business day, they exhaust the patience of everyone they encounter. They can talk about people, food, money, and stuff all day long and never consider the wonders of providence.

The Vulnerability of the Wicked

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:

Who can doubt the psalmist felt his own vulnerability toward bad fortune and was distressed over the affluence of the wicked? Why the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper trouble every Christian mind. (See Psalm 73)

“spring as the grass” and “flourish” are metaphors for ease and abundance. Though successful and comfortable, the inspired author vigorously and dogmatically states, “they shall be destroyed for evermore.” (See Psalm 37)

“destroyed” is a Niphal infinitive in the passive voice meaning that they will be ruined by Another. The word “destroyed” (shamad) means “annihilation, or extermination” (Strong’s).

The wicked flourish now, but their end is “destruction” ; that is, their prosperity in this world will be short-lived. Justice is coming.

8 But thou, LORD, art most high for evermore.

The word “but” is a translation of the Hebrew Vav which can mean “and” or “but.” The psalmist provides a contrast between the temporal prosperity of the wicked and the eternal nature of the Most High God. As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, He will reward the righteous and punish the wicked.

9 For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

The word “lo” or “behold” (hegeh) is in the emphatic position meaning “Hey there! Wake up and look.” The rich, wealthy, prosperous, comfortable God-haters shall all perish!

The word “scattered” expresses defeat and retreat; that is, they are not going to hold together on the Day of Judgment. There will be much “weeping and gnashing” of teeth when they face the sentence for neglecting the Most High God Who Made Heaven and Earth (Hebrews 2:3).

The Security of the Righteous

10 But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

After winning a war, the Israelites would blow trumpets and shofars to celebrate their victory. Thus, the word “horn” is a symbol of triumph. While the wicked are headed for a catastrophic downfall, the psalmist expresses confidence that he will experience the friendship of God and sweet fragrances in Paradise Restored.

11 Mine eye also shall see my desire on mine enemies, and mine ears shall hear my desire of the wicked that rise up against me.

His enemies are God’s enemies! He believes the wicked will be destroyed in the next life, but here he expresses confidence that his enemies will be destroyed in his life time; that is, he will hear about the towers of the wicked crumbling in this life.

12 The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

Unlike the wicked that perish, the psalmist expresses certainty that the righteous will prosper like palm trees and cedars in Lebanon: erect, stately, strong, they flourish even though the winds blow against them.

13 Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

By “righteous” (v. 12) the psalmist does not refer to likeable people, but to those with roots in the house of the LORD; to those that know God and obey Him — to souls who delight in the Word of God and are sustained by it.

The image is one of an olive tree located near the temple. Thus, this passage encourages Christian parents who bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; who take them to church, and expose their tender minds to the wonders of the gospel.

The Value of Older People

14 They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

The words “fruit,” “fat” and “flourishing” are metaphors for health and prosperity.

We have here a continued description of the righteous. They are not “shooting stars” or annual plants that grow for a season and then choked by thorns.

The one having a right relationship with the Lord has developed habits of sobriety, self-restraint, patience, love, work, and goodness. And, those with such traits seem to live longer, more prosperous lives than those who sell their soul to temporal pleasures.

The “they” refers to all believers planted in “the house of the Lord,” especially those in their golden years. The palm trees and cedars of the church are its senior citizens. A congregation of old people is a testimony to God’s faithfulness . . . of the strength God gives to run the race and finish the course. These “old” saints do not wilt, wither, or fade away. They flourish!

The word “old age” (seybah) refers to those with a crop of grey hair on their head.

These promises are not only for the Jews, but for the Gentiles; not only for Israel, but for the nations; not only for men, but for women; not only for youth, but for seniors.

Terms like “fat” and “flourishing” are metaphors for health and growth. Skinny people were considered sick and frail, while fat people were deemed healthy.

Ellicott says this text means: “Still shall they sprout in hoary age, sappy and green shall they be” — an analogy alluding to flourishing of the Palm and Cedar trees.

Because godly men continue to grow and flourish in Christ, they are the most valuable assets of a church -- a lesson that one can be productive in their service to Christ even in their old age. A church does not need young people as much as young people need veterans in the faith — people who have walked with God their whole life.

15 To shew that the LORD is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

“To shew that the Lord is upright” refers to the “good life” and general happiness of the righteous; that is, their verdure and longevity provides evidence that God is faithful to His promises; that He is a true friend to His people. Their usefulness in old age demonstrates that God is a friend of virtue and rewards goodness in this life (Barnes).

What a terrible place the world would be if God were not faithful to His promise and did not and sustain those who trust Him.

Warning: this psalm does not teach that health and wealth is a product of faith. John the Baptist, Jesus, Stephen, and James lived short lives. Who can doubt they were godly men?

The purpose of this psalm is to show the general truth that God exercises great care over those men who trust him in this life and the life to come; that the wicked, though they prosper, are doomed to destruction.

Psalm 93 - The Floods Have Lifted Up

“The Lord Reigneth!”



We don't know the author of this psalm or the time it was written. It appears to have been composed during a time of national danger — “the floods have lifted up” is a reference to some political trouble threatening the nation.

This psalm gives men assurance that even though they are engulfed in perilous storms, God sits above the waters; that His purposes for us will be fulfilled.

“Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord,” inform us this psalm was designed as liturgy to be used in the place of public worship on the Sabbath-day — a hymn so necessary in a world where news is filled with reports about madmen threatening to slaughter entire nations.

Psalm 93:1 The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved.

“The LORD reigneth” is the gospel of the Old Testament. The same acclamation is found in 1 Chronicles 16:31; Psalm 47:8; Isaiah 52:7; and, Revelation 19:6.

Apparently, the psalmist had been meditating on the grimy problems of His day when like a lightening flash in a dark storm, the lights came on and he saw with the eye of faith, “The LORD reigneth.” It must have seemed like the twisted tornado of politics would rip through his nation leaving a swath of destruction in its path. Suddenly, he realizes that the LORD is still on His throne; that the LORD reigneth; that He controls the clown show and stupidity of politicians; that God will cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him (Isaiah 3:10-12; Romans 8:28).

It is good news that God reigns when “the floods are lifted up,” that “He is above the mighty waters,” and His “testimonies are very sure.”

“The Lord is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself” is an allusion to the custom of Orientals cinching up their skirts under their belts when working in the fields so as not to become ensnared by low-hanging branches that so easily snare loose clothing. The idea here is that God is not a defenseless, disinterested, disengaged French monarch sitting on his throne at the Palace of Versailles savoring chocolate bon bons while the masses suffer, but a king assiduously involved with the issues threatening the nation.

The word “majesty” (ge'uwth) means “rising up” or “loftiness.” The term is applied to God's reign over waves swelling in the sea (Psalm 89:9); and to clouds of smoke rising in the sky (Isaiah 9:18). The idea here is, that God is highly exalted and clothed with majesty; that He is

not frantic or in a panic; that He rules with dignity and is fully apprised of the mounting troubles.

“He is clothed with majesty” inform us that the LORD still wears His royal robes; that He is still on the throne; that court is in session; that He is aware of our troubles; and that He has the power and authority to abate the rising tides threatening national shores.

“The world also is established” means “firm”; i.e. on a solid foundation. It cannot be shaken or destroyed by natural convulsions, or the convulsions of men. The world cannot be shaken or destroyed by natural disasters, by the hullabaloo of politicians, nor by grand mal seizures of psychopaths in positions of power.

“that it cannot be moved” refers to the fact that the earth cannot be jarred out of its place; overthrown; destroyed by the machinations of madmen; and, that God has a purpose for His creation and for the church that cannot be altered by the irritability and brutality of man.

Note: this verse hints the world is not a spinning ball twirling a thousand miles an hour around the sun traveling at 66,000 mph; that the world is stable and unmovable.

Global warming, dangerous pathogens, natural disasters, iron-fisted tyrants, basement dwellers, blood-sucking elites, sticky-fingered politicians, wacko zealots, and demented world leaders with political myopia cannot derail God’s kingdom program. The LORD reigneth, not politicians!

2 Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting.

Though storms rage, floods rise, and lightning bolts dash across the sky, God’s throne is firmly fixed — as solid as a rock. Neither red-terror nor soul-sucking, twisted elites can derail, hinder, or alarm the sovereign reign of the LORD God. From everlasting to everlasting, He is God. His throne stands firm.

The great question is not whether God rules over all, but does He reign over our souls: “Thy kingdom come” – that is, may men acknowledge His rule now.

3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.

“floods” refer to waters, rivers, and the roar of ocean tides — a fitting metaphor for “wars and rumors of wars,” for the grit and grime of totalitarian conspiracies, and for the despots fueling the furnace of hate threatening to annihilate entire populations.

“voice” and “waves” refer to ominous news regarding political convulsions that rattle the bones with knees-a-knockin’.

[As I write this, the headlines in alternative news read ; *The Ides of March; Storm Coming; Banking Collapse Imminent - Brace for Impact!*; *NY gov deploys 1,000 MILITARY TROOPS in subway system as violent crime CHAOS sweeps NYC*; *The Black Sun organization issues ultimatum: announce world federation or face nuclear holocaust*; *Attacks On Churches Are Up 800 Percent*; *Emergency War Alert: 48 Hour Security Threat In Russia*; *Nuclear Forces Ready*; *US Troops Deploying . . .* ; *U.S. Target List Shows 90 Percent Won't Survive 2024-2025 (March, 2024)*, *The Storm Is Here! The War Between Good*

and Evil, No One Can Stop What Is Coming, the Death Of America Written On Their Hearts, US Economy LOST 1.87 Million Full Time Jobs In Past 3 Months, Largest Decline, You Need to Know U.S. Target List Shows 90 Percent Won't Survive 2024-2025. Therefore, let us remember “The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters . . .”]

Though “sorrows like sea billows roll” the trusting saint can say, “all is well with my soul.”

4 The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters, yea, than the mighty waves of the sea.

“mightier” provides us with a contrast between flood waters and our faithful God.

“The Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters” refers to the fact that He is more powerful than the breakers of the sea, more powerful than windstorms ordering white caps to assault the beach punching and beating the rocks with sledgehammer-like force; more powerful than waves erupting like volcanoes spewing out fits of venetian red lava. The LORD controls all these forces and is stronger than the little finger of them all.

Does this mean our time will not experience horrific political disasters caused by madmen at the helm? No, it simply means that God is in control and that psychopaths are limited in the evil they can spread around the world. God will restrain these nutcases and they will end up being the most frustrated miscreants on earth.

5 Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.

“Thy testimonies” refers to the law of the LORD God, or to the two tablets in the Ark of Testimony which is a witness to the faithfulness of God.

All His laws, promises, commands, and prophecies about the coming kingdom are true, right, fixed, and unbudging.

“holiness” refers to the eternal, unchanging, immutable perfections of truth and justice of the LORD God.

In shaking off his fears regarding the ferocious political floods of his day that threatened to overthrow truth and righteousness, the psalmist taps into the eternal, iron-like holiness of the LORD. Not only is God invincible, but His holiness and moral sensitivities are immutable. Right will be done! Man’s wrath will be restrained! Justice is coming! The wicked, blowhard extremists with their gulag-whipping outrages and their pernicious schemes will be frustrated! Amen!

We are not in charge! Rest, Soul, rest!

Psalm 94 - Why do the Wicked Prosper?

"Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?"



The author looks around only to see the proud prospering, and it pricked his soul.

He knows that God is sovereign, but he is baffled by the LORD's lethargy and lack of action—the trial of the saints.

What should a good man do when the Sovereign LORD God seems so dilatory in performing His duty to judge the wicked?

The psalmist cries out in prayer, charges his adversaries with crimes before the Court, and publishes the truth about the ultimate triumph of good over evil.

Growing in perspective on God's chastisements, the author becomes convinced the LORD will judge evildoers. God not only condemns the wicked, He corrects the righteous. As important as confronting the wicked is, the psalmist realizes that the LORD is intensely devoted to improving His people. He concludes a man who endures His corrections as blessed.

Thus, we have another psalm dealing with dilemma of the thinking man, "Why do the wicked prosper?" This is another instance of a good man perplexed by the rapid success of godless men, and who comforts his own heart by remembering that God is sovereign.

We have a kingdom of God theme presented: The LORD who vigorously corrects His own, will in His own good time, with the assistance of the imprecatory prayers of His people, crush rebels in positions of power.

The Psalmist Cries out to the LORD to Take Action

Psalm 94:1 O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself.

"vengeance" (neqamah) refers to punishment or retribution for a wrong done.

The psalmist can see the wicked prosper in their lawlessness, but he struggles to see God's hand at work. Therefore, he prays God would come out of hiding and "shew thyself."

The Hebrew word for "shew" is *yapha* which means "to shine forth" as sunbeams. God seems to be masking Himself in the clouds. "Shine, God, shine" is the psalmist's prayer. This is a prayer for vengeance; that is, for God to deliver a counter blow against the proud who use political power for their own personal agenda.

Recited as a liturgical appeal, the Orthodox church says: "It is time for the Lord to act."

2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

The author knows that God is the Judge of all men and that it is His duty to administer justice. What he doesn't understand is why the wheels of Divine justice grind so slowly. Here he sees the Chief Justice asleep. "Rise up, get up, stand up" shouts the psalmist in agonizing prayer. "Do your duty" and try the proud traitor who forces his anarchy on society.

The Psalmist's Conundrum About the Prosperity of the Wicked

3 LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

"Usquequo Domine" (Latin) – "How Long, O Lord" is the great question of the righteous stressed by the shadowy success of the wicked.

The term "wicked" (ra'sha) refers to those eating fruit from the Poisonous Tree: lawbreakers, criminals, thugs, rioters, warlords, lawmakers, rulers, and evil aristocrats intoxicated with power. He is not thinking of blue collar crime, but white collar criminals who use the power of their office to break the bones of God's lambs. Quite possibly, he refers to gloating politicians and public officials of his time.

4 How long shall they utter and speak hard things? and all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

"Usquequo Domine" is asked a second time in order to emphasize the soul-stress of the righteous.

"hard things" refers to the yoke, the whip and chains, the profane place on citizens – violations of God's law that abrogate the rights of man.

"They" is plural. The wicked run in packs and God's lambs are frazzled by the administration of arrogant rulers.

The author has long endured the blasphemy, cursing, ignorance, boasting, spin, lies, slander, deception, censorship, and the arrogant commentary of the pompous against the righteous. He has had enough! Tired of the twisted propagandists and haughty officials, he wonders how long he has to endure these know-it-all, full-of-themselves psychopaths.

The psalmist had to learn what Henry Wadsworth Longfellow so eloquently wrote, "Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small; Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds He all."

The Psalmist's Complaint Against the Wicked

Like a prosecutor, the author presents his case against the sin-stained, elitist criminals.

5 They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

"Break" and "afflict" are Piel verbs expressing intense action – a charge against civil officials.

He charges these tyrants with breaking the legs of God's lambs. Somehow, these monsters seem to enjoy spreading pain and misery among humanity. They seem to feel it is their duty to attack, assault, insult, denigrate, disparage, deny, twist, hammer, and crush the hard-working innocent in order to prove how important and powerful they are. They are guilty of crimes against

humanity . . . of malfeasance . . . of violating the common law by injuring others and their property.

6 They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

The psalmist charges these wolves with violating the 6th Commandment, “Thou shall not kill.”

Great societies protect all people, but especially the most vulnerable: the widow, old people, the alien, and children. Degenerate societies adopt State policies that plunder and slaughter the most vulnerable among them: the unborn, the aged, youth, and the legal immigrant.

7 Yet they say, The LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.

Particularly egregious to the writer was the disbelieving, willful ignorance of the autocratic man. Moreover, this theological callousness on the part of the arrogant was not directed toward general religion, but specifically toward the sovereign LORD God of the Bible, the God of all grace, the God of Jacob.

The Psalmist Condemns the Fools

8 Understand, ye brutish among the people: and ye fools, when will ye be wise?

The author describes the political behemoths as “brutish” which means “hot, kindled, fired up, or burning.” Politicians never lack something to say. They have a utopian answer for all of man's problems.

Vigorously lobbying for “freedom from God’s law,” the proud man’s energy and zeal for lawlessness appears boundless. The psalmist wonders how long it will take for them to learn the truth about God and be wise. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,” but the despots seem unable to grasp the simplest truths about God. Thus, he calls them “fools.”

Fools are proud and unreasonable men. Because fools are subjective and follow their feelings, they have the amazing ability to arrive at wrong conclusions about the great issues facing mankind 100% of the time.

9 He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

The psalmist challenges the theology of the wicked with penetrating questions. Does not the One who made the ear hear, and the One who made the human eye see?

Cast in the sea of ontology (nature of being), they must swim against the current where they are forced to wrestled with questions about the origins of man and the cause of their own existence. Such questions overwhelm the skeptic smothering him with confusion. Inquiries like this overload the circuits of his unused grey cells. Flooded by emotion, he is unable to think.

Remember, liberals are dreamers not thinkers; talkers, not problem solvers; idealists, not realists; egocentric, not lovers of God; and, feelers fretting about world problems while possessing delusions about their personal importance.

10 He that chastiseth (yacar) the heathen, shall not he correct (yakach: rebuke) ? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?

Again, the Psalmist overwhelms the heathen with questions. This time he throws them into the sea of epistemology to ponder the theory of knowledge.

The term epistemology comes from Greek word ἐπιστήμη, *epistēmē*, meaning 'knowledge'; and, λόγος, *logos*, meaning 'logical discourse'.

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. Here the skeptic must wrestle with (1) the nature of knowledge and beliefs; (2) the reasons for skepticism; (3) the sources of knowledge and the justifiable reasons for belief claims; (4) proof of claim and the basis for knowledge and belief. Unless one lays hold of the Creator, the doubter will face a shoreless epistemological sea tossed to and fro by waves of conflict and contradiction.

True knowledge comes through the investigation of claims seeking proof of claim. Plato called knowledge "justified true belief;" that is, reasonable belief based on proof of claim (the foundation of conservatism) as distinguished from possibilities and utopian ideology (the foundation of liberalism).

In Christian epistemology, God is the Source of knowledge: In the beginning, God created the world and everything in it, including knowledge.

However, the idea that God knows everything may seem to be a simple concept, but the more we contemplate it, the more we come to understand what an amazing truth this is. The psalmist informs us, "He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His understanding has no limit" (Psalm 147:4-5). Imagine, God not only knows how many stars are in the universe, He knows each of them by name. That God is omniscient means that He has never learned anything. Surely, the One who knows the names of stars, knows what the infidel does, says, and thinks.

History is inexplicable without the Christian God. All men know instinctively there are forces at work behind the scenes of history that cannot be explained by chance. History is a series of judgments, conflicts, wars, and mighty deliverances that can only be explained by the hand of God. Surely, He who judges nations knows the deeds of individual men and holds them accountable.

Thus, the Psalmist asserts the LORD knows the hidden secrets of men; that He is "the Chastiser of the Heathen" and the One Who charges and chastens the wicked.

11 The LORD knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity.

God know the thoughts of man, but man does not know the thoughts of God unless He reveals them to men. And, He has through His Inspired Word.

The word "man" is *adam* in Hebrew and *anthropos* in Greek.

The psalmist proclaims a truth that God knows not only the words and actions of a man, He reads his thoughts. He deciphers them all, and summarizes their content as "vanity." In the Lord's estimation, no matter what cellophane man thinks, God regards the brainwork of the rebel as good-for-nothing.

The Psalmist's Confidence about God's Correction of the Righteous

12 Blessed is the man (giber; gibbor) whom thou chastenest (yacar), O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

Having laid out his charges against the wicked, the prosecutor rests.

The word "man" here is not *adam* or *anthropos* but *giber* – a mighty man in the eyes of God; that is, a strong Christian man.

Changing roles, the psalmist's soul contemplates the sweet melodies plying on the harps in the orchestra of afflicted saints. They are portrayed as being chastened and instructed by the LORD; that is, the righteous voluntarily seek the correction of God. Consequently, they are strong. Though often in pain and bewildered by their difficulties, they are blessed -- blessed because God knows them, loves them, and corrects them out of His Word – blessed because they are morally and spiritually stout.

The word "man" (*geber*) refers to a strong, military male that is instructed out of God's law. This "man" is not a sugar-addicted wussy suckin' on lollipops and caramel-glazed donuts. A soldier in God's boot camp, he trains for war. A student of law, under the One and Only Lawgiver, he becomes a powerful, discerning lawyer-advocate in the good sense of the term. He is blessed because he is being instructed out of the "perfect law of liberty" and prepared to enter the contest between good and evil.

13 That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit (grave) be digged for the wicked.

The Hiphil infinitive "give him rest" (*hashakit*) expresses causative action; that is, there is rest from the LORD to those agitated by the proliferation of evil. Trained under the chastening hand of God and instructed out of His law, the believer must learn to rest in his position in Christ, to rest in service to humanity, and to rest in the long, drawn out battle against proud fools. The man of God is not permitted to wear anything that causes him to sweat in his service to Christ. Nothing of the flesh can assist the Spirit. There is a grave prepared for the proud, but until this judgment, the Christian man must not fret (be hot) because of evildoers (Ezekiel 44:18; Psalm 37:1).

"until the pit (grave) be digged for the wicked" means that the wicked live as if they will not be punished . . . but even as they think this way, God is digging their grave. Thus, the righteous have to exercise patience.

14 For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.

The author learned that no matter how hot the fire, how painful the switch, how hard the hammer, how scarce the rations, how uphill the path, how lonely the journey, the LORD will not forsake His people!

To express the certainty that the Lord will not "cast off" or "forsake" His inheritance, the psalmist employs the Hebrew negative "not" or "neither" (*lo*) before the two verbs. "not" is in the emphatic position to the verb and is used twice in this statement.

In Hebrews 13:5, the Spirit uses five negatives in Greek to express the impossibility of the righteous being forsaken by God: "He will never, never, no never, never forsake thee." Rest, soul, rest!

15 But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.

The Judge will not delay justice forever. His gavel will be heard on the day of sentencing. The pirate ship of the wicked will be forced to dock in God's judicial harbor, and when it does, the godly will rejoice. The kingdom of God will come, the righteous will be saved, and the wicked will be punished.

A ticker tape parade is coming to the joy of the righteous and to the grief of dignitaries, heads of state, and bully bureaucrats. God's edelweiss, white flowers hidden in the crags of the rocks, who humbly served Him without recognition, will be showered with rewards along the "Walk of Heroes" near the Celestial City.

16 Who will rise up for me against the evildoers? or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

Having laid out the fate of the wicked and the blessedness of the righteous, the psalmist can't imagine who would not want to join the battle against entrenched lawlessness. He calls for champions to come forth and join His army to fight for the gospel of Christ against the citadels of wickedness.

The governments of this world have been in the hands of proud politicians way too long—in the hands of corrupt officials who use the powers of their office to crush the rights of men. Thus, the author blows the trumpet calling for the righteous to join him on the battlefield to lay siege to the fortress of government to reclaim civil offices reserved for the righteous.

The Psalmist's Comfort in Providence

17 Unless the LORD had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.

18 When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

19 In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

Here slumps a soldier: exhausted, alone, and overwhelmed by the strength of his enemies who are as active as hinges on the gates of hell.

The author is no idealist. The mountains were high, the rivers wide, the clouds dark, the nights long, and enemies as numerous as maggots on a corpse. He admits exhaustion and loneliness. Resignation robbed him of strength. Yet, he remained in the fight by the strength of the LORD God and His sweet consolations.

The Psalmist's Conclusion About the Fate of the Wicked

20 Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?

The "throne of iniquity" refers to government offices, legislatures, politicians, and statutory courts; presidents, governors, police officers, congressmen, legislators, bureaucrats, judges,

magistrates, and administrators. Like in David's day, the political institutions of our time are a den of iniquity staffed with bottom-feeding scavengers.

"Mischief by a law" means these public officials use man-made statutes and executive mandates to control men, to tax their wealth, and to promote their totalitarian agenda. They do not believe in the rule of law; they believed in rule by law! Tyrants always exempt themselves from their own statutes. Further, they seek to use the force of government to achieve their ambitions. In a police state no one can breathe . . . or be safe from neck-breaking police tactics . . . from false arrests . . . from kangaroo prosecutions under color of law . . . and harsh imprisonment. Under despotism no one is safe from relaxation of constitutional restrictions of government by government.

Law is good if it is limited. While God's law serves mankind, the multiplication of man-made statutes cannot save humanity or regenerate society. Tyrants use legislative bills to force their will on the people. Such tactics destroy liberty and make the people slaves of the State.

21 They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

What unites this army of power mongers (misotheistic government officers and their goon squad) is their hatred of God, their love of death, and their determination to ravage the righteous.

In their world view money matters, government matters, Black lives matter, blue lives matter, politicians matter, powers matter, political philosophies matter . . . but innocent lives don't matter! Their king is money, ledgers, and profit.

Likewise, the power players on the gridiron of politics today see Christians as the ones blocking their global agenda. For it is Christians that are anti-utopianism, anti-fascism, anti-globalism, anti-feminism, anti-abortion, anti-pornography, and anti-Sodomy. In order for the infidels to achieve world domination, they must trick Christians into joining them . . . censor them in public debate . . . or kill them.

22 But the LORD is my defense; and my God is the rock of my refuge.

23 And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; yea, the LORD our God shall cut them off.

The Psalm does not close with a sigh, but with a song. Having prayed through issues and renewed his mind with truth, he grows in confidence that God will be his rock. Though he is a chastened man, he is a blessed man.

While he feels better about his lot in life, he expresses solemn assurance the lawless man will be arrested by the Judge, indicted, and sentenced to a prison in darkness.

The phrase "shall cut them off" (tsamath) is repeated twice. The English word "yea" is not in the text. It is supplied by the translators to emphasize the certainty of the destruction of the wicked.

The psalm begins with a man drowning in grief over the prosperity of the wicked, but ends with the man buoyed up by promises. The psalm begins with a frustrated, imprecatory plea for

the LORD God to rain down judgment on the wicked, and it ends with a double assurance: God will "cut off" . . . God will exterminate the wicked like a nest of termites. He will, He will, He will!!!

Psalm 95 - A Warning Against a Hard Heart

“Harden not your heart, as in the provocation and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:



This psalm is a general call to worship song.

We don't know who the author is, but the LXX attributes the psalm to David. Moreover, we don't know when it was written or on what occasion it was composed.

This general nature of this hymn makes it appropriate for any occasion.

An Exhortation to Worship the LORD

Psalm 95:1 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

The psalmist invites men to come and to join the festivities in celebration of the LORD; that is, he summons the people of God to join the chorale and to vigorously sing to the Rock of our salvation.

“noise” refers to the shout of triumph, the happy shout of approval, and the voice of victory.

“Rock of our salvation”: This jamboree was founded on the strength and security the LORD provided for His redeemed.

There is no warning to the uninitiated not to join in the singing, nor is this praise entered into slowly or patiently. Rather, the herald encourages people to jump and to shout “Glory!”

2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

“come before,” means “let us go meet” Him face to face or “go stand in front of.”

The summons continues. “presence” means “face” (paniym). Thanksgiving by clapping as a means of showing appreciation and honoring the Host goes back to antiquity.

“with psalms” suggests there is an order, harmony, art, and dignity in worship. This is not chaos with every man doing what is right in his own eyes, but worshipers joining together to exalt the LORD.

Following an invocation, every church service would do well to begin with a liturgy of thanksgiving and singing of praise to honor the Lord.

Reasons to Worship the LORD

3 For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.

Reason one: the LORD is supreme above all the so called “gods” of the Babylonians, Greeks, Egyptians, and Romans.

Songs are a didactic; that is, an opportunity to learn doctrine. This text addresses the Name of LORD, His supremacy as God above all the gods of the surrounding nations; His greatness as a great King, and the fact that He is the one, true, Absolut God — a truth designed to prevent apostasy.

4 In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

Reason two: He has unsearchable knowledge about all things whether seen or unseen.

“In his hand” means within His reach, control, or knowledge.

“deep places” could refer to caverns, mines, or even the bottom of the sea.

5 The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land.

Reason three: He has jurisdiction over the land and the sea; that is, He is the Maker of both; the ruler of both. What He creates, He owns . . . and what He makes, He controls the rights to it.

6 O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.

So marvelous and wonderful is the LORD, the psalmist repeats the call to worship Him as our Maker.

“Come” is an imperative — a gentle, gracious, invitation to worship the Lord — a summons to the people of God to acknowledge His authority.

“Let us worship” is a Hithpael verb meaning let us willingly consent . . . to voluntarily accept this marvelous privilege . . . to intentionally tune our own hearts to the pitch of His excellence, majesty, and holiness.

7 For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice,

Reason four: The LORD is not only an inexplicable, untouchable, transcendent Being, He is a personal God Who has revealed Himself to man directly in dreams, in theophanies through prophets, and in special answers to prayer. God’s relationship to His people is compared to a gentle, caring Shepherd tendering the flock he loves . . . sheep guided by His comforting hand.

A Warning to Worshipers

8 Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9 When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

He is calling, urging, and inviting us today to know Him, accept Him, to bow before Him in worship. Don’t delay. Don’t buck the process. Don’t be proud and arrogant demanding God kowtow to your whims and wishes as your ancestors did at Meribah, the place of contention. This is the place where the people assumed the worse about God -- that He intended to kill them (Exodus 17).

“Harden not your heart” refers to man’s retreat from faith into a spirit of unfaithfulness and rebellion — a state where men refuse to bend their ear, to bow their head, or to allow the Word of God to touch their hearts.

10 Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways:

Men should strive to please the LORD and bring Him joy; but, Hebrew ancestors tried His patience and grieved Him.

“grieved” (quwt) refers to that which opposes His holiness: that is, something that holiness repels and hates.

11 Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

The “rest” refers to entering the Land of Canaan. Unbelief characterized by complaining, contumely, and criticism prevented them from entering the Promised Land.

In Hebrews 3, the author warned the Hebrews of the first century not to harden their heart and reject the pathway to Heaven (eternal rest) in and through Christ; and, therefore, be excluded from the kingdom of God.

“swear in my wrath” means the destiny of unbelievers is set in stone that “they should not enter into my rest” — an irreversible sentence that ought to give all men pause.

Psalm 96 - Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

For the LORD is Great



We are living in a careless age where the sin of casualness mars the gospel.

Thus, this psalm is a corrective to the tendency of Protestant Churches to be shoddy and sloppy in their approach to God.

Psalm 96:1 O sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

The psalmist issues a public order to sing a new song unto the Lord. New needs call for new prayers; new mercies call for a new round of thanksgiving and praise. New victories call for new songs. Great victories over the enemies of mankind require new singers to join the choir.

Possibly, the return from Babylon under the startling orders of King Cyrus (The Persian Messiah – Isaiah 45:1) or some other occasion (1 Chronicles 16:7, 23-24) called for jubilation and a new song.

2 Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day.

There are three Piel imperatives in this one verse: sing, bless, and shew forth.

The command “to sing” is delivered a third time. It is issued to those invested in the LORD. The choir is the redeemed of the nations, and the audience is none other than “the LORD.” Israel’s return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple set the stage for the Savior to bless all mankind.

The command to “bless” means to speak well of the One Who works salvation for the nations; that is, the psalmist calls the redeemed to recount His mercies and to proclaim His salvation to the people of the earth.

“shew forth” is a command to proclaim His redemptive work.

The command to sing requires refined musical skills; the command to bless calls for a heart in tune with the works of the LORD; the command to shew forth his salvation belongs to those with iron-like convictions.

3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

The imperative verb “declare” is a Piel verb calling for intense action to proclaim His sovereignty and salvation.

Since everything about God sparkles with “glory,” the redeemed are admonished to “declare” and shout his “glory” among the nations.

“Glory” (kibod) refers to His holy attributes. His “wonders” (plural) refer to His extraordinary powers and triumphs; i.e. that which is beyond what humans can do.

4 For the LORD is great, and greatly to be praised: he is to be feared above all gods.

Glory is the subject of proclamation; “great” refers to the infinite nature of the LORD and His superlative virtues.

He is great in power; great in mercy; great in knowledge; and, great in holiness.

In considering the greatness of His glory, “fear” prevails as the appropriate response for sane people.

“above all gods” introduces the audience to the presence of idolatry; of rivals that contend for the people’s affection and devotion.

5 For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

Idols are little pieces of nothingness. Since idols are nothing, believers invest everything in Him Who is the Cause of all things — in the Creator Who made the Heavens and the earth.

All the gods of the nations are man-made fictions. They do not exist except in the minds of sinners.

That all religions are equal or that all religions deserve equal protection is philosophical gobbledygook designed to make idolaters feel comfortable.

Modern politicians embrace omnism (all beliefs) to capture votes and to appear generous and big hearted. In reality, a jockey can’t ride both truth and lies down the backstretch to the finishing line. Arsenic and honey don’t mix. Earth and sky can’t fuse together. Truth is not relative. When religions contradict each another, one or both of them must be wrong. That Christ is “the way” to God; and, other religions are a way to God is nothing but secular doublespeak.

The position that “all paths lead to God” is irrational and nonsensical. The law of non-contradiction must be applied to metaphysical debates; that is, just as the earth cannot be round and flat at the same time, neither can monotheism and polytheism be two acceptable positions. That there are many paths to God is a presumption; that there are many roads to ruin is a fact.

6 Honor and majesty are before him: strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

This text hails four attributes of the LORD.

Just as the whole universe displays His glory, His sanctuary with its attired priests, orderly ceremonies, with gold and silver vessels proclaim His honor, majesty, strength, and beauty. Possibly, this impressive truth motivated the remnant to complete the second temple (520-516 BC).

“Pureness and stately glory fit his shrine.” (Ellicott)

“Wherever he manifests himself, there are the exhibitions of honor and majesty” (Barnes).

Whatever “beauty” is there, the meaning is, “that whatever is suited to charm by loveliness; whatever is a real ornament; whatever makes the world attractive; whatever beautifies and adorns creation, has its home in God” (Barnes).

Whatever makes society lovely and attractive, and whatever causes the world to hum with life, decency, and beauty has its source in the church (sanctuary) of Jesus Christ.

Oh, that all churches, big and small, might shout “glory; that each might reflect the excellence of His majesty.

7 Give unto the LORD, O ye kindred’s of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 8 Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

“Give . . .” is used three times in this text; that is, He is worthy of triple honor. And, “glory” is used twice describing how we are to worship the Lord.

By employing the imperative “give,” the Spirit calls men to esteem His glory (kabowd) and strength (kabad); to reflect His glory and strength in their services, traditions, dress, speech, and deportment.

This requirement to give is not for the benefit of the LORD God, but for the benefit of his church. Men are made better by remembering One greater than themselves. Here the Spirit calls those clothed with shame to array themselves with glory fitting His Majesty.

“Bring an offering” refers to the *minchah* or gifts of silver and gold and not libations of blood. The command is issued not because God needs these treasures, but because men desperately need to recognize Him as their greatest treasure.

The LORD is not only awesome, He is admirable! He is not only to be feared, but cherished; that is, men should recognize his glorious attributes during all seasons of life. Pious men not only obey the LORD, they enjoy Him as the Source of all things beautiful.

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name . . . or “the glory of his name” . . . ; whose name is glorious and excellent, because of his nature and perfections, because of the works done by him, and because of his benefits and blessings bestowed on his creatures . . .” (Gill).

9 O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

The NAS Bible reads, “Worship the LORD in holy attire; Tremble before Him, all the earth.”

A liberal First Presbyterian Church advertises: “Come as you are to worship God. Dress is casual and varied . . .” but is this what Scripture says? “Come as you are” may be appropriate for a church picnic . . . but a worship service?

The term “worship” is a Hithpael imperfect verb meaning “cause yourself to bow down.” In the Persian Empire the law required citizens to bow prostrate when approaching the king at Persepolis. Humility is always in style.

The term “beauty of holiness” refers to the apparel of priests. Exodus 28 focuses on the special clothing which God authorized for the high priest. Because God is beautiful in holiness, church services dedicated to worship require stately excellence, order, and raiment.

“Bow before Jehovah in holy attire” (Ellicott).

“Worship the Lord in Holy Attire” (Psalm 96: 8-9). The Hebrew word for “attire” is “hadarah,” which means “adornment and glory.” When you and I enter as priests in God’s presence, this very act assures our adornment with glory” (Loving Grace Ministries).

“We don’t often think of holiness as beautiful. Preachers sometimes threaten their listeners with God’s holiness, while people who claim to be holy can strike us as self-righteous. To say that someone has a “holier-than-thou” attitude is not a compliment. But here, the psalmist speaks of the beauty of holiness” (Lake Trails Presbyterian Church).

“As we are by nature, it goes against the grain to see and call holiness beautiful” (PRCA.org).

Nevertheless, the psalmist calls the whole earth to fear and to worship him in the beauty of holiness.

The word “fear” (hadarah) in this text is not the usual term for fear (yare or yir’ah). This word for “fear” (hadarah) means to writhe, twist, shake, contort, or dance. Most likely the psalmist is calling delinquent people to “tremble” in fear at the greatness and majesty of the LORD . . . to possess a fear that leads to surrender and obedience.

Worshiping the LORD in the beauty of holiness requires the soul to be in harmony with the LORD God — a harmony which is reflected by what one wears in the sanctuary.

Since worshiping the Lord in the beauty of holiness involves clothing, casual Christians ought to consider the dress code in Orthodox Churches.

Ladies – sleeved and non-revealing dress or blouse, respectable fitted clothes and skirt length with head covering . . .

Gentlemen – sleeved and collared shirt, long trousers, coat and tie is preferred with no head covering

Source: <https://armenianchurchsydney.org.au/learning/respectful-traditions-of-the-armenian-church/>

The St. Joseph Catholic Church requires the following:

Women and girls must cover their heads. (Chapel veils or mantillas are available for loan in the vestibule.)

Women and girls must wear dresses or skirts that cover the knee completely when sitting or standing; slacks, shorts, sleeveless, tight or low-cut clothing or dresses with long cuts or slits are to be avoided.

Men and boys should wear suit coats and ties. (Except in very hot weather)

Jeans, sports logo and other casual attire are inappropriate for attendance at church services.

10 Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.

“The LORD reigneth” is the gospel of the Old Testament. It is good news that He governs the affairs of mankind; that He has rules for life; that He leads and preserves men; that He restrains the wickedness of the wicked.

“Say” is an imperative. “Heathen” (goy) refers to the nations. Our God is not just the King of the Jews, but the King of the Nations (Jeremiah 10:7). That Jesus is king was the gospel that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6-7).

11-12 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord.

The psalmist not only calls for His people to sing to the LORD and for the nations to bow down and worship the LORD, he calls for the heavens to rejoice, the earth to be glad, and for the seas to roar and burst into praise at the majesty and glory of God. If the stars rejoice and the valleys are glad; if the seas and its creatures roar to the tune of glory; and the flowers in field and the trees on the mountain rejoice before the Lord, shouldn't the wonders of the Lord be on the lips of men? Shouldn't His glory be reflected in our choice of raiment?

Since nature proclaims the glory of God, the only question is, “Will man do the same?”

With “a view of these grand events, and beholding in spirit the advent of King Messiah, the psalmist exults in most jubilant and triumphant strains, calling the whole creation to break forth into joy, and to celebrate the glories of redemption” (Benson quoting Horne).

“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad – Let all worlds be full of joy, as they are all interested in the fact here stated. The universe is one. It has been made by the same hand; it is under the control of the same mind; it is governed by the same laws. The God who reigns on earth reigns in heaven; and what affects one part of the universe affects all” (Barnes).

13 Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

The reason the psalmist calls nature to rejoice (a form of prosopopoeia) and men to fear and tremble is because the LORD comes to judge the earth (world) in righteousness and his people with truth.

The phrase “before the LORD” literally means: “The face of the LORD.”

The participle “cometh” is used twice as an emphatic declaration: “He is coming!” “He is coming!” Get ready! The virgins of the Lord trim their lamps.

The purpose of this coming is for the judgment of nations. While this *mishpat* judgment may refer to the reign of Messiah, it can refer to His judgment in time when He comes to save the simple and to judge sinners; that is, to judge them by His law (righteousness) according to truth.

Apparently, nature rejoices over the conversion of sinners. Concerned souls would do well to repent and tremble before Him because the LORD comes to judge the world with unwavering righteousness and truth.

Notes:

(1) See the rules of holiness for priests (Ezekiel 44:9, 15-31) who wore (1) a linen turban on their heads as a symbol of holy service, (2) official linen robes which were a sign of the professional calling – worn only in the temple in their official role of service (3) a full beard as a sign of their sanctification, (4) and a full head of hair – not too short and not too long.

(2) When the Bible says, “Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness” (Psalm 96:6), the ordinance requires worship in holy vestments (Psalm 96:6) – that is, with decency, order, and excellence in manners, customs, and clothing.

Psalm 97 - The Gospel of the Old Testament

"The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice"



Before us is the gospel from an Old Testament (O.T.) perspective. What was the O.T. gospel and what is the language of proclamation? Since there is only one gospel, it behooves the Bible student to understand its O.T. presentment in order to expand one's understanding of that glorious message.

The Gospel of God's Reign

Psalm 97:1 The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.

Before us is the heart of the gospel: "the Lord reigneth."

When is the last time you heard this announcement in the classroom or from the media? You are more likely to hear "we are in power," than "God is in power!" The human doctrines of "man's choices" are more popular than the doctrine of God's elections.

While we take great comfort in our Lord's redemptive work, his core message was "the kingdom of God has come unto you" (Matthew 12:28); that is, the central message of Christ was the reign of God. God's rule entered history in and through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat man's great enemies: Satan, sin, and death. The good news is that God is offering men peace with Himself on the grounds of Christ's doing and dying for us.

Paul quoted a verse from Isaiah declaring the excellence of gospel proclamation: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace" (Romans 10:15). Paul's quote is from Isaiah 52:7 which say, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings . . . that saith to Zion, 'Thy God reigneth!'"

The theme "the LORD reigneth" is the crux of the Old Testament gospel; and, the New Testament is simply the grand manifestation of the reign of God in action.

We do not always feel like God reigns. The humanist says, "It matters not . . . how charged with punishments the scroll, I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul" (Invidictus).

Madmen come to power to steal property under color of law. Murderers and butchers are protected by legislative statutes. Rulers permit monopolies and bribes for high ranking officials. Government agencies oppress and bully the weak into submission. Disease and death visit every family. Jobs end. Stock markets plunge. Automobiles crash. Things seem out of control . . . and they are depressing . . . unless, of course, we believe God reigns over all things in our lives.

Thus, the need of the hour is not more money, more organizations, and more self-esteem, but Christian men who proclaim the Lord reigns and that His dominions have entered history in and through His Son.

The good news is that God reigns over nations, over politics, over weather, over disease and tragedy, over health, and the nasty storms hovering over us . . . and for those who have repented of their rebellion against God's law order and surrender to His authority, His reign brings great joy and comfort.

One great cause of melancholy in our lives, is that we fail to take sufficient comfort from simple, but profound statements in Scripture. "The LORD reigneth" is the lightning bolt that lights up the cloudy skies during the cold, dark nights of our lives. The verbs "rejoice" and "be glad" are Hebrew jussives that enjoin all God's people to consider the dominions of our Lord and to join the triumphal procession taking place in Zion, the city of Almighty God, the general assembly of spiritual Israel. The people on vast continents as well as tribes on tiny islands (Pitcairn, Samoa), the great and small, are urged to take comfort in the Sovereignty of Christ.

Notice that the locus of joy is outside of man and in the Lord's dominions. Joy is not connected to introspection, self-esteem, or inner exploration. It is not coupled with knowledge of self. It is not associated with profit in business or a large bank account. This psalm takes us outside of self, outside of our pride, outside of human choices, to the Sovereignty of the Lord God. Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

The Gospel of Righteousness

2 Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. 3 A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about. 4 His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. 5 The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. 6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

The reign of God is good news for those who have made their peace with God and surrendered to His law order, but it is not good news for rebels. In fact, it is rather disturbing for the self-willed, self-governed lawless man hell-bent on self-governance and asset accumulation.

The psalmist takes us back to Mt. Sinai. The clouds and darkness reminds us that the Lord is holy and unapproachable. There is a veiling of His splendor lest man be destroyed. Fire is an instrument of destruction stoked to consume the proud who refuse to acknowledge His supremacy. If the earth quakes and mountains melt in His presence, how much more should pagans tremble before Sovereignty and Glory.

"The heavens declare his righteousness . . . His justice in punishing his enemies"
– Gill.

Gospel Instructions to Idolaters

7 Confounded be (or be ashamed) all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.

A better rendering of the original text is as follows: "Let all be ashamed who serve idols. Worship him all ye gods." The first statement or jussive serves as a command.

There are two jussives (commands) in this verse informing us of the response the Lord seeks from those outside His fold.

The first jussive is “Be ashamed” (buwsh).

If a person understands the Lord reigns and that His law is the supreme law, then shame for transgression is the proper response to gospel proclamation.

The term “serve” (abad) implies a serf relationship to idols. An “idol” is a source of law and values that one feels obligated to follow.

The gospel announces the sinfulness of man and its effects by eating fruit from the poisonous tree. Man is not sick; he’s a sinner that sins. Shame is the sense of failure and guilt one has because of disobedience to righteous Authority. The proper response to God’s reign is fear, trembling, and a deep sense of shame that causes the naked spirit to reach for fig leaves.

The second jussive is the ONLY reasonable response to the reign of God which is “worship” (bow down).

The word “worship” is a rare form (Hithpael) and is difficult to translate because the verb is a reflexive action; i.e. the subject is ordered to act on himself. But, the psalmist is not asking men to worship themselves, but Him who reigns. Thus, the verb should be treated as follows: “Fall down! Bow your knee! Make yourself the object of the LORD’s affection!” Cease your war against Him and surrender to His authority!

He is not calling for sacerdotal worship here but total surrender of the total man to Absolute Sovereignty. This is God’s way of calling rebels to repent and to make peace with Him. Since the Lord reigns, the only reasonable, sensible response is acknowledgement of the rule of the Lord God and acceptance of his terms of peace.

Now if “be ashamed” and “bow down before Him” is the proper response, then the opposite action exposes of the plight of humanity.

All the problems we face as a society is because men have rebelled against God’s law order . . . and are not even ashamed about their pride and immorality.

What is wrong with men that are not ashamed of their filthy words and cursing; of their fornications and adultery; of their scams and schemes and fraud? Further, the reason we need a government police force is because men have declared war against God’s law order. Is not all the corruption in government a result of men who reject God’s law order—men who do not execute the duties of their office under the eye of His Sovereignty?

Notice the terms “idols” and “gods.” An idol is a fiction, a man-made thing or entity or corporation. The word “serve” (abad) is the word used of a slave who renders service to his masters. Think of it. People are absolutely in love with fictions and man-made things.

What’s wrong with man? Men have time to work, watch sports, take their kids to soccer games, watch T.V., eat and sleep. But, they don’t have time for God.

“Worship Him, all ye gods” could refer to “angels” as K & D suggest, or the term “gods” could refer to government officials such as judges and magistrates (Psalm 82:6). He calls “the gods” to bow down and worship, but the “gods” he is talking about is not “so-called” gods, but proud, arrogant man who sees himself as his own king. After all, Satan said to the first couple, “You shall be as gods;” that is, self-governed, autocratic people.

This text is God’s way of telling humanistic man to repent of sin and to surrender to the authority of the living God. The New Testament equivalent of this text is “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me;” (Matthew 11:29) or, “If we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord” and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved (Romans 10:9); or, “God now command all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

8 Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD. 9 For thou, LORD, art high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

The fact that the LORD reigns over all the earth and calls the pagans and infidels from every nation to repent and surrender to the LORD are sweet sounds in Zion. He is not just the God of Israel but of all men. He is not just the God of the hills but of the valleys, deserts, and seas. He knows the secret counsels of all the kings, foils their plans, and executes His will on the earth.

Zion is the community of the redeemed (the heavenly Jerusalem today), and they rejoice in God’s reign and His attention to call the rebels to order. The redeemed have repented of their sins and made peace with God on His terms. Because of their deep desire for others to find grace and forgiveness at the foot of the cross (judgments), there is joy for Christians in gospel proclamation.

“The faithful servants of God may well rejoice and be glad, because he is glorified; and whatever tends to his honor, is his people’s pleasure.” – Matthew Henry.

Gospel Instructions to Lovers of God

10 Ye that love the LORD, 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 Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Just as the LORD has instructions for the pagans (7-9), God has instructions for believers. Between the two commands He reminds His beloved of the benefit of living under His authority: preservation (eternal life), deliverance, light (increase light and perspective on truth), and gladness.

The first command: “hate evil.”

The first command is not to “believe in yourself; or “to love your neighbor as yourself;” or, “be all you can be,” or “reach your full potential;” but TO HATE evil! Toleration of evil is not Christian. Believers are called to hate fornication, adultery, homosexuality, theft, murder, covetousness, disrespect, and idolatry . . . and those who promote vice.

Evil is not floating through the air. It is in men!! It is not like the flu that comes on men for a short time and then leaves.

That believers are to love the sinner and hate sin is a modern Evangelical nicety that is anthropologically flawed, practically unattainable, and theologically preposterous. Perjurers lie because they are liars; fornicators fornicate because they are fornicators; burglars steal because they are thieves. The whole idea that a criminal did not mean to do what he did but is really a good man on the inside is absurd . . . but this is what the psychologists and the courts argue today.

While it is possible for a sinner to sin less, it is not anthropologically possible to be sinless. And, because it is not possible to amputate sin from the sinner, it is heresy to think that it is spiritually possible to separate sin from the sinner or for people to hate the sin and love the sinner. Oh, that it was that easy! While the Word can divide soul and spirit, it is not possible for men to separate sin from the sinner nor is it desirable to hate the sin and love the sinner. To call for an end of abortion without calling for the death penalty for abortionists is more Rousseauan than Christian. Rousseau would say, "I know the abortionists kill babies, but because they are trying to help women, they must be really good people."

Rousseau taught the world to judge him by his feelings, and not by his actions; that is, though he consorted with prostitutes, he felt he was really a good man with noble thoughts, honorable ambitions, and virtuous feelings. The belief that we should love the sinner and hate the sin is a product of Rousseauan "touchy-feely" anthropology that spreads the seeds of permissiveness and irresponsibility. That some crimes are hate crimes and others are love crimes, and that some criminals are good criminals and others are bad criminals is psychological non-sense. There is none good but God, said Jesus. But, there are many evil men who think they are good people (Mark 10:18).

America's youth are trained to be open-minded and to tolerate evil. Moral laxity marks our age. Permissiveness perpetuates immorality. Hate is associated with bigotry and nasty dogmatism. Love of pleasure, love of self, and love of money wins awards. Politicians believe money is the answer to all of man's problems. In fact, in the minds of modern man, the lack of money is the root of all evil. Everything is a commercial issue. Nothing is a human nature problem.

We don't see the sinfulness of sin or the ugliness of ugly. We are deaf to hissing of the snake near the poisonous tree. We are more concerned about the "economy" and "health issues" than we are about evil at work in our own hearts. To hate evil is a positive command. It takes moral energy to hate evil. We are ordered by our Heavenly Father to break from the pack and to stoke the fires of hatred; i.e. to hate evil and evil men manufacturing evil. To shut down the "moonshine" industry, you must arrest the moonshiners. While modern humanists bifurcates man separating actions from feelings, and feelings from criminal acts, the Scripture does not sever the man from his actions. Evil is not out there in the environment. It is in the human heart. Man is seen a whole unit. Actions are evil because man's heart forges evil.

Matthew 12:34 You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

Rousseau taught that man was good and that evil was in the environment. Only a Rousseau could sleep with a prostitute then try to convince her of the path of virtue. He sent his bastard children off to boarding school, and then wrote a book on how to raise children. Thus, severing the man from his actions and declaring the criminal virtuous has been a product of more than a little evil.

The second command: “rejoice in the Lord.” Gladness is a benefit of the gospel (97:11), but in this verse the LORD commands His own to rejoice (97:12). Because we live in a negative world bombarded with gloomy news stories, it takes moral energy to “rejoice” and “be glad” Thus, the Lord commands his saints to add fuel to fires of gladness by an act of the will. A singing saint is a powerful Christian. Maybe, for this reason, Satan tries so hard to keep the Christian defeated and depressed.

In conclusion, the O.T. gospel is not the offer of “fire insurance” against the flames of hell, but the proclamation of the reign of God. The need of the hour is not “feel good about yourself,” but a bold declaration that “The Lord rules over the affairs of men.” Things are not out of control. Our God reigns! Because His kingdom is now, men should repent and bow the knee to his authority. Those who enter His dominions will find “preservation” and “deliverance.” Likewise, those who have accepted the yoke have a duty to hate evil as well as to rejoice in His reign.

Note: Psalm 99 is also an OT gospel similar in style to Psalm 97.

It declares “The Lord reigns” in verse one.

The first word (Exalt) in verse five is a Piel imperative. This word means “to lift up” and is translated “I lift up my hand to the Most High, Maker of Heaven and Earth” in Genesis 14:22. The idea is that of allegiance and devotion. Thus, the imperative is a gospel invasion term calling the reader to pledge allegiance to the Lord God . . . by oath; that is, to enter into a covenant with Him.

Like Psalm 97, Psalm 99:5 publishes the Jussive or gospel invitation — to “worship” — a Hithpael Jussive verb meaning “to cause yourself to bow down” to Him Who is on the throne (v. 5).

How does one get saved in Psalm 99? The answer is to understand “the Lord reigns” . . . to bow down and acknowledge His authority . . . to “lift up your hand” and to enter into a covenant / oath of allegiance to Him.

Psalm 98 - Let the Sea Roar

“The LORD hath made known his salvation . . . let the sea roar”



The author of this psalm is unnamed. Many suppose that it was written after the completion of the second temple (516 B.C.), and indeed was proposed for that purpose. However, it is of such general character, it is appropriate for any occasion.

“Let the sea roar”: the psalmist makes use of personification and hyperbole as literary devices to arouse the human mind to consider the majesty and grandeur of God’s saving work in history. May the psalmist’s poetry not fall on dull minds!

“The very ‘reading’ of the psalm – so joyous – so jubilant – so animated – so exulting – is suited to awaken the mind to praise; to rouse it to thankfulness; to fill it with joy” (Barnes).

Psalm 98:1 <A Psalm.> O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

While considering the great works of Providence, possibly the completion of the second temple, the psalmist calls for a new song to celebrate a recent victory — a victory given to the people, not by their own prowess, but by the right hand and holy arm of the Lord.

The word “victory” (yasha), a Hiphil verb, is more commonly rendered “salvation” — a reference to God’s intervention and deliverance from some kind of trouble.

If these “marvelous things” refer to the exile’s return from Babylon and the completion of the second temple, the “victory” (salvation) is none other than a reference to the nation’s resurrection from the dead (539-516 B.C.).

2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

The noun “salvation” (yeshua) is translated “deliverance,” “help,” “victory,” and “salvation” 61 times. The Messiah is named *Yeshua*. In this stanza the word “salvation” is a metonym closely associated with “righteousness.”

In the New Testament “being declared righteous” by faith in Christ (justification) is the pinnacle consideration of the doctrine of salvation in the Book of Romans.

Apparently, the people had reason to doubt the purpose of God, but when He revealed His power, the people were delightfully stunned by the revelation of His salvation. This was not a private act, but a public achievement that even left the surrounding nations speechless.

3 He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

The word “salvation” is used a third time in this anthem. Whatever this “salvation” was for the nation, the house of Israel understood this deliverance was not the result of their own cunning, but the result of God keeping His Word . . . a marvelous display of sovereignty, mercy, and kindness to the nation.

“all the ends of the earth” is so strong we must conclude this work, possibly the return from Babylon to build the second temple, demanded the whole world’s attention.

In relation to Israel, there are four historical works that demand the world’s consideration: the exodus event, the defeat of the Assyrians under Hezekiah, the return of Israel from Babylon (Ezra & Nehemiah), and our Lord’s visitation in the New Testament.

4 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. 5 Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. 6 With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

The word “noise” (ruwa) means “shout of victory.” The imperative is addressed to all the earth. Not only should Israel shout “victory,” the nations of the earth should join the festivities.

Very few events in life demand an international celebration, but this work of God did. Orders like “make a joyful noise” and a “loud noise” inform us that this “salvation” (v.3) was so grand and monumental that it had to be celebrated with every voice and every musical instrument available to mankind.

Let us consider the fact that Gentiles now share in the benefits of salvation in Christ just like believing Jews.

“Let all the children of men rejoice in the setting up the kingdom of Christ, for all may benefit by it.” (Matthew Henry).

With trumpets and cornets, this psalm had the character of a military march with pounding drums and contrasting strains that release the heart to shout, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55-58)

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 be joyful together

“Let the sea roar”: A national band with a million member choir singing the praises of God with millions of instruments blaring away didn’t have enough force and strength to applaud the wonders of this salvation. This international orchestra is too small, too puny, and too frail to score the grand triumph of this mammoth salvation.

Consequently, the psalmist orders the roaring sounds of the surf and foam of the sea, and the sounds of rivers with their roaring waterfalls, and thundering, volcanic mountains to assist the chorale in celebrating this deliverance.

9 Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

This psalm calls for universal praise. So great was this salvation that the psalmist calls every member of the human race to pick up their saxophone, violin, and drum and to join the jamboree.

The great lesson in this psalm is that our worship is too feeble and our choirs too passive in proclaiming the greatness of the Lord's salvation. The world has yet to produce a choir and to organize an orchestra appropriate for commemorating the glorious wonders of salvation in Christ.

His salvation demands more tenors, bases, and sopranos be added to the choir. There are not enough drums, trumpets, saxophones, tubas, and trombones on earth capable honoring the magnitude of God's salvation at Calvary.

Let the trees clap, the lions growl, the elephants roar, the cows moo, the birds chirp, and the dogs bark in celebrating his salvation.

May the Lord enable us to add our voices to that heavenly chorale (Revelation 5). Until then, let us sing our best, dress our best, act our best, and do our best to celebrate the wonders of the cross.

Sounds of a volcano: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m3okcldkLjk>

Sounds of ocean waves: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfPPPhYuq7I>

Psalm 99 - Bow the Knee to His Authority

“Worship at his footstool; for he is holy.”



The theme of this psalm is *the LORD Reigneth*. The foundation of all worship rests on the fact that He rules over the nations and is guiding history towards its ultimate conclusion.

That the Lord reigns is the subject of psalms 95-100 because “The LORD reigneth” is the gospel of the Old Testament.

It had to be put to music and sung as a Hebrew liturgy. The noble work of worship and service is built on this truth, “The LORD reigneth.”

The Foundation of Praise

Psalm 99:1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

“The LORD reigneth” means the LORD is installed as King; that He has authority to make law and to judge the people; that He is in charge, and not man!

The word “tremble” (ragaz) can mean “to quake,” “to be agitated,” “to rage,” or “to be perturbed.” The Spirit is NOT calling people to be angry with God, but to be properly moved by His status; that is, for men to take their appropriate place and to arrange themselves under His authority; for men to confess Him as King, Lord, and Master, and to surrender to His law-order.

“sitteth between the cherubims” refers to the Ark of the Covenant, the mercy seat, and the law of the LORD God; that is, “sitteth” makes NOTICE that He is the properly installed King.

This reality reinforces the requirement for men to develop a new gestalt and to organize themselves before God’s throne — to accept His government and gladly acknowledge His dominion. In Latin the title “Lord” is “dominus” from which we get the term “dominion” and “dominate.”

“Let the earth be moved” is a call for the earth “to TAKE NOTICE,” “to shake,” and “to tremble,” not literally, but as a metaphorical example to men on how to properly respond to Divine authority. The description is taken from the fury of a storm with all its commotion on trees and seas — an example of His majesty and the terror of His power to which all men ought to prostrate themselves before Him.

Reasons to Praise

2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

“great in Zion” refers to the great acts of the LORD in redeeming and delivering His people from dangers. The idea is that God has interposed Himself when the nation was threatened by hostile nations to save His people and to discomfort His enemies. Consequently, Hebrews had high esteem for the LORD.

“high above all the people” refers to His status and jurisdiction; that He rules over the nations; that He has them under his control; that He rules over all men and all the hullabaloo behind politics; that the One ruling in Zion also exercises authority over all the nations of the earth. Because of this the people have a special reason to praise him.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

The first call (command) of this psalm is for people to acknowledge His authority and surrender to it.

The second call is for men to consider the virtue of His name; that is how great and large in scale He is to temporal men. He is great because his redemptive works represent the attributes of God and marvelous acts performed under this banner.

The adjective “terrible” means the mere mention of His name ought to cause men to pause, to tremble, and to honor Him with praise and thanksgiving.

His name “is holy” means that His name is set apart for honor because He is pure and righteous — a reasonable warning against cursing and blasphemy. You don’t keep your diamonds in a pigsty, and you don’t use the Lord’s name cheaply or degradingly. Things done under this holy appellation ought to bring out the best in us. “Hallowed be thy name” is a prayer that all men everywhere might honor and respect His holy name; that is, don’t use His name lightly or disparagingly. Reserve using His name for solemn matters in courts and in worship.

4 The king’s strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

The psalmist provides another reason to praise the King.

“The king’s strength” refers to the power of God as a king and his exercise of authority among the nations.

“loveth judgment” means He is always on the side of what is right and just. God does not choose sides: He is always on the side of those promoting love and justice, and never on the side of those promoting party politics.

“establishes equity” is a common-law term referring to those who advance fairness and impartiality in controversial matters related to men.

“Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob ” refers to God’s ability to arbitrate conflicts related to Israel; the ability to balance the interest of His holiness with the needs of the people for their good; to do what ought to be done; to do not only what is right but to do it lovingly for the good of Jacob even though no one else had his interests at heart.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

This is the **third and fourth call** in this psalm:

The Polel imperative “exalt” means “to rise up” intensely as if one was in church parading the Bible down the aisle or going into an honorable court – “All Rise!” It is a command for the people to stand up in His presence in a manner worthy of monarchs; to lift up His name with high honor so it stands out like a flag on a pole.

The word “worship” is a Hithpael imperative meaning “cause yourself to bow down” before His footstool; that is, humble yourself, kneel, bow, and prostrate yourself before His Majesty.

“Majesty, worship His majesty;
unto Jesus be all glory, honor and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority,
flow from His throne unto His own; His anthem raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus.
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.”

This command answers the “Baptist” question, “How did people get saved in the Old Testament?” The answer is to confess Him as Lord, King, and Master; to bow the knee and acknowledge His supremacy; to arrange one’s precious all under His authority — the foundation of Romans 10: 9-10.

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

The official ministers of the Hebrew religion, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel bowed their knee to His authority and called upon His Holy name. And, God answered them. Likewise, followers of the Hebrew religion ought to follow this example as the grounds upon which petitions are granted.

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.

Calling upon His name (v. 6) involves “listening to His Word as they did when He spoke from the “cloudy pillar,” and obeying His testimonies (law) and ordinances.

“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honor him” (Psalm 91:15).

“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor Me” (Psalm 50:15).

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

“Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God” provides those approaching His throne with the assurance they too will be heard just like He heard Moses, Aaron, and Samuel. The God Christians worship is the same God that they worshiped. Therefore, we ought to feel the assurance of this promise.

The word “inventions” refers to misdeeds, sins, and wantonness.

“tookest vengeance” refers to judicial judgment and severe fatherly discipline.

We are often flogged by our own sins; and, this guilt hinders prayer. Likewise, the founding fathers of the nation were also flawed men; that is, they too were sinners who needed forgiveness. By “sinners” we do not mean rebels. They acknowledged the authority of the LORD and in following Him sometimes failed. In floundering, they sought to be reconciled to God and found Him faithful to forgive even though they were often the object of severe chastisement.

If they found forgiveness, so can we. The difference being that we know that forgiveness is based on the fact that Christ was punished for our sins and that He paid the redemption price with His own blood.

Psalm 86:5 For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

Ephesians 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

“Exalt” and “worship” is **the fifth and sixth command** in this psalm — obedience required by the certainty, “The LORD reigneth.”

“Exalt” and “worship” have the same meaning here as they do in verse five and for the same reason — His holiness:

The Polel imperative “exalt” means “to rise up” as if one was in church or going to court. It is a command for the people to stand up in His presence in a manner worthy of monarchs; to lift up His name with high honor so it stands out like a flag on a pole.

The word “worship” is a Hithpael imperative meaning “cause yourself to bow down” before His footstool; that is, humble yourself, kneel, bow, and prostrate yourself before His Majesty.

The word “holy hill” refers to Zion — a metonym for the authority of the LORD God as Creator of Heaven and Earth.

“God is holy” refers to the fact that the LORD God is not one among many, but that He is the One True God. All others are pretenders. He is the real God; therefore, let all men acknowledge His authority and surrender their precious all to His law and His care.

“All hail the pow’r of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,”Ye chosen seed of Israel’s race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,

And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,
Crown Him Lord of all!"

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,
Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him who saves you by His grace,

And crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,
Crown Him Lord of all!"

Psalm 100 - Enter His Gates with Thanksgiving

“For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting”



Loved by Christians all over the world, this psalm completes the gospel songs declaring the reign of the LORD God (95-100).

Psalm 100:1 <A Psalm of praise.> Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

This psalm moves from the particular and the local to the universal; “all ye lands.”

The LORD is not just the God of Israel, but the “King of the Nations.” (Jeremiah 10:7). Israel was God’s beachhead, but the grand prize is all the nations of the world.

The Hebrew word for “praise” (*todah*) means “thanksgiving” or “praise.” The *todah* sacrifice was a thanksgiving sacrifice offered under the Torah (Leviticus 7:11ff).

The word “noise” means “shouts” of praise — like victory chants after a conquest in war — praise Him for defeating Satan, sin, and death at Calvary; for rescuing us from shame and clothing us with garments fit for a king.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

According to many rabbis, the greatest sin among Jews was not serving the Lord with joy. Therefore, this psalm exhorts the Hebrews to dig down deep and to discover reasons to praise God and to serve Him gladly, willingly, voluntarily.

“Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things” (Deuteronomy 38:47).

The opposite of worshipping the LORD joyfully is service with the fear of slaves having their heads down, eyes askew, and expressions of total defeat.

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

“Know” is an imperative meaning, “Let all the nations know that YHWH is the true God.,” that He is the Creator, that we are His creatures; that He is the One, true absolute God and that all others are pretenders; that He is the Great Shepherd, and we are the sheep of His pasture.

Each man, due to the principle of irreducible complexity, are proof that God created the world and everything in it all at once.

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

“Enter His gates with thanksgiving” is a rule of worship. It is an imperative. It is **not** an option. It is law. There are **no** exceptions.

Hebrews coming to the temple were required to put a smile on their face and to open their lips with praise. Likewise, the Lord’s majesty requires Christians to look their best and be at their best when they come to church. There is no place for shoddiness, sloppiness, gloominess, or a criticalness in the temple of God.

Bless Him, praise Him, and give thanks to Him. If there is no joy in your heart, fake it. Praise Him and soon your feelings will match your singing.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

We adore the Lord for many reasons — not just because He is big and strong, but because He is kind and tender. He is not only all-powerful, He is admirable.

- He is good to all men, even to His enemies.
- He is merciful to those who don’t deserve it — a mercy that echoes praises into eternity.
- He is true to His promises. Therefore, our hearts are filled with assurance of His love — a love that lasts forever.

An eternal Spirit-Being of unchangeable goodness, mercy, and truth manifesting His kindness to us is worthy of universal praise.

Psalm 101 - The Politician's Psalm

"I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes"



Shortly after David became king of Israel, he penned the policies that would guide his administration as king of Israel. Thus, we call this, "the Politician's Psalm."

Oh, that modern officials would be as contemplative and adopt the principles that David scribed for his public life. All men would do well to acquire virtues that will guide them during their pilgrimage on earth. King Alfred the Great did, Stonewall Jackson did it; Robert E. Lee did it. Successful politicians must also do it.

Government officials are required to take an oath to uphold and support the constitution of the united States of America before assuming the duties of office. They are not permitted to take an oath of office to support the laws of a foreign corporation.

Oaths sanction performance. In exchange for an oath, We the People grant politicians privileges and powers. Without an oath, there is no power and no duty to perform acts of office. Without an oath and bond, the acts of pretenders are null and void; that is, they become de facto rulers and not de jure public servants.

Further, the oath was to the LORD (Deuteronomy 6:13). The whole problem with American politics is that we do not have any men in office who have sworn an oath to obey the law of the LORD God – the ultimate law on which the common law is founded.

Look at this psalm as David's oath—his pledge to serve under the jurisdiction of truth as Israel's minister of justice.

Black's Law Dictionary defines "ministerial" as "that which is done under the authority of a superior; opposed to judicial: that which involves obedience to instructions, but demands no special discretion, judgment, or skill."

Psalm 101:1 I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

David's first pledge was to conduct his administration conscious of the LORD (YHWH).

Most politicians are men-pleasers instead of God-pleasers; servants of fictions instead of ministers of truth. Amidst the cacophony of officials feverously scratching their nails on government blackboards, David pledged to compose melodies and to make music; to light a candle amidst the darkness; to promote good over evil. And what was his grand theme? —the virtues of mercy and justice; velvet and steel; the sweets and the bitters; the cream and the vinegar; the soft and the rough; the tender and the tough; forgiveness and vengeance; grace and truth — and, the choices that must be made between good and evil.

Few politicians today know the difference between right and wrong much less have the skills to compose songs with such grand themes. Training in righteousness is, therefore, necessary for success in politics.

It takes great skill to blend justice and mercy into a harmony that binds the wicked and frees the righteous; that refreshes the weak and reforms the wretched; that invigorates industry and stifles corruption. David made a choice to please God and not the bankers.

Thus every politician must choose whom he will serve, God or man, truth or fiction. "No man can serve two masters," said Jesus.

Hopefully, the choices of a political leader will please his constituents. But, if a choice must be made to do what's right and follow God's will or to do what's wrong and to please man, hopefully that politician will have the moral character to do what is right regardless of the consequences. Such character, however, is as rare as pretty on an ape.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

David pledged to conduct himself with integrity; i.e. to be holy in his conduct. Holiness among government officials is a scarce commodity. Excellence in ethics, manners, temperament, and political skills must be studied. Few graduate from such a difficult course of study. Corruption is easy; perfection is hard. Precision is tedious; pettiness is effortless. David did not achieve his ambition, but it was good that it was in his heart.

Thus, all politicians must beware of eating fruits from the poisonous tree that compromises one's integrity. No wonder David prayed to God asking Him "to come near unto me!" Holy ambition without His Holy presence leads to unholy action.

Politicians are sinners and sin's sweet fragrances are a constant attraction. Power has its own temptations. In the hands of a good man power can be used for the benefit of the people, but in the hands of a weak man power corrupts. It is not natural to be pure and holy. For holiness must be studied and supported by the divine Presence. Oh, that more politicians would surrender to the jurisdiction of truth and justice.

David made a commitment to be holy at home as well as at work. It is too easy to be an angel in public and a devil in private; to sing in the choir and to sin in the corners; to be sweet away and sour at home; to be civilized to colleagues and uncivilized to the commoner; to be gentlemanly to the media and barbarous to the masses.

Like a lion following a herd of African antelope, duplicity stalks the life of every politician. There is no harmony so delightful as a gracious, consistent, and principled life among public officials.

3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

David pledged to resist the temptations that confront men of wealth and power. Like a burlesque, the charms of money and pleasure dance their way into the lives of politicians.

Politicians would do well to remember the pundit: “sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit reap a character; sow character and reap a destiny.”

David determined to grow flowers, not weeds; to nurture holy ambitions and to starve unholy passions. He failed, but his ambition was correct. Oh, that modern men would seek to do better than David. Technology channels temptations to us that men of antiquity never dreamed. Where are the politicians today that have made a covenant to “set no wicked thing” before their eyes? Little wonder, Christianity has a little impact on the culture. Political leaders are laden with sins of pride, of wealth, and lust . . . and so are the people.

David says he hated the work of evildoers. On another occasion, he declared, “Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? (Psalm 139:21). He not only hated the deeds of the wicked, he hated them—the source of evil infecting other men!! David is not saying that he hated weak and flawed sinners, but a special class of sinners — those who made a pact with the Devil’ for those content to remain in the jurisdiction of darkness. He called these people, “the wicked”, “the bloody,” and “thine enemies” (Psalm 139-18-21).

The willingness of politicians to take bribes (donations) seems to find their way into the niches of government. Evildoers are not just street vermin, but government officials dressed in blue suits.

It is “woke” today to disparage the necessity of hate. Our government is ready to indict men for hate speech, hate crimes, and hateful thoughts. Balderdash! It is impossible to be a godly man who does not hate wicked politicians. Where in the Bible does it say we are “to hate the sin, but love the sinner?” Wicked deeds come from wicked men, and we are called to hate both.

Politicians today have more sweets than a candy store. Christians are called to be salt, not sugar. Life is not about being nice, but about being holy . . . and holy men hate tomcats in the fish market; i.e. chubby politicians gorging themselves from the public trough. It must be so!

4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.

David pledged to clean up the deep state—to “drain the swamp” of political alligators and water moccasins. To not “know a wicked person” means that David was not going to employ crooks in his cabinet.

It has been said that 98% of lawyers make the other 2% look bad. The problem with presidents is that they are surrounded by crafty bureaucrats and canny cabinet members that have perfected the art of duplicity. “When the wicked rule, the people mourn” (Proverbs 29:2).

It was said of “Honest Abe” that he was one of the cleverest men to ever hold office, and that he often cloaked his real ambitions behind noble suggestions. Such cleverness is not to be admired, but to be feared.

David, therefore, determined to surround himself with godly men and to cleanse his staff of two-faced, double-minded, double-tongued, double-hearted shysters. David was flawed, but not corrupt. He did not promote miscreants to cabinet posts.

As important as personal integrity is, the decision of one's political counselors is just as critical. Many a president has been ruined by his own advisers. President Woodrow Wilson, following the advice of a close cabinet member said to his friends, just before he died, that he had been "deceived" and that "I have betrayed my Country." No doubt he did! (The Zionists were all over him).

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

David pledged to cleanse his cabinet of mudslingers devoted to utopian fantasy. Every organization has snipers hiding in the bushes firing arrows of criticism at their boss.

All politicians instinctively understand the politics of personal destruction. Legislators know that the way to destroy an adversary is to slander him; that is, invent a despicable accusation and leak it to the media. Politicians are masters of the attack ad. They know how to ruin their opponents through backbiting and character assassination.

David had no room in his pool for camouflaged cobras and vipers. He was committed to rid his administration of proud and pompous counselors. David suffered greatly from Saul's slanderous accusations against him, and he purposed that even his political foes should not suffer the same fate. Truth "Yes, but slander "No." David zealously promoted his political agenda, but he did not employ propagandists skilled in the art of smear campaigns. Mudslingers need not apply.

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 serve me.

David pledged to employ men of integrity. A good master chooses good servants.

Emily Dickenson said, "Her friends were her estate"; that is, all her wealth and hope and success centered on the friends she possessed. "A faithful man who can find?" Godly friends give good advice, but pretenders poison the soup. Friends rush in when foes rush out.

A man is rich indeed who has men around him that are committed to integrity and to his success. David made it his ambition to find them, employ them, and to take care of them. Take care of your friends and they will take care of you. Superficial men walk out when you are weak and failing, but your true friends will draw near to protect you in a time of crisis.

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

David pledged to cleanse his staff of schemers; i.e. men skilled in the art of defrauding people of their wealth and property. Working deceit is not simple theft, but grand plots by clever politicians to plunder the assets of the people for their own political ends. It is called "covetousness" — a violation of the 10th Commandment.

David is not judging the hearts of men, but the actions of duplicitous government officers maximizing their positions of power to exploit the weak. International bankers and government officials throughout history have conspired against the people so that the profits of industry

flow into their hands. This was true during the middle ages in serfdom where lords enslaved the masses, and it is true in our day wherein government officials promote the modern “income tax” scheme to skim the milk off every man’s paycheck before the worker tastes the fruit of his labor.

Jesus had no tolerance for these workers of deceit. His first confrontation was with the moneychangers in the temple, and eventually they had him arrested and crucified for exposing their fraud.

Behind all schemes to enslave men and deprive mankind of their property is the art of the lie. The wretched thing about lies and deceit is that the deceived do not know they are being fooled. Such economic schemes of socialism, communism, democracies, and fascism are clever plots to shift power from the masses to the elite. David sought to cleanse his court of these dirty, double-minded, double-crossing, double-dealing, double agents . . . and, righteous politicians would do well to do the same.

8 (Morning by morning – ESV) I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

The first word in this sentence in Hebrew is “mornings” (labarim, plural). The ESV translates this “morning by morning.”

In law, we call this “Morning Justice.” For every court is under the original-jurisdiction of truth and justice; every officer is under the perpetual-oversight of the one, true Lawgiver (James 4:12).

The only question is whether or not judges will surrender their court to the jurisdiction of truth or whether they will surrender to foreign-fiction-jurisdiction and alien laws that punish the sovereign-citizen party.

For justice is the end of government; the ambition of a just society. For relieving the oppressed and punishing the oppressors is the daily concern of all good men. Equity, not impossible equality, are the sunbeams that enlighten the heart of all judges.

David pledged to faithfully perform his duties as Israel’s chief law enforcement officer. The first duty of the State is to surrender itself to the rule of God; i.e. to seek first the kingdom of God and arrange itself under the jurisdiction of justice (Psalm 2; Matthew 6:33).

God’s law is not a private matter demanding something from Christians but leaving other men to do as they please. The law is valid for the Christian because it is valid for all people. God’s law is not only right for me, but for all men, and all of man’s institutions. As Israel’s commander and chief, the king had two duties: (1) to punish those who violate the rights of men (the “wicked”), and (2) secondarily to protect the people from those who abuse the liberties of a free people. So, when David says “he will cut off all the wicked,” he is saying he will faithfully perform the duties of the executive branch of government.

If you are a politician, you serve in one of the three branches of government. And, whatever your duties, God calls you to know your duty, to do it, and to limit your authority to the jurisdiction of truth and justice.

Two great evils among politicians must be avoided: (1) dereliction of duty; that is, a slack hand in the performance of official responsibilities; and, (2) ultra vires acts; that is, assuming powers and authority beyond the scope of your office — the latter being the sin of most politicians — the sin of not limiting government to its constitutional restrictions.

In conclusion, this is called the “politicians psalm” because it outlines the principles upon which king David sought to govern his administration. He turned the psalm into an oath to faithfully perform his duty. Modern government employees know little of this psalm or its lofty ideals . . . thus, the reason so few people have confidence in government. It has been said, “If you aim at nothing, you shall surely hit it.” Likewise, every politician would do well to sit down and write out the principles upon which he is going to conduct his public service . . . and a man would do better by adopting the pledge that David penned.

Psalm 102 - A Prayer for the Destitute

A Psalm for Troubled Saints



This is a psalm written by a distressed saint who draws a lesson from one of the great acts of God in history—the return of the Jews from Babylon (536 BC).

The occasion is due to the unexpected command of Cyrus for the exiles to return to Canaan and to rebuild their temple. Afflicted and alone in his personal trial, he submits his petition to the unchanging God of history. See Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah.

Psalm 102:1 <A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD.> Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.

Satan would have us believe that there is no God, no hearing, and no answering.

If such be the case, it would be more desirable for the atheist to execute our death warrant than for us to ramble on about the case for the existence of God. To the soldiering saint, it would be better to die than to be denied access to His Mercy Seat.

The Hebrew word for “hear” is *shema*. It is a command, and it is the same word used in the “Shema” of Deuteronomy 6:4. I know you hear prayers, but hear my plea. My prayer is flawed and I am broken, but hear my cry!

The prayer of the psalmist is so flawed; it is more of a “cry” than a prayer. The first use of the term “cry” is when Israel cried over the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt. When sorrow fills the heart and words fail, the urgency of our conditions begs that our groans reach the ears of Him who has the power and grace to arrest our conflict.

If our cries do not enter the veil of Him who rules over true Israel, we are the most miserable of all men.

2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

The psalmist deals with a truth: that God is . . . but that God also conceals Himself. Where is God when I need Him? Why does He seem so near in His temple, but so far away in trouble? Why does God feel so close in times of prosperity, but so distant in times of adversity?

The secretive ways of God tests all men, and the psalmist fears His evasiveness Who at times is more difficult to find than Big Foot: “Hide not . . .” Do not ignore me. Do not pretend You do not know me. Do not be truant when I am in trouble. At least raise your eyebrow and

acknowledge my presence. If my sins have so offended You, deal with them latter when I can better bear it. But, now, in my distress, overlook the weakness of my faith and the weaknesses of my prayer.

Troubles are difficult enough, but a silent God in the midst of trials is a double tragedy. It is a great blessing for God to send a gift, but for the gift to arrive in time to avert disaster is a double benefit that bolsters confidence in God.

Answers that come on the heels of prayer are the medallions of the saints. But, who can boast about a silent God in the midst of screaming problems? What faith can endure the bombardment of doubts due to God's abandonment of the man in the midst of his field of battle? The psalmist employs a set of effective metaphors to describe his condition.

A Description of His Suffering

Consumed

3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth.

The metaphor is well chosen. Smoke is illusory, intangible, and immaterial. Fire is a fearsome destroyer. Smoke disappears into the midnight sky never to be seen again. It cannot be retrieved. It cannot be harnessed. It cannot be saved for usefulness at a later time.

Not only were the psalmist's days disappearing like smoke, his bones burned like coals in a hearth. Likewise, his feeble faith and piety passed before him like vapors amidst the charred ashes of his precious all. His righteousness that stood like a proud cedar in the forest was stripped of its bark and all that remained was black charcoal of a once noble tree.

What a plight -- a child of God with an empty bank account; his energy spent; his youth past; his dreams a flame in pillars of smoke! But, this is the state of many a dear child of God.

God's Withering Flower

4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread. 5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.

The term "smitten" refers to an aggressive blow with the intent to slaughter. It is translated "kill" in Genesis 4:15. It refers to God's act of flooding the earth to destroy humanity in Genesis 8:21. It is the term used to describe Moses killing an Egyptian in Exodus 2:11.

The psalmist sees himself as a tender plant that wants to live but is smitten by the intense heat under the desert Sun. He struggles to survive but his beauty and freshness is spent. Burnt, dehydrated, and under intense heat, the psalmist exposes himself as God's withering flower. God's blossom is so distressed he can't even eat. Sorrow stole his appetite. Regret ruined his routines. Weakened by the spiritual drought, God's faded flower shrinks into despair, dismay, and depression.

Gaunt and thin, he looks more like an Eisenhower German POW death camp survivor than one of God's well fed sheep. Pale and gray, he resembles a living, emaciated corpse. Where is God?

His Comparison to Three Birds Blown off Course

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.

The pronouns "I" and "my" may be a literary device where the psalmist speaks for the exiles.

The psalmist likens himself to three miserable birds. What is a water fowl doing inhabiting the parched, blazing wastelands staring at cactus and sand dunes?

What is an owl doing moping alone in a desert clinging to solitude? Stunned and disorientated, all hope is abandoned. Isolated and depressed, he lies face down in the sand. Fluttering for breath, he awaits his final fate.

I stare at the sand
Where is His hand?
My prayer not heard,
Alone like a bird.
Having once flown high,
Is it time to die?

7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.

The psalmist sees himself as a tiny sparrow perched on a housetop as a sentinel keeping watch over a city he cannot defend, he cannot protect, and that will not heed his chirping. He is the lone patriot watching the nation. Where is the flock? Where are the soldiers?

Maybe this little bird has lost its mate or its little chicks. Maybe the other members of his clan are safely roosting in their nests.

This is not a cheerful sparrow, but a bird chirping in a minor key warning his nation of impending doom. He is only one bird. No other guards are seen on the rooftop. Where are the kindred spirits? What can a single, weak, depressed, exhausted sparrow do to save his sleeping city? He looks; he sees; he chirps out his warning, but no one hears; no one cares; no one wakes. The church slumbers on.

8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.

God's little bird watching his city was surrounded by predatory hawks, coyotes, and snakes. Clever politicians and government bureaucrats plotted his downfall.

The psalmist found himself confronted by canons of criticism and the sword of slander "all the day." Whereas leaders should have a sworn an oath to uphold God's law, these rulers were under oath to crush God's sparrow. In the hunt, the demagogues acted with insane intensity to trap God's little bird and to break its wings.

A Description of His Personal Distress

A Diet of Ashes and Tears

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

Ashes were the mourner's cosmetic choice in times of great grief. Lying in ashes symbolized humility and havoc. When people in the East wanted to express bereavement, they adorned themselves in sackcloth and wept face down in a pit of ashes.

God turned his wine into water. Drinking only water, he could taste the salty tears in his cup.

Indignation and Wrath

10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.

The nation was under judgment. Loyalties were divided.

In the cloud of confusion, opportunists rose to power. Madmen ruled the nation.

The rabble used that power to oppress this servant of God. His enemies had provoked the Lord and were cause of the distress. When men idolize political power, Christians cannot be trusted not to betray one another. The sharp effects of justice now touched this patriot and he felt its bitter impact personally. The wrath of God poured out upon the nation splashed upon God's little bird. The grief and suffering of God's people pierced his own soul. Though he had done all within his power to avert the calamity that reached the nation, he found himself on his face mourning in ashes.

Possibly, his own political or financial distress was the judgment of God against the psalmist for his own personal sin. With his welfare deteriorating, he saw God as the Source of his calamity. It was God that lifted him up, and it was God that cast him down. God promotes; and, God demotes. He is the cause of the rise and fall of men. The psalmist agonizes because he is among the fallen.

A Disappearing Shadow and Withered Grass

11 My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

Grabbing two more metaphors, the psalmist compares his life to a shadow that appears in the morning and disappears in the evening under the cover of darkness.

Like a tender, green blade of grass that appears in the spring, his vitality faded to dry, pale yellow under the summer heat. Scourged by the blazing Sun, the positive passion of youth shriveled into depression.

The psalmist is made to feel the brevity and temporariness of life. He wants to live. He wants a full life. But, poverty and death was at work robbing him of joy and happiness.

His Description of the God He Serves

Eternal

12 But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.

Turning from his personal affliction, the author reflects on the true source of consolation. God's name is YHWH or "I am". I will perish, but You remain. I fade and change, but You are permanent. My life is a variable, but You are Constant. My nation crumbles, but You are imperishable. My generation will disappear, but you are indestructible. Because You reign as the eternal King, all is well (Exodus 3:12; Psalm 30:4).

Men will forget me, but there will be new generations who will remember You. Evidence of thy presence will cause future generations to seek your face. All things are vanishing, but you remain forever. You are the Creator and Your creatures will always remember You.

Merciful

13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.

For the Hebrews to return and build Zion – What faith!

What is our view of God? What kind of God is He? Is He a scrooge grasping tightly to his pennies or is He a benevolent Father eager to give? Do we see Him as a warden holding us in prison, or as a Governor that can grant us clemency and freedom? Do we see Him as some kind of unfaithful beau that abandons His sweetheart to lustily pursue another, or do we see Him as a devoted Lover that will "never, never, never, no never forsake us"? Our sticky trials often taint the truth of His character.

Surely, there must be a key that unlocks the steel vault that hides the presence of God from us.

He does not know when, but the psalmist expresses confidence that God will act soon to comfort His people.

He believes the silent, inactive God will come out of His hideout, speak, and revive His work in the psalmist's day; that the sunshine of His presence would cause the shadows of judgment to retreat and the flowers to bloom.

The disasters of yesterday are past. Today offers new hope. He may hide Himself for a while, but He cannot restrain His desire to bless for long. The dark gray storm clouds and thunder claps must surely contain rain. He may withdraw His affections so His people will repent of their transgression, but he cannot restrain His love forever.

The time has come, yes, the time has come! After a dark night, there is the light of sunrise; after the cold winter, there is the warmth of spring time; and, after bitter discouragement, there is sweet encouragement. The God of love must love; the God of wealth must give; the God of grace must show mercy. And, He did in 539-516 B.C.

The jailed must go free; the rejected must be accepted; and life must prevail over death. God is never continually at war with His people. Peace must be declared. Surely His frowns are temporary. Fasting must end and feasting must begin: For the time to favor her is come; yes, it is come!

Precious

14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.

Zion refers to Jerusalem and its Solomonic temple. Zion was not only the religious center of the nation but the hub of civil authority. Zion was God's throne as well as God's altar. Every devout heart yearned to be near the temple . . . even in the dust. The cold hard stones delighted the servants of God. So great is Zion even the dust had value to His people. Every aspect of God's work is precious . . . and every task in service to Him a privilege!

Likewise, the servants of God take great delight in the church, the true temple of God. The youngest child in the smallest church has great importance to deacons in the family of God. Everything is significant, from preaching of the Word to the mopping of floors. Nothing is without significance and no task below our dignity.

Feared

15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

When God has mercy on his church, even the heathen take notice. When sincere hearts gather to light a candle to honor Christ, even the pagans come to see the light and enjoy the warmth.

When Zion rejoices in the accomplishments of Christ, heathen are converted. Even kings are attracted to simple, happy faith of genuine believers. The restoration of Jerusalem following the captivity was a marvel to all the surrounding nations. Likewise, a revived church cannot escape the notice of civil rulers. There is nothing more riveting to pagans than to see humble Christians delighting in Christ and joyfully serving their Master's interest.

A prayer: O, God, revive me and start a fire in my own heart that sheds light on the glories of Christ. May others see it and rejoice.

Glorious

16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

Young's translation has the tenses correct: "For Jehovah hath builded Zion, He hath been seen in His honor." A post-captivity psalm, God's house was rebuilt and His presence manifested among the people.

Kings take great pride in their palaces and public projects. Likewise, when God revives his work and rebuilds His church, He is honored among men. When pagans are converted and trained to serve Him, the Lord is glorified.

A united church growing in holiness and love is like a setting of silver at a king's banquet. Who can resist genuine Christians bound together to honor Christ and to serve the gospel in the energy supplied by the Holy Spirit?

When Christians surrender themselves to the cross, little candles create a bonfire for all to enjoy.

Building up Zion is God's work and must be energized by His Spirit. While man can participate in it, and appreciate it, men can add nothing to it. Likewise, building the kingdom of God is God's work. It can only expand by a supernatural supply of power. Man can preach the

kingdom (sow the seed), but only God can cause the seed to grow (Mark 4:26). Both seed time and harvest are supernatural works of God.

The Great Lesson in the Psalm

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

Again, Young's translation has the tenses correct (Qal perfect): "He turned unto the prayer of the destitute, and He hath not despised their prayer."

Historically, the poor were those left in the land to forage for food and those among the captives of Babylon that returned to rebuild the House of God. The pioneer exiles came back to a wasteland in order to rebuild the infrastructure of the nation.

What an encouragement that God hears the prayer of the destitute! The term "destitute" (Heb: ar-ar) refers to a small bush in the desert with tiny leaves—a condition brought about by a combination of acidic soil and drought conditions.

In Jeremiah 17:6, the term "ar-ar" is translated "heath" which refers to a dwarf-shrub—a low growing woody plant in arid regions of the earth. Jeremiah specifically mentions salty, parched lands. Perhaps, the psalmist is referring to vegetation near the Dead Sea. The principle the psalmist seeks to convey is that God hears the prayers of his dwarfed afflicted people.

What an encouragement! God answers prayer! Thousands of saints will testify to it! Israel's King does not hear men because of their wealth or their status in society. God is not moved by riches or reputations. He is moved by faith. God is love and He loves because of Who He is and not because of who we are or what we have accomplished. Great kings are surrounded by powerful and wealthy men. The common man has no access to a prince.

Unlike arrogant judges who cite petitioners with contempt for violating some esoteric rule, there is a King that is ready to bend his ear to those stripped of wealth and health. He hears beggars! As a King he has the wealth to pass out more than crumbs; as a gracious Being He can overlook the great faults of the petitioners. He will not despise the weakness of the prayers or the prayers of the weak.

18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.

Having experienced such direct and intense answer to prayer, the psalmist shares his intent: Let this be written for future generations. Take a lesson from history. The rebuilding of the Second Temple was an act of God in answer to prayer. Take note, for there shall be future generations who will be poor and destitute. Let them be hopeful! There is a God in heaven who hears the prayers of the poor.

19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth; 20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death (YLT: "sons of death"); 21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

The lesson from history continues: the destitute in Babylon are called “sons of death” because it appeared they would die bondmen in a foreign land forever. Exiled and without a temple, they poured out their hearts to the Lord. The God of Heaven heard their cries for spiritual and political freedom (prisoners of Babylon). When Cyrus came to power, God stirred the heart of this Persian messiah to grant freedom for political prisoners. He gave the order for volunteers among the exiles to return to Israel to rebuild God’s temple.

To the captives, the order seemed like a dream. Political prisoners in Babylon, Cyrus ended their bondage. Such political reversals are rare in history. Jolted, the nation came to life. In the graveyard where nations are buried, God pried open Israel’s casket. Like Lazarus, a nation in grave clothes hobbled out of their tomb.

The psalmist teaches a profound truth: When forsaken by men, there is a God in Heaven Who hears the cries and groans of those in shackles and chains.

22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

How great were the sudden political reversal and the return of the captives from Babylon to rebuild the temple? The psalmist answers. When the final act of history closes, and saints are gathered around the eternal campfire telling stories, the return of the Jews to the land of Israel from the refugee camps in the State of Babylon will not be eclipsed. As a miracle of history, it parallels Israel’s deliverance from Egypt.

His Personal Prayer

Weakened and Shortened

23 He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.

Having secured the grand fate of the temple and announced the miracle of the release of the Jews from Babylon, the psalmist now returns to his personal stress.

The verb “weakened” is a Piel perfect indicating intense affliction that caused him to hobble as a lame man toward the finish line. He was so afflicted; the stress drained him—even shortening his expected life span.

24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.

The psalmist did not fear death, but he loved life. With a Chaldian elephant on his chest and struggling to find strength to breathe, he begged the Almighty for a full life. Because God lives, he wanted to live.

Knowing Who God is, the poet wants to personally experience all of Jehovah’s mercies and graces.

Because God answered the prayers of the destitute under Babylonian oppression and because he feels like a desert plant stripped of its leaves, he begs God to be to him what He was to the exiles—a God of resurrection.

25 Of old hast thou laid 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.

It is reasonable to expect God to answer his prayers because God has not changed. God is unchanging in His eternal being. There has never been a time when God was not. There will never be a time when He will cease to exist. He is the Great I Am. What he was to destitute Israel in Egypt and in Babylon, He can be to the destitute psalmist and his people now!

28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

The psalmist seemed confident that godly seed will continue in future generations, not because of virtue in them, but because there is an unchanging God who creates and sustains them by His mercy in every age.

What encouragement! We can expect the truth and mercy of God to prevail in all seasons of history. While it seems things are always getting worse and worse, there is this promise to claim: "the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

Psalm 103 - A Thanksgiving Day Hymn

Bless the LORD, O my soul



This psalm is perfectly adapted to be read at Thanksgiving, on New Year's Eve, or on those dark, cloudy days where the fog of discouragement hides the sunshine of God's love from the soul.

Soul Talk

This is a hymn composed of soul-talk. The psalmist prods his own spirit to take on the attitude of gratitude.

Complaining is quite common, but praise is quite rare.

We are more prone to grumble and stumble than to rise and shine with thankfulness on our lips.

There are benefits of being in covenant with God.

The composer produces highly intricate arrays of sounds and pitches across six octaves of the human experience. Its composition draws emotions out of groaning base tones to touch the tenor notes of joy and happiness.

Psalm 103:1 A Psalm of David.

After reflecting on his great failures as a man, husband, father, and king, an aged King David pens this masterpiece. It has been called the "Mt. Everest" in the mountain range of great hymns . . . the highest peak in the "ring of fire."

Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

Seven times the psalmist calls his soul to wake up, to do the work of angels, and to sing the golden notes of praise to God (verse 1-2; 20-22). Three of those exhortations are in the first two verses.

Rise up! Stand up! Speak up! Stir the mind! Arouse the soul, and bless the Lord! Conduct the instruments within the heart! Come on stage and burst into song about the benefits received from being in a covenant relationship with the LORD God. Don't skip a note! Play them all.

The Benefits of Being in Covenant with the Lord God

Forgiveness

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities;

The term “iniquity” refers to sins and transgressions against the law of the LORD God . . . the open putrid sores caused by poisons from eating the fruit of the Poisonous Tree.

Oh my soul, sing the sweetest note of all. Remember, soul, He forgives ALL your iniquities; the big ones and small ones; the common and unique; the great and the small; the ugly and the alluring; even the shameful and embarrassing ones. All the sins that hurt Him, offend Him, and annoy Him, he forgives . . . cancels . . . pardons . . . and acquits. He not only forgives the sins, He forgives the pain they caused Him.

But, there is no cancellation of debt apart from the cross of Christ. Because our Lord paid the ransom for our soul, sins can be forgiven. Selah.

Healing

who healeth all thy diseases;

Physical diseases sometimes find their source in a sick soul.

Oh, soul, He is not only the Judge that pardons all your sins that would drive you down to hell, He is the Great Physician that heals all your iniquities that would turn your body into a corpse and put you in the grave. He is Jehovah Rophi!

Redemption

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction;

Oh, my soul, remember the fundamentals. You are a sinner that deserves the gavel of death. However, you are not in a funeral march, but in a coronation. Strike up the band. Signal the drums to thunder their cadence. Let coronets announce the triumph of grace for you have been redeemed from the hanging tree.

Crowning

who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies;

Oh, soul, instead of having a black hood placed over your head and hearing the steady, deadly tap-tap cadence in a macabre march to the gallows, your Savior has placed a victor’s crown upon your brow. He has invited you to share in His feast of everlasting victory. Lift up your sagging head, beloved!!

Satisfaction

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

Oh, my soul, think of all the wonderful ways God satisfies your palate with rich green avocados, honey-roasted pecans, cinnamon spices, and grains of paradise. The world’s delights like espresso fudge pie, fresh Arizona fruits, and lime chicken fajita salads have been placed on your table.

But, there is more. Your heavenly Father has given you Manna from Heaven to delight your soul – the tender shoot of divine grains that satisfy the conscience from the harvest of Christ’s finished work at the cross.

Cruci dum spiro fido! (As long as I breathe, I will remember the cross).

Justice

6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

Oh, depressed soul, the LORD has delivered you from the judge’s hammer, the executor’s writ, and the executioner’s sword. He has become your Provider and Protector, your Savior and Friend, your Rock and your Fortress. Awake! See! Rejoice!

Revelation

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

Oh, soul, men have traveled the island seas, trekked up the Mountains of Tibet, and buried themselves in the athenaeums at Oxford, Athens, and Cairo in search of truth to satisfy the soul. But, He has not hid Himself from you. In His grace, He escorted you to the libraries of heaven to study His Crowned Prince and to delight in His salvation: “Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow you, all the days of thy life!!”

Mercy

8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

“mercy” is not getting the bad you deserve. “grace” is getting the good you do not deserve.

My poor soul, do you see God as stingy? From the stable architecture of the universe, to the tenderness of His providence, and to His magisterial ruling in the affairs of men, all of providence is evidence of his grace, patience, and royal kindness. He is good and always good. There is no pauperism here. He is a king rich in mercy, and eager to share His jewels with those who keep His covenant.

Abatement

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 according to our iniquities.

Oh, soul, you have felt the heavy hand of discipline from the Father? “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”

Though discipline feels like punishment, all his wrath against sin fell upon Christ at Calvary. Not one drop is reserved for the believer. Not once has He treated you as your sins deserve. Stop sulking and start remembering that He is not like men who nurture hate and plot revenge. There’s a time-limit on his anger. Moreover, all His discipline is for your good. Up, soul, up!

Soul, when you don’t get what you want, you ought to be thankful you don’t get what you deserve.

My soul, be thankful for what you have, and the things you don't have! Stuff can be a burden and a snare. Rejoice in His providence.

Great Mercy

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

How can you measure the riches of His mercy?

To help us grasp the magnitude of His grace, the Spirit compares the stock in His granary of mercy to the infinite expanse of the heavens.

While there is a limit to His anger, there is NO limit to His mercy.

Do you feel like your sins are piled higher than the clouds? Look up! Is anything greater in size than the heavens? His mercy is higher than the clouds, higher than the stratosphere, higher than the stars in the farthest galaxy (MACS0647-JD allegedly 8 billion light years away according to "scientists." And, if comparing the abundance of His mercy to the height of the heavens is not enough, the psalmist adds one bass drum adjective, "so great" (gabar — mighty and powerful), to amplify the magnitude of His mercy.

Freedom

12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Spurgeon says it well: "There is neither latitude nor longitude for praise. God's grace is boundless; let us therefore unstintedly praise him."

Pity

13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

Sentience is often the measure of a man. Tenderness adorns manliness. Here the psalmist compares the compassion of the transcendent Creator to that of a human father condescending to meet the tender needs of a young son — a son who needs correction but not scolding, wisdom but not a lecture, encouragement but not drilling criticism.

Empathy

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.

Because you cannot see God does not mean that He cannot see you. We are not iron and steel. We are more like tender grass . . . flowers . . . blowing in the wind. We are dust, but He is Spirit. Our days upon this earth are short, but He is eternal. We don't remember the sod and the turf that appears in the spring and disappears in the fall, but the Lord remembers us during every season of life . . . even in our senior years.

Enduring Mercy and Faithfulness

17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

The conjunctive “But” may be the most important word in the sentence.

Righteousness appears to refer to God's faithfulness in this text.

We live in a world of changing seasons; of shifting tides; of birth and death; of day and night; and of the fashions and failures of politics. Nothing is stable. Nothing is secure.

“ . . . for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.”

(Excerpts from *Dover Beach* by Matthew Arnold)

But, God does not change with the seasons. Because He is immutable, His well of mercy never runs dry. His clock never stops. His battery is never dead. Court is never closed. Because He is from everlasting to everlasting, every generation can feast at His banquet of mercy. Therefore, soul, praise must flow from your lips.

The Objects of Mercy

18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

The word “covenant” refers to one in contract with the Creator-God.

God shows Himself faithful to the faithful; abundant to the obedient; kind to those that bind themselves to His will.

While the wicked experience the kindnesses of creation, His golden mercies are reserved for sons and daughters in covenant with Him – for those children who pray and obey.

“There are no promises of blessings to the unfaithful, nor have those who are unfaithful any reason to hope that they or theirs will be partakers of the blessings of the covenant of mercy,” says Albert Barnes.

Likewise, only the redeemed can praise God . . . and, if the redeemed don't praise Him, who will?

Praise is the occupation of the godly. As a violin was made to make music, we are made to praise Him. When we praise Him, we fulfill the reason for our existence.

We will never stand taller than when we are on our knees praising the LORD for Who He is.

Prayer is the soul's occupation with its needs.

Thankfulness is the soul's occupation with its blessings.

Praise is the soul's occupation with God himself.

The Lord Rules

19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

All that happens to us must be viewed through the lens of God's sovereignty. He controls the little things as well as big things. Nothing happens to us that has not first gained the approval of our heavenly Father.

Because He rules on a throne, He has authority to grant our petitions; because His throne is one of mercy and grace, He is sure to overlook the faults of our prayers and the defects of our person.

The Blessed Response of a Healthy Soul

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. 22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

The imperative "Bless" is used four times.

Because of the benefits of being in a covenant with God, the psalmist summons all of creation to praise Him:

- the strong that obey His commands;
- ministers that do His will;
- and, all His works, animate and inanimate, in every place to join the heavenly chorus and to praise Him.

Where ever the Lord reigns, there ought to be praise! As long as He reigns in my heart, there will be songs rising up to Him!

Because man is the most stingy and reluctant of creatures to express thankfulness, the psalmist has to command his own soul to join heaven's choir: "Bless the LORD, O my soul."

Get out of the whine cellar, oh soul, and sing his praises! Bask in the sunshine. Stop pouting, and start praising! Great is His mercy toward you!

Psalm 104 - The Wonders of God in Creation

“My meditation of him shall be sweet”



This psalm contains many mysteries about the author and the time of its composition.

Some Arabic, Greek, and Latin versions ascribe this psalm to David, but there is no good reason to do so. It could have been written by him, but we don't know for sure.

The composer of this psalm is occupied with the glory and greatness of His Creator. Drawing upon the wonders of Creation, the psalmist discovers a treasure trove of reasons to bless the Lord.

Displays of Greatness from the First Day of Creation

Psalm 104:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

“Bless the LORD” is a Piel imperative — the only command in the 35 verses of this psalm — an imperative that came as a result of His study on the attributes and works of God in creation — a command repeated in the last verse of this psalm (v. 35)

These are the words of a healthy soul — a man with positive spiritual energies occupied with the glories of His Creator. He commands his own soul to bless the LORD. He isn't preaching to others, but to himself. His eyes are NOT on himself, but on Another. Not only does the LORD God own the title to this man, this man makes a claim on the LORD as “my God.” That is, this soul builds his house on the Rock.

God is “very great” in every way: Great in majesty, great in honor, great in genius, great in power, and great because of His creation. His royal, majestic robes shining with a rainbow of colors display His greatness and honor.



2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

The pronoun “who” in English is used six times in this section reminding us of the wonders of the Creator.

Blinding light was the first manifestation of God: “And God said, “Let there be light, and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). All the rainbow colors from the

sun, moon, and stars are merely an extension of His striking royal robe arrayed with gold and

silver foliage, fleurs-de-lis (white lilies) in backgrounds of blue, embroidered with roses and shamrocks shocking the eyes with constant bursts of light while encompassing heavens like a titanic curtain. His majestic robe is worn as a mantle and closed with a golden clasp in the shape of millions of eagles, robins, and scarlet macaws.

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:

The Who “layeth” is a Hiphil verb meaning He causes it to be built — a word frequently used for constructing a house.

“chambers” refers to the oriental tradition of building two story houses. However, the context is a king’s palace with granite pillars reaching to the sky.

No one builds a king’s palace with Corinthian columns on plunging hills of blue — the most unstable, shaky, wobbly substance imaginable. Who could build a mansion with limestone and marble columns fit for a king upon white caps with tossing seas? No man. But, God’s home is in the blue skies above appears to be constructed on the oceans of the earth.

Ancient kings preferred light, tactical, horse-drawn chariots as the major assault engine for their armies. When employed they kicked up clouds of dust that could be seen for miles. Likewise, Israel’s majestic warrior-King makes the clouds with their aggregate of minute droplets of ice particles churning in the atmosphere His war-chariots — vehicles for battle, racing through the heavens kicking up sky clouds known as hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones, and super storms.

“who walketh upon the wings of the wind” is a metaphor for the ease and rapidity of God’s movements. Wings soar birds through the air. By twisting and turning its wings these sky-kings sweep through the air smoothly and effortlessly. No man can fly much less walk on wind. But, the LORD glides through the heavens with such simplicity of movement, His strides can be compared to one casually walking at break neck speed with the ease of a creature lifted up on the wings of the wind.

4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

The ways of God in acts of creation are a mystery to all men.

“Who maketh his angels spirits” could be translated, “Who makes the winds his messengers,” or “his angels;” i.e. the LORD employs these powerful unseen cherubs to execute His orders with lightning-like speed.

“His ministers a flaming fire” seems to refer to lightning (fires in the sky) employed by His majesty as ministers to accomplish His purpose on earth. These invisible seraphs are entirely under his command. They are sent by him to do his will and to carry out his designs. Flashes of lightening in the sky are viewed here as God’s cabinet members charged with executing His grand purposes on earth.

5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

Contrary to fake science propaganda germane to the 20th century, the earth is not a spinning globe traveling around the sun at 66,000 mph with no visible effects of such movement. Rather,

the psalmist introduces us to an earth built on a massive, granite foundation impossible to move.

Displays of Greatness from the Second Day of Creation

6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

The meaning here is that God covered the earth with water as easily as a maid covers a bed with a blanket to produce the effect of dry land surrounded by seas.

“the waters stood above the mountains”: On the second day of creation there was no dry land, hills, or mountains. This is not Noah’s flood, but the original state of the earth. Every earthly substance was camouflaged by oceans. In the beginning the earth appeared like a naked desert of seas as far as the eye could see.

7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.

“At thy rebuke they fled.” The Hebrew word “rebuke” means “reproof” as if something needed correction.

At His command christened “the voice of thunder,” the waters fled to the lower places of earth like frightened kittens seeking a hiding place so dry land could appear.

8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

“They go up by the mountains ” conveys waters being gathered together into seas rolling and tumbling over hills and mountains in rapid descent to valleys and canyons where they permanently rested together.

Luther’s translation of the Latin Vulgate reads, “The mountains ascend, the valleys descend.”

Barnes translation adds this insight: “They (the waters) go up mountains; they descend into valleys” which you appointed for them.

9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

Though cohesive, water always adjusts itself the form of its container. In this text, the psalmist views water as a wild animal that is bound and confined to its cage. Like untamed creatures, the psalmist portrays water as a fiendish prisoner confined to the boundaries of an internment camp. Water is not permitted to roam free scarring the land and demolishing everything in its path. Consider carefully the Antarctic ice-wall.

Contemplations of God from the Third Day of Creation

10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.

Water is the most studied substance on earth, and the psalmist wants us to see the wonders of water.

All plants and creatures depend on water. “Though the waters are gathered together into seas, yet God has taken care that the earth shall not be dry, parched, and barren” (Barnes). Seas, lakes, and lagoons become reservoirs for this life-sustaining treasure.

11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

Water is essential to life. Animals spend much of their time searching for water, and if they can't find it, water finds them through showers from above; i.e. the God-ordained phenomena of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation.

12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.

Plants produce seeds. Seeds are buried in the soil. Water nourishes these seeds of life to produce a maternity ward of vegetation and trees where birds build their nests. Safe and secure in their home among the trees that grow near streams and waterfalls, birds sing cheerfully about their happiness in God's creation.

13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

“Chambers” refers to God's mansion in the sky. Where does precious, life-sustaining water come from before it finds its way into lakes and streams? From the psalmist's point of view, it comes from waterfalls in the garden of God's Heavenly Home.

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;

Precious water causes a variety of grasses to grow as food for cattle while nourishing an abundance of herbs, vegetables, and fruits necessary to sustain the life of man.

15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

Added to these life-sustaining herbs, rain causes wheat-kernels to sprout, wine-grapes to flourish, and olive trees to thrive. He not only meets man's primitive needs, but supplies luxuries to make man happy.

16 The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

Sap is the life blood of a tree that provides nutrients for trees to grow in the spring time. The “trees of the Lord” refer to the majestic cedars of Lebanon, and to the giant pines and sequoias with head and shoulders above all the other timber in the forest.

“He hath planted” reminds men that God engineered these magnificent evergreens that tower above all vegetation hugging the earth.

17 Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.

God made these noble red woods to not only stand tall above the shrubs on earth, but to provide a place for little sparrows (birds) to build their nests and to raise their young.

Storks are water fowl that love to nest in tall trees near the water. The idea here is that the God who created the tall trees did so not only for these stately firs, but to provide a home for storks.

“The fir tree” refers to the Cypress, pine, and fir trees common to the Levant.

18 The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

In carrying out the work of creation, God not only provided trees for birds, but He created the high lands for mountain goats and the rocks for badgers, rabbits, and marmots. He provides a home for all His creatures, big and small.

Contemplations of God from the Fourth Day of Creation

19 He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

Spring, summer, fall, and winter are from him; days, weeks, and months are His idea; that is, the Lord plots the course of the sun across the skies to create days and seasons.

Summer days are here at last,
Days of school are in the past,
Summer skies will turn to grey,
And summer’s warmth will fade away,
Autumn comes and leaves fall down,
Winter comes, snow covers the ground,
Spring comes and brings new life,
And ends all of the winter’s strife,
All the seasons come and go,
From the summer’s heat to the winter’s snow...

Katherine Knight (2011)

20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.

Sunrise and sunset, day and night, light and darkness that guides the creature of the forest are His doing.

“Oh, the day’s too long for a heavy task,
And long, long, long is the night” – Henry Van Dyke

21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

The psalmist hears the roar of lions tracking prey attributing their kill to the provision of God.

English poem, “The Lion” –
“The Lion, the Lion, he dwells in the Waste,
He has a big head and a very small waist;
But his shoulders are stark, and his jaws they are grim,
And a good little child will not play with him.”
In the jungle, a lion’s roar,
Loud rumbling from it’s core.

Magnificent mane of golden brown,
He is a king but wears no crown.

Predator and enemy they have two,
Human hunters, Hyenas too.
The lion and his lioness pride,
If you cross them, run, don't hide.

The roar of a Lion,
The rolling sound of thunder,
The chase of a Lion,
His prey runs asunder.

The Lion's roar is his symbol,
Of Strength, Of Leadership, Of pride,
The raw Roar sound is tribal,
His pride, so true, abide. (Philo Yan – 2012)

22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

Some animals are made for the day; others are made for the night. As the sun's rays peak over the mountains in the east where lilies dance to the music of the sun's passion, the writer sees some animals slither into hiding, and others rising to forage for food. The Hebrews did not attribute these habits to "Mother Nature" or to the alleged forces of evolution but to the power and plan of the LORD God. All these patterns are designed by the Creator and are part of his purpose.

23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

Day and night, sunrise and sunset are God beacons to get up and go to work; to come home and rest. At sunrise a man arrives in the fields for the duties of the day, and at sunset he disappears and surrenders his fields to the creatures of the night.

Contemplations of God from the Fifth Day of Creation

24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

Men tend to focus on one task, but not the LORD. His works are varied and his obligations are many. He works in the heavens, on the earth, and under the seas; He operates during the day and at night; He manages His delicate creatures during the winter and summer; and, when they are young and when they are old. Look to the north and to the south, from east to west, and you can see that the earth is full of His treasures.

There is no scarcity of resources on this earth. Plant one apple seed and the tree will produce thousands of apples.

25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

The “sea” refers to the Mediterranean Sea — a cocktail of colors that separate continents.

A literal translation of this text reads, “This sea! Great and broad of hands!” – A reference to waves of water stretching in all directions — waves that have inspired poets captured by the mysteries of the sea.

“The Ocean has its silent caves, Deep, quiet, and alone; Though there be fury on the waves, Beneath them there is none” (Nathaniel Hawthorne).

“Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
Nor any drop to drink.” (The Ancient Mariner)

“creeping things” refers to varied marine life that appear to slide through the waters. The variety and abundance of aquatic creatures both large and small provides more evidence of His manifold works.

26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

There go the ships refers to clippers and schooners that attract schools of fish, dolphins, whales, and aquatic life.

The “leviathan” seems to refer to any large sea creature. The root word means a large creature that “twists, turns, and coils.”

The word “play” means “to laugh.” Consider God’s angels — the dolphins leading ships during the day with their sweet smiles rollicking with each other, with ships, and even people.

27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

The word “wait” does not literally mean “to wait” in time. Rather, it expresses the dependence these sea-creatures have on their Heavenly Provider. None of them toil or work or sweat for a living. They cannot plan for the future. Neither do they store food in root-cellars. They live each day receiving from Him the gifts of life.

28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

“thou givest them they gather” means they eat what God places before them. They plant nothing, build nothing, create nothing, and save nothing; yet, God provides for them; that is, each is fed out of his hand day by day.

How manifold are His works — most of which men never see.

29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

These sensitive creatures are not without feelings. If God provides for them they are happy, if He hides His face or closes His hand they are troubled (alarmed and terrified). If God were to withhold what these creatures need to sustain life, they die and like man return to dust.

The point is that all creatures are dependent upon Him for their provision; that God is active “in nature” providing for the daily needs of His creation . . . for without Him they perish. And, the reason these creatures are with us today is because God is actively providing for them day by day. How manifold are His works!!

30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

Dynamic Conclusion

A direct reference to the sixth day of creation is absent. *The psalmist did not want to contemplate man, but the Creator.* The psalmist inadvertently becomes the model of what God created man to be — a thankful soul tenderly made in the image of God — a soul captured by the wonders of His Creator. Furthermore, the last verse of this creation-psalm is a reference to God as the black-robed Judge of all men — an allusion to the Fall of Man and his rebellion against the Creator.

31 The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.

Neither man nor His creatures should worry because “the glory of the LORD shall endure forever”; that is, His good and generous works are like towering mountains that shall endure the rains and hammers of hail until the consummation of all things . . . and even then, His works shall shift into eternity.

32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

Like a father instructing His children with a glance of the eye, God guides life on earth with a look. The inspired writer of the psalm informs us that earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions occur as if they were moved to action by a look on the face of God or a touch of His finger. One glance from the LORD . . . one touch and the earth trembles and the mountains smoke.

“The mountains saw thee, and they trembled” (Habakkuk 3:10).

With man, however, some of the most minute duties takes all a man’s energies, concentration, and brain power. But, figuratively speaking, the most complex and powerful acts of nature like earthquakes, tornadoes, and super storms are attributed to a mere gaze . . . a swift glance of the eye by the LORD toward His subjects.

33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

With an awakened mind cleared of brain fog, the psalmist burst into a melody of praise.

After considering God’s work in creation, the psalmist vows he will never stop adoring the LORD; never cease admiring Him; and, never be silent when praise is due Him. So filled with admiration, the hymn writer can’t conceive of a good reason to stop worshiping Him . . . or that there would ever be a time when he would be exhausted in his devotion to Him.

34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.

By “meditation” the psalmist refers to the musings of his mind. By “sweet” this Hebrew determined that he would take candied pleasure in meditating on the LORD; that all his joy

would come from his reflection on the fragrant attributes of His character and the sunbeams dancing off the oceans of His creation.

The psalmist was not just a lover of nature, but a lover of God; He did not worship nature, he worshiped the LORD. He was not just attracted to the marvels of creation; He was fascinated with the rainbow beauty and ocean-like wonders of the Creator.

“I will be glad in the LORD” means that He will seek happiness in the Creator and not the creature; that he would rejoice in oeuvre of God (the artwork, masterpiece) and not the petty works of man.

Consider for a moment that the human body contains about 37 trillion cells. In each cell, around a billion biochemical reactions occur per second. That means around 37 billion trillion biochemical reactions are taking place in our bodies every single second! Oh, the accuracy and precision of the oeuvre of God.

35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

The proper translation of this text reads, “Consumed are the sinners out of the earth.” This is a fact, not a desire; a reality, not a wish.

“consumed” (tāmam) does not mean “to be annihilated.” Rather, it means to come “to an end, to cease, or to pass away.”

There is a day coming when sinners will be taken away to judgment and banished from this earth to wander among the stars (Matthew 24:40-41); a day coming when the kingdom of God will gloriously appear and all the inhabitants of the earth will bow their knees and honor the Lord. History is not going around in circles. It is moving toward two climatic events: the Great Judgment, and Paradise Restored.

In meditating on God’s creation and His power over the sky, sea, and earth, He became convinced that sinners are doomed . . . that there is no way to escape the gavel of His justice.

As a result of his meditation of the first five days of creation and considering the beautiful works God in relation to the waters, the springs, the mountains, the trees, the fowls, the wild goats, the moon, the sun, the young lions and all the creatures of the wide sea, he issues a mandate to his own soul – “Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.”

Oh, come Lord Jesus, rid the earth of rebels, restore humanity, and release your creation from the bondage of sin; that all who remain may rejoice in your salvation; that all creatures might leap like lambs released from the stall.

Psalm 105 - A Call to Remember

“Remember his marvellous works that he hath done”



We do not know the name of the author or when this psalm was composed.

The first sixteen verses are borrowed from 1 Chronicles 16 :8-22 — a psalm composed by David to celebrate the coming of the ark to Jerusalem.

In verse 17, the author rehearses the history of Israel as if to justify the ways of God to men — a means of instructing the people about their marvelous past. Remember your history or perish.

Give thanks

“Give thanks” and “make known” are imperatives. There are nine imperatives in verses 1-5 — holy instructions for God’s people, and a rebuke to lukewarmness.

Psalm 105:1 O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.

In this chapter “his deeds” include the election of Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph; and, the appointment of Moses to lead the people out of Egypt — miraculous events in history of Israel which no other nation on earth has ever experienced.

Sing unto him

2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

Remember, write songs, create compositions, talk, and sing all the time about God’s astounding works in this nation’s history — the foundation upon which the Four Gospels are constructed.

“talk” means let there be an accurate accounting of His works.

Scripture reveals to us the character of God and the works of God. He is known by His works as well as His character. Here we see the election of God, His guidance, His providence, and His redemptive love and power.

“The external works of God are His works of creation, providence, and redemption. The external works of God in redemptive history involve His covenantal provisions, miracles, works of judgment and salvation, the establishment of His kingdom, and the securing of the new creation. God’s works in redemptive history are established based on the person and saving work of Christ” (Legonier Ministries).

Glory in Him

3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

The word “glory” (halal) means “to praise” Him; i.e. to think and speak well of the LORD; to revel in Him; that is, to derive all our joy from the consideration of a God.

The word “glory” is a Hithpael verb meaning “cause yourself” to boast in His name. The command “rejoice” is a jussive which encourages all those seeking the Lord to join the heavenly chorus.

Seek the Lord

4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.

“Seek” (darash) means “to inquire to, to search for, or to consult” His throne, His Word, His law, and His Messiah.

The second imperative “seek” (baqash) is a Piel stem requiring intense, vigorous action; that is, to call up all our abilities to seek His face — to do all we can to live in such a way as to make His face shine upon us.

Remember the Lord

5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

“Remember” (zachar) is the key command in this psalm. Remembering the work of God in Biblical history moves us to fear God and to carefully obey Him; to respond to life’s challenges with faith instead of fear; to order our lives under His law . . . in truth and in love for others. Remembrance fuels trust, inspires respect, and motivates us to join Heaven’s choir to announce, pronounce, and proclaim His glories so others may find Him to be their Savior and Protector.

The subject of remembrance are “His marvellous works,” “his wonders”, and “His judgments”; that is, remember His acts in history, His sign-miracles, His law-order, and His decisive, legal decisions.

Remember God’s Election

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. 7 He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth.

The commands “to seek” His face and “to remember His marvelous works” are addressed to God’s people — the “seed of Abraham . . . his chosen.

“children of Jacob” reminds us of God’s grace. Use of the title “his chosen” reminds us that God chose us before the foundation of the world to be His ambassadors. The church is the New Israel because Christians share in the commonwealth of Israel. The LORD is the true God, the only God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, our God.

Remember His Covenant

8 He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.

Let us remember that the LORD remembered His covenant to Abraham — that One (his seed) would arise to bless the whole world with salvation; and that One is the Lord Jesus Christ who redeemed men by His own blood.

9 Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant: 11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

Salvation history begins with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It culminates with the miracle of Christ's entrance into history — the "arche" and "telos" of redemptive history — a covenant that included "the seed" and "the land."

The National Clause (Genesis 12:2-3): "And I will make of thee a great nation . . ."

The Personal Clause: "and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing . . ."

The International Clause: "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee . . ."

The Spiritual Clause: "and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed . . ." (Christ)

The Land Grant Clause (13:15): "For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever . . ." which included "the promise, that he should be the heir of the world" and not just real estate in Canaan (Romans 4:13).

"confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law" — hence, "a rule" which governs all of history — a settled "ordinance" by which all of redemptive history is regulated; the legal grounds of establishing God's kingdom on earth which includes His providential work in our time.

Remember Your Humble Beginnings

12 When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

When Jacob's family went into Egypt to settle in the Nile Delta, they arrived with 66 persons (Genesis 46:26). They came out of Egypt with over 2 million people (Numbers 2-4); that is, they were truly a nation without a land.

13 When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another people; 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes;

In leaving Egypt they traveled through many nations, but the Lord restrained all these self-interest driven kingdoms from harming his people; that is, they traveled with Divine protection — for 40 years.

"he reprov'd kings for their sakes" — kings have always been the most powerful beings on earth. Who rebukes a king and lives? That God rebuked, restrained, and resisted kings demonstrates His power and control of the earth's monarchies and their armies. See how God

rebuked Pharaoh in the time of Abraham (Genesis 12:17-20) and Abimelech (Genesis 20). See how God restrained the kings of Edom and Moab in the Book of Numbers.

15 Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

God calls ancient Israel “mine anointed” and His “prophets”; that is, God appointed this nation to be a prophet and to announce to the world the existence of God and His plan to redeem the world through His Son.

“Touch not mine anointed” is the correct conclusion of the psalmist. God never actually said these words. But, in looking at God’s powerful protection, provision, and preservation of His people in the wilderness, His actions demonstrated that God acted under the rule, “Touch not mine anointed . . . do them no harm.”

Remember God’s marvelous providence with Joseph

16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.

What nation can survive seven years of famine?

The famine that brought Joseph to power and fame is attributed God and not acts of nature.

17 He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant:

“He sent a man” and not a woman, even Joseph, the younger son of Jacob.

God knew about and appointed this famine before Joseph was even born.

The psalmist attributes Joseph’s capture, sale, and slavery to Providence and not to the petty jealousy of his brothers.

18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: 19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him. 19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

The psalmist attributes Joseph’s imprisonment, pain, and suffering to the Will of Providence -- His two-year training course to be Prime Minister of Egypt. Joseph rose to power to be a Savior. The training to save the families of Egypt took place in a cold Egyptian prison under pains and chains.

20 The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, 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 senators wisdom. 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 enemies.

Who can really understand the work of Providence — God’s man trained to be the world’s redeemer in an Egyptian prison? A king calling a prisoner to be his chief of staff? Joseph gaining the wisdom of sages from treachery and slavery under the custody of a warden? A former prisoner instructing Egypt’s senators, governors, and government ministers? Joseph, a blessing

in the land of Ham . . . of those under a curse? Of slaves growing more powerful in their slavery than their masters in their freedom? Who has ever heard of such a thing?

Remember God Calling Moses to lead the people out of Egypt

25 He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

Egyptians were not hateful people. Why would you hate the goodness of Jacob? Egypt's change in attitude from hospitality to hostility can only be explained by the work of Providence. God permitted the Pharaohs to be ruled by their anger, jealousy, and by *libido dominandi*. He permitted extreme taxation, debt slavery, and tyrants to rule over them — even a command by the king for the midwives to kill, abort, and murder Hebrew babies. Under these abusive dictates, the sons of Jacob prayed and God sent them Moses.

26 He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen.

In their change of status from favor to disfavor, from grace to disgrace, the nation cried out to God to deliver them from taxation and servitude to Egypt's government. He answered them by sending them the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter to deliver them from the cruelty of Pharaoh.

27 They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham. 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word. 29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. 30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings. 31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts. 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 coasts. 34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number, 35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground. 36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

How do you motivate a proud, stubborn powerful king to willfully release prisoners that build your cities and bolster your economy? God did it through the ten plagues. Ruined and with the firstborn dead, Pharaoh was compelled to conform to the LORD's order, "Let my people go."

37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.

If and when slaves and prisoners are freed, they are sent out poor and empty handed. Not so with Israel. They left Egypt richer than kings. Who has ever heard of such a thing?

38 Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.

Instead of being angry, resentful, and full of hate, the Egyptians were happy when Israel departed. What slave master releases cheap labor for his farm happily? Egypt did!

Remember God's grace in the wilderness

39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

Traveling through a hot desert during the day without shade and camping at night without candles would test the comfort of any people. But, God in His grace, knowing the needs of His people, provide a cloud by day to comfort them and a fire by night to guide them.

40 The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. 41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river.

How do you live in a desert? Where do you find water? How do you feed two million people? God provided water out of the rock and manna from Heaven's kitchen. He even brought them meat which they craved.

42 For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

All this kindness was given, not because of the pleasant disposition of the people, but because of His promise to Abraham.

43 And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness:

"joy" and "gladness" describe Israel's disposition following their release from bondage in Egypt.

44 And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;

The foundations of a nation are its people, its language, its religion, and its land. Israel had a people, a religion, and a language, but they did not have a land . . . until they crossed over the River Jordan where God used his powers to drive out the Canaanites and to give Israel land. How can a man be free or wealthy without land? The gift of land made Israel rich, stable, and secure — a true nation indeed.

Remember the purpose of God's goodness to His people

45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

Why did God give all these gifts to the nation? Answer: So they would be his grateful, thankful, happy obedient servants with a commission to share His wonders to the rest of the world.

"Do this in remembrance of Me," said Jesus.

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

Psalm 106 – The Nevertheless of Grace

“He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.”



Though we don't know the name of the author or the occasion of this psalm, it has the feeling of being a didactic psalm written during the Babylonian Captivity to instruct the exiles to recall their history, to confess their sins, and to seek their salvation in the LORD God.

It records the downturns of the nation. It is disturbing psalm when looking at sins of these Hebrew slaves for their sins are our sins. But, it is an encouraging psalm because it sheds light on the power and patience of the Lord. Thus, this is another psalm that encourages us to look at the goodness and severity of God.

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Romans 11:22).

Oh, the wonder of the English adverb “nevertheless” (8, 44) or “yet” or “even so” in some translations. The word “nevertheless” is an adverb that alerts the reader that *something happened even though there is something that might have stopped it from happening*. In this psalm “nevertheless” marks the triumph of grace over the sins of the nation.

The big question is this: “How do you take a nation of serfs and make them responsible, moral, self-sufficient, kind and honest freemen?” People with a slave mentality are poor material for leadership. Thus, this psalm shows how God took a nation of vassals, took them to Mt. Sinai, gave them a written constitution, and weaned this nation from its cry-baby stage to become kingpin in the rack of nations.

A Call to Remember the LORD

Psalm 106:1 Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

This is a liturgical call to worship. The subject of praise and thanksgiving is the goodness and mercy of God. If this psalm was written during the exile, the call to praise and thanksgiving is nothing short of astounding. Who could give thanks to the LORD after He destroyed the nation, ravaged the holy city, demolished the temple, nullified the priesthood, shattered hopes, and deported survivors to Babylon? The goodness of God? What? Where? How?

Somehow, someway this psalmist arises from tomb of hopelessness in Babylon to sing “his mercy endures forever.”

2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise?

The “mighty acts of the LORD” include the judgments on Egypt, the Passover, the exodus from Egypt, the Red Sea Crossing, the journey to Mt. Sinai, the gift of manna, the splitting of the rock, and the wilderness journey to the Jordan.

But, the exodus is not a record of historical facts for the mind but a revelation of spiritual matters in the work of redemption for the heart. The mighty acts of the LORD are set in contrast to the mighty sins of the people.

“can shew forth all his praise” is a question asking what language . . . what words . . . have the capacity to express the wonders of the Lord in an appropriate manner — in words that don’t deprecate “His “mighty acts.”

How do you play, “Where the Green Grass Grows” on an old, dusty fiddle rediscovered in grampa’s spider-web attic?

3 Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.

One lesson that follows the recalling Israel’s history and God’s work among the people is that it is a blessing to keep His commandments and to live faithfully.

A Call to God to Remember Me in this Generation

4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation;

This is a personal prayer that every member of the choir could pray. In light of the blessings upon the righteous, remember me, Lord . . . with favor. In light of what You do for your friends . . . for the obedient, please do for me. In light of the disposition of people to sin, save me, O Lord. Since there is joy and peace available for those who practice true religion, let those blessings fall upon me . . . your weak and flawed servant.

5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

The purpose of the psalmist’s prayer in verse 4 is so the psalmist may see good, rejoice, and revel in the riches of being a part of this chosen nation. The psalmist desires to experience the same joy and gladness that other sheep in God’s pastures enjoy.

A happy saint is a better servant than a dejected one.

Remembering the Nation’s Sins, Part I

Remembering the history of Israel is not merely a matter of identifying events, but remembering their faith and failures. Reflection exposes the gladness of the obedient, and the sadness of the disobedient.

Remembrance forms the grounds of praise and confession — a renewing of the will to forsake sin and to find new strength to obey His Word.

6 We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

The psalmist acknowledges that the people of his generation followed the course of disobedience which so remarkably mimicked the generation of their contentious fathers. Three sins are attributed to the fathers that characterized the psalmist's generation: sin, iniquity, and wickedness; that is, sins of omission, sins of commission and sins of perversion.

The psalmist generation was not worse than the exodus generation. They simply repeated their failures. These sins were not causal, accidental, or fortuitous, but intentional and inexcusable.

7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.

How do you persuade 2 million people to pack up their belongings, leave their homes, risk the wrath of the king, and travel 250 miles on foot into a dry, dusty, desert without water, food, shade or shelter to a promised land you have never seen? God used the miracles not only to pressure Pharaoh to free the slaves, but to build Israel's confidence that He could provide and protect them, not only in Egypt's delta, but in Egypt's wasteland.

The sins in verse six refer to boneheadedness, willful forgetfulness, and rebelliousness at the Red Sea.

"understood not" refers to the lack of perception and insight of the people into what was happening. "remember not" reflects on their willful neglect, failed thinking, and indisposition to recall the signs God gave them in the Delta. There was no excuse for this. These signs were miracles — one-of-a-kind events that could only be explained by the dynamic intervention of God.

"multitude of mercies" — The Lord is rich and His mercies come in bundles.

Exodus 7:14 but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

Exodus 7:21 – and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river;

Exodus 8:21-23 . . . the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are. 22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. 23 And I will put a division between my people and thy people: tomorrow shall this sign be.

Exodus 9:4, 6 And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel and the cattle of Egypt: and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel. And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

Exodus 9:26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

Their shoes strings did not break and their sandals did not wear out.

"And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot" (Deuteronomy 29:5).

The word “provoked” (marah) means “rebellious, contentious, bitter, grieve, resist, or provocative.”

Exodus 14:12 . . . we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.

“provoked him” — is kind of like biting the hand that feeds you . . . or jabbing a stick at the eye of the One Who is trying to save you . . . or throwing a temper tantrum and refusing to leave the classroom after the fire bell rings and smoke fills the hallways.

What’s so aggravating about this text is there is a little bit of the “children of Israel’ in all of us; that is, we don’t learn from their mistakes. We repeat them again and again.

Remembering God’s Salvation

8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.

The exodus event is described as a miracle of care and a matter of speed:

Exodus 19:4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself.

Nevertheless introduces us to the wonders of grace. God saved the nation, not because of something meritorious within the people, but because of the marvelous mercy of God — to show the mysteries of His power; that is, He was motivated by His glory to graciously show the world His power and what He is capable of doing for His people. Since He redeemed Israel by blood and power, He can save us by blood and power through the cross providing an exodus from the power and penalty of sin.

9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

The marvels of His power include splitting the Red Sea into two towering walls of water 200 feet high and instantly drying up the seabed so the people could conveniently escape from Egypt on dry land pulling their carts and wagons 13 miles to the Arabian side of the sea.

Where this event took place is uncertain. The candidates for the crossing are (a) near the Delta, (b) near Elat, (c) Nuweiba Beach, and (D) the strait of Tehran.

10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

“saved them from the hand of him” refers to the tyrant Pharaoh and His army who died on the 25th day after Israel left Goshen.

11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

Pharaoh and his army drowned in the roaring current during the reunification of the walls of water. All of them. Not one enemy survived.

Whoever the Pharaoh of the exodus was, he was not entombed. This text informs us he was buried in the Red Sea.

12 Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

Immediately, upon seeing Pharaoh's destruction, the people shouted for joy.

Remembering the Nation's Sins, Part II

13 They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel:

Who could possibly forget the splitting of the Red sea, the walls of water, the dry land, their escape to safety, and the destruction of Pharaoh, the man who made their lives so bitter? But, they did.

Thus, we learn a lesson about human nature. *When men are obsessed with fulfilling their lusts, they easily forget the kindnesses done to them.* Forgetfulness is one of the wretched effects of the Adamic nature upon mankind. For this reason, believers must lay hold of the power of God to remember their salvation in Christ. If they do not, amnesia sets in.

14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

This text scoots over the troubles of Israel in the Wilderness of Sin to target the bigger problem eating away at the company — that of unbridled desire. "exceedingly" is an adverb modifying "lusted" to emphasize the degree of their lust — a lust that excluded everything else. Instead of being thankful for Divine deliverances, they became lustful in the desert; i.e. they showed contempt for God by insulting Him with "if you can" challenges. "Exceedingly" is an adverb identifying the enormity of their lusts.

You can petition the Lord to act, but you test Him when you turn prayer into a contest of wills.

You can petition the Lord, but you can't command or demand something from Him.

You can lay out evidence to prove your case, but you can't demand God prove Himself.

You can pray to have authority, but you can't challenge His authority.

You can be a creature in need of His counsel, but don't expect Him concede to your will.

15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

The Hebrews complained and got what they wanted, but it resulted in a shriveled soul. A screaming child pounding on the floor may get his own way, but his soul shrinks to the size of a pea. Jesus asked, "Is not life more than meat" (Matthew 6:25). Isn't the health of the soul as important as health for the body? Why feast the body and starve the soul? Too many of us are like blubber hanging on a dry stick.

The man who prays and waits enlarges his soul. A child who asks politely and respectfully is more likely to obtain what he requests than a brat throwing a temper tantrum.

A fat soul comes with persistent prayer, patience, and waiting in silence for God to act and to give His counsel.

16 They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD. 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.

The reference to the rebellion of Korah indicates the psalmist was not thinking chronologically but spiritually.

“Aaron the saint” means one who is set aside and appointed for service.

The “wicked” is a reference to the sins of Korah, their lust for power, and their mass burial in a volcanic crater. These leaders were controlled by a spirit of libido dominandi, the original sin, and they suffered for it (Numbers 16).

19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.

A reference to the dreadful golden calf — the *egel maccekah* where 3,000 idolaters were killed.

What is it about man that he is so prone to walk by sight and not by faith — to see, feel, touch, his way through life without God?

“Our life and conduct and our “walk” in this world rest on our belief in the Unseen” (Ellicott).

The Christian life is a pilgrimage through the wilderness to the Celestial City on the other side of Jordan. Thus, it is our duty to walk by faith until we reach the other shore where we will walk by sight. Our hope is not in the visible, but the invisible; not in the things that are seen, but things that are unseen. Visible realities of wealth, status, and power deceive us. But Christians who walk by faith live by promises, principles, and policies coming from the glories of heaven.

20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

The idea communicated is that men become like what they worship. These Idolaters bowed to the *egel maccekah* and became as dumb as an ox; i.e. they exchanged the sentience of man for the senselessness of an animal.

Instead of honorably waiting and worshiping the all-powerful, all-wise, all-virtuous God that brought them out of slavery, they prostrated themselves to a golden image and became dumb, naked, and monstrously depraved.

21 They forgot God their saviour, which had done great things in Egypt; 22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea.

How could anyone forget the marvelous works of God He did for the nation in Egypt? But, when a man worships a metallic image of an ox, he becomes as dumb as a sack full of hammers.

Only fools forget God (Psalm 14). It doesn't matter how many three letter abbreviations come after a man's name, forgetting God is a form of insanity — a state of being seriously mentally ill.

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.

God threatened to destroy the people and would have done so if Moses and not interceded for them (Exodus 32:10-14).

Many a deserving curse has been turned away by prayer. When Christians pray, many troubles are resolved. When good people give, they turn away the evil upon the poor and of evil stalking poor pastors.

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 the LORD.

“despised the pleasant land” — the Holy Land, the Promised Land, the Land of Milk and Honey even after the spies came back and gave a “good report.” They fixed their eyes on the power of the Canaanites and **not** on the promises of God regarding the good land.

Owning and possessing land is one of the essentials of life. Land is one of the four cultural foundations of a nation. Evil governments seeking all power abolish private ownership of land to the destruction of the family and the ability to earn a living.

“murmured in their tents” - God promised them Palestine, but in their unbelief, complaining, and rebellion they showed contempt for the holy land and the land grant promises. Remember this was a nation of slaves, not entrepreneurs. They preferred security to risk; slavery over freedom; being debtors instead of creditors.

“murmured” refers to the “cooing of doves,” the undertones of discontent.

Bitterness so infected their souls that men complained to their wives about God's goodness, and wives murmured about Providence.

26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: 27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

“He lifted up his hand” is a gesture for oath taking. See Numbers 14:28. The lifted hand is a metaphor for God's oath against the unbelievers. A dreadful and irrevocable judgment that brought down the gavel upon that generation. None of the complainers entered Canaan.

Behold the goodness and severity of God. This judgment not only impacted their persons but their posterity. See Ezekiel 20:23; that is, the Babylonian captivity, was in part, a punishment for the sins committed in the wilderness. The initial fulfillment was in 1446-1406 B.C and the second fulfillment was in 606-536 B.C.

See also: Ezekiel 20:5; Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 4:27, Deuteronomy 27:64

“The result of their rebellion and complaining would not terminate with them. It would extend to their posterity, and the rebellion of the fathers would be remembered in distant generations.” (Barnes).

By way of current events consider that God uses war, abortion, and vaccines to overthrow the seed of the wicked; that is, God uses the wrath of man to destroy the offspring of fornicators and adulterers (Psalm 37:28).

28 They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

This event was late into the exodus journey.

Even the carnal in the second generation of the redeemed participated in the sex-cult and necromancy rituals of Moab.

“sacrifices of the dead” may refer to necromancy; and, or it may highlight the fact that they worshiped dead, fictional, non-existent gods of Moab -- that they ate with approval of the sacrifices. Modern man would call them liberals because they knew no restraints. Theologians call them “apostates.” The psalmist calls them “wicked.”

29 Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.

“anger” is a hidden, restrained attribute of the LORD — a dimension of God that no one wants to experience. His anger was stirred when young, virile men committed fornication with the seductive temple prostitutes in Moab.

“provoked” is a Hiphil stem inferring the people acted in such a despicable way they “unchained” “the tiger of wrath” within the LORD.

Consequently, the LORD sent them a painful, blistering, terminal disease that left corpses of the compliant and tolerant in the camp.

30 Then stood up Phineas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.

The king of Moab ordered the temple prostitutes to use their charms to seduce the young men of Israel. When the venereal acts began, the LORD released a terminal plague upon the people. The remedy to the plague came from the Priest Phineas who grabbed his spear and thrust it through a copulating couple making “whoopee” in a tent of a young, male Israelite.

31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

So honorable, so admirable, so virtuous was the deadly zeal of Phinehas, that God rewarded this holy man with an everlasting priesthood. This “killer” became the next high priest.

Exclusivity and intolerance is a virtue to be admired. Inclusivity is the mantra of the depraved. Tolerance is the doctrine preached when liberals seek to overthrow God’s law-order. That we should love everybody and include everyone in the body politic is the vice of this age. When progressives come to power, they launch a campaign of intolerance, censorship, and political assassination toward those who believe that Christ is the only way to God.

Inclusivity is good if you are talking about minor diversities among people. However, you can’t include rattlesnakes, lions, and hyenas in the barnyard full of cattle or sheep. Likewise, it is a tragedy to release homosexuals, transvestites, and feminist upon society who prey upon the innocent.

**32 They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:
33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips**

The account of “the waters of strife” -are found in Numbers 20:3-13 — the first sin of the new generation and the last time the people of Israel complained in the wilderness. Waiting on God in a state of thirst is a virtue, not a vice. Unfortunately, this sin agitated Moses to the point that he struck the rock twice with a rod instead of instructing the rock with his words.

Unfortunately, Moses’s anger became an example of unrighteousness instead of righteousness — a symbol of the false doctrine that Christ must die twice and not once — a symbol of an irate pastor unsuited to shepherd God’s flock.

Emotional maturity is a pre-requisite for spiritual leadership. Lose your temper once, and you must resign the pastorate. Angry preachers that flog the flock need to leave the ministry until they grow up into the sweetness of Christ.

Expression of anger in the home pierces everyone to the bone. Deep anger calls for deep repentance and a profound renewal of obedience to the practice of praise and thankfulness. A thankful soul qualifies himself to serve the Lord. An angry disposition disqualifies a man for a position of service in the Lord’s army. Only a man of peace can defeat Satan (Romans 16:20).

“If God dealt severely with Moses for unadvised words, what do those deserve who speak many proud and wicked words?” – Matthew Henry

34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:

God loves mercy and hates wickedness. He not only saves sinners, He orders governments to punish the “wicked.” We call them “criminals.” When governments fail to execute reprobates, they slide into the graveyard of nations.

He is not only the Shepherd of Israel, but the LORD of Hosts (armies). Not only does He call His people to love; He calls His people to execute criminals who violated the rights of others. In this case, God called the nation to be righteous and to kill the wicked Canaanites as a matter of justice. The wickedness and depravity the Canaanites merited justice, and God ordered His people to execute all of the pedophiles, Sodomites, and murders in the land. The Canaanite Civilization was so depraved; there was no other solution, but to kill ‘em. Both the saving of life and the taking of life is duty of man. A healthy society has gospel preachers that save souls, as well as a justice system that uses the sword to purge society of evil men.

[Political note: the “other Israel” claims to have a right to slaughter innocent Palestinians in the name of “self-defense. The Palestinians are not Canaanites nor is the “other Israel” the true people of God.]

Pity for the condemned is a human weakness, and God judged them for it (Deuteronomy 7:16; 13:8).

35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. 36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

Holiness demands separation, but the children of Israel integrated with the depraved. Instead of killing the Canaanites, they made friends with them. This comingling of the righteous with the wicked did not improve the Canaanites. Rather, it corrupted Israel. Holiness is not contagious, but sinfulness is.

Instead of executing those condemned to death, Israel exercised pity. This failure weakened the nation to point that God had to execute contaminated Jews and deport the survivors to Babylon to start all over again.

37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, 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 own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

It is not normal for parents to kill their children, but Israel did under the spell of Devils; that is, it is Devilish to kill innocent, helpless babies who have done no wrong. Instead of executing criminals as God's law demands, this liberalized society murdered the innocent as forbidden by God's law.

[Note: Our society is not worse than the Canaanites. Rather, modern man simply repeats the perversions.]

40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.

A society that kills the innocent and protects the guilty is doomed to experience the fearful wrath of the LORD.

Remembering His Goodness

41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. 42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

Instead of giving His people a shepherd like David to gently rule over them, he gave them butchers to torment them. Because they voluntarily subjected themselves to idols and foreign statutes of other nations, God took away their freedom and gave them taskmasters (tax collectors) to oppress them.

The word "oppress" means "to afflict." The pagans invaded their borders, plundered their wealth, destroyed their crops, and made slaves out of freemen. And this pattern is the story of history: From slavery to freedom; from freedom to prosperity; from prosperity to depravity; from depravity back to slavery.

43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

The word "counsel" does not imply they counseled God, but that their rulers adopted the wretched, liberal policies of the nations (2 Chronicles 17:1-7).

Gods are the source of law for every nation. When men worship others gods, they adopt the lenient laws and oppressive rules of these false deities. Honoring God's law made the nation high; adopting the liberal, permissive statutes of the nation's brought them low. The nation went from honor to dishonor, from good to bad, from bad to worse; from order to chaos, and from being right side up to being upside down.

44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry: 45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

O, the grandeur of His royal love and infinite mercy. Even though they let snakes loose in the camp, God was predisposed to save them from the adders.

Oh, the wonder of the word "nevertheless" – a triumph of grace over sin.

46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.

Another mercy: Even when they were captives and slaves in foreign lands (Babylon), He restrained the natives and endowed them with kindness to show pity to the exiles; that is, they were not treated badly, but fairly.

Remembering the Need for the LORD to Save us Again

47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.

Salvation is of God, not man. The fact of "nevertheless" embolden this saint to pray for more grace.

The psalmist prayed that just as God had delivered the nation in times past, He would be pleased to do so again. "Gather us" back to the holy land was a big prayer, and He did in 529-536 B.C. Out of this vassalage emerged the first monotheistic nation with new insights into the LORD and renewed devotion to their King.

48 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

The nation went from tragedy to triumph; from slavery to sovereignty; from suffering to rejoicing. No wonder they shouted "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel." Let all the people say, "Amen!" and "Amen!"

In the good times and bad times, in prosperity and poverty, in our youth and in our old age, let us say, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen. Praise the Lord.

Book 5 (Psalm 107-145)

Psalm 145:21 concludes with " My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever." The Hallelujah Psalms are included in Book 5.



Psalm 107 - Discovering the Ways of God

See the Works of the Lord

"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness"



This psalm has no title, and its author is unknown. It appears to be a post-exilic psalm as it tastes like the bitters of Israel's Babylonian Captivity (606 – 536 B.C.)

The main lesson of this psalm is the goodness of God: "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107: 8, 15, 21, 31, 43)

The reader of this psalm will need to redefine "goodness" after contemplating this inspired text.

Unlike so other psalms that use an abundance of hyperbole and metaphors to convey truth, this psalm has no hyperbole. Though it has a poetic style, it uses metaphors conservatively; that is, this psalm should bend toward the literal-grammatical method of interpretation. In other words, you must believe it in order to see it in your experience. Selah!

The psalm shines light on the ways of God and how He works to bring men to a place of submission and salvation. The whole purpose of "oppression, affliction, and sorrow" is that ambitious men might let go of their self-isms and discover "his goodness, and . . . his wonderful works to the children of men!" (107:8).

The Redeemed

Psalm 107:1 O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Thanksgiving is the essence of spiritual health.

Giving thanks is not natural. Complaining is common. Praise is normal, spirit-filled behavior. Consequently, all of life seems to be a training camp to purge bitterness from the soul of the self-willed and to train the willing to be thankful, grateful, and faithful sons of God.

God is good and always good. Under his tutorship, "all things work together for good to those that love God."

The reason the Spirit calls us "to give thanks" is because God's mercy is all around us. We must learn to see it, feel it, and marvel in it.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;

The redeemed are specially qualified to give thanks. Thus, the mark of those redeemed by the Lord is thankfulness because they have been delivered from the penalty and power of sin.

3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

This text refers to those Jews who were scattered throughout the Babylonian empire during the captivity who were not all located in one place. The gathering refers to the remnant that returned to their homeland after the edict of Cyrus the Great.

The Wanderer (Drifter)

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

“They” appears to refer to the remnant who had to travel nearly a thousand mile on foot through waterless deserts to return to the borders of Israel . . . but, it also causes us to contemplate Israel’s journey from Egypt to the Holy Land.

5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

Hunger and thirst are life threatening conditions that cause every soul to push the panic button in order to maximize his resources to meet his physical needs.

6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

While applicable to the remnant, the text applies to those enduring stress of any kind.

The word “distresses” refers to circumstances that are “narrow, straitened, and compressed.”

7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

Those returning from Babylon did not know the way back to the Holy Land. They started marching west and the Lord directed them so they ended up taking the shortest, safest path back to their homeland. They discovered it was “the right way” and that the goodness of God led them, protected them, and provided for them.

Consider also Israel’s journey from Egypt to Canaan -- God’s guidance and His provision.

“city of habitation” refers to “an abode” or homeland where travels cease and pilgrims rebuild their farms.

8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

The word “men” is not in the original text. It was supplied by the translators to provide clarity. Translate this, “Let such praise the LORD.”

The design of this instruction is that such careful guidance ought to generate praise in the hearts of men for His goodness.

9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

Out of His goodness, God supplies food for the hungry and water for the thirsty. The lesson here is that men ought to bow in prayer and thank God for every meal and every cup that satisfies their hunger and quenches their thirst.

The Prisoner and Those in Darkness

10 Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron;

The darkness and shadow of death appears to apply to the exiles in Babylon who were confused and disorientated by their captivity, but this text applies to all indentured servants, slaves, and prisoners oppressed by the cruelty of men and who survive the shadows of death.

11 Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:

The captivity of the Jews in Babylon was due to their national disobedience to the LORD and His law-word.

12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help.

Because the Jews were proud, morally compromised, and spiritually complacent, God's remedy included war, defeat, and destruction of their national infrastructure, slavery, and deportation -- the goodness of God at work to make the nation whole again.

13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.

For seventy years the surviving exiles cried to the LORD for deliverance. He heard them, and graciously released them from bondage under the Edict of Cyrus in 539 B.C. – a product of the goodness of God.

14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

“brought them out of darkness” – a rare metaphor in this psalm. It implies that God not only released them from captivity, but from the darkness of ignorance, doubt, and unbelief.

15 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

The psalmist reminds the people that every deliverance, great or small, comes from the goodness of God and that these liberations ought to generate continual praise. This text is the main lesson of the psalm.

16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

To these Jews, the captivity felt like they were imprisoned behind iron bars and gates of brass. Likewise, many a man has felt like his work or station in life is a prison sentence. But, this psalm is in place to provide hope. God is able to free men from literal prison bars and those predicaments that feel like iron chains.

Moreover, God is able to break the chains of sin and immorality: angry habits, despondency, criticalness, depression, pornography, complaining, and bitterness.

The Fool

17 Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

Fools are identified as transgressors of law; that is, every lawless man indulging his depravity is a fool.

In this context, it refers to antinomian Jews punished in Babylon.

18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

Only sick people loathe food, and those who disregard the Word of God are sick indeed. The realm of the dead are unable to respond to the Holy Scripture, and those who neglect the gospel of salvation “draw near unto the gates of death.”

There is one question no man can answer:

“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him”
(Hebrews 2:3)

19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses.

The context is sickness both physical and spiritual. God delivers those they seek him during their troubles and suffering.

20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

The LORD sent His word and healed them. One word from His lips releases prisoners from sickness . . . from fear . . . from sin and guilt . . . from rebellion and arrogance. He cannot only save men from sin, but he can save them from the troubles it causes. All healing is from God regardless of its agency. “He kills and He makes alive” (1 Samuel 2:6-9).

21 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

The main exhortation of the psalm is repeated again.

The psalmist wishes that all who experience salvation to praise God for his goodness; that is, he hopes men might experience complete healing of the soul. Healthy souls give thanks and praise God for His mercies; sick souls fuel their furnace of ambition and complain like the dickens.

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

The term “sacrifice” refers to worship. Sick souls are self-operating, self-occupied, and self-obsessed; healthy souls praise the goodness of the Lord.

Those Mariners Exhausted by Trouble

23 They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

The drama switches scenes from wanderers in the desert . . . from those who are in prison . . . from fools who are spiritually and physically sick to mariners who experience the terrors of cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons on the sea.

24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.

Seamen have an opportunity to see the wonders of God in their profession that landlubbers will never know. Every station in life provides an opportunity to see the marvelous works of this sovereign God and to experience His salvation. You don't have to be a preacher to experience the power of God.

25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

Winds and storms are His servants for our good. The "forces of nature" are under His command and only operate under His authority.

"he commandeth" means that He speaks His word, and it is done. One word from Jesus silenced the winds and the stormy sea in Mark 4:29 – one command for the sea, the other for the winds.

A man can go years without answers to prayers, and then in one day, years of prayer are mysteriously answered.

26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. 27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

The "they" refers to sailors on a swaying ship tossed from the bottom of the sea and to the heavens during a typhoon. In voyages of this toss and turn nature, all courage associated with manhood suddenly "melts" (mug) and dissolves – a manifestation of the goodness of God to deliver men from self-reliance.

28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

Sea dogs don't pray much, but hundreds of sailors will pray with all their heart in a ship bailing up and down during a tumultuous storm smashing them into floors and ceilings in the dead of night.

29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

"He makes the storm a calm" is a work of God. Only He can do it! Neither congress nor the government nor the navy can stop the raging waves of a super storm with tornado like winds.

The word "still" (chashah) means "silence." The Lord hushes the roaring waves, crashing winds, and bombing thunder to the relief of all. The cyclones of deadly power are sent because there is at least one man on board the clipper that God is calling to be His man.

30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

After praying their hearts out, circumstances change from terror to peace, from a howling tempest to a serene calm. Mysteriously, fear is transformed into relief and gratitude.

The verb "bringeth" (nachah) means "to guide." God not only calms the storm, He calms hearts and escorts sailors to safety.

31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

The main lesson of the psalm is repeated again.

The word “praise” (yadah) means “to throw up the hands in thanksgiving” or “to gratefully raise the hands in a pledge of allegiance to the LORD God of the Bible” (Genesis 14:22).

The goodness of God brought this storm to hammer their vessel, not to injure men, but to show them His grace and power.

32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

The psalmist expresses a wish that these seamen along with all men might praise God and “exalt” (lift up) His name, not only in private during the terrors of the night, but in public during the pleasantries of peacetime.

The Sovereign Redeemer

The psalmist introduces us to the works of the LORD. These are not “acts of nature,” but facts about God. There is no such thing as a sovereign act of nature! “Mother nature” is a fiction of the mind -- an idolatrous conception of men.

33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground;

His power humbles mighty rivers, huge lakes, and ground level water.

34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

If He turns off “the faucet” to productive farm lands and turns them into dustbowls. He dries up groundwater to the distress of regions and nations. Droughts with their parchedness and waterlessness are acts of goodness designed to deliver men from their wicked neglect of God.

35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into watersprings.

As God is the Source of drought, He is also the Source of drenching rain. He creates desert lakes and pools of water in the wilderness to refresh man, plants, and beasts.

36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

Famine and drought motivate people to move and to travel to regions of abundance. But, God is able to change these ruinous patterns with one word so that people are able to make an abundant living in these regions without fear or distress.

“habitation” refers to a permanent homestead.

37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

God can cause streams in the desert to appear so that men build farms, plant vineyards, and grow all kinds of crops.

38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

God is able to turn deserts into flourishing gardens, dry sand into fertile soil, and meager yields into bumper crops He not only provides for men but mercifully for their livestock.

Men are too quick to attribute these things to coincidence and act of nature. It is sheer heresy for a child of God to attribute anything to “mother nature.” Nothing is by accident!

39 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

People are not always prosperous. Sometimes God changes circumstances so that populations are “minished” (diminished) and humbled through oppression, affliction, and sorrow . . . conditions due to climate disasters, political disasters, and moral disasters.

40 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.

“contempt” – God is no respecter of persons. God is fair and just. He acts without prejudice; and, He has no conflicts of interest.

He treats the elite as common men. He humbles both rich and poor. Bedouin kings are forced to wander in deserts. Men in all stations of life suffer loss and frustration. All men experience illnesses, hardships, want, depravity, loss of income, depletion of finances, frustrations and the like. All have to relocate in order to earn a living.

41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

Yet, there are poor men who are immune to economic downturns, droughts, and political reversals. Some men seem to prosper regardless of the times. This too is an act of God.

The Righteous and Wise Man

42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

The righteous shall see these changes of fortune and rejoice. Their own lot in life were evidences of God’s favor and proofs of His mercy and goodness.

But, the boasting mouth of the wicked shall be silenced. Though the wicked complain, they will find nothing in their lot that justifies complaints against God.

43 Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the lovingkindness of the LORD.

This is the main message of the psalm!

The wise study men, and learn the great lessons of life – not only from their own experiences, but from the ups and down of other men. Studies of one’s contemporaries lead to a true understanding of human nature and the ways of God among us.

After looking at hunger, thirst, distress, loneliness, chains, and prisons in this psalm, we need to redefine God’s goodness. Modern man defines good by how much money he has in the bank.

What we call “good” is not always good; and what we call “bad” is not always bad. If affliction delivers us from depravity and debauchery, that is good; if prosperity makes us plump and proud, that is bad.

If you are experiencing “oppression, affliction, and sorrow” the goodness and mercy of God is there. Look for it, Search for it. When you find it, give thanks and become a person of praise.

Psalm 108 - Through God We Shall Do Valiantly

"Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man."



This psalm is attributed to David as it has the smell of a warrior king all through it.

Apparently, David had to work through his own fears and doubts before great conflicts. Here we see Him coming out of melancholy with a healthy fixation on the glories of God — a focus which results in the assurance of victory over his adversaries. Oh, that all of us could move from fear to faith so masterly.

Psalm 108:1 <A Song or Psalm of David.> O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

We have a spiritual movement from doubt to praise; from stagger to stamina; from shame to honor; from faltering to firmness; from fear to faith.

Out of the pit of despair comes shouts of praise. David appears to rise from the ashes of melancholy beaming with glory at the honor of praising God with his lips and tongue.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.

The psalmist shouts to himself, "Awake!"

"psaltery and harp" seems to imply that the psalmist should employ the noblest powers within his soul in praise to God.

3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

Here is a healthy man occupied with the beauties of the LORD who understands that praise is the means of witnessing to the nations.

4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

The great theme of his praise is the mercy and truth – polar opposites on the scale of virtue.

When God gave instructions on constructing the mercy seat above the ark, he defined the width and length of the mercy seat, but not the height (Exodus 25). Now we know why. The LORD did not supply a height measurement to the mercy seat because there is no limitation on His mercy: "Thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds."

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;

David longs for God to rise, be with the army in battle, and to be exalted because of His work of strengthening soldiers and monitoring the clashing of swords.

His mercy is as high and wide and deep as Calvary. One who stooped so low to save you and me ought to be exalted above the heavens. And, surely He is exalted above the heavens in and through the resurrection and ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father.

6 That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me.

The word “beloved” (yed’iyd’ha) is in the plural informing us that he is addressing the people of God; that is, the psalmist hopes the LORD will arise and stoop to save his army.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

That “God has spoken in his holiness” is equivalent to Him taking an oath.

“Shechem,” west of the Jordan, and “Succoth” east of the Jordan were important places in the life of Jacob. The use of these regions seems to imply that God will keep the promises He made to Jacob.

8 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver;

Gilead was east of Jordan, and Ephraim was west of Jordan. God claims the land and the tribes to be His own; that is, though each tribe had its gifts and territory, He claims jurisdiction over all the tribes and the land they possess.

9 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.

Moab is to the east of Jerusalem; Edom to the south-east; and Philistia to the west along the coastline.

While God esteems and protects the tribes of Israel, he has not sworn to protect Moab, Edom, or Philistia. In fact, the surrounding godless nations were doomed to servitude, humility, and defeat.

10 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

Petra of Edom was the strong city that no nation seemed able to conquer. The question is raised to demonstrate that though Edom seemed impossible to conquer, the mountain city was vulnerable to the sword of the Lord.

11 Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

There is a tension between being “cast off” and “go forth.” David acknowledges God’s heavy hand of discipline upon the nation . . . and himself, but past chastisements did not dampen his hope that God will be with the armies of Israel in future battles.

Defeat is never permanent.

The lesson here is that past failures and corrections by the Lord are not omens of defeat regarding future engagements. In fact, past struggles may be viewed as God’s training program for future conflicts.

12 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.

This prayer is addressed to the Lord and not to the people of God. “God” is the assumed subject. “Give” is the verb, and “us” is the plural object. The Lord is our helper (ezer), and vain is the help of man. Trust God, not men. Trust God, not the army. Trust God, not your own skills.

13 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

The psalm begins with a saint rising out of the doldrums to believe God, and ends with matador-confidence that Israel shall kill the bull charging against them.

“shall tread down our enemies” is the voice of faith expressing confidence the nation will overcome future adversaries.

Praise and remembrance of His attributes always ends in triumph; that is, a praising, thankful saint prepares an environment for God to work while a heart filled with fear and doubt creates an environment for Satan to work.

Listen to the promises; commit to faith; praise God for His mercy; and, rest knowing that God’s enemies are destined to be “cast out” like an old shoe (v. 9).

Psalm 109 - An Imprecatory Plea for Justice

“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.”



This psalm is credited to David. A righteous man with many enemies, there is no reason to doubt his authorship.

Furthermore, this psalm is quoted in the NT in regards to Judas (Acts 1:20). Like Jesus, David had enemies willing and ready to betray him to the highest bidder.

There are two ways to improve society; (1) the salvation of souls, and (2) justice applied toward the wicked. Both the saving of life and the taking of life are duties of men. This psalm prays that God would rain down justice on those who verbally assaulted him.

Psalm 109: A Prayer lying the Grounds of His Claim

1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;

“hold not thy peace” is an expression used by David appealing to God to intervene in his defense. The Hebrew word literally means “don’t stop ploughing.”

“O God of my praise” -- David grounds his prayer on the character of God, particularly His justice, to intervene that he might have more reasons to praise Him. Spiritually speaking, David claims the best thing about himself is God; that He is his treasure.

Slander

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.

The wrong done to David is described as slander – the weapon of choice of political opponents – a violation of the Sixth Commandment, “Thou shall not kill”; that is, defamation and libel are auxiliary violations of the law against murder.

Matthew 5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Verbal Assault

3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause.

“They compassed me” implies the vilifiers came at him from every direction attacking his character and assaulting him to any who would listen.

“without cause” implies David had not injured any of his accusers; that he violated no law; that all their accusations were malicious and wrongfully inspired. David is not saying he is not a sinner. Rather, He claims innocence in relation to the verbal charges laid against him.

Malicious Mud Racking

4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer.

“For my love” -- David had shown love to his accusers and they repaid him with libel, slur, and insults.

When David did good, they reimbursed him with evil; that is, they repaid his kindness with backstabbing unfaithfulness.

Instead returning evil for evil, David prayed *for them*.

Personal Wrongdoing

5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

David did good toward His enemies and did not retaliate in like kind. Rather, they returned hate for love, bitterness for goodness.

“David's enemies laughed at him for his devotion, but they could not laugh him out of it.” (Matthew Henry)

A Prayer for Retribution upon the Wrongdoer

6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

Since these malicious accusers could not be corrected by David’s love or prayer for them, he prays for strict justice – that God would place a wicked taskmaster over them that would treat them like they had treated him.

“let Satan stand at his right hand” - at the side of the taskmaster’s counselor and adviser. Since Satan is the master of accusation, David prays his enemies might be made to feel the pain and terror of slander against them.

When a man criticizes a pastor or elder, he gives permission for others to belittle him.

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

Unlike David who had not violated the law and who was falsely accused, he prays that his accusers might be held accountable for their actual violations of law; that is, for the very thing they were doing, David appeals to strict justice. Lord, when they are judged for their sins of slander, let them be condemned.

“let his prayer become sin” in court; that is, may the judge reject the maligner’s plea for mercy. This text informs us that David’s accusers were religious men claiming a holy status before the Lord – a presumption that was proved false by their duplicity.

“When men reject the salvation of Christ, even their prayers are numbered among their sins” (Matthew Henry).

This imprecatory prayer was David’s hope and a supposition, and not an immediate actuality.

8 Let his days be few; and let another take his office.

This petition is consistent with Psalm 37 that God would cut off the wicked. No good man would pray that God would forgive the unrepentant or that they might live a long, prosperous life. He wants these wicked governors removed from office.

9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

Again, this imprecatory prayer is consistent with God’s promises in Psalm 37. Crimes deserve punishment and David pleads with God to punish these criminals and to prevent them from multiplying quibblers like themselves.

10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

David does not want to see evil men with children who will do the same things as their fathers. He prays that the seed of the blasphemers would be cut off so they could not multiply more minions. The early death of the offspring of the wicked is a one way to improve society.

“desolate places” = barren lands, deserts, and the wilderness where men have to work day and night for one meal.

“Let his family share the punishment, his children be as wandering beggars to prowl in their desolate homes, a greedy and relentless creditor grasp his substance, his labor, or the fruit of it, enure to strangers and not his heirs, and his unprotected, fatherless children fall in want, so that his posterity shall utterly fail” (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary).

11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.

“Let the extortioner” or debt collector harass, hound, and pester him.

“let the strangers spoil his labour”; i. e. let foreigners seize and possess what he has earned.

12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.

The sense behind this petition-curse is that the slanderer and his family might never experience comfort, compassion, or pity from anyone.

“See what hurries some to shameful deaths, and brings the families and estates of others to ruin; makes them and theirs despicable and hateful, and brings poverty, shame, and misery upon their posterity: it is sin, that mischievous, destructive thing” (Matthew Henry).

13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.

This prayer is consistent with Psalm 37:28 – “but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.” It is a blessing to the world when liars, slanderers, murderers, fornicators, lesbians, and Sodomites do not have children or that their children are killed. Thus, this is a prayer for pure justice.

14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

“Be remembered with the Lord” is a Biblical doctrine that God “visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate” him (Exodus 20:5). It is an inescapable fact that children and children's children regularly suffer from the errors, crimes, and sins of their parents.

“The sweet of vengeance lies in its completeness. The curse must strike backwards as well as forwards, and the root as well as the branch be destroyed” (Ellicott).

In his prayer, David seeks to purge society of evil men and their reprobate children – a noble, beneficial, profitable strategy. We don’t need more liars and fornicators on earth. Plants that produce bad fruit must be plucked up.

15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

“Let them be before the Lord continually”; that is, may God never forget their sins and may He work to cause others to forget them. Thus, this is a prayer for pure justice.

“Let their sins never pass from the mind of God. Let him never so forget them as not to inflict punishment for them (Barnes).

16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.

David’s imprecatory prayer is not extreme or unjust. It is fair and proper. Because they did not show mercy to the poor and needy, David petitions the Lord to withdraw His mercy from them even if they have a broken heart during prosecution. Isn’t this what the Day of Judgment is all about?

17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.

In regard to these slanderers, David prays that they would be cursed because they loved cursing him; that because they despised mercy and compassion, God would not show mercy and compassion to them; because they took pleasure in vilifying others, that God would treat them as villains; because they took pleasure in smearing others, they might be smeared; and, because they showed no compassion to their victims, that God might not show them any compassion -- a prayer for pure justice.

18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.

“clothed himself with cursing” is a metaphor meaning these miscreants clothed, dressed, and robed themselves with blasphemy.

Like “water” and “oil” are necessities of life; the psalmist wants their whole being drenched with damnation as easily as water and oil can be splashed on a body.

19 Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.

Like a leper clothed with rags, David wishes these reprobates to be eternally clothed with curses, condemnation, and hopelessness.

20 Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

“reward” – Let them receive the curses I have prayed because they deserve them.

Because they tried to ruin me with their lies and slander, let them be ruined forever.

A Prayer for Personal Deliverance and Protection

21 But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name’s sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.

Unlike his accusers who broke the 6th and 9th Commandments, David prays for mercy . . . not because he was a flawless man, but (1) because he did not injure those that sought his ruin, and (2) because it is God’s nature to be merciful.

22 For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

Though a king, David saw himself as an ordinary, poor, and needy man . . . but, more than this – a true victim of defamation. David was not plying the victim; he was truly an injured party of intentional, premeditated, undeserved murder.

“Whoever files, attempts to file, or conspires to file, in any public record or in any private record which is generally available to the public, any false lien or encumbrance against the real or personal property of an individual described in section 1114, on account of the performance of official duties by that individual, knowing or having reason to know that such lien or encumbrance is false or contains any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned for not more than 10 years, or both” (18 U.S.C. § 1521).

23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust.

David uses the metaphor of a shadow and a locust in the wind to describe the wobbly, precarious position his accusers put him in when they sought to destroy him through slander . . . that is, the slander worked to destabilize him.

24 My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness.

So effective was the malicious slander, it caused David to take leave of his kingly responsibilities, to pray and to fast over this plot to ruin him as king. The more he prayed the weaker he became.

25 I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shook their heads.

Perhaps, the most devastating result of this defamation campaign to demolish his reputation was that others believed the mudslingers. When the victims of defamation looked upon David, they shook their heads in contempt; that is, they believed the carpers even though they had no evidence against David.

26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy:

Trapped between backstabbers and those who believed them, David felt alone.

Christians can be fair weather friends, and when the black storms of slander hit the sails, they jump ship. When government is god in the minds of Christians, you cannot expect them not to betray you when you are accused of wrongdoing.

27 That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, LORD, hast done it.

David looked to God to save him from traducement and to do it in such a way that the whole community would know that God stood with him and saved him.

28 Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice. 29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.

David could survive the slander, but he could not live without God's blessing. Let them continue their gossip, but God please don't discontinue your blessing. Work on my behalf. Let them be ashamed and let me rejoice in You! Let their shame be so complete that it would cover them like a garment.

A Prayer Expressing Clean Hands

30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.

Having prayed this imprecatory prayer, David bursts into praise knowing that the God of justice heard his prayer and that the matter was in His hands.

31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

David finds rest for his soul without finding a clear remedy for the slander. Knowing that God was with him sustained him during this assault on his character and status as king.

To save him from those that condemn his soul - - Margin, "from the judges of his soul." The Hebrew is, "from those that judge his soul" (Barnes).

The LORD is the poor man's advocate just as Satan is the poor man's accuser (Ellicott).

“Jesus, unjustly put to death, and now risen again, is an Advocate and Intercessor for his people, ever ready to appear on their behalf against a corrupt world, and the great accuser (Matthew Henry).

Let us all find rest for our souls knowing that matters of concern are in His hands.

Psalm 110 - The Coronation of God's King-Priest

Behold the Beautiful Christ

Before us is a royal hymn.

The most quoted psalm in the New Testament, its importance is staggering (Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Hebrews 1:13; 7:11, 15, 17; 8:1).

It has been said the first duty of man is not to submit to authority, but to question authority.

The writ that challenges authority is called a *quo warranto* requiring an individual claiming authority to produce in writing his writ of authority to exercise certain powers.

This is Jesus' response to man's quo warranto. It is proof of claim that He was called to be the Ruler of all matters pertaining to God.

Before us is the glorious coronation of Messiah to the office of king and priest. A contract with offer and acceptance is announced. The acceptance of the appointment to office contains rights and privileges, and imposes duties and responsibilities on the Messiah.

Here the powers of government and the obligations of King-Priest are conferred upon this human agent, the Messiah. The Psalm serves as constructive notice of His appointment a thousand years before He walked the earth.

Messianic Appointment as King

Psalm 110:1-2 A Psalm of David. The LORD (YHWH) said unto my Lord (Adonai), Sit (yashab) thou at my right hand, until I make (shiyth) thine enemies thy footstool (hadom). The LORD shall send the rod (matteh) of thy strength out of Zion: rule (radah) thou in the midst of thine enemies (oyeb).

Five persons are introduced in the first three verses: David, LORD, Lord, the enemy, and thy people.

When the Pharisees quibbled with Christ and tried to trap him in a contradiction, He queried them about the identity of the "Lord" David mentioned in this psalm, "If David then called him 'Lord,' how is he his son?" (Matthew 22:41-46).

David

When David wrote this psalm He was God's duly anointed king.

The word "anointed" is the Hebrew word for "messiah."

A messiah is someone with olive oil poured over them during an inauguration ceremony. In Israel, kings and priests were anointed with oil as a symbol of their divine appointment to public office. David was God's de jure messiah king.

But, in this psalm the anointed One is not David, but “the Lord.” The only reference to David is in the inscription and the word “my” when he referred to “my Lord.”

In the New Testament, the Greek word *christos* means “anointed.” Consequently, our Lord Jesus was called “the Christ” or the “Anointed One.” This psalm, therefore, is not about David, but about the coronation of the Lord Jesus Christ and His commission as king and priest.

LORD / Lord

The name “LORD” (YHWH) is the Tetragrammaton meaning “I Am” — a being verb expressing “the existent One.” This is God’s official name and the covenant name whereby God made His contract with Israel. Jesus taught us to address the LORD as “our father.”

The title “Lord” (Adonai)[1] in lower case letters means “master” or “owner.” The word *adon* comes from a Ugaritic word meaning “lord” or “father.” The plural form, *Adonai*, is like the plural form *Elohim* which is regularly used with singular verbs and modifiers. It is proper to construe the Name as an “emphatic plural” or “plural of majesty.” The plural form occurs over 300 times in the Old Testament, and it always refers to God. Adonai is our Lord Jesus Christ.

That the LORD is the supreme authority over all creation was unquestioned in Israel by virtue of the fact the LORD is the Creator (Genesis 2:4), and that He is the Redeemer of the nation (Exodus 20:1; Isaiah 41:14; 43:14).

Because He is sovereign, He rules! Because He loves His people, He redeems! He rules His people with their needs on his heart; that is, Israel’s God is an all-powerful, all-holy, all-benevolent Sovereign.

“Sit” is an imperative. It is YHWH that summons Adonai and bestows on Him the duties and privileges of the Messianic office at His right hand. He was commissioned because of His virtue and His competence.

“Right hand” is a Middle Eastern symbol of authority and power. It is a position or throne whereby Messiah exercises jurisdiction over His domain.

“Footstool” or “under feet” is an idiom for conquest over enemies.

“Rod” or “staff” is a scepter, a symbol of authority. Today we use stamps and embossers and seals to declare the authority of a written instrument. In Biblical times, a king’s staff represented His authority.

“Zion” is Jerusalem, the residence of King David, and where God ruled over the nation from the tabernacle / temple. But, this coronation does not occur in carnal Jerusalem, but in the presence of Almighty God in Heavenly Jerusalem, the place of God’s eternal rule before Christ came to this earth (Psalm 87).

Rule: The term “rule” (*radah*) is an imperative; i.e. we have here a grant of authority to execute the duties of the Messianic office. This answers the *quo warranto* question, “by what authority does Christ make claims on men?” The duties of Messiah include at least two obligations: (1) to

save His people from their enemies and (2) to crush the enemies of God, His law, and His authority.

Enemies: The term “enemies” means that not everyone accepts this king or His grant of authority. Many rebel against God’s law-order and resist His reign.

God’s enemies (oyeb) are proud and foolish men who reject His rule over them. Anyone who refuses to surrender to this King . . . is an enemy! Terms like “wicked,” “unbeliever,” and “anti-Christ” come to mind.

Luke 19:27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

Destroying God’s enemies means salvation for God’s people; that is, the defeat of enemies means victory, safety, and prosperity for Zion. No force or political movement on earth can defeat the will of Heaven. The true church is invincible.

Messiah’s Appointment and the Consent of the People

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning; thou hast the dew of thy youth.

In this verse we have a lovely description of the King’s people using rich and refreshing metaphors of morning dew and sparkling in the sunshine of the unveiled Christ.

“Here there is the additional idea of brightness—the array of young warriors, in their bright attire, recalling the multitudinous glancing of the ground on a dewy morning: thy young warriors come to thee thick and bright as the morning dew” (Thompson).

“Thy people” refers to God’s covenant people; those who confess Him as their King, Lord, and Master; those who surrender to His law-order and live out a life of love. We call them “converts,” “the elect,” “believers,” or “Christians.” Jesus called them “friends” (John 15:13-14; Romans 10:9-10; Matthew 11:28-29; Luke 18:7).

“Thy people” are not Jews, as there was no such thing as a “Jew” in David’s day. Moreover, Jesus was from the Tribe of Judah, but He was not a “Jew” in the religious sense of the term. The Jews of Jesus’s day murdered Him. They were His enemies. Those Hebrews who believed in Him were called Christians, God’s chosen ones, believers, and God’s people. Today’s “Jews” who belong to the “other” Israel are not Hebrews but Khazarians from the Ukraine . . . and, they too are anti-Christ and enemies of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Modern so called “Jews” have no Hebrew blood them . . . and, even if they did, race / genetics does not commend one to God nor make them “God’s chosen people” (Matthew 3:1-10; John 1:10-13).

“Willing” (nedabah) refers to consent. It is a word connected with free-will offerings, something voluntary and not mandatory. In order to experience the benefits of the contract (salvation), one must consent to be ruled by the Lord-King. Everyone in God’s kingdom is there because they want to be there. These are people with “no king,” but King Jesus (Acts 17:6-7).

“Day of power” is a reference to the day the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ will be unveiled to mankind. It is the day of the Lord and the day of resurrection. The New Testament calls it the “apocalypse” (2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 1:1).

“in the beauties of holiness:” God’s people are seen dressed in holy garments. Justified and sanctified in Christ, the saints shine “in the beauties of holiness.” In contrast to His enemies lurking in the darkness, the church sparkles with devotion to their King.

The “womb of the morning” is a glorious reference to the arrival of the Eschaton in its fullness and universal power. The long night of distress, disease, and death is over.

The “dew of thy youth” is a lovely description of the bodily resurrection of the holy dead. These holy ones are described as the morning dew that refreshes the meadow after a long summer drought.

This is an ideal picture of God’s people robed in the holy garments of kings and priests. Raised from the dead (spiritually and bodily), they sparkle and shine like fresh crystals of dew on a mantis-green meadow.

Messiah’s Appointment as Priest

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

We have a second pronouncement — The public declaration that God has made His selection for the office of priest, and installed Adonai to be not only a king, but a priest! A priest is one who not only mediates God’s interests to men, but mediates man’s concerns to God. This messiah priest not only has access to God’s throne room, He intercedes to God on man’s behalf.

This royal coronation is a grant of power and authority by our Father-God to Messiah to enter heaven’s sanctuary in order to mediate the needs of mankind to our Father-God.

An oath binds a man to the duties of his office. An oath is made in exchange for public trust.

The oath verifies the acceptance of Christ as man’s representative in Divine affairs. He is not only God’s Representative to man, but man’s Representative to God. What an advantage to have one man Who loves us and Who represents our concerns before the throne of Almighty God.

Glory! Hallelujah! We have a wise, virtuous, competent, duty-bound King-Priest that rules, and represents us before the Father (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 5)!

Sworn: No man has a duty to perform public service unless he is commissioned to do so and voluntarily accepts the appointment. Consequently, assignments to office require a public oath. (Note: In America when a man is appointed or elected to public office, “We the People” require the officer-elect to take an oath and post bond in exchange for public trust before he begins to exercise the duties of office (Article VI of the U.S. Constitution).

This was true in David's time, and it is true in our time. Public officers are required to take the prescribed oaths and to post bond . . . OR, they are imposters acting under color of office, color of authority, and color of duty.

The wording in Hale v. Henkel declares a political truth: the citizen "has no duty to the state or his neighbors to divulge his business . . . his rights are such as existed by the law of the land long antecedent to the organization of the State . . ."

Because a man has no duty to the State, upon acceptance of a commission to serve the public, the man must take an oath to faithfully perform the duties of public office. Likewise, every contract requires an oath or promise to faithfully perform the duties of a contract. In most states, the duly sworn officer must also post a bond they will faithfully perform their duties according to the contract (the constitution).

Thus, we have in this verse the LORD's oath and appointment of Messiah to the office of the Melchizedek priesthood. A mysterious figure, Melchizedek was the greatest man in the Old Testament – greater than Abraham – greater than Levi and Aaron. With no record of his birth or death, he is a type of the Son of God. Unlike the Aaronic priests, he did not inherit the priesthood from his parents, but was appointed such by God. Unlike Levitical priests whose ministry was interrupted by death, Jesus serves by the power of an endless life. Because He lives, believers live (Hebrews 7:7, 16).

Will not repent: This appointment of Messiah as King-Priest is irrevocable, unalterable, and unalienable – not capable of being taken away or denied for all eternity.

"Thou art a priest" means that He is not a priest stemming from His own ambitions, but by the appointment of the Father; that the Messiah is not only a king that kings, but a priest that priests. Before us is an ideal king—a King that mediates the affairs of God to man; and, a Priest that mediates the concerns of man to God. He is God's representative to men as King; and man's representative to God as Priest. He serves God and dispenses justice as a king, but he serves mankind and shows mercy as a priest.

We have here for the first time in history a King that not only serves the law of God, but also a King-Priest that serves the needs of the people. What a concept – a King committed to God's law-order – a benevolent King – a King-Priest that cares – a King that executes justice toward the wicked, but a King-Priest that exercises mercy towards kingdom citizens!

As King He purges society of evil men; and, as Priest He saves sinners to the uttermost! Hallelujah!

"Melchizedec:" The title "Melchizedec" means "king of Salem" (King of peace or at peace). He is the King of Shalom and without him there is no peace.

One of the unique features of Melchizedek is that He appears suddenly in the Genesis record. His origin is shrouded with mystery as the Spirit reveals nothing about his human ancestry. The writer of Hebrews used this strange feature to signify the eternal nature of the Melchizedek priesthood with which our Lord is identified. He was the first king-priest mentioned in the

Bible and was either a Theophany of Christ or an ideal king-priest to the people living near Jerusalem at the time of Abraham.

Melchizedec refreshed Abraham after Abraham's return from pursuing the five plunder-kings that captured Lot by supplying him with bread and wine. Rejecting a contract with the King of Sodom, Abraham accepted a contract with the King of Jerusalem. So great was Melchizedek, that Abraham tithed a tenth of his equity to this king-priest. Melchizedek was not a Jewish priest ministering in the carnal temple with sacrifices that can never take away sins. Rather, He was a true catholic king-priest that used his resources to meet the needs his people, and specifically, Abraham.

Our Lord's kingly priesthood is the archetype of the competent, charitable, cosmopolitan Melchizedek priesthood.

He is the King of Peace, and there is no peace without Christ as King.

Messiah's Conquest, Triumph, and Rest

5-6 The Lord (Adonai) at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

O, how the kings, princes, rulers, presidents, legislators, judges, and parliamentarians anger us! But, oh how they must fear the mere mention of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Psalm 21:8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. 9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

Adonai, when His glory is revealed, shall judge among the heathen; He shall fill the places with the dead bodies; and, he shall wound the heads (rulers) over many countries.

The Lord at thy right hand: Before us is an apocalyptic pronouncement of the bone-crushing victory by Adonai, God's appointed King-Priest, over stubborn and rebellious kings that have resisted God's rule and His law-order. This is not "sweet Jesus" caressing lambs in his arms, but the Lord Christ, the righteous-conservative, "tough on crime" Judge who will "drain the swamp" and deny relief for corrupt government officials.

Strike (machats): The word "strike" means "to smite, shatter, or wound severely." Here it represents the Messiah faithfully executing the duties of His office to punish evil doers and to purge society of evil men . . . and those self-promoting, greedy, hedonistic politicians.

This is the "day of the Lord" that unbelievers and politicians fear!

Kings: The "kings" refer to proud and defiant rulers on earth that shake their fists at God to maliciously and recklessly violate the rights of man.

These are rulers who defy the law of the LORD God and rule arbitrarily as tyrant-taker-taxers over men. All presidents, sultans, prime ministers, Caesars, queens, emperors, dukes, generals, governors, and government officials are included in this word "kings."

Wrath: The word “wrath” (aph) means “nostril” in Hebrew. An angry man has his nostrils flared and is an appropriate expression for wrath.

This is “eternal wrath,” the wrath of the Eschaton, the wrath associated with the Last Judgment. It also includes the wrath leaking from heaven now against evildoers now (Romans 1:17ff). This is “sinners in the hands of an angry God.” This is the irresistible, dynamic, cataclysmic, universal “day of vengeance” and the “baptism of fire” mentioned by Malachi and John the Baptist (Malachi 4:1-2 Matthew 3:1-12).

Jeremiah described a limited, local day of wrath on rebel Jews prior to 586 BC. Jesus describes the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD as the sign of His wrath on the Jewish Nation and proof He reigns in the clouds of heaven in Matthew 24. Furthermore, one day this judgment will break forth into a final, ultimate display of wrath for which there is no escape.

Jeremiah 46:10 For that day belongs to the Lord God of hosts, A day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes; And the sword will devour and be satiated And drink its fill of their blood; For there will be a slaughter for the Lord God of hosts, In the land of the north by the river Euphrates.

Dead bodies and wounded heads: Before us is imagery of the Bonecrusher splintering the enemies of God littering an ancient battlefield with bleeding, broken bodies. The psalmist assures us that the enemies of God will suffer ultimate, irreversible, eternal defeat.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

On this canvas of Holy Writ, the Holy Spirit sketches a scene of the Champion King-Priest returning home as a Victor from a fierce battle.

With blood on his garments and sweat on His brow, He stops by a stream to refresh himself with a drink of water and to reflect on the marvels of this victory. With His enemies crushed, and His people safe, He holds His head high with dignity, honor, and joy.

The battlefield was Calvary wherein our Lord faced the trinity of evil: Satan, sin, and death. Having given His all to save His people, He returns to the Father as Heaven’s Champion — a reference to His resurrection and ascension to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:32-37).

This is the King-Priest of the psalm; the Lion-Lamb of Revelation chapter five; the One with a “sword in His mouth:

“He that treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God;” the “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS;” and, He that orders the fowls of the air to “eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great” (Revelation 19:15ff).

The Lord Jesus Christ has been crowned, and he is sitting at the right hand of God in authority over heaven and earth.

Does this King-Priest know you as one of His own? Your eternal destiny will be determined by your relationship to this King. Acknowledge Him now, bow the knee now, own Him as your

Lord and Master in this life, and He will be your Savior on the day you are called to cross Jordan's River into the presence of Almighty God (Romans 10:9, 10).

[1] "The plural form Adonai, like the plural form Elohim, is regularly used with singular verbs and modifiers, so it is best to construe the Name as an "emphatic plural" or "plural of majesty." When the plural is formed using a singular possessive ending ("my Lords"), it always refers to God, and occurs over 300 times in the Tanakh in this form"

(Source: http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/Adonai/adonai.html).

Psalm 111 - A Call to Worship

"Praise ye the Lord . . . the works of the LORD are great"



This is an acrostic psalm. It begins with the word "Hallelujah."

Designed for public worship, this psalm calls men to leave their petty concerns and to praise God because of His marvelous works.

Section One: 1-8 with Two Clauses Each

(Aleph, Bet) Psalm 111:1 Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.

Praising God is the highest calling of man. Men are at their best when they contemplate the works of God and honor Him.

"whole heart" implies worship with undivided affections – a call to reject duplicity and being a "double minded man." Nothing should interfere with worship: not business, not money, not the family, and not the wobbly affairs of the State. It is simply too easy to have one foot in church and the other in the world.

(Gimel, Dalet) 2 The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

"The works of the LORD are great" in number, great in goodness, great in power, and great in wisdom. And, they are studied by all godly men and women.

(Hay, Vav) 3 His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

His works of creation, redemption, and providence are marvelous, honorable, glorious, and righteous because they are indissoluble and immutable.

"endureth forever" means the more men scrutinize his work, the more valuable, enchanting, and veritable they become; that is, they last forever. Many things appear valuable until they are deliberated, sifted, and analyzed. Not so with the works of the Lord. The more they are percolated in the mind of men, the more admirable they seem to be.

(Zayin, Chet) 4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

God made His works to be remembered in Creation and in His Word; moreover, He made the mind of man to recall and to commemorate them. Man is at his very best when he reflects on the LORD's wonderful works of creation and redemption; that is, he moves from rags to riches, from the common to the kingly, from the lower class to the higher class when he remembers Christ and the cross.

(Tet, Yod) 5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

Who cannot help but praise the Lord when considering His provision for all His creatures in the air, land, and sea; and, that He is faithful to His covenant promises and to His Word?

Because He will “never, never, no, never, never forsake” His people, they remember God, and celebrate being in covenant relationship to Him (Hebrews 13:5).

(Kuf, Lamed) 6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

Who cannot help but praise the Lord when considering that He was pleased to reveal the power of His works to His people so that they might receive an inheritance; that His people might be privileged citizens in His kingdom forever? All that He does is for us. Even the pagans work for us.

(Mem, Nun) 7 The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.

“verity” – His works are by truth, of the truth, and for the truth.

“and judgment” means “just.” All that He does is good and right. Nothing He does supports injustice, fraud, slander, deceit, murder, oppression, sensuality, or perversion. He wrongs no man. Some may receive justice, but even they have also been the recipients of His mercy.

The word “commandments” (piqqwd) refers to “something appointed” – a charge or commandment.

(Samekh, Ayin) 8 They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.

His works of justice and mercy will not fail, fall, flounder, or fizzle. In this fallen flawed world, He will do what needs to be done, what must be done, and what is best to be done (Barnes).

Section Two: 9-10 with three Clauses Each

(Pay, Tzadi, Kuf) 9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.

He redeemed Israel at the Red Sea, and He redeemed His people at Calvary. He placed Himself under oath to make Christ a Priest forever. His promises serve us, protect us, and provide for us. Our salvation is as good as His word.

“holy” is His name; i.e. his name is precious and must be dignified, beautified, and glorified.

His name is Reverend. “reverend” means “to be feared”; i.e. His name is to be venerated, respected, and celebrated. At the name of Jesus every knee shall fall! No pastor or preacher is deserving of the title “reverend.” **Reverend is His name!** At best, pastors are servants (ministers) of the Lord. None of His true servants will accept the moniker, “Reverend.”

Out of love, let us solemnly rebuke those who profane the holy name of the Lord, “for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 10:7).

(Resh, Sin, Tav) 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.

This verse has three clauses. Each of the last three letters of the Hebrew alphabet introduce a truth-clause.

All wisdom culminates in the worship of God. There is no such thing as wisdom apart from Christ . . . or wisdom apart from His Word . . . or wisdom that doesn't contemplate the greatness of God and the wonders of the cross. The wise obey His commandments and follow His way; fools turn to “their own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

Because His praise is forever, we would do well to praise Him now and to live for Him today. Hallelujah!

Psalm 112 - Where Have All the Godly Gone?

Help, LORD; for the Godly Man Ceaseth



As David look around at the degradation in his day, he asked, “Where have all the Godly Gone?” Likewise, the God-fearing men of our time are often bewildered by the shrinking population of the pious.

This psalm is a canticle about the frustration David felt about being surrounded by charlatans and hypocrites, and the hope he had of being delivered from their schemes. Further, David articulates the advantages of walking with God.

This is a psalm for people who can’t see God’s “little flock” and feel like they are surrounded by miscreants. If you are sick and tired of the promotion of depravity by government officials, the media, and political organizations, this psalm is for you.

Psalm 12:1 (To the chief Musician upon Sheminith, A Psalm of David.)

Sheminith – an eight string guitar, a possible reference to an octave.

“A Psalm of David:” Either David wrote this psalm or another added it to his library of songs. There are no historical references in this chorale to any events in David’s life where we can say with certainty that David penned these lyrics, but the tenor of the psalm definitely chimes with other songs that David composed. Like all psalms, this lyric addresses a conflict in the heart of the psalmist – an eclipse in the psalmist’s life where he loses sight of the remnant.

Troubles Caused by Those that Do Not Know God

Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

The word “help” (yasha) is an intransitive Hithpael verb with no object. It means “save.” In the emphatic position, David looks around and burst into a prayer because of his grief: “Save, LORD. I am surrounded by profane men!”

Feeling like the last sheep in God’s green pastures, David bleats out: “the godly man ceaseth” and “the faithful” (pious) have vanished – probably because wolves eat lambs, and surviving sheep are in hiding.

This statement is a poetic hyperbole – an expression of David’s loneliness . . . of his longing for spiritual companionship. This is not a fact, but it felt like one. Like sheep, David preferred the company of other sheep. Apparently, David experienced an eclipse in his life where he could not see or feel the warmth of Divine life ad rem to children of light. Rather, David feels crowded by impious, pro-longed, adolescent, alpha-males oozing with depravity and debauchery.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

The “they” refers to the wicked (*rasha’ m’im*) void of purity and piety. There are three marks of godless men in this text; that is, they are easily recognized by their talk and tantrums: swaggering speech, smooth discourse, and double-talk (double-speak).

First, they speak “vanity” (*shawv*) which refers “to deceitfulness, to overly proud, to emptiness or to nothingness.”

The *rasha’ m’im* are narcissistic. They sermonize only about themselves and what advances their agenda. Vain people seem to have the capacity to talk for ever about trivia in their personal lives and zero capacity to dialogue about important matters. Shakespeare wrote a play titled, “Much ado about nothing” – a mark of boorish people.

Second, they speak with “flattering” words; that is, their tones and inflections are smoother than butter.

Third, they speak with a double heart. The word “double” is not in the text, but the word heart (*leb*) is used twice: i.e. they speak with *leb leb* or a double heart. Deceivers say one thing and mean another. They have one glossary for church, and another at the beerhouse; one kind of speech at work and another kind of speech for home. In 1614, Thomas Adams observed, “A man without a heart is a wonder, but a man with two hearts is a monster.”

David was surrounded by monsters.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:

The pious psalmist has no patience with these double-minded, doubled-tongued, sweet-talkin’ drivellers (James 1:8). His theology taught him these tricksters will be amputated from society by the sword of the LORD.

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

The noun “our tongues” is in the emphatic position; that is, the main weapon of deceivers is their tongue. These masters of deception have a way of twisting the language to sell their enslavement programs. Captions like “Social Security Insurance,” “Federal Reserve,” “Patriot Act,” and “Affordable Care Act” come to mind.

When the wicked say, “Our lips are our own,” they mean our mouth and our choices are at our disposal to say what we please.

“Who is lord over us?” are a challenge. Who has any right to control us; or to call us to “shut up”? These people acknowledge no authority over them but their own passions.

These schmoozers make ugly look pretty, and bitter taste sweeter. These deceivers have the skills to market arsenic soup as magical-cures; the ability to sell sawdust as oatmeal; the talent to make stinkhead salmon smell like fried shrimp; and, the means to cook ten day old bread and make it taste like fresh baked pancakes.

In our time, the airwaves are filled with pretense and monkeyshines. Having mastered the art of newspeak and propaganda, the depraved media puts a spin on everything. Sports heroes are covered criminals; news anchors are paid CIA agents; and, entertainment is colored with anti-Christ prostitution.

Benefits of Walking with God

5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.

The LORD speaks this ancient oracle affirming the theology of the psalmist. Seeing the exploitation of oppressors and the sighing of the poor, the LORD arises from his silence to rescue the oppressed.

The word “needy” refers to the poor man with few resources to recover from fraudulent promotions of charlatans. There is no mention of formal prayer here. The needy sigh in secret. But, God hears the pain and inner groaning of the poor (Hagar; Moses at the Red Sea).

“will arise” is a moment of military-like action. The voice is first person — the voice of the LORD. Our God is a God of War who promises the sons of Abraham they will possess the gates of their enemies (Genesis 22:17).

“Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel” – Numbers 10:35-36

The construction, “I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him” is a figure of speech that can be construed to mean, “I will set him in safety for the one who pants for it:” “in safety for which he yearns (breathes),” or “I will set him safely from the one who blows upon him.” Ellicott promotes the former, Barnes and Benson advocates the latter.

When promises are broken by smooth talkers, the poor are the ones most likely to suffer. The rich, having many resources, are less likely to feel the pain of broken promises or malice aforethought. “In like manner, the poor would be most likely to “be taken in by the acts of unprincipled men, and to be deceived in their small dealings with them.” (Barnes)

Both positions are true. God delivers those who thirst for salvation, and he sends the north wind against defrauders who huff and puff at the poor.

6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Unlike the promises of shysters, God’s Word can be relied upon. The words of double-minded politicians and government officials are worthless, but the words of the Lord are like refined silver that have been smelted seven times. The doubled-hearted (leb, leb) are filled with deceit, but there is no falsehood with the LORD. His Word is infallible.

Silver addresses the value of God's Word. Profane men consider the Bible as worthless; nominal Christians measure its value in pennies; but holy men consider it their greatest treasure.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

"Them" refers to the "godly" in verse one and the poor and needy in verse five.

"Thou shalt keep them" is a direct promise of the LORD — a reference to "I will set them in safety" in verse five. What God promises, He shall perform! Thou shalt keep them from corrupt politicians; from the palm-greasing salesman; from double-dealers; from degenerate and depraved schemers with covetousness in their hearts. Thou shalt keep them and guard (preserve) them in this generation and in generations to follow.

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

This verse must be linked to verse seven, "Thou shalt preserve them" even though "the wicked walk on every side, "when the vilest (zuwleth = worthless) men are exalted" to positions of power.

The wicked (rasha'm'im) are everywhere filling every branch of government, every corporation where money can be made, and every political office where power can be obtained. No wonder David complained about the "foundations" being destroyed in Psalm 11:5 – a reference to the breaking down of the front lines in the infantry.

This psalm ends with a promise of protection for the humble. God's lambs will be kept and guarded even though surrounded by wolves. The promise is not that God will purge the wicked from the earth, but that He will preserve the Godly man who looks to the Lord as his Protector. The season of separating the chaff from the wheat awaits the end of history.

Psalm 113 - The Blessed Works of God

“From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD’S name is to be praised.”



This is a general “Hallel” psalm sung at various festivals extolling the great works of God. The author is unknown as the focus is upon the LORD and not man.

Psalm 113:1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

The command “praise” (hallel) is used three times. The LORD is the object of praise and His name is also used three times. Healthy people are occupied with the glories of God; sick people moan and groan about unfulfilled lusts. Servants (Levites) are addressed because his ministers have a special mission to proclaim the glories of the LORD.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.

“Blessed,” an intense Pual passive participle, means “to adore” or “or to be endowed with beauty;” i.e. let the name of the LORD be blessed for ever and ever.

The eternal nature of this absolute God who loves us and sent His Son to die for us has a claim on our mind and affections. Praise Him today; praise Him tomorrow; and praise Him with your last breath. Honor Him this minute, this hour, and this day.

3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD’S name is to be praised.

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same implies universal jurisdiction wherein all men have a blessed duty to honor and reverence His name; likewise, the phrase conveys men have a duty during waking hours to acknowledge the wonders of the Creator and to praise Him. Praise Him at sunlight, noon, and twilight.

“ Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him in the morning, Praise Him in the noontime. Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him when the sun goes down! .”

This is not religious fanaticism! It is a description of spiritual health in contrast to sick men who love the world all day long.

4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.

“high above the nations” implies the LORD has universal sovereignty over kingdoms of men; that He rules the nations; that He is a greater priority and has greater pre-eminence than the kings of the earth. As the God of the Chinese, Africans, Europeans, and South Americans, He warrants the praise of all men.

5 Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,

Who can be compared to the LORD our God? He is the one, true, infinite, personal, triune Spirit Who is the Creator of all things and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is high above His creation . . . above the thrones of kings . . . and above the tussle and fray in the cities of men.

6 Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!

God is so great and so far above kings and politics, He has to humble Himself to observe affairs of men on earth. He is so humble, He sent His Son to become a man.

For you and I to become a worm would not be as humiliating as God becoming a man. The difficulty with God's humility is that we have to be humble to draw near to Him. He humbles Himself and this requires men to humble themselves. Be humble or stumble.

7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;

"poor" is a metonym referring to common sinners among us. This God is so humble, He works in the dust, the back alleys, and the garbage pits of this life to rescue those in need of Him. He doesn't always work in this manner, but it is among the great works of God on behalf of men.

"For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth"
(1Corinthians 1:36).

8 That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.

Among His many works of redemption consider that He seeks out average men, touches them by His grace, and exalts them to conditions of wealth, rank, and honor. He not only has power to do it, He actually does it. He does not always make kings out of paupers, but it is among the great works of God on behalf of men.

Most of us are just common people called to serve an extraordinary God and to minister to Him. We work alongside ordinary people for the good of the common man. Praise the Lord.

9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

His work among us includes graciously granting children to barren women who long for children. He doesn't give every woman children, but blessing women with motherhood is part of His great works. He doesn't always work in this manner, but it is among the great works of God on behalf of men.

Other women are set free from these blessed duties to serve Him in other essential ways during their sojourn on earth. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 114 - Mountains that Skip

"The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs."



This psalm celebrates Israel's deliverance from Egypt using the art of the metaphor.

Everything is personified to stir man's imagination to consider the wonder of the Exodus event.

The lesson in this psalm is that God has performed marvelous works in history that need to be studied. The second lesson is that man's mind is so dull to the presence and power of God that lambs and mountains have to hip-hop across a dance floor to attract man's attention to the great works of God in history.

But, it is much sorer than this. The modern mind is so enthralled with Hollywood fiction movies and computer generated graphics (CGI) that Bible stories seem boring. But, remember this: CGI is fake; Bible stories are as real as the nose on your face.

Psalm 114:1 When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

"When Israel went out of Egypt" includes all the events of the exodus: the devastating plagues, the stunning death of the firstborn, crossing the Red Sea, and traveling to Mt. Sinai on "eagles' wings."

"the house of Jacob" includes the 12 tribes that make up that ancient nation.

2 Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

Judah, the leading tribe, is a metonym for all Israel.

"his sanctuary" implies that His sanctuary in Judah was His home, His sacred dwelling place, and His beachhead from which to reach the nations.

"his dominion" informs us the LORD established His law among these people and ruled over them. However, the name of "God" or "Lord" is not used here.

3 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.

The "sea" refers to the Red Sea — the place where the LORD proved His dominion over the waters, over the people, and over Pharaoh's pursuing armies.

The "Jordan" introduces to the time Israel entered Canaan during the flood season in Joshua 2-5. These mighty movements of water-splitting demonstrated the power and authority of the LORD God.

The psalmist attributes the human sense of sight to the sea — personification. In seeing the armies of God, the sea fled in fear at His presence. When the Lord of Hosts arrived at the Jordan River, the waters retreated in distress.

4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

So marvelous was Israel's deliverance from bondage in Egypt, the psalmist personifies mountains and hills skipping like new-born rams and lambs leaping with joy at being alive and set free from the stall.

5 What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

The psalmist personifies the dauntless sea and mocks it by asking, "What ailed thee?" that is, what kind of force and power disrupted the natural order of things causing your moored water to divide and stand straight up like saluting soldiers? The question is asked not to receive an answer from the waters, but to stir the human mind to reflect on the grace and power of God.

6 Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?

Again, the author repeats the statement in verse four by endowing immovable mountains with human traits like skipping. Once was not enough! The psalmist had to repeat the jizzer-metaphor to stun man's graveyard mind and to awaken it to carefully consider the wonder of the exodus account. Sadly, it is easier to get mountains to dance the boogie-woogie than to awaken man's mind to the greatness of God's redemptive history.

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

So immense and marvelous was Israel's deliverance from Egypt, the psalmist orders the earth to shake like a patient in a dentist's office hearing the buzzing sound of the drill — trembling in awe at the power of God in the exodus events. But, the earth is not the one that should be doing the jitter-bug. Man needs to vibrate with awe and wonder over God's display of thundering muscularity.

8 Which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

In case the marvels of crossing the Red Sea is not enough to awaken the Starbucks psyche, the psalmist includes the miracle of the split rock at Massah and Meribah which yielded pools of water to thirsty pilgrims. Thirsty people in the desert don't usually go tapping on rocks expecting water to come forth in faucet-like fashion. But, in this case, it did — and, this water-witching success can only be attributed to the power of God.

In summary, the great lesson in this psalm is that God has performed marvelous works in history that demand our attention. The second lesson is that man's mind is so dull to the presence and power of God that lambs and mountains have to hip-hop across a dance floor to attract man's attention to the enormous exploits of God in yesteryear.

Be quick to see his mighty works in history. Open your eyes! Behold the magnificent One!

Psalm 115 - He Will Bless Us!

"Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield."



We don't know the name of the author or when this psalm was written though some suppose it was composed during the Babylonian exile. We just don't know for sure.

However, we do know this psalm was composed in a time of national calamity which might lead the surrounding nations to conclude God had forsaken the nation.

The psalmist replies to the charge agreeing the calamity was indeed real and God had approved it, but that the hardship was not proof that the LORD was not the true God. Rather, the calamity proved that God was sovereign over the affairs of the nation.

The Source of Catastrophe

Psalm 115:1 Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

Success is not a matter of talent or the choices one makes in life. Both the good and the bad come from the LORD. Every circumstance of life, the delightful and the dreadful, are opportunities to give God glory for His mercies.

The catastrophe was great enough that it caused even the pagans to question His love for Israel.

2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?

Pagans work from the assumption that a man blessed by God will experience nothing by health and wealth. When these external icons of favor are missing in a man's life, the heathen conclude that God is not on his side; that the man is not in his favor; that God has forsaken him.

But this is a faulty premise. Look at the life of Jacob, Moses, David, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter, Paul, and John. All these men suffered terribly. Yet, each was a man of God.

Beware of the health and wealth gospel. Change in the pocket and money in the bank are not the best evidence of God's blessing. Even the wicked enjoy good health and large bank accounts. Peter was blessed by God, and he said, "Silver and gold have I none . . ." (Acts 3:6).

The catastrophe was not proof God had forsaken them, but it was proof God is Sovereign.

3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

Critics seem to come out of the woodwork when a man is at his lowest. Though disciplined severely, the catastrophe was **not** proof of claim that God had forsaken His people. The catastrophe was proof that God is sovereign and that He ordered this for the good and

improvement of the nation. Any discipline that causes man to let go of his idols and to pursue the living God is a benefit from Him.

This sovereign God Who permitted this catastrophe is worthy of worship, but the idols of Israel's critics are absolutely worthless.

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 are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

Idols are deaf, dumb, blind, mute, stupid, and senseless just like their creators.

The LORD should be trusted even though He uses the rod of chastisement on His people.

The Response Desired of God's People

9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.

Since idols have no power, Israel had to learn to trust God for His provision and His protection.

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.

Ministers are not immune from trouble. They too must learn to trust the LORD.

11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.

Likewise, the common man without power to change his circumstances has to learn to fear displeasing the LORD and to trust Him for His provision and protection.

The catastrophe was not terminal. God had plans for the good of the nation.

12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.

The context of the return from Babylon comes into focus here.

The word "bless" is used three times as triple assurance of His intent to do good for His people.

"He will bless us" – Israel's recovery from severe chastisement furnishes a claim with strict proof of claim that the Lord will continue to bless the house of Israel.

The psalmist reasons, if His intent was to destroy us, the Babylonian Captivity was the time to do it. The fact that He delivered us from so great a catastrophe is proof of claim He will not forsake us at this juncture. God is not cruel, nor does He take delight in the suffering of His own and the pain it causes. His chastisements healed us, and now that we are healed, we should expect God to continue blessing us even if that blessing includes more correction.

He Will Bless us

13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.

His blessing is for those who fear the LORD and not for rebels. Though His people are flawed and fractured, His intent is to bless the rich and poor, the great and the small, the weak and the strong who fear God.

God did not bring us this far to forsake us now!

He will . . . He will . . . He will bless them that fear the LORD. "Believest thou this, my soul?" – (John 11:26)

14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.

What a time to give this promise! Who could believe it?

The Babylonian captivity had greatly diminished the Hebrew nation. The promise of "increase" was in accordance with their "cherished wishes" (Barnes).

15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.

Blessing? No exile among the remnant felt blessed! But, God called them to believe it.

This blessing does not come from the idols of the nations nor because of their own skills, but from One, True God Who made heaven and earth.

16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

God controls the heavens and is sovereign over the spirit world, but He has given earth to families to enjoy and use as their home. In a limited sense, man exercises a small measure of sovereignty over the earth and can use it to meet His needs. The land, sea, and water are made subject to man. Earth is the source of man, the home of man, the arena of his concern. *Every man (family) has a God-given right to live somewhere on earth without harassment or paying fees for his shelter.*

"The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

A Lesson from the Catastrophe

17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

The dead cannot praise God or serve Him. God's choir is not improved with less voices to sing his praises. While living, make the most of the opportunity to be a virtuoso in Heaven's chorus of praise.

18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

Having survived the great catastrophe and having been improved by it, the psalmist, on behalf of the nation, commits Israel to the duty of glorifying God.

He has blessed us, and we will bless Him!

While life lasts and until I breathe my last, I will spend my time praising the LORD with the skills and talents He has given me. As a member of the church militant, I will praise the Lord at

the gates of hell; and, when I join the church triumphant I will bellow out my praises to God before the throne of grace.

The great lesson in this psalm is the following: There are troubles that have the potential to destroy our soul and our faith. Therefore, we pray, "Lead me not into temptation." For the man who fears the Lord and seeks to be like Him, God will use difficulties and calamities to improve the man and to make Him better. God wants to bless. He intends to bless. He will bless the man who responds to him with treasures that last into eternity. Therefore, trust Him! Praise Him! Expect Him to bless and not curse.

Blessed be the name of the LORD!

Psalm 116 - A Mighty Deliverance

“What Shall I Render Unto the LORD for All His Benefits?”



This lovely hymn is the product of a thankful heart — a heart once weighed down by a near-death experience. It is the complete story of a saint that experienced a marvelous answer to prayer.

So, important is the message of this true Israelite, he had to write it in a hymn for Israel to learn the message.

Out of the darkness, white lilies grow.

This psalm addresses three living subjects: the people, his own soul, and the LORD.

Address to the People

Psalm 116:1 I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

The psalmist shares the story of his mighty deliverance to the readers.

Use of the pronoun “I” makes this very personal.

The verb “love” lacks an object in Hebrew. The construction reads, “I love” because “the LORD has heard my voice and supplication. The author assumes the world knows the object of his affection.

Knowing that God hears our prayers inspires love for Him.

The psalmist loves the LORD because the LORD humbled Himself to hear his prayer.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

“As long as I live” should be translated “in the day that I call.” Translate the text, “He bends his ear to me in the day that I call.”

The psalmist wants us to know that He loves the Lord because of His grace toward Him.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

Background of his prayer — his battle with death at the gates of sheol (hell) as “the ropes of death having been wrapped” around him. With elbows turned inward, mouth gagged, and feet bound, who would not feel as helpless as a baby bird trapped in a net.

“sorrows” (che’bel) of death = cords, ropes, bands

“pains” (metsar) = straits or distress

“hell” (sheol) = death, grave, the underworld

“trouble” (tsarah) = distress, vexation,

“sorrow” (yagown) = grief, pain, sorrow

The psalmist loves the LORD because He delivered him from the grip of death.

4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

“Then” refers to the composer’s struggle to live in verse 3. With one foot in the grave, his eyes turn upward. Out of His throat came a breathy, base-tone prayer to the LORD for help.

“In the name of the LORD (YHWH) (or hashem)” is in the emphatic position of the sentence. The psalmist wants the readers to know that his prayer was not a “shot in the dark,” but a specific request to and in the name of the LORD.

The psalmist informs us that the Lord heard him, not because of the quality of his prayer or the virtue of his own character, but because God humbles Himself and shows grace to His children.

We come to a throne of grace. Because He sits on a throne, we know He has the authority to answer our prayer. Because it is a throne of grace, we have the assurance the Lord will overlook the weakness of our prayers and the flaws of our character.

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

The psalmist was not impressed with the hammer-pounding power of prayer as much as he was impressed with the tender character of the LORD.

The psalmist discovered the LORD looked upon his death-bed frailty with compassion, and then touched him graciously without compromising His righteousness.

6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

“simple” means uncomplicated, devout, and unsophisticated in the good sense of the word. It does not mean “simpleton,” “twit,” or “dullard.”

“brought low” refers to his near death experience. It was in this state of weakness with dull eyes and his face turning pale-grey when the LORD helped him.

The LORD helped him, not when he was at his strongest . . . at his peak with masculine muscle, but at his weakest when he was looking like a thin grey corpse. The LORD came to his aide not when he was at his best, but when he was at his worst. His strength is made perfect in weakness, declared Paul.

With the cold winter of his life ended, the sunshine of health caused the white lilies to grow.

Address to His Own Soul

7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

The psalmist has a message for his own soul. His battle was over. He must learn the lesson the Lord taught him and to rest in it before he teaches it to others.

Therefore, the scripter orders his battered soul to return to a state of rest.

The term “rest” implies that his soul was not at ease battling extinction — that his soul was disturbed, fearful, stressed, and severely agitated like any of us would be at the exit gate of this life. He had to let go of his combat mode.

“Soul,” says the author, “rest on the pillow of His love for the Lord has tenderly and graciously nursed you back to health. Rest, soul, rest.”

A Christian’s strength is not in his frantic effort to do more, but “in returning and rest.” – Isaiah 30:15

Address to the LORD

8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

After coaching his own soul, the psalmist addressed the LORD affirming that it was “thou” that delivered my soul . . . eyes . . . and feet from the grave. All healing is of God!

9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

Having been so graciously delivered from sickness, the author of this hymn states how he will respond to the LORD’s benefits.

First, he commits himself to walk with God as a little child skipping before Him in the land of the living. Occupied with the wonder of Another, he avoids the spiral into introspection.

10 I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:

Second, he commits himself to speak about the LORD to all that would listen. His witness was not rooted in law, but faith derived from his existential experience where he was “greatly afflicted.” Faith comes from hearing the Word of the Lord (objective faith) and faith comes from personal experiences of seeing the Lord’s faithfulness (subjective faith).

Because he experienced God’s mercy, he believed. Because he believed, he spoke.

If people do not talk about the Lord, do they have faith?

11 I said in my haste, All men are liars.

The psalmist bears his soul. His benedictions to men emerge after the Lord delivered him. While sick, he must have called for the physicians . . . each with a promise of a cure. All failed. Instead of getting better, he got worse. In his rashness while choking on the bitterness of death, he concluded all men are liars.

After his deliverance, he realized his conclusion about men was merely a lightning bolt of anger flashing from dark clouds in his own frustrated soul. Apparently, before he looked to the Lord to help him, he looked to men for aid and became distressed over their impotent promises of help.

12 What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

Apparently, the question is asked at a celebratory meal where family and friends were gathered to happily commemorate his restoration. Picture in your mind's eye the host rising up from the table and lifting up a glass of wine to propose a toast.

13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

Third, he commits to take the cup of salvation. By taking the cup of salvation, the psalmist decrees that he is going to rejoice and fervently invest in the Divine work of saving men. Isn't this what Christians do at the Lord's Supper?

The host says in effect, "I will receive the salvation of the Lord and glory in its benefits. From this day forward I will "lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:22).

14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

Fourth, he commits himself to faithfulness: He continues his profound eulogy, "In times past, I was careless about my devotion to the LORD, but from now on I will diligently keep my vows and fulfill my duty to God in the presence of all His people."

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

Fifth, the psalmist holds up his cup high, and formerly proposes a toast to the dead . . . to those who perished in battle . . . to those who finished their course with honor: The word "precious" means that God has set a high price upon the life and death of His children. And, if an enemy is permitted to take that life, He will pay with his life.

They are precious to us and to the LORD. Amen! See Psalm 74:14.

Both the life and the death of God's saints is precious to Him because whether they live or die, it is unto Him (Romans 14:18). (Benson).

We behold a victory when we see men die in the faith (1 John 5:4).

Men are immortal until their work is done. They cannot die until their work is complete and when the most good can come out of their homecoming. The death of the saints is often a testimony to the power of God, a comfort to those of like faith, a motivation to walk higher and live better by those remaining on this earth. It is a witness that God can sustain a man even when he walks through the valley of the shadow of death.

16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

Sixth, with all eyes on the host, the dramatic pledge continues. Slowly lifting up his cup, with eyes upward, he declares in solemn tones, "I am thy servant."

Likewise, with a cadence of sincerity, he salutes the women at the table and particularly his blessed mother, "thine handmaid." Finally, he looks toward heaven and raises his cup to the LORD who freed him from the bands of death saying,

17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD. 18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people, 19 In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

Seventh, he commits himself to live a life of thankfulness. Because God graciously raised him from his death bed, all service had to be driven by grace . . . and not by the drudgery of duty.

Lifting up the clay cup with eyes sparkling, the psalmist offers another toast — the toast of thanksgiving combined with renewed commitments to faithfully call upon the LORD and to serve Him alongside his covenant people. Moreover, he renews his commitment to frequent the temple and to offer thanksgiving in the “LORD’s house.”

Psalm 117 - The Spirit's Command to the Nations



This is a short psalm that was used to open or close temple services. It is a liturgical exhortation for the nations of the world to join Heaven's choir and to exalt the Lord.

Psalm 117:1 O praise the LORD (YHWH), all ye nations (goy): praise him, all ye people (ommah).

2 For his merciful kindness (hesed) is great toward us (Hebrews/Gentiles): and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

This is the shortest psalm in the royal hymnal.

It has all the feel of a doxology sung at the end of a temple service by Levites with praise on their lips and a sword on their hips:

“Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand” (Psalm 149:6).

The appellation “God” is not mentioned in the psalm — only the sacred name “YHWH” in Hebrew or “LORD” in English. YHWH means “I am that I am.”

The letter aleph (X-meaning sovereignty) is used three times and the letter Hey (H-breath of life) four times; “(X) I am (X) that (X) I am;” and with the hey as “I am (Hey, Yod, Hey) that I am (Hey, Yod, Hey).”

The Spirit's command to the nations is to praise the LORD.

The command is not to praise religion or government. The command excludes secular-pagan gods like Molech, Pan, Ra, Apollo, Jupiter, Aten, Horus, Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, Allah, education, science, beauty, sex, family, or medicine.

All religions are **not** the same, nor are there many roads to heaven. All religions are false except one. Therefore, praise the LORD.

According to the Holy Scriptures, there is only one true God and one true creed. Consequently, the nations are commanded to order their affairs under the authority of the LORD, the sacred name of Elohim (See the Shema: Deuteronomy 6:4).

“Praise” encompasses all the duties of man: to hear, to know, to surrender, to believe, to love, to honor, to esteem, to obey, to follow, to confess, and to bow the knee to the LORD (YHWH) as the true and only God.

Praise is commanded two times in verse one.

The first word for “praise” (hallelujah) is a Piel imperative—a powerful, emphatic command to yield to His authority and to enter into the wonders and mysteries of the majesty of the LORD

— to glorify Him with a clear, loud voice. From this Hebrew word (halal), we get the term, “Hallelujah” which means to clearly “shine” forth the praises of God.

The second word for “praise” (shabach) is also a Piel verb urging vigor and intensity of focused attention. It means “to soothe” and is translated “still” in Psalms:

Psalm 65:7 who stills (shabach) the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples,

Psalm 89:9 You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still (shabach) them.

Matthew 4:39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

Against the cacophony of the clangs and clashes of politics, Habakkuk issued his order:

2:20 But the Lord is in his holy temple (sovereignty): let all the earth keep silence before him (surrender).

Be still all ye politically minded who roar. Be quiet. Shut your mouth. Zip the lip. Open your ears. Listen to the Word of the LORD.

World Peace can only be found when men seek truth and not power; truth and not fiction; knowledge and not propaganda; shalom and not supremacy; the cross and not control. Only when agitated men surrender to the authority of the LORD God, His gospel, and His law-order can there be shalom.

The lyric proclaims one grand truth — that this Creator-God claims jurisdiction over all nations, all peoples, on all the continents; that all the nations of the earth are under obligations to know and to worship the LORD as King of the Nations.

Knowing and loving the LORD is a duty of all men.

“He is not the God of the Hebrew people only, but of all people; his praise should be celebrated not merely by one nation, but by all” (Barnes Notes: Psalm 117:1).

“Who would not fear Thee, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Thy due! For among all the wise men of the nations, And in all their kingdoms, There is none like Thee” (Jeremiah 10:7).

What a magnificent theme! Men and women from every nation, tongue, color, and race under one creed rejoicing in the goodness, kindness, and mercy of the LORD to mankind.

“For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

The same theme is found in Deuteronomy 32 and Romans 15. The design of which is “to show that the Old Testament speaks of the Gentiles as called on to celebrate the praises of God; of

course, the apostle infers that they are to be introduced to the same privileges as his people” (Barnes Notes).

What hope! -- The Gentiles sharing in the commonwealth of Israel and the benefits of the gospel. History is not going in circles. The wicked are not winning. Though sins are being repeated, things are not getting worse. All things are headed toward the kingdom of God and the exaltation of His Messiah Son. There are people in every nation that worship Christ.

“ . . . that in all things he might (hina) have the preeminence (first in time, first in mind)” (Colossians 1:18). (“hina” a purpose clause).

Though we see proud men rising to power on the violent sea of politics that appear for a short time on the crest of a powerful wave and then suddenly disappear below the surf and foam of the angry sea, the final vision of the universe is one where men from every nation and tribe bow to the Lamb to proclaim the wonders of His accomplishments at Calvary.

Our vision for America should not be “one nation under God,” but “one nation under the LORD God.”

One day millions in China, Japan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Sudan, Niger, Chad, and the United States will bow the knee to the Savior and acknowledge the greatness of the Lord (Isaiah 2, 11, 9, 66; Revelation 5).

Psalm 118 - Open the Gates of Righteousness

The Call to a Litany of Thanksgiving



Before us is a call to worship based on the victories of God's people. It is a Messianic psalm liturgized for the Feast of Tabernacles. The Victory began when the Levites demanded the porters to Open the Gates of the Righteous so the prayers of God's people could ascend to the throne.

If you are distressed because of political enemies, this psalm is for you.

Victory's Call to Thanksgiving

Psalm 118:1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever. 2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. 4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever.

The psalm begins and ends with "O give thanks unto the Lord." This is the conclusion of a matter, not the beginning. The Hebrew word for "give thanks" (to'dah) means "to throw up the hands" in worship to express gratefulness, yieldedness, and devotedness. It is an imperative – the reasonable response of those devoted to the LORD.

The reason for this encumbrances is "his mercy endureth for ever" which is liturgically repeated four times for emphasis in verses 1-4, and again in verse 29, making a total of five times in this psalm. The term "mercy" implies the restraint of perfect justice combined with a spirit of kindness for the benefit of the impaired.

So noble is this grand theme of thanksgiving, the psalmist invites Israel, the house of Aaron (the priests), and all who fear the LORD to join him in proclaiming the mercy of the Lord. No doubt each group felt broken and in need of restoration and encouragement.

The Reason for Thanksgiving: Victory

5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place.

The "I" could be an individual in the nation, Israel, or in the ultimate sense the Messiah.

The reason for this five-fold vigorous litany is the psalmist's deliverance from his difficult troubles by the LORD; and, or, the nation's deliverance from international perplexities.

The word "distress" (met'sar) refers "to the straits" or to a "narrow place" crowded by adversities with no means of escape. The phrase "set me in a large place" (bi'mer'hab yah) literally means "set in a large place by Yah" or "answered me with the freedom of Yah" (Ellicott); that is, the LORD gave him "elbow room" (King John).

6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

The greatest state in life is the assurance “the LORD is on my side” — something not all men are able to say or feel.

The result of the psalmist’s rescue was not only a deliverance from pressing troubles, but freedom from fear devouring his happiness. If we are on the Lord’s side, He will be on our side.

7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.

The psalmist had true friends that stood with him during his trials. The Lord used them to help him. He relied on God and the LORD employed his associates to provide comfort and to relieve his stress. Our Master does not draw upon organizations or corporations, he uses people to console and support those suffering under adversity. Consequently, with the eye of faith the writer of this hymn was able to see the downfall and defeat of his enemies — “princes” (v. 8), “man” (v.8), surrounding “nations” and governments (v.10).

The Lesson of Victory

8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

This is the middle verse in the middle of the Bible!

The word “better” (tov) refers to two options. The psalmist had a choice between creating a treaty (alliance) with surrounding nations or going deeper into reliance upon the LORD. He chose a course of trusting Yah.

The word “trust” (la’ha’sot) refers to fidelity to the covenant (Ellicott). Armies, ambassadors, and government representatives always disappoint and seldom provide the relief that men wish for. “That the military is the only way” reeks with false hopes and treachery.

The lesson is clear: stop trusting your government to do something good for you. See Psalm 145 & 146.

The Confidence of Victory

10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. 11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them. 12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

The psalmist now describes his “distress” in verse five. The pronouns “me” and “I” appear to be literary devices performing the function of a personified-allusion humanizing the nation of Israel.

We do not know the circumstances surrounding the composition of this psalm, but we sense the hymn writer is a King or Levitical leader who hears the sounds of armies on the march at the borders of his nation. “they compassed me about” is repeated four times for emphasis.

The image of being surrounded like “bees” around a honeycomb provides an impressive snapshot of this stress — an image used in Deuteronomy 1:44 describing the pursuit of Amorites against Israel like a swarm of bees.

Considering his political distress, his confidence that he will destroy these armies is astounding. The word “destroy” (muwl) is used twice for emphasis. The Hebrew word “muwl” (destroy) is the term for “circumcision.”

The agricultural imagery of being burned “as the fire of thorns” not only describes the character of his enemies, but carbonizes the ruination of these armies in our minds.

His confidence is stunning: “in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.”

“in the name of the LORD” announces his authority.

He uses the phrase “I will destroy them” three times to emphasize the defeat of his adversaries. His desired outcome was not “conversion” but “demolition.” Our God is not only a Savior that improves society by converting men to the gospel, but a God of War (Exodus 15:3) who improves the commonwealth by destroying armies and purging society of evil men.

13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.

The “thou” is a direct address to his enemies as if they were in front of him with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Unless we are prone to degrade this peril, the psalmist reminds the reader of the force and aggression of Israel’s adversaries; they “thrust sore at me that I might fall.” The word “thrust” (dachah) means “to push violently.”

These enemies were massive and terrifying. But, the LORD was more terrifying.

The Theology of Victory

14 The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

Facing overwhelming odds, the psalmist did not rely on his own might and muscle. Rather, He focused on the muscle and sinew of Another.

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

The word “tabernacles” (‘ohel) could literally be referring to the number of tents erected around Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles — like a huge Bible camp movement.

The “voice of rejoicing” could be the happy sounds of families laughing and singing about the Lord as the people gathered around evening campfires during the festival sharing their perspectives on the “right hand of God” working for them following this national crisis.

Luther renders this beautifully; “They sing with joy for victory in the houses of the righteous” (Barnes).

16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

The imagery here is of a mighty warrior with his hand lifted up ready to strike (Ellicott). Since the power of God is superior to all others, his enemies have no chance of victory. Their armies will be crushed and broken.

17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

The composer is confident that he will live and that Israel's enemies will die. In one sense the pronoun "I" refers to Israel or the "new Israel," the church; that is, the church will never be defeated.

Numbers 14:21 But *as truly as I live*, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.

Let us remember, the purpose of deliverances is for the glory of the Lord . . . to give us reasons to boast in Him.

18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

The Lord is not only against sin in the camp of Israel's enemies, the Lord is against sin in the lives of His people. The psalmist reminds us that "judgment must begin at the house of God" and that the LORD had tempered the righteous in the furnace of affliction. This man knew his sins deserved punishment and that it was only because of the LORD's mercies he was not shattered to the bone.

The Faith of Victory

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD:

The "gates of righteousness" is better translated "the gates of the righteous" which refers to the doors of the temple which only Israel was allowed to enter.

"O ye porters, appointed by God for this work, open the gates of the Lord's tabernacle, where the rule of righteousness is kept and taught, and the sacrifices of righteousness are offered:" (Benson)

"Open" is a command. Maybe some of the porters seemed dubious and dilatory. More likely, "open the gates" is used in a metaphorical, spiritual sense. David and others demanded entrance into the courts of the LORD so they could be near God, adore Him, and learn His ways. Likewise, the "kingdom of God comes violently, and the violent take hold of it;" that is, kingdom-seekers pound on heaven's gates until they open for them to enter. They knock and knock until their prayers are answered. Likewise, Christians demand to be in a church with God's people to worship and enjoy the Lord.

20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

All who are truly righteous and wish to be holy have a right to enter the house of God and to join the devotions of his people.

God's people prefer the company of sheep rather than goats; of saints than sinners; of a house of worship than a palace of pleasure.

21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

I will praise You because You have allowed me access to your courts and received my petitions. Now it is time to throw up my hands in thanksgiving because your “mercy endures forever” — even unto me. You and You alone are the reason for my prosperity.

22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.

“The stone” should be translated “a stone.” The “stone” is Israel — a small nation rejected by others in the Levant as an insignificant force in the Middle East and a nation of no political value.

Prophetically, what is true of Israel is also true of Christ. He is the ultimate Stone which the builders rejected (Matthew 21:42-44; Acts 4:11; 1Peter 2:7; Ephesians 2:20).

The theory behind this perspective is that when Solomon built the temple, the stone carriers arrived at the temple site with a “weird” shaped stone. Not knowing what to with it, the builders simply pushed it down the hill only to realize later that the rejected stone was actually the corner stone of the foundation on which the temple had to be constructed.

That Jesus is the Cornerstone and that the Jews rejected Him is a fact of history. Now, He is the foundation stone of the church, the new Israel of God.

23 This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

In a primary sense, this change of destiny for Israel which made her of strategic political importance in the Middle East is to be ascribed to none but Yah Himself.

Since this nation gave birth to the Messiah, the Savior of the World, this ancient nation is the bridgehead of salvation for all men. Who could conceive in the first century that the crucified Christ would become the cornerstone of Western Civilization?

24 This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

The day of victory for ancient Israel is from God. The Lord made it; Israel rejoiced in it.

Prophetically, “the day which the LORD hath made” is Calvary; and, we rejoice in our Lord’s accomplishments at the cross and His subsequent triumph over death. Our ultimate enemy is death, and the Savior defeated this opponent in and through his resurrection. Therefore, we will rejoice and be glad for the cross as this is the day of salvation!

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido.

The Benediction of the Victorious

25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

“now” is not in the text. It is not an adverb of time (Ellicott): “Save, we pray (anna).”

The Hebrew imperative “save” (yasha) is translated “Hosanna” in the New Testament (Matthew 21:9). The crowds employed this word as our Lord went to the cross.

The word “prosperity” (tsalack) means “rush” your blessings to us; that is, you have saved us. Now continue to pour out your goodness to us.

The “we” are the priests in the House of the Lord. “The one coming in the name of the LORD” appears to be worshippers presenting offerings to the priests;” that is, the priests blessed the worshippers.

Those coming in the name of the Lord were not always welcome in Israel, but here we see receptive hearts eager to receive the Word of God. Ultimately, “he who comes in the name of the LORD” is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

Historically, this psalm was sung on the last day of the Feast of Sukkot (tabernacles). “Hoshana Rabba” (a request for great salvation) is on the seventh-eighth day, the last of the seven days of Sukkot. At this time the Jews performed the sacred water drawing ceremony by going in parade like fashion to the Pool of Siloam to fetch a golden pitcher of water and then returning to the temple. This was called the “Simchat Beit Hashoavah.” Another group led by priests went to collect palm branches. At this time the people entered the “water gate” and heard the blast of the shofar. The priest would pour water and wine upon the altar as a symbol of thanksgiving to God for sending rain for the harvest, and as a prayer that the LORD would send the early and latter rains for next season.

At the same time, the people would wave palm branches and chant, “O LORD, save us now.”

Remarkably, the people in Jesus’s day did not know that their Savior-LORD-Messiah was in their midst in the person and presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 7:37 In the last day (the day of the water festival), that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

27 God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.

If this song was created for the Feast of the Tabernacles, the “light” could refer to literal light of the pillar of cloud and fire present during Israel’s pilgrimage in the wilderness. On the other hand, it could be figurative referring to “light” as a the revelation of God at Sinai. Ultimately, Jesus is “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.

29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Apparently, the psalmist called worshippers to join his declaration and to confess as a nation, “Thou are my God . . .” Thus, the psalm ends as it began — thanksgiving to the Aleph and Tav, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End of all our blessings – for His mercy endures for ever.

“the LORD is good” during good times and bad times. He is always good. He injures no man. He is good in sending rain for crops; and, He is good for sending us the Savior Who is the Water of Life and the Light of the World.

Note: See the historical traditions and the use of the psalm during the Feast of Tabernacles as explained by Israel My Glory – “priests holding willow branches marched once around the Great Altar, reciting for all to hear, “Save now (hoshanah), I beseech thee, O LORD! O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity!” (Psalm 118:25).

Psalm 119 - The Power of the Word of God



This is an alphabetical psalm written by David. These verses are designated in our common version by the names of the Hebrew letters – Aleph, Beth, Gimel, Daleth, etc.

As king, David was required to write his own copy of the Torah, and this psalm reflects his meditations on it.

David is the ideal king who loved and honored God’s law. There has been none like him since. Oh, that modern men had a king David.

The word “law” is used 25 times in Psalm 119.; and, it is the major theme of the Tanakh.

David Guzik correctly observes eight basic words used to describe the Word of God.

Law (torah, used 25 times in Psalm 119): gods are the source of law. In this case law is a product of the LORD’s sovereignty and love (Exodus 19). Law is absolute, but it is also limited. Law forbids men from acting in a certain way. Where there is no law prohibiting an action, there is freedom. Thus, the law is called the “perfect law of liberty.” Law means “law:” i.e. mandatory rules for life, the common law, do your neighbor no harm. Thus, you are free to do about anything that doesn’t harm your fellow man. When it comes to God’s law, men are without excuse. All must know it and all have a duty to it.

Word (dabar, used 24 times): The idea is of the spoken word, God’s revealed word to man. “Proceeding from his mouth and revealed by him to us...” (Matthew Poole)

Judgments (mispatim, used 23 times): “...from shaphat, to judge, determine, regulate, order, and discern, because they judge” right and wrong regarding our words and works; “show the rules by which they should be regulated; and cause us to discern what is right and wrong, and decide accordingly.” (Adam Clarke)

Testimonies (edut/edot, used 23 times): This word is related to the word for witness. The law is a witness to the character of God. When we obey, we become God like; that is, we grow in His character.

Commandments (miswah/miswot) is used 22 times in this psalm. The law makes demands upon our life and defines our duty to God and men.

Statutes (huqqim, used 21 times): The noun is derived from the root verb “engrave” or “inscribe”. All law is written or it is not law. The idea is the permanent authority of His written law: “...declaring his authority and power of giving us laws.” (Matthew Poole)

Precepts (piqqudim, used 21 times): precepts refer to general principle of moral or ceremonial law. The law provides men with principles and maxims of law that guide decision making; that is, the law is a shepherd of the soul.

Word (imrah, used 19 times): Imrah is similar in meaning to dabar, yet a different term. “The ‘word’ may denote anything God has spoken, commanded, or promised.” (Willem VanGemeren) (Blue Letter Bible).

This psalm reflects much on the benefits of clinging to God's Word, but it is also about the grief the enemies of God's law caused David. Keeping the law of liberty leads to freedom, but no man is totally free until his friends and associates keep His commandments. God's Word is good, but the more you obey it, the more enemies you will have. Furthermore, the law is good, but as Paul noted, it does not supply the power to keep. Nine times David prays that God would "quicken" him and supply the power to live in conformity to His statutes.

Moreover this psalm is about the value of God's Law-order and not the gospel. It would be an error to turn every verse into blanket statement about the value of the Holy Scriptures; that is, Christians would do well not to pit law against grace; and, not to abrogate the law. When David mentions terms like “statutes” and “testimonies,” he's referring the Ten Commandments given at Mt. Sinai and relevant case law.

The gospel saves us from the penalty and power of sin; but, it also empowers us to keep the law. There is all the difference in the world between being saved by law and being saved in order to keep the law (Romans 8:4). The former is false; the latter is true.

What the Word of God Can Do For You

Aleph: Blessing for those who walk in His Law

Psalm 119:1 ALEPH. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

Defilement is spiritual dirt on the man. Spiritual defilement is all around us — above us and below us. We are defiled by our sins and other men's sins. But, those who walk according to His law are uncontaminated.

2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

“testimonies” refer to the Ten Commandments where each law reflects the character of God. Those who obey His law become like the LORD in His character.

3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

A man who has bound himself to God's law is not sinless, but he does sin less; that is, they are righteous in character and they do what is right. The psalmist is not talking about the advantages of religion, but the advantage of being wholehearted in pursuing the will of God.

4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

People that know God, listen to Him. Obedience is the natural result of walking with God. Men obey because His commands are of the highest authority . . . given out of love for the good of mankind: “I am the LORD thy God (authority), which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage (love)” (Exodus 20:1)

5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

Our ways are crooked. Thus, Christian men seek the strength of the Holy Spirit to order their ways.

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

Sin shames every man. But, those who do what is right avoid the embarrassment that sin brings.

7 I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

Learning God's Word produces practical righteousness in man's heart and energizes praise — the desire to live and speak well of the Lord.

8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

This text reflects the firm purpose of the psalmist. "I will keep thy statutes by the strength you give. In my weakness and failures, do not forsake me.

Beth: Purity for those who obey God's law

9 BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.

The world in which we live is full of moral dirt, filth, and garbage. Follow His Word and a man can avoid the contamination of the world.

10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

A whole hearted man is a strong man, but he needs something more. Knowledge of His law is good, but knowledge in and of itself is not power! He needs the power of God. What God commands, He enables. Seek Him for the power to do what you know you ought to do.

11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

Treasuring His Word in the inner man is the antidote to sin. Knowledge of what is right must be in place before a man can do what is right.

12 Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

The revelation of God's law merits praise. Because you are good and your law is good, teach me your statutes.

13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

Read the Word; know the Word; meditate on His Word; speak the Word; Rejoice in the Word. Delight in His Word.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

There is joy in studying His testimonies; find it, know it, delight in it. As people rejoice when they find great wealth, this man found great joy in the treasures of God's Word.

15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

Growth happens when men read, think, and meditate on God's Word. The psalmist is not digging into his own soul, but searching the meaning and implications of God's law . . . His ways . . . His rules for living life.

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

David's delight was not in the knowledge of self, but in the knowledge of His law . . . His Word. He was not a spiritual man in touch with self, but a spiritual man because he was in touch with God's law-order.

Gimel: Counsel for those who seek light

17 GIMEL. Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

What God demands; God enables. The law is good, but a man needs the power of God to keep it.

18 Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

Many eyes are closed and blinded to the wonders of His Word. Men are easily distracted by the tensile and glitter of the world. Pray for eyes to see and ears to hear precious things out of God's law

19 I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

It isn't long into the Christian life when a man begins to realize that he is a foreigner . . . an alien on earth . . . that this world is not his home . . . that he is "just a passin' thru." Life is short and therefore the psalmist prays he might find God's gold mine . . . His commandments.

20 My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

This is the key mark of a man of God — a deep spiritual longing to know His Word. A man of God may not be good looking, smart, educated, or rich . . . but, He longs for insights into God and His Law-word. If God finds a man, and a man finds His Word, he is rich beyond measure.

21 Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

The opposite of God's man is a proud man . . . a self-sufficient, self-directed, self-absorbed man — a man on the "broad way" — a man under the curse. A man who strays from God' Word is in danger. Beware of dusty Bibles.

22 Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

The world is duplicitous and Christians are often fickle. A man of God will be misunderstood, hated, despised, and rejected by men of the world. But, he has the right and duty to pray that shame and contempt will be removed from him because He follows God's law-order.

23 Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

"Princes" refer to government officials. No man of God expects the approval of government nor will he experience official approval for his way of life. Government officials want citizens to obey and honor them, but the man of God seeks the approval of Another! Thus, the government

sanctions men of God who show contempt for flawed power, flawed statutes, and presumptuous statutes of “lawmakers.” If a man is **not** experiencing “flak” from one of the government’s three letter agencies, he is **not** following God’s law. A man in “good standing” with a rebel government is not following Christ as Lord. No man can serve two masters: God and government.

24 Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.

Life is messy! A man needs wise counselors to avoid all the traps and snares of life. But, the man who is counseled by God’s law will be protected and find joy in His testimonies.

Daleth: A prayer for Divine life

Daleth: 25 DALETH. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that all things tend to lose energy . . . to descend to a state of rest. This is also true spiritually. The life of men cling to the dust. Thus, the psalmist prays, “Lord revive me . . . quicken thou me with the power of your Word.”

26 I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

This is a confession: “My ways are not Your Ways! Therefore, teach me Your statutes.”

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord.
“For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 57:8-9).

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

The “natural man” does not understand, submit, or perceive the “way of thy precepts.” Therefore, a man needs to pray this prayer again and again and again.

28 My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

There is much grief in this world; that is, it easy to become burdened down by the madness in today’s political climate. Therefore, the man of God prays, “strengthen thou me . . .” And, strength comes to the man who opens the Book.

29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

We live in a world of lies: friends lie, teachers lie, the media lies, government lies. Therefore, we pray, “Lord, keep me from lying lips” and give me your law which is pure truth.

30 I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

Truth is like “hot coals” which is often “too hot” to handle. Want truth? Pray for the ability to receive it and act on it: spiritual truth, theological truth, historical truth, scientific truth, and political truth.

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.

“stuck” means “to cling.” Clinging to the law of God is not easy in a world that demands attention, devotion, and loyalty to everything else but God’s Word.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

Running the course of obedience to God’s commandments is possible for the man whose heart has been enlarged by the Spirit of God.

Hey: A prayer for guidance and understanding

33 HE. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.

Obedying the Lord does not come natural. A man must be taught. Learning with the intent to obey is a gift of God – a rarity on this planet.

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.

“Incline” means “to expand, stretch, or to extend.”

37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

The real test of godliness is not to turn down the worst the world has to offer, but to turn down the best the world has to offer.

38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

“Stablish” means “to rise up and to come on the scene.”

39 Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

We all want to please men and we fear being rejected. Choices to serve God result in contempt by men. Therefore, the psalmist prays that God would remove the negative effects of men’s criticism against him.

“Thy judgments are good”; that is, God’s law is good, always good, and perpetually relevant for every generation.

40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

The psalmist had momentum in seeking the Lord’s precepts, yet he prays for more life, more energy, and more power to walk on the path of righteousness . . . the lonely path and the one less traveled. Thus, every generation has its definition of good, of “cool,” of “woke.” But, the man of God builds his house on the rock and not upon sand and the latest fad.

Vav: A commitment to be guided by God’s Commandments.

41 VAU. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word.

The law not only tells us what is right, it shows sinners the way of salvation; the way of being saved from the penalty and power of sin.

42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

All men sin . . . even “good” men. All are subject to criticism, censorship, and contumely. But, God’s Word has the answers for a man’s critics . . . a message of hope and light about salvation in Christ.

43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

You have heard the saying, “Use it or lose it.” David’s greatest fear is that his failure might cause God to take His Word from him. During this time of trouble, David prays that he might not be left hopeless . . . without promises . . . without forgiveness . . . without power.

44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

David offers his wish . . . his commitment to keep God’s law today and tomorrow, in the sunshine and in the darkness, during good times and bad times . . . for ever and ever.

45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

Though committed to law, David did not feel like he was in debtor’s prison. He loved the law because it freed him the religious bondage of the heathen. The law is limited. Where something is not forbidden, man is free to pursue healthy wants and wishes. The law can be distilled into two principles, (A) love God, and (B) love your neighbor as yourself. What could be more simple and freeing than God’s law? It is, after all, the “perfect law of liberty.”

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

Unashamed of God’s law (or God’s gospel), David raised the topic of God’s law and quoted texts to kings, governors, and high officials.

47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

David delighted in God’s law. Be careful for what you hunger, for you will become the sum total of your desires.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

“hands lifted up” refer to taking an oath. He made a promise to God to keep His law with the power He supplied.

Zayin: The Word comforts

49 ZAIN. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

David was deeply committed to God’s Word, and he prays that God would remember that commitment and bless him accordingly.

50 This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

The psalmist discovered that regular review of God Word provided new energy, vigor, health, and sparkle for the soul. Likewise, all who regularly read God's Word can expect revival in the soul.

51 The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.

The word "derision" means "scorn." Though the psalmist felt pressure, rejection, and ridicule from proud friends and fellow statesmen, he did not back off, back down, or release his grip on God's Law-word. He followed the rule of law and not the political will of his day.

52 I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

God's law governed the state of Israel. The psalmist experienced great opposition to his strict adherence to the rule of law, but he learned that remembering, quoting, and reciting God's law-decisions provided comfort for the soul and strength to resist the political pressures of his day.

53 Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

No man is safe when the wicked in positions of power abandon God's law-order. Those that promote party politics and man-made regulation burden and indenture the soul. All ought to be horrified that modern governments seek to enslave and trap all citizens by their ultra vires regulations at federal, state, and local levels. If a man is not burdened by the madness of modern politicians and their new world order policies, something is wrong with him. Good men are naturally troubled by the insane propositions of men and women in positions of power.

54 Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

God's statutes are good for the psalmist, for all men, and for all of man's institutions. Thus, His limited but righteous statutes became his anthem to sing. Man-made statutes burden the soul and fetter the man. The "law of liberty" sets men free.

55 I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

Good theology inspires men to think and to keep the law. Bad theology leads to antinomianism and permissiveness.

56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

The blessings of the covenant of grace are felt by every man of God.

Chet: The sanity of obeying God's Word.

57 CHETH. Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

Men want land, riches, and fame, but the psalmist saw the LORD as his greatest asset. Likewise, He is the portion of all the poor who keep his Word.

58 I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

There is nothing half-hearted about the psalmist. He was fully invested in the Lord and His Law-word.

59 I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

“thought” involved a measure of personal introspection.

“ways” is a metonym for personal habits. David measured himself not by the opinions of men but by the measuring stick of God’s law.

The psalmist did not always seek God’s law. There was a time when he had to make the “big decision” about what principles would rule his life. He chose the Ten Commandments and relevant case law.

60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

“haste” is not a good thing, but hurrying to keep His law is good . . . even the best of things.

61 The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.

The word “robbed” means “to be surrounded,” “to go around and around.” Though surrounded by the haughty opinions of wayward men, David weighed every decision in light of God’s law.

The psalmist discovered his cabinet was made up of wicked men -- that the wicked were in the streets, in the market place, and in the temple. Though he was surrounded by proud, lawless men, he did not lessen his grip on his duty to law. The cold heart of his peers did not dampen his fire for the Lord. Simply put, David was not governed by opinion polls, but by the Word of God.

62 At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.

Religion is either a dull habit or an acute fever. In David’s case, the fires burned.

63 I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

You can know a man by the friends he keeps. Though he lived in a chilly environment, David made friends with other God-fearing men . . . men with a conscience toward law. Too many of God’s people make friends with cold hearts and dull minds.

64 The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

As David looked at the “natural” created order, he did not conclude like so many that God was cruel and had abandoned his creation to evil forces. Rather, he looked for evidence of God’s goodness, and he found the mercies of God everywhere. His study of creation and the natural order of things motivated him to study God’s moral order for the universe.

Tet: The Word of God corrects the errant man

65 TETH. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

David found God’s promises to be true and the LORD faithful to His covenant.

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

In faith, David embraced God's law-order and correctly presumed that God would be his teacher.

67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Growing up, David fell into many vices available to youth. Finding himself on the wrong path, affliction motivated him to pursue God. Troubles have a way of driving a man to chase after the Word of God. Blessings followed his youthful obedience.

68 Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

David found that God was good and always good. Therefore, he became a student of God's law.

69 The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.

Obedience to God's law did not eliminate criticism. Constantly throughout this psalm, the Spirit exposes the true character of the world -- a world of liars, critics, and complainers. Opposition to God's law-order did not undermine his own commitment to obey His precepts.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.

"fat as grease" refers to the cluttered, obese obsessions of the wicked — fetishes opposed to the law of the LORD God.

71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

Affliction is good if it drives us to His Word . . . to learn . . . and acquire His law. It is spiritual progress when a man can say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." In the time of trouble, very few men can see the good that distress brings to them. Only the discerning, after an event, can see the good that troubles brings – "All things are working together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28).

72 The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

Men love gold, silver, land, and houses. But, the man of God considers knowledge of His Word more valuable than precious metals. It costs some men everything to learn God's Word. These paupers own nothing of value, but they have a treasure chest that few can appreciate. Possessing the treasures of God's Word does not equate to popularity. It is in the nature of men to seek companionship of the wealthy and not to make friends with men rich in God's Word.

Yod: Obedience to the Word creates gladness of heart

73 JOD. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

God made man to know Him . . . His Word . . . His law. "You have made us for yourself O Lord & our heart is restless until it rests in you" – (Augustine).

74 They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

David was not only blessed by God's Word, he was a blessing to all who feared God. A bright, optimistic man whose hope is in the Lord is as rare as a polar bear in Arizona.

75 I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

David grew to understand that God's law was right and that he was better for studying His judicial decisions. Moreover, his attitude toward trials and troubles changed. He learned over time that God appointed his afflictions in order to make him a better man.

Notice the progression of spiritual insight: "Before I was afflicted I went astray" (67); "it is good for me that I have been afflicted" (72); and, "Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me" (75).

76 Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

God is just and He is merciful. But, it was the mercy of God that nourished his soul.

Cruci dum spiro fido.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

The law told David what was right and that he was wrong. As he went through life, he learned that the God who afflicted him was also the One who comforted him; that God provided-mercies inspired him to go deeper into the law of God. The law is good, but His mercies are higher than the heavens.

78 Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.

David wished that the proud, arrogant men around him might be ashamed of their blasphemies and repent . . . but, their response to revelation did not cool the flames burning in the furnace of his heart to know God's law. Their neglect of God's law did not cool David's red-hot desire to obey the Lord.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

Notice the link between knowing God's law and men turning to God.

80 Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

David feared shame and disappointment; therefore, he prays that God would give him a "sound" heart; i.e. a whole heart for His law. David understood that a double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Duplicity is the death of everyman.

Kaf: The Word keeps a man out of the pits of the wicked.

81 CAPH. My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.

God's Word invigorates the man, but David found himself afflicted by an unquenchable desire to know God and to experience His salvation . . . from the proud . . . from sin . . . f

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

“eyes fail” is a metaphor for exhaustion. Harassment by the wicked and inability to heal his own soul exhausted David. Therefore, he prayed for comfort . . . for relief . . . for a restoration to balance.

83 For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

David compares his affliction from the wicked as a “bottle in the smoke.” The illusion refers to wineskin hung over a fire to harden and shrivel. The fire of resistance was fierce, but so were the flames of desire to know God.

84 How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

Like so many psalms that express David’s weariness of waiting on God to execute justice on his persecutors, he raises the question, “How long, O Lord?”

85 The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.

The term proud does not refer to men in the market place as much as it does to David’s own cabinet members and political associates. Everywhere David turned, they were there planning his political ruin.

86 All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.

David was not persecute because he did something wrong, but because he did something right. Oppression erupted when David refused to bend to the lawless ambitions of his contemporaries. David found God’s law to be faithful and his associates unreliable.

87 They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

The adjective "almost" implies that David was at a breaking point. That David did not bend expresses his character and reliability.

88 Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

Political troubles drain a man. David had to pray for new strength, revival, and renewal in His soul. To David a fresh supply of power meant strict allegiance to God’s law.

Lamed: The Word is faithful to support the man in his cause

89 LAMED. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

God is eternal. He abides in heaven. His Word has its source in heaven. Therefore, His law-word is eternal.

90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

Because God is faithful and eternal, every generation can enjoy His mercies, His faithfulness, and His promises. The analogy to the surety of

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.

“They” refers to God’s creation, things in heaven and things on earth. All serve His purpose.

92 Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

“Unless” refers to circumstances that could have ruined David. Because he delighted in God’s law, those desires prevented evils from coming his way.

93 I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

Because God’s Word revived David’s soul, he determined never to forget His precepts.

94 I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

Seeking God’s Word serves as a foundation-claim for answered prayer.

95 The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.

Again and again, David faced a choice of bowing to the pressures of his critics or following God’s Law-word. He chose God’s Word.

96 I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

This is a difficult verse to translate. It seems to mean there is a limit to human goodness, but there is no limited to the goodness of His Word.

Mem: The Word makes a man wiser than his contemporaries.

97 MEM. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

Blesses are all souls that can say this in truth! To love God is to love His Word; to love His Word is to love God. How do you know if a man loves God? He is a man of the Word.

98 Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

As a man begins his journey on this earth, he feels like he is surrounded by smarter, shrewder, craftier men than he. God’ Word deals with real life, real men, and real problems. As the Bible lover studied His commandments, he discovered in time that God made him wiser than his contemporaries.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

Teachers are good, but being a student of God’s Word is better. Study His law, and you’ll find yourself wiser than college professors, congressmen, and BAR attorneys. Understanding, yes; popularity, no.

100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

Studying God’s Word gives a man perspective. As one stands under the authority of the Holy Scriptures, he discovers that he has more wisdom than Persian magi on many subjects.

101 I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

“refrained” is a term for self-restraint and self-control. The blessed man is a separated man free of duplicity. In order to keep from stumbling on the road to the Celestial City, one must clear

his path of stumbling stones; that is, the Christian life is one of constant pruning, cleansing, and maintenance of the soul.

102 I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Apostasy involves a serious departure from God's Law-word. The man of God departs from sin, but he does not depart from the Bible. He may be accused of neglecting the pursuit of wealth, but he cannot be accused of having a weak grip on the plow of doing his Father's business. Taught by the Spirit, he leans toward faithfulness, not frivolousness; commitment, not merriment; duty, not mutiny.

103 How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Earlier the psalmist refers to the Word of God as more valuable than gold. Here he compares it to the sweets of life — of delights sweeter than honey.

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

It is impossible to be a good man without hating evil . . . and evil men. His love for the Bible caused him to hate immorality, duplicity, and every deceptive practice.

Nun: The Word guides the man

105 NUN. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

The psalmist compares God's Word to a Bronze Age, handheld pottery lamp where there is enough light to see a few steps ahead.

106 I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

As a king charged with enforcing the rule of law, David bound himself by oath to do God's will and to obey His law.

In the West, when a politician is elected to office, he must file an oath and post bond before he takes office. In exchange for an oath, citizens bestow public trust. Without an oath or bond, the "official" is merely de facto ("in fact, without right to hold office").

107 I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

Loving God's Word and affliction from the wicked are two realities that accompany the man throughout life. Conflict tires the soul and David prayed for revival . . . for a quickening in the inner man (John 7:7; 15:18).

108 Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

What a dark world this would be without the praise of Christian men. The wicked pout and curse, but the righteous praise and boast in the LORD.

109 My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

David saw his soul as a fragile, tender treasure carried in his hand that could easily fall out of his palm to his own ruin. Remembering God's law provided a shield of protection over his precious soul.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

The sounds of con artists, fraudsters, and tricksters are all around us. David recognized this earlier than most and determined not to be trapped by their ballyhoo.

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

David compares his knowledge of the Torah to possessing a treasure . . . his heritage . . . a prize passed on to hungry souls in our time.

“This is all the Inheritance I can give to my dear family, The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed” (Will of Patrick Henry).

112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end.

The word “inclined” means “to stretch out”; that is, David strained every spiritual muscle to obey the lofty commands of the LORD God.

Samekh: God shields and protects the man that obeys His Word

113 SAMECH. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

A man who loves God's Law-word will end up hating vanity, frivolousness, pomposity, and pretense. Hate is an attribute of God, and the man who pursues the Lord seeks to hate what God hates and love what God loves. Hating lies and liars is not a vice, but a virtue.

114 Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

The war against wickedness at the gates of hell is real and David found shelter in the fox hole of God's Word. A man needs a place to hide from evil, and David found the Lord to be his place of rest and protection.

115 Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

The man of God learns to say, “Yes” to His Word, and “No!” to contracts offered by the wicked (street criminals and government officials, but why be redundant?).

116 Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

The God Who promises is also the One Who preserves. The One Who adjures is the One Who empowers; what He demands, He sustains, What He orders, He enforces.

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

David felt oppressed for doing what was right. But oppression did not conquer his quest to obey God's law-order.

“Hold me up”; that is, keep me from falling, straying, or departing from Your law.

“Be safe” has been coined as a good will gesture by the “snowflake” generation. But, the saints have found the Lord to be a safe place for millenniums.

118 Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.

If preservation is the destiny of the righteous, then destruction is the destiny of those who stray from God’s law.

119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

While vice and fraud may help a man achieve prosperity, deceivers are also marked for adversity. We claim His Word because it proclaims our salvation, but we also love it because it proclaims the ruination of the wicked.

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

God’s Word produces love in our hearts for Him, but it also produces fear about what might happen if we disobey Him.

Ayin: A prayer for protection

121 AIN. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

Because David did not enact personal revenge on His enemies, he made judicial decisions based on God’s law. One half of the litigants in a court case are unhappy with the judge’s decision. In response to his decisions, criminals hated him. Therefore, he pleads that God would not allow malcontents to injure him.

122 Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

Surety defined: “a person who takes responsibility for another's performance of an undertaking, for example their appearing in court or the payment of a debt.”

David needed assurance that God would provide for Him and to protect Him. Therefore, he prays that God would be his bond . . . his surety . . . his guarantee for good.

123 Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

“mine eyes fail” is a metaphor for exhaustion or weariness because of God’s slowness to deliver him from the peril created by his enemies — for his interest in eternal salvation and devotion to God’s law-order.

124 Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

Being a sinner, David did not cry out for justice . . . but for mercy . . . for displays of forgiveness and favor. Though flawed, he longed for instruction from the law . . . grace to keep it . . . and mercy where he failed to uphold the law.

125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

In light of God's deliverance from peril and in light of his generous mercies, David committed himself to be a servant of God. He recognized that servants have a duty to their master and therefore petitioned his Lord to teach him the rules of His household.

126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.

The arrogance and apostasy of national judges made David more determined than ever to pray and to uphold God's law. Nullification of man's law is a good thing; nullification of God's law is a national crisis that calls for Divine intervention.

Of particular concern to the poet is the dormancy of the LORD. Surely, during periods of deep apostasy, God must wake up from His slumber and go to work to restore the faith. "If the foundation be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?"

"'It is time for thee, Lord, to work'; or, 'to act;' i.e. to lay aside quiescence, and come forward as the active Ruler of the universe. For they have made void thy Law" (Pulpit Commentary).

In this time of apostasy, the psalmist committed himself more thoroughly to a life of obedience.

"the poet hopes that God will surely not (לֹא) leave him to the arbitrary disposal of his oppressors" (Keil & Delitzsch).

127 Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

The more people broke God's statutes and attempted to abrogate it, the more David saw the value of God's law . . . "above refined gold." In studying the Torah, David became a gold digger . . . a miner in caverns of darkness . . . the richest man of his time.

128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

The more the elite broke the law, the more David esteemed the law; the more he saw the negative effects of setting aside God's law in favor of man's opinion, the more David hated man's pride and deception.

Pey: The Word gives understanding to the simple

129 PE. Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

As David reflected on the law, he became convinced of the accuracy of God's laws, the simplicity of them, the wisdom of them, the mysteries of them, the need of them, and the good they do for all of society. David discovered that God's law was not only good for society, but good for him . . . and for all men.

130 The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

In a world of moral shadows, David discovered that God's law was a candle in the darkness. They were not complicated or sophisticated. They were so easy to understand, and the simple received light from the law's instruction.

131 I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

“panted” expresses the desires of the heart. Some men huff and puff after wealth, David panted after God. A healthy man is driven by winds in the sail to know God and His Law-word.

132 Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

David admired the ancients and prayed that as God attended their wants and desires, that He would answer his prayers.

133 Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

David felt the tug of war between sin and righteousness, the push and pull of both in his life.

He prayed for God to direct his steps on the path of obedience; that the Lord would intervene and not permit David’s own sin to dominate him, rule him, or control him — a good prayer for all men.

134 Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

David not only needed to be delivered from his own sin, but from the sins and oppression of other men . . . from their duplicity and lust for power over men in search of God.

135 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

“face to shine” is a figure of speech referring to divine favor. Show thyself; manifest yourself; show me signs of your love. Teach me! Guide me! Direct me!

136 Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

David not only loves the law and admires those who keep it, he grieved over the rebellion and lawlessness of other men. True men are grieved over the apostasy of their age.

Tzadi: The Word of God is the standard of righteousness.

137 TZADDI. Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.

The law reflects the character of God. God is righteous; therefore, the law which reflects His righteousness, is also righteous. Because He is eternal, His law is eternal. God does no wrong. Therefore, His law wrongs no man.

138 Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.

The tablets of stone are witness to the character of God. Therefore, the law is right . . . and the very definition of righteousness. The two tablets are an objective witness to the character of God; and, Christ, the Living Torah, is the subjective witness to the character of the Father. But, His Word is not only righteous, it is faithful, dependable, and reliable as a guide through life.

139 My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

In the darkness of his age, David burned a torch so the nation could see God’s law. “zeal” is a praiseworthy passion to preserve something precious. David burned with passion to uphold God’s law as the national treasure during a time of apostasy.

140 Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

People love pure things; pure grape juice, pure silver, pure water, pure gold, pure wool, etc. In this case, David loved the purity of the law. It was uncontaminated by sophisticated, duplicitous men.

141 I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.

David may be using the literary “I” to speak for the whole nation. “small” may mean few in number, humble in status, young in age, or low in rank. The one who knows God’s law can stand with giants.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Because God is everlasting, He is absolute, immutable, and unchanging. Men change, but God doesn’t. Because His law reflects His everlasting righteousness, His law is absolute . . . binding on all men for all of time. By “truth” David means that God’s Word conforms to reality. It does not apply to Fantasy Island in Never, Never Land. It applies to real, flawed, mortal men with all their hopes and dreams in a real, fallen world.

143 Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.

Trouble and anguish pursue everyman. Notwithstanding, David found joy and comfort in God’s Word.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

Since God is eternal, the law which reflects the sunshine of His character is also eternal, permanent, and absolute. The New Testament gospel is built on the foundation of God’s law and does not nullify God’s law. The opposite of law is not grace but lawlessness; and the opposite of grace is not law but lasciviousness, permissiveness, and indulgence.

Kuf: The Word of God is truth

145 KOPH. I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

Here is a whole man, an undivided man, a healthy man praying that God would deliver him so he could keep God’s law and the religious ceremonial aspects of the codes established by the Lord for the good of the nation.

146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

Troubles abounded in David’s life and these difficulties diverted his devotion to the Lord and His testimonies. In order to be wholehearted and single focused, David prayed for deliverance from his political struggles.

147 I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

“prevented the dawning” means David was up before daylight praying and seeking guidance for the day by reading His Word — a good habit for all men.

148 Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

“watches” appear to be the natural divisions of the night in which soldiers are well acquainted. David awoke during these hours to pray and nourish His devotion to the Lord.

149 Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

It is the nature of God to care for His creatures. But, David does not presume on the grace of God. Rather, he prays that the LORD would be pleased to hear his prayer . . . and that He would revive him and empower him.

The source of this power is related to the judicial acts of God.

150 They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

David describes his foes as near . . . in pursuit of wicked schemes . . . plotting his ruin. They pursue naughtiness because they camp far from the law near the Poisonous Tree.

151 Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

As David read the commandments of God, he felt the presence of God. In 2 Samuel 23:2 David could say, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue.” To draw near to His Word is to draw near to God; and, to draw near God, one must read, study, memorize, and meditate on His Word.

152 Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

Every command is a testimony regarding the character of God. The law defines what is right; and, because they are a reflection of His character, they are forever the standard of right and wrong . . . of good and evil . . . of beauty and majesty.

Resh: A prayer for quickening

153 RESH. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

Knowing God’s law is not the grounds of answered prayer, but it does provide the pious with a basis upon which to plead the promises.

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

David was a public person with many enemies. He feels that his prayers are weak and therefore asks God to be his Advocate and his Revivalist (1 John 2:1-2). Though David was the most powerful man in the nation, he leaned on the everlasting arms.

155 Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

This blunt text is set in contrast with the previous verse. Because David sought the Lord, salvation was near; because the wicked abandoned his law, they had no hope of success . . . of help . . . of salvation.

156 Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

The law is good, but it is not a savior. David depended on the mercies of God and not strict principles of justice as the grounds of deliverance.

157 Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

Being a public figure, David had many enemies and jealous rivals. Yet, David did not panic nor did his conflicts with men become an excuse to reduce his commitment to obey God's law.

158 I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

"transgressors" probably refers to men in positions of political power.

Again, David was a good man and as a good man he was grieved by the lawlessness and perversion around him. A healthy soul loves righteousness, but he is also burdened by the lawless rising to power.

159 Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

David is not claiming his "good life" as the reason God should answer his prayer. Grace, not law, is the foundation of His mercies. Nevertheless, his love of the law provided a claim upon which the promises could be connected to obedience.

"The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we have of deliverance" (Matthew Henry).

160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

Truth is the foundation upon which the pious build their life. Being a friend of the Court makes it easier to plead one's case as enemies have no standing on which to plead their cause. Since His truth endured forever, pleading His truth is solid ground upon which claims can be sustained.

Schin: The Word of God produces peace in the man of God

161 SCHIN. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

"Princes" represent godless, self-driven men in positions of political power — men angry that David was governed by law and not political interests. Because David followed the rule of law and not the rule of man, his peers hated him (Rex Lex v. Lex Rex).

The "me" may refer to the whole nation since the whole nation suffered from rude, erratic leaders.

"I fear thy displeasure more than their wrath, and therefore do nothing contrary to thy word in my own vindication" (Benson).

162 I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

Men are delighted by many of earth's treasures, but insight into God's Word was David's greatest treasure. New insight into the law was like finding a nugget of gold.

163 I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love.

Being a king, David was lied to regularly. He grew to hate lies, deceit, and falsehood. The word "hate" is the word "abomination;" that is, David loathed and detested dishonesty. He loved the law and hated lawbreakers.

"Hate is an attribute of God. It is not vice, and there is no such thing as a "hate crime." It is impossible to be a good man without hating all that is contrary to God's nature.

164 Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

"Seven times" is a hyperbole expressing an unknown number of times David reflected on, waited on, or spoke on the wisdom of His law.

165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

The word "offend" (mikshowl) means "to stumble" into sin and shame.

Want peace? Make peace with God's law-order. The idea that a Christian has no duty to God's law and that he is free to choose his own law is nothing short of blasphemy.

166 LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

Men are not saved by law, but they are saved in order to keep the law. David's hope for salvation increased his determination to obey God's law . . . not the other way around.

167 My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

Do you hear the whispering pulse of a healthy heart? How can a man love God and not love His law? Impossible! His obedience was not merely outward, but inward . . . from the heart.

168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

Knowing that God sees the whole man is another motivation to keep God's law. Because He sees, I obey in private as well as in public.

Tav: The Word of God delights the heart

169 TAU. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

Before us is another sign of a healthy soul. David prays the LORD would hear his prayers and give him understanding in conformity to His Word and Truth.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

Apparently, many things hinder effective prayer. The psalmist prays: Do not let the weakness of my person or the weakness of my prayers prevent You from hearing them. Let nothing obstruct my prayers. Deliver me as your Word promises.

171 My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

When delivered from my enemies and having learned Your statutes, “my lips shall pour forth (naba) a stream of praise.”

172 My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness.

Men talk about what they think. In this case, David talked about the Word of God. His commandments are righteous because they reflect the righteous character of the Lord. Society is made better when men purge evil from among men. There is a time to speak; and, not speaking would be a great evil.

Consider for a moment the greatness of King David. There is not a politician or parliamentarian among the nations like David . . . a man in pursuit of God’s law-order. No wonder he is the model man, the model king, the Messianic link between Abraham and Christ. Oh, that there might be one man to rise up in politics in our time with a true heart for God.

173 Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

The Word tells a man what is right, but a man needs the power of God at work in him to enable him to keep the Word. David willed to obey His precepts, but he needed God to supply strength to walk in His way.

174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

David desired deliverance from his troubles because he was a friend of law and a friend of God. When our desires conform to God’s will and our prayers are consistent with His purpose, we are in a position to experience His salvation.

175 Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

As long as I live, my soul shall praise Thee. I desire life, not for selfish purposes, but that I might learn your judgments and spend my life glorifying you.

176 I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

The “I” may be a literary “I” where the psalmist speaks for the congregation — a confession that we are lost sheep having gone astray, and a prayer by the lost that God would pursue and care for each sheep, and that each sheep would remember to obey His commandments.

The “Song of Degrees”

Introduction to Psalms 120 - 134.

The Pilgrim’s Songbook

The title, "A Song of degrees" is given to fifteen Psalms, 120-134.

The Hebrew word *maalah* signifies, “going up, ascent.” It is translated “stairs, steps, and going up.”

We picture Levitical choir armed with swords and adorned in white robes harmonizing in base tones praises to the LORD at various times during the required festivals.

Tradition has it that the all-male Levite choir would sing these hymns as they ascended the steps of the temple in the Women's Court leading into the temple proper.

Psalms 120-134 were the pinnacle psalm – an encouragement to praise God during the night . . . and, no doubt, many a Pilgrim would stay in the temple rejoicing and talking with friends past midnight until their eyelids slid downward.

These Ascent Psalms have been grouped together: four are by David, one by Solomon, and the rest are without a name. Psalm 135 is added because it fits the theme and purpose of these songs.

The background to all these psalms is the Babylonian Exile (606-536 B.C.) and the Order by God for Cyrus in 539 B.C. to release the Jews so they could return to a devastated Land and to build the LORD God a house at Jerusalem.

Furthermore, these psalms are sometimes called the “Pilgrim’s Songbook.”

Pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem during festival seasons would mix groups and sing these choruses together as they approached the holy city – songs that shed light on the Lord while generating hope for believers.

Keep in mind all the psalms and Hebrew symbols belong to the church, the True Israel of God; that is, these are our songs.

No anti-Christ Jew has a legitimate claim upon these precious choruses of faith. The Jews belonging to the 12 tribes of Israel were blessed to see the coming of their Messiah in the first century, but they rejected Him by crucifying Him on a Roman cross.

Modern Ashkenazi so-called “Jews” joined the spirit of ancient, unbelieving Israel. Therefore, they have no claim upon these songs.

But, the faithful Jews received Christ as the Messiah Savior, namely: Peter, Paul, and John et al. As the gospel went into the Roman Theater, gentiles believed on Christ and were “baptized”

(placed into) into this holy community we call the “remnant,” or “the true Israel,” or “the New Israel”, or the church. Our Lord transferred the stewardship of Israel’s holy symbols (the candelabra et al.) to the “seven lampstands” in writing (Revelation 1:19-20).

It is written! These are our songs! Therefore, let His people sing them as they go to their “holy temple in the Lord” we call the “church” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

“I was glad when they said unto me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’”
(Psalm 122:1).

Psalm 120 - Keep Me From Lying Lips

"Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips"



Ever feel like you are surrounded by hornets?

A righteous man having to share the same neighborhood with liars and deceivers pains the soul.

Wounded by stinging wasps, the psalmist pours out his pain in a hymn. His misery is our misery -- the grief of every pious man.

Thus, the Spirit pulls back the curtains so we can see the character of a righteous soul.

Psalm 120: 1 <A Song of degrees.> In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

The word "distress" (*tsarah*) refers to the agony of having to work alongside obnoxious people who take pleasure in jabbing you with their tongues (slander).

The word *tsarah* describes the anguish of Joseph's soul when his brothers betrayed him and sold him as a slave to a caravan going to Egypt Genesis 42:21); and, of "Hannah's grief of sharing her house with an odious, critical woman: "her adversary also provoked her sore" (1 Samuel 1:8); and a "time of tribulation" in Judges 10:14); and, "vexed" in Nehemiah 9:27.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.

Lies and deceit were so common this righteous man had to pray to the LORD for protection. Lying lips include exaggerated reports, false promises from business associates, and slander by adversaries.

Consider our time. Is it possible to find out the truth in the news, in history, in medicine (vaxxines), and in science? The doctrines of evolution, climate change, homosexuality, gender-bender wokeness, and UFOs choke optimism out of our soul. We are surrounded by fake news, lying politicians, indoctrination, false advertising, feminists' hoopla, Zionist's propaganda, and social media censorship. The Christian man in search of truth finds himself in the company of hostile minds, gossips, and slanderers. Even the church is filled with deceived people who are comfortable with their sophism.

War involves the art of deception, and the Scripture warns us not to be deceived.

"Deuteronomy 11:16 Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them;" (Deuteronomy 11:16).

The verb "deceived" (*pathah*) means "to be spacious or wide open."

The adverb “not” nullifies the probability of being deceived; i.e. the believer must doubt enemy propaganda.

And, the wretched thing about deception is the deceived does not know he is deceived.

Moreover, deception is a fact of war after a war is started, but the international laws of war prohibit propaganda to start a war.

The first casualty of every war is the truth.

During the Hamas-Israel War (October 7, 2023), Israel illegally and immorally published a report about Hamas beheading children. Though it wasn't true, the report went around the world. Notice the language of deception in the following report:

“It’s been about four days since this incredible and tragic escalation of violence and the level of misinformation — even disinformation — seems near unprecedented . . . Women, children, toddlers, and elderly were brutally butchered in an ISIS way of action and we are we are(sic) aware of the heinous acts Hamas is capable of,” the spokesperson wrote in response to questions from The Intercept about the viral reports. **“We cannot confirm it officially, but you can assume it happened and believe the report,”** she reiterated in a follow-up phone call.” (Israel Defense Forces, Reported by “the Intercept” October 10, 2023).

Without going to primary sources, it seems difficult to find the truth about the Civil War, WWI, WWII, and the death cult in the Municipal Corporation of Washington D.C. Winners write the history to make their enemies look like the Devil incarnate and themselves like Virgin Mary. The Bible is smeared, Christ blasphemed, and pastors portrayed as mumbling idiots by Jewish Hollywood. O Lord, keep me from lying lips!

3 What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

Ellicott translates the text, "What more can be added to thee (i.e. in the way of epithet), besides lying and false, thou deceitful tongue?"

He is correct. What more can be said about the lying, deceitful, duplicitous tongue of politicians, the media, and gossips?

4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

Struggling to describe the pain in his soul that these liars caused him, this righteous man employs two metaphors: (a) being pierced by sharp arrows from a skilled archer; and, (b) being intentionally tortured by burning coals – horrific vexation every faithful pastor understands. O, the pain of defamation, slander, and libel spoken maliciously behind the back that comes by a report from a friend.

Be clear, the psalmist is not talking about deserved criticism due to a moral failure or the helpful criticism of a friend, but undeserved aspersions from careless and reckless souls.

5 Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

The psalmist employs two more metaphors to describe his extremity and girdle of adversaries plaguing him: Mesech and the tents of Kedar.

Mesech refers to Israel's traditional enemies from the north: Canaanites, Amorites, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylon, Gog and Magog.

The *tents of Kedar* describe adversaries from the South: Edomites, Moabites, Arabu tribes; and, Nabatu tribes.

Compare the pain in the soul to Virgin Mary being forced to share a house with Fanny Porter and other prostitutes; or Mary Poppins having neighbors like Scrooge; or Sleeping Beauty having to live in the Bronx with drug addicts. This author is a lamb among wolves, a rabbit among coyotes, an elephant ringed in by big game hunters.

6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.

"It is very grievous to a good man, to be cast into, and kept in the company of the wicked, from whom he hopes to be forever separated." - Matthew Henry

7 I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.

Before us is the description of a righteous man being pushed and shoved by wicked men. He is for peace, they are for war; He loves life, they love death; he helps the weak, they crush the innocent; he is reasonable, they are fanatics; he loves truth, they embrace lies.

America has changed! The Christian suffers grief in his soul because he is surrounded by abortionists, feminists, transvestites, fake media, fake science, and warmongers that smile when you mention "nuclear war."

O, the pain of having to live on this earth with Sodomites, fornicators, fraudsters, communists, war hawks, gluttons, and the superrich who believe you should own nothing and be happy.

O, Lord, deliver my soul . . .

Psalm 121 - The LORD is My Keeper

"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."



It is believed by many that the "Songs of degrees" were written after the exile (586 B.C.) by Jews in Babylon struggling with issues of the faith connected with their deportment. And, it is this perspective we must consider as we seek to uncover the beauty and mystery of these glorious hymns.

The key word in this psalm is the word "keep" or "keeper" (shamar). Used six times, the word "shamar" sheds light on the nature of our Lord and His work for us. Because He keeps us, we cling to Him.

Another key word is the noun "help" (ezer) or "helper." Nouns are facts, not presumptions. Employed two times by the Spirit, the psalm shines light on the character of our Creator-Savior. Is it possible the Lord permits us to experience trouble that we might discover His assistance? This psalmist thinks so.

We do not help Him, but He helps us.

Psalm 121:1 <A Song of degrees.> I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

The psalmist gives us the conclusion first; and, the question second.

The word "whence" (ai'yn) is an interrogatory and **not** an interjection.

The latter part of the text is a single question. "Where will my help come from?" After he ponders the question, he comes to the conclusion his help comes from the LORD – the One who chose the hills of Jerusalem for His dwelling.

The word "help" (ezer) refers to assistance, comfort, support, and aid. The first usage of the term "help" is when the LORD made the woman Adam's helpmeet (Genesis 2:18). As history progressed, pious men learned that God was their helper. Jacob promised his sons that the LORD would be their Helper after his passing (Genesis 49:25). After the deportation, the exiles rediscovered the LORD as their Helper.

Feeling the loneliness and confusion of the exile, those banished from Jerusalem were asking, "Where do we look for help?" This question did not embrace pure optimism. . . It was a sincere question by those struggling with confidence and doubt, faith and fear, hope and unbelief.

"How can I trust him that ruined my comfortable life and exiled me to Babylon?" may be the bigger question.

The plural noun "mountains" (har'im) informs us that after looking around the plains of Babylon which had no mountains, the psalmist was thinking of Jerusalem, the temple mount, and the hills surrounding the capital city. "He lifted up his eyes unto the hills" but he could not possibly see them from the plains of Babylon; that is, lifting up his eyes is a spiritual expression that refers to his hope in the Lord and his faith in the character of God.

This is one of the greatest spiritual comebacks in history. In the dust pits of Babylon, many Hebrews placed their faith in Israel's Protector and Provider.

The word "hills" is a metonym for the LORD'S house in Jerusalem; that is, following his quest, the author concluded that He would look to his God for help . . . the same God who destroyed Jerusalem and deported the survivors to Babylon. The God who chastised them now became their hope for salvation. The hand that holds the rod of discipline also holds the key to freedom.

2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

This confession of faith is also part of his conclusion. It did **not** come easily. The psalmist spent many years contemplating this question before he found his answer. My help comes from the LORD . . . not from men . . . not from totem pole rituals . . . and not from the matrix of government . . . but from the Creator of heaven and earth.

Is there a greater Helper than this - the all-knowing, every-present, omnipotent Maker of earth and sky?

The One Who permits the sorrows of life also provides the comforts of life. The LORD Who created life has the power to save life. The King of righteousness is also the King of mercy. The One who judged Israel is also the one that can save Israel. *The One with perfect grace will never let his righteous decrees destroy His imperfect people.* The One Who is righteous must punish sin; yet, the merciful One is also driven by His grace to save His troubled ones.

At the cross, "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other"(Psalm 85:10).

3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

The psalmist speaks for God to Himself. Having considered the character of God, he instructs his own soul: "He (God) will not suffer thy foot to be moved (shaken)."

When difficulties are greatest, we need to comfort ourselves by reflecting on the attributes of the LORD. Though the winds blow and the seas roar, He will not permit our vessels to capsize or run aground. The One Who watches over us does not slumber. He is on guard duty day and night, seven days a week.

Satan used this text in the temptation of Christ. God protects, but beware of presumption. There is no promise of protection for the self-governed man.

We who teach children to pray, "Now I lay me down to sleep," ought to rest because He never sleeps.

4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

The word "behold" is a particle of interjection -- the voice of a holy hawker, "Hey there, come and see."

The word "keepeth" (shamar) is a Qal participle referring to the work of God on our behalf. The term "keep" means "to keep, maintain, or to protect." We get the words "scorekeeper," "goalkeeper," "doorkeeper," and "wicketkeeper" from this English word.

He that "keepeth Israel" refers to God's supervision, maintenance, and protection of the nation . . . even backsliders in the foreign lands of Babylon. Many of them were not only protected, but promoted. Think of Daniel and his companions.

Typical of accent songs, the psalmist repeats the previous statement for emphasis. The One who keeps Israel . . . and me . . . does not catnap, hibernate, or take a siesta. He is always on duty. His office is always open; and, He never has a sign outside his door that reads, "Do Not Disturb!"

5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

Arresting the word "keep" from verse 4, the psalmist amplifies the thought in verse 5. The LORD keeps us, and retains us in His possession. He will not and cannot let us slip out of His hand or be hurt under His supervision.

He calls the LORD "thy shade upon thy right hand." He protects us from the heat of the day, and the cold after dark; from the burning sun and from the freezing nights. He blocks all that would injure us. He is the filter that removes impurities that would harm us.

The Great Keeper of Israel sent His people to Babylon, but the Chaldean wolves were not permitted to harm His lambs nor was the blazing Babylonian sun permitted to damage the bodies of His people.

We should thank God for all the good He does for us, and for all the bad that doesn't happen to us.

6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

Building on the word "shade" from verse 5, the composer amplifies the fact that the LORD protects His people from heat stroke during the day and from chills at night in verse 6.

The dangers of the sun by day and the dangers of the moon at night are so well known there is little need to comment. We get the word "lunacy" from the moon, and the words sunstroke, sunburn, and sunbaked from the sun. UV radiation from the Sun can damage the skin even causing skin cancers. But, here the psalmist proclaims God's protection from both.

Likewise, we need protection from creatures that come out in the day and from creatures that come out at night.

7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

The word "preserve" (shamar) should be translated "keep." The word "keep" (shamar) is used six times in this psalm and twice in this text. It is one of the beauties of this hymn.

Our Keeper keeps, maintains, and protects His own. Consistent consideration of the word "keep" (shamar) will enlarge our appreciation of all the marvelous things the LORD does for us.

That He as our Keeper is a fact; that He keeps shows us insight into His work for us. He Who saves, keeps on saving; He Who sanctifies keeps on sanctifying; He Who provides, keeps on providing.

Natural dangers are one matter; moral evils are another.

Keeping one from "evil" is an advanced thought in this psalm. The word "evil" can refer to "moral evil" or it can refer to calamity. While God is not the creator of moral evil, He is the author of calamity (Isaiah 45:7). While He forbids His people from indulging in moral depravity, He does permit tragedy and adversity -- not to harm us, but to wean us away from our idols. The One who protects us from natural dangers also protects us from iniquity and calamity.

Let us rest. There is no evil designed by men or the Devil that can separate us from our salvation in Christ. We are immortal till our work is completed. And, what we deem as evil for us, God works to turn troubles into riches and bad into good into our lives (Romans 8:28).

8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

The word "preserve" (shamar) should be translated "keep."

"going out" and "coming in" is a common Hebrew idiom referring to all the events of life. He keeps us from evil when we leave home and come home; when we work, and when we rest; on the sea and on the land; at home or abroad; when we walk and when we sit; at night and during the day. He is our Protector and Provider; our Guide and our Guard.

The noun "for evermore" (olam) includes matters on earth and in heaven, in now time and eternal time.

An atheist was criticizing Christianity to a believer saying, "The trouble with you Christians is that you use God as a crutch." The saint said, "You don't understand. He is not my crutch. He is my whole wheelchair!"

Psalm 122 - Joy in the House of the Lord

"I was glad when they said, 'Let Us Go to the House of the Lord'"



The theme in this chapter centers on the House of the Lord in Jerusalem and the tribes that make pilgrimages to the city during Israel's festival seasons.

While wolves howl in the night, the heart cry of every pious saint is, "Let us Go the House of the LORD."

Possibly, this desire burned in the heart of the exiles, but more likely it was a psalm composed after the exile or maybe even during the times of David and Solomon. We just don't know for sure.



Jerusalem is mentioned three times and peace three times. The House of the Lord is mentioned in the first and last verse of the psalm. Terms like "tribes" "city" "gates" and "LORD" stand out in the psalm as they highlight the material substance associated with the joy of traveling to Jerusalem during

festival seasons.

This psalm exposes the fragrance of life within the soul of every faithful man -- the joy of being in the House of God with the Family of God. In the Old Testament the House of the Lord was the temple proper; in the New Testament the House of the Lord is the church, an assembly of He people meeting to gladly worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

The invitation by others, "Let us go into the house of the Lord" cheers the heart of every true saint.



St. Paul's Cathedral

Psalm 122:1 <A Song of degrees of David.> I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

These are the words of the people exhorting one another to go and worship the LORD in the temple during the three great festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

"I was glad" expresses the happiness of heart and the smile on the cheeks of every "true Israelite" when friends and family invited the psalmist to travel to Jerusalem to venerate the LORD in the

House of God.

"Let us go" is inscribed over the porch doors of St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

We must imagine in our mind's ear the comments of the pilgrims when they entered the gates of Jerusalem after traveling miles to join the festivities: "At last, we are here standing in the gates of our capital city."

3 Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together:

Surely, the country folk from the villages within the nation must have raised their heads and stared with amazement at the architecture of Jerusalem and the temple proper while commenting to one another about the beauty of its walls, the charm of its gates, and the handsomeness of its structures.

4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

"Whether" is not a question, but a statement meaning "There the tribes go up . . ." Tribes is mentioned twice -- a reference to pilgrims around the nation.

The "testimony of Israel" refers to the "ark of testimony" which contained the Ten Commandments a.k.a. the "testimony" because the words expressed the character of God. The ark was placed in the tabernacle which was called the Tabernacle of Testimony (Numbers 1:48). The focal point of meditation were the words on the two tablets . . . laws . . . words that which reflected the character of God:

Psalm 119

111 Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

137 Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.

140 Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

Benson adds this comment: "Unto the testimony of Israel — Unto the ark, called the testimony because of the tables of the covenant laid up in it, which are called God's testimony, and the tables of the testimony."

Thankfulness for God's provision and His protection graced the lips of the worshipers entering the city.

"Its not how much we have, but how much we enjoy that makes happiness" - Charles Spurgeon.

5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Jerusalem was not only the nation's religious hub, it was Israel's political capital. The term "thrones" is mentioned twice. It reminds us Jerusalem was the nexus of the nation's theocratic government. Great Kings like David, Solomon, and Hezekiah set up their administrations in this city.

6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

It was perfectly appropriate to call the people to pray for the peace of Jerusalem when the House of the Lord was in this holy city between 1000 B.C. and 70 A.D. But, it is unfitting for Zionists to call Christians to pray for modern Jerusalem. Modern Jerusalem is no more holy than London or Kansas City. The temple of the Lord is His church . . . and men should pray much for the prosperity of the church.

7 Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

"Peace be within thy walls" points to the fortifications of the city and the sense of peace people felt as they entered into it. Peace in the fortress and peace in the presence of God in the holy city.

8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.

"Peace" (shalom) is a common greeting much like the English salutation "hello."

The greetings on the lips of the residents announced "shalom" to the visitors entering the city, and "shalom" as the proper response from the pilgrims to the residents in the capital.

Let the church in America learn a lesson from the ancient Israelites. They were peace-lovers and not saber-rattlers. Shalom ought to be on the lips of the American people as madmen seem hell bent on turning the country into a nation of war hawks.

9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

Because the LORD dwelled in the temple, and Jerusalem was the capital, every Hebrew wanted only the best for their beloved city. Faithfulness to the LORD and fidelity to the nation filled the hearts of the pilgrims. Who wouldn't pledge allegiance to the city that housed the living God?

Matthew Henry provides this application: "Love of the brethren and love to God, ought to stir us up to seek to be like the Lord Jesus in fervent prayer and unwearied labor, for the salvation of men, and the Divine glory."

Benson also says it well, "I desire its influence to be perpetuated and extended that I seek thy prosperity. This expresses a deep feeling in the mind of a pious man. To him the church of God is the most important of all objects, gives the principal interest to a place, and is everywhere to him the chief attraction."

"I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the LORD.'"

Psalm 123 - The Need for Triple Mercy

"Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt."



It is not difficult to imagine an anxious Levite in Babylon composing this hymn. Moreover, it is the stand of every saint waiting for God to provide the answers to their prayers.

The key word in this psalm is "eyes" – a metaphor describing the Christ-centered heart, an expression of the hope of every pious man. This a statement of the mental anguish and the renewed focus of every Christian.

Psalm 123:1 <A Song of degrees.> Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

The word "dwellest" could be translated "enthroned," or the "One ruling from heaven." That the LORD reigns is the gospel of the Old Testament (Psalm 87:1; 99:1).

"Behold how not only I, but the rest of thy faithful people wait upon thee, submitting ourselves to this severe punishment, as poor slaves do to the stroke of their offended master or mistress, and resolving to bear it patiently till thou, our Lord, who dost inflict it, wilt be pleased to show thyself our most gracious God, and in much pity toward us remove it." - Bishop Patrick (Quoted by Benson).

Many times in life, the struggling servant finds himself with his eyes locked on to the Lord like magnets. His hope is not in men, not in government, and not in a better economy, but in the Lord.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

The word "eyes" is mentioned four times in the first two verses.

As the eyes of a servant study the expressions of their master, the eyes of the pious are often narrowed to slits staring at the Lord. They wait with the patience of a nun for God to have mercy upon them.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

The word "mercy" is mentioned three times in the psalm. The LORD's grace reveals the hope of the psalmist.

Mercy is an act of God that relieves stress, tension, and the pain of chastisement. It is God acting to restrain judgment that a man so justly deserves.

If God dispensed pure justice, who would be left standing?

Have mercy up us . . . upon the church . . . upon our nation . . . and upon me, O Lord.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

Now we learn the reason for all this waiting and cries of mercy. This saint along with all his fellow pilgrims felt the pain of proud mockers howling, "Where is your God? Why doesn't He help you?" Ouch!

The psalmist uses the article "the" to refer to "the scorning"; i.e. to a particular season of mocking taking place against God's people in Babylon.

The need for mercy is in proportion to the contempt experienced. The word "contempt" in English means, "the feeling that a person or a thing is beneath consideration, worthless, or deserving scorn."

We learn there are periods of contempt in history against the faith whether it be from Yankees mocking the faith of Southerners, or liberals jeering the Holy Scriptures in the early twentieth century. Today pseudo-scientists shove evolution, the Big Bang Theory, and global warming down the throats of Bible believing Christians as if this is the only viable opinion in the debate. Every age has its proud scoffers which in time are shown to be fools. Ludicrous theories like the efficacy of "flue shots" or "man evolved from monkeys," or the earth is "billions of years old" have exhausted the patience of true science.

Which of us has not ran ourselves breathless waiting for the Savior's deliverance?

If you are weary from tarrying for the Lord, you are not alone. Like waiting for the sunrise, you wait for that which is sure to come. God is seldom early, never late, and always on time.

Join the saints and lift up your bleary eyes to Him who shows mercy again, and again, and again.

Psalm 124 - The LORD is On Our Side

The "if not" Syllogism of a Confident Saint.

Psalm 124:1 <A Song of degrees of David.>



The presumption this psalm was penned by an exile in Babylon has merit.

Note the dual terms and repetitions in this chapter: "side, side;" "LORD, LORD;" "swallowed, wrath;" "overwhelmed, gone over;" "waters, stream, proud waters;" "prey, snare;" "gone over our soul, and gone over our soul."

This psalm is written by a saint that had listened to the doubters among the captives in Babylon that felt like God was not on their side . . . that He has not been fair with them . . . that He didn't love them.

Carefully observe the accurate deductive reasoning of the psalmist.

A reference to "what if"

Psalm 121:1 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

The problem plaguing the exiles was a prevailing doubt about whether God was with them or had abandoned them.

If you have never doubted whether God was on your side, you are not human. The greatest of saints during fluctuating tides of life has asked this question, "Is the Lord on my side?"

The psalmist addresses the confusion and unbelief of his people, a fallacy in their reasoning that was invalid. By employing a deductive argument called a "hypothetical syllogism" - an "if not" type of reasoning He was able to persuade many that the LORD had not abandoned them. When one has an invalid presumption, the conclusion will be invalid.

In contrast to the skewed thinking of his peers, the psalmist reasons that if God had not been on our side, then we would have been devastated, but we weren't. Instead of poverty, we experienced prosperity; instead of hate and rejection, we experienced kindness and acceptance among the Babylonians. So, the conclusion that God was not with us is deeply flawed.

Deductive reasoning is a logical approach where you progress from general ideas (our blessings and lack of hardship) to specific conclusions (The LORD must be with us).

Correct premise: Our sins deserve death, but we are alive.

Correct conclusion: Therefore, the LORD must be with us.

The psalmist is saying, "suppose for a moment the Lord had not been on our side, then . . ." No doubt many of the exiles looked at their "enslavement" in Babylon as evidence the LORD was

not on their side, but on the side of their enemies. But, their prosperity and popularity among the Chaldeans was proof that God had not abandoned them.

The good news of the psalmist is that the doubters were dead wrong, and that the LORD was on their side guiding, guarding, and giving peace to them.

Therefore, in the rest of this psalm, the author rebuts the fundamental conclusion of the doubters that God was not with them by engaging his "if not . . . then" syllogism.

2 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:

This godly author repeats the premise of his argument - "If not . . . then . . ."

The psalmist rebuts the presumption of the doubters by using an "if not" syllogism: *If the LORD had not been on our side, then this would have happened.*

A reference to the heathen's harassment potential.

3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

If the LORD had NOT been on our side, then the Babylonians would have plundered us with their power and abused us with their anger and wrath . . . but, this never happened.

The Chaldeans treated us decently and fairly. Therefore, this fact led the psalmist to conclude the LORD was with them.

4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:

If the LORD had NOT been on our side, then our captors would have chained us to millstones and thrown us into the Euphrates. But, this didn't happen, so the LORD must be on our side.

5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

If the LORD had NOT been on our side, the current of adversity by the proud would have carried us out to sea. But, this didn't happen, so the LORD must be on our side.

A reference to deliverance

6 Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.

The fact of the matter is that the LORD did not abandon us. He did not give His sheep to the wolves. We were not mutton in the teeth of the Chaldeans. The only explanation for this fair treatment is that God restrained the pagans in Babylon from harming us.

7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

If the LORD was not on our side, we would have been like doves snared by trappers. The fact of the matter is that we escaped the snares, nets, and nooses of the Babylonian officials (fowlers). In fact, it is better than this. There were no snares laid to capture and plunder us.

A reference to the Source of help

8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Those doubters among us who say the LORD is not on our side are dead wrong. The LORD helped us, protected us, and provided for us. Look at the evidence. It is in plain sight. Most pagans treat us like we are “nuts,” but the Babylonians accepted us with grace and kindness.

Moreover, the LORD Who created heaven and earth exercised His power to give us a good standing in the community where we experienced peace and prosperity. And, in 536 B.C. Cyrus released us to come back and to rebuild our temple in Jerusalem. This is of God, not man.

A better question might be, “Are you on the Lord's side?”

If you doubt whether God is on your side and are tempted to conclude He does not love you, employ an "If not" argument.

Yes, the LORD is on our side! Amen!

Personal note: As I was thinking and writing about this psalm, my lovely wife walked in the door with happy tears in her eyes. She shared with me how she did not have enough money to pay for our grocery bill. Consequently, she had to put some vitals back on the counter. As she was in the parking lot, the lady behind her in line handed her a bag of the things my wife had put down on the counter. The two women smiled and exchanged thank yous. I was able to assure my bride, "If the Lord had not been by your side, this kindness would not have happened to you."

Psalm 125 - The Righteous Cannot Be Moved

"They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion"



Feel vulnerable? God protects those who trust Him. You are invincible until your work is done.

Psalm 125:1 <A Song of degrees.>

The song of degrees are called the Pilgrim's Songbook because the worshipers sang these choruses while they traveled to Jerusalem on the way to yearly festivals. The melodies are lost in history, but the lyrics remain.

Surround by hills in all directions, Jerusalem is protected from chariot-rich invaders. Two valleys provide a means of traveling to Mount Zion. But, this hymn is not about the valleys, but about the mountains placed like cupcakes around Israel's capital.

Imagine in your mind's eye pilgrims coming over the crest of a hill and beholding the mountains surrounding Zion for the first time. When seeing the eternal hills around the walled city, the worshippers break into song with smiles on their faces and gladness in their hearts?

Psalm 125:1 They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

The psalmist draws a spiritual lesson from the topography of Jerusalem: "They that trust in the LORD shall be like Mount Zion" - stable, permanent, resolute, strong, steady, and enduring.

"cannot be removed" expresses the invincibility of the believer and of the church, for "we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28).

The phrase "abideth for ever" stretches this promise beyond this veil into eternity.

2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

The "mountains" are the subject of the sentence and the adverb "round" (cabiyyb) is used twice. It means "to be placed around."

These mountains gave Jerusalem a strategic military advantage against armies composed of charioteers.

The psalmist draws a second spiritual lesson from the topography of Jerusalem. Not only does the LORD embrace those that trust Him, these mountains inform us that God borders His people on all sides like the mountains encircle the capital city. Our Lord stands above us, below us, and around us. How secure it that?

Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from ("out of" or "away from") the curse of the law, being made a curse for ("over") us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

The first promise compares the mountains to the stability and permanence to those who trust the LORD; the second promise compares the security the mountains afford Jerusalem militarily to the protection the presence of God has over one's precious all.

The protecting care of Jehovah is likened to a wall round the city, instead of the two valleys that lead to Jerusalem. - Ellicott.

"As Jerusalem is thus protected by the hills around, so the people of God are protected by Yahweh." - Benson

Those minds who are in covenant with God shall be like Mt. Zion -- like mountains that cannot be displaced by winds, rains, and armies. "God so surrounds His people, and they cannot be moved" - Matthew Henry.

Again, the term "forever" assures believers that His care is not only for this age, but for the age to come.

What God did for ancient Israel, He does for the New Israel, the church. He surrounds his called out ones, protects them, and supports them. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church nor shall the church succumb to the tensile and glitter thrown at her by the world. The church will not only survive the terrors of our time, the church will thrive and succeed in her mission to reach the lost.

3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

The word "rod" (shebet) would better be translated "scepter" or "ruler's staff." The "righteous" are believing Hebrews that cling to the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – that believe His promises and not the "we are doomed" message barking at them from their circumstances.

The noun "lot" refers to the work and station in life that God gives His people.

The word "rest" does **not** refer to sleep, but to the passing placement of grating governance over a people.

"put forth their hand unto iniquity" refers to the capacity or weakness within His people to engage in wrongdoing while being mistreated by secular regimes. Righteousness is not contagious, but sin is like leaven that permeates everything it touches.

The "rod shall **not** rest" refers to a reign of tyranny -- to a death grip of some oppressive regime over true Israel (or the church). . . and, particularly unrelenting, continuous absolutism over the Holy Land.

God does **not** tolerate long periods of despotism over His people. The exile ended after 70 years (586-536 BC). Tyranny will **not** linger long lest God's people be seduced into complicity by pagan allurements or beaten into submission by the iron-hand of autocrats.

The Rod of the Wicked may indeed touch the bodies of the righteous, their families, and assets, but it cannot touch their soul - Matthew Henry.

Individual believers may suffer the indignities of tyrants, but the church of Christ will prevail unto the coming of our Lord. Their house is built on the Rock, not upon shifting sand.

God may use the wicked as a rod to chastise the wicked, but He will **never** use the wicked as sword to punish His own. Disciplined, Yes; punished, No!

Moreover, the Apostle Paul informs us that God is at work making good come out of individual troubles (Romans 8:28). How can a man be strong in life without tests of his faith? The strongest among us are those who have been through the wringer of testing.

4 Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.

The psalmist addresses the LORD. Since You have promised to keep Your people from evil, be pleased to grant them Your blessing for good so they can do good. Deal graciously and bountifully to those who seek to walk honorably before you. Reward their faith and simple acts of obedience.

Nothing can frustrate the grace of God, not even the failure of His people.

Psalm 89:30-33.

“. . . Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail" (Psalm 89:30-33).

5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.

The ways of the righteous are straight, but the ways of the wicked are crooked.

Just as the LORD seeks the good of His people, the Lord seeks justice for the workers of iniquity; i.e. He treats them as transgressors of His law: "for they shall soon be cut down as grass . . . for the seed of the wicked shall be cut off" (Psalm 37:2, 28).

Psalm 126 - We Are Glad

"The LORD hath done great things for us ..."



How do you think the captives in Babylon felt when they first heard the news that they were free to return to their homeland (539-536 B.C.)?

So great was their jubilation the psalmist had to commemorate the miracle in song. Great events call for great songs to a great Lord.

Psalm 126:1 <A Song of degrees.> When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

Ellicott translation: "when Jehovah brought back the returned of Zion."

How can you possibly put into words the bubbling joy that burst from the clouds over the exiles in Babylon when they heard the command by Cyrus that the Jews could return to Jerusalem to rebuild their temple?

We were like them that dreamed . . . like skinny men made fat . . . like vagrants given a mansion . . . like inmates released from prison.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing; then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

What a reversal of fate: from languish to laughter; from sorrows to songs; and, from condemnation to justification among the heathen.

"All that the people around us say is true. We see it; we feel it; we acknowledge it."- Barnes.

The heathen saw the salvation of God and were glad for the Jews; but the exiles felt it from the top of their head rippling to the bottom of their feet.

What a transformation: A nation deprived now revived. Doubt dwindled, faith improved; fear diminished, courage flourished.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

The psalmist continues his rags to riches story and attributes the reversal of the nation's destiny, not to fate . . . not even to Cyrus, but to the LORD.

The euphoria of the exiles is simply described as "we were glad."

Of course, this is an understatement. We might amplify and compare their bliss to finding lost love; something as sweet as "the look of a lover saluting the eyes of a maid" (Ambrose); as lovely as matrimony; as delightful as finding a shade tree at high noon; as refreshing as being rescued off a sinking ship; or, as the elation of a soldier returning home from war.

The English term "glad" comes from the Old English word "glaed" which means "to shine."

In our minds eyes we can see the released captives smiling from ear to ear, with eyes sparkling like the stars, and feet kicking up dust dancing the Hora like brides and grooms.

4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

The news of Cyrus's command impacted the exiles like sunshine on a cold day. In this text, the psalmist remembers other exiles dispersed among the nations. He prays for another gracious manifestation of redemption -- an act of Providence that might be as refreshing to them as streams in the Negev.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

Employing another metaphor, the psalmist contrasts the songs of the fall harvest with the tensions of planting in the spring sowing season -- the sweat and anxiety of seed time with the gaiety and joy of harvest time.

The jubilation of the Return provides a spiritual lesson - that corn must be planted before bread arrives on the table; that toiling in prayer precedes the comfort of answered prayer; that sowing the gospel seed comes before the harvest; that study leads to competence in any field; that toil and sweat usher in success.

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

The psalmist expands the lesson the exiles learned: sowing comes before reaping; weeping precedes laughing; that the pleasure of gleaning is built on the patience and perseverance of the sower; that the gladness of harvest time is in proportion to the toil and trouble of seedtime; possessing the product follows paying the price; that enjoying the fruits at cropping season depends on hard work during the planting season.

Psalm 127 - The Great Exception

"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it."



Solomon built the first temple and gave the glory to God.

Those who returned from Babylon rebuilt the second temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua -- leaders who learned that completing the temple project was not by might, but by My Spirit

(Zechariah 4:6).

Observing these facts, the psalmist draws a lesson for all of life, **"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it."**

Psalm 127:1 <A Song of degrees for Solomon.> Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

The "house" could be any house, not just the temple. It is a general statement, not a specific one.

From the context the "house" represents the family, but it could apply to building a business or a church or a school.

The word "except" in English is defined as "a person or thing that is excluded from a general statement or does not follow a rule."

The work of most men ends in vanity. This is the rule. But, there is an exception to the norm. Occasionally, a man comes along who seeks God's help to assist him in building his house and prospers in doing it. This is the exception to the rule . . . and, in breaking from the pack and trusting the LORD, the man succeeds.

The particle or conjunction "except" (im) can be translated "but" in English. It eliminates all possibilities of success without the help of the Lord. Building anything without God ends in calamity, but with Him is prosperity.

Duties as simple as "watching" during guard duty are doomed to fail unless the Lord is part of it; i.e. there can be no joy or happiness in a project unless the Lord adds His blessing to the enterprise.

2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

"Rising up early, staying up late, and eating the bread of sorrows" are examples of the sacrifices men make to succeed in their ventures. Yes, men work to achieve their ambitions, but ultimate success in the project on all levels depends on God's blessings and not upon men's sacrifices of burning the late night oil.

While He gives His beloved sleep, He prospers and protects the proposals of those trusting Him.

3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

Now we learn that "the house" referred to in verse one refers to the family.

The Biblical mind sees children as a "heritage of the LORD" - as a "reward" and not a burden, a decree and not an "accident;" a legacy and not a product of nature (Genesis 30:2).

Children are a precious gift of God. Godly couples invest in children and not in stuff. Things perish! Children not only endear, they endure.

4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.

In military terms arrows are instruments of war; ordinances commanding enemies to surrender. Likewise, a mighty man sees children as His ordinance launched into the future admonishing men to bow their knees to Christ. We cannot live forever. The mighty man gives the gospel to his children as his inheritance for them with the expectation they will pass it on their sons and grandsons.

The Christian father with a love for God and family is called a "mighty man" - an *el gibbor* -- a warrior armed for battle. "Children" are not sons only, but godly daughters with sugar and spice and everything nice.

The need of the hour is men . . . manly men who will lead their families with a global vision of Christianizing the nations. Godly children are a mighty man's gift to the world -- arrows launched forward to build a highway so future generations can find their way into the kingdom of God.

5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Quivers are carried by warriors and hunters. Arrows are a metaphor for children. The more powerful the man, the more arrows he has in his quiver. Happiness and honor of a man are not found in his business, but in his family. The joy of seniors is their children and grandchildren.

At the end of life very few men say, "I wish I had worked more." Happy men find joy and pride in their family. Children make the man, honor the man, and are the power and joy of a mighty man.

The city gate represents the market place, government, and the city courts. The enemies of mankind gravitate toward centers of power.

Family men do not hang their head in shame. With chin up, they confront the lawless vying for power in the city gate.

The way to destroy enemies is not to kill them, but to "speak" with them; to enter the debate and to defeat bad ideas with good ideas; to defeat idolatry with allegiance to God; to defeat idealism with pragmatism; to defeat lawlessness with law-keeping; to overthrow criminals with a proper execution of law; to win sinners to the Lord by proclaiming the gospel.

"Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Psalm 128 - The Man God Blesses

"Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD"



If chapter 27 informs us that success cannot be achieved apart from God's blessing, this chapter informs us about the man God blesses.

Fearing the Lord

Psalm 128:1 <A Song of degrees.> Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

God intends to bless every man who "fears the Lord." The "fear the Lord" mirrors the NT call "to believe in Christ." And, if you are "in Christ," you are blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places - Ephesians 1:3.

God does not bless a man because of his fortitude, friends, or franchises, but because of His faith.

While "fear" includes respect, fear is primarily an attitude of mind that dreads being out of God's will; that fears being judged for one's sins; that fears breaking His law. Fear is a faith produced by studying Bible theology, God's attributes, and His work in history.

The opposite of "fearing the Lord" is personal autonomy -- "doing it my way."

"And now the end is here
And so I face that final curtain
My friend I'll make it clear
I'll state my case, of which I'm certain
I've lived a life that's full
I traveled each and every highway
And more, much more
I did it, I did it my way" (The anti-Christ Song by Frank Sinatra) – See Isaiah 53:6.

In this Bible text "fear" is defined as "living life His way" under His laws in dependence upon him.

The whole sentiment that New Testament commands are great suggestions is a product of being raised in a permissive society. Few things are more reprehensible than the notion that men are free to choose their own law, their own values, and their own religion. Study His law and His gospel to fear the Lord. Fear the Lord and be blessed. Go your own way, and be cursed.

The Fruits of Fearing the Lord

2 For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

The fear of the Lord produces labor: The word "labor" is a metonym for "fruits" or "products" of one's work. The man who fears the Lord works; work transforms into money; money is exchanged for commodities; and, supplied needs infer happiness and contentment.

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

The fear of the Lord leads to a happy marriage and a happy family.

"Fruitful vine" is a metaphor for unity and happiness -- an image of a happy housewife employed in her duties at home. She is not like the idle gossip, sitting "at the door of her house on a seat in the high places of the city" (Ellicott) or like modern women slaving away in some high rise complex chasing the feminine ideal.

"Olive plants" are images of growing, happy children that beautify and adorn the home.

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

The interjection "behold" (he'gey) means to stop what you are doing, look up, and study how the LORD blesses the man that fears Him.

5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

"Seeing the good of Jerusalem" is a reference to the prosperity of the state. A man that fears the Lord not only blesses his family, he blesses his nation.

Zion was not only the religious center of the nation, but also the capital of its theocratic government.

We learn from this text that the strength of a nation is not only in its economy, but in its families.

When the family is blessed, the nation is blessed; i.e. when families are strong, the nation is strong.

The Hebrews understood that the welfare of the state rests on the health and prosperity of the family. The family does not need the government, but the state needs the family. A state that taxes the family into poverty commits suicide. The modern transfer of wealth from the family to the state weakens the nation and makes it vulnerable to conquest by enemies foreign and domestic.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

The blessing of a man that fears the LORD includes a full, abundant life even to the point of seeing his grandchildren grow and prosper.

Not only does a man who fears the LORD see God's blessing on his family, but he is a blessing to all the tribes in the nation. Shalom on the man; shalom on his family; shalom upon the church; and shalom upon of the nation.

Psalm 130 - There is Forgiveness with Thee

"But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared."



The exiles saw themselves in deep distress and mired down with Babylonian customs.

Who among the exiles did not think they were deported to Babylon because of their sins? (2 Kings 17:7-23)

In a foreign land, without a temple, without a sacrificial system, all doubted if God could or would forgive them.

Possibly, this poet wrote this psalm after the temple was rebuilt. We just don't know for sure.

Wrestling through centuries of guilt and the distress because of the exile, this Hebrew concluded, "There is forgiveness with God;" "that the LORD shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

Psalm 130:1 <A Song of degrees.> Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

The psalmist employs a popular image "Out of the depths" to characterize the grave circumstances under which he uttered his prayer to the Lord.

Like Jonah in the belly of the whale, the Levite felt squeezed by the despotism of a severe trial. Possibly, his cry to the LORD involved the crushing consequences of the Babylonian Captivity.

2 Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

The Lord hears many prayers, but the psalmist pleads with Him to hear his prayers and to be attentive to his voice in his dire distress. The psalmist has confidence in the Lord, but appears to be suffering from waves of doubt due to the storm raging in his soul.

Possibly, in the surf and foam of the "depths," he remembered his sins and becomes anxious about securing the LORD's forgiveness.

3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

A soul weighed down with a millstone of guilt hanging around his neck appears on stage. In his torrent of distress, sins come out of the grave like ghosts to haunt his conscience. Sins of the past came to life and flashed before him causing the psalmist to question God's forgiveness and his standing with the Lord.

His faith taught Him that sin has negative consequences. What he doesn't know is whether his distress is a form of punishment for his personal sins or a tool for sanctification. Discipline often feels like punishment.

Remember, the Jews were a profoundly religious people. Misfortune stirred a deep sense of contrition. Faithful Hebrews did not blame the Lord for their circumstances, but they did question the reason for it. The question, "Is it my sins?" plagued the mind of every distressed soul.

The word "mark" means "to guard or to watch." If the Lord is a fastidious judge Who demands justice for every sin, what man would be left standing on earth? The answer, of course, is no one.

Consider the patience of God and His grace towards sinners. He doesn't strike men dead when they sin. Rather, He patiently endures transgression and defers judgment. Moreover, He forgives penitents resting on the accomplishments of Christ and the power of His blood (1 John 1:5-7).

4 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

In distress, this burdened soul seems anxious to secure God's forgiveness.

Other religions offered no forgiveness, but there is forgiveness with the LORD. Up all night with worry, the distressed man cannot wait till dawn so he can go to the temple to offer the appropriate sacrifices and to plead his case to the Lord.

The duty to live righteously is a bedrock of Jewish theology, but studies in the Torah also taught the Hebrews that the LORD is forgiving . . . that blood on the altar enables this holy God to forgive His people . . . not only for their acts, but the pain it causes Him.

The psalmist is not in the least way talking about some kind of automatic, sugar-sweet, Fairy Godmother-type forgiveness.

Israel's sacrificial system taught the nation that God forgives sinners, but only upon the grounds of blood sacrifice (Genesis 4; Exodus 12; Leviticus 16). This fact is not some kind of spiritual insurance program that justifies reckless and careless living. Rather, God's forgiveness created fear in the hearts of the pious.

Likewise, for the church! That the Son had to die to pay the blood-bond generates love for our Lord and procures our obedience to Him.

Ellicott adds another color to this rainbow of blessing: "the manifestation of Divine mercy to Israel may strike fear in the heathen."

5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

This text is usually interpreted as a saint waiting on the LORD in prayer for some type of relief. But, it is much more than this!

The "I" refers to the psalmist who is in dire straits . . . a man burdened down by his own sins . . . a man anxious to be right with God -- something very rare among modern men.

Mark the double use of the word "wait" -- the method of emphasis in Hebrew: I wait, my soul waits. Note the patience at work in the soul of the author: *I waited, I wait, and I will wait . . . and*

while I wait, I take comfort in the promises of His Word. I wait for assurance of forgiveness . . . for a sign that I have right standing with God . . . for His deliverance from my distress.

Benson adds this insight: "I wait for him in sincerity, and not in profession only; with fervency, and not in a spirit of lukewarmness and indifference."

6 My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

Barnes has this translation insight: The Septuagint and Latin Vulgate render this, "My soul hopeth in the Lord from the morning watch until night."

This text is usually interpreted as a man anxiously waiting for an answer to a prayer for relief. But, the context of this psalm informs us this man was waiting for the gates of the temple to be opened at dawn so he could obtain forgiveness from God.

The psalmist, probably a Levite, was familiar with the duties of night watch in the temple where the first rays of light signaled the commencement of temple rituals which secured God's blessings upon the nation -- sacred services which comforted anxious souls eagerly waiting to enter the temple and to offer the required sacrifice to obtain relief for their souls which were battered by an agitated conscience.

Benson adopted a natural approach to this text: "Levitical guards being wearied with hard service and want of rest, earnestly desired and eagerly expected the break of day, that they might be discharged from duty." But, this approach alone fails to reflect the context of a man burdened down with his sins.

Benson quotes Hammond who sees anxious penitents waiting patiently at the temple gates burning with ambition to worship God; to offer prayers of thanksgiving to the Lord; and, penitents earnestly seeking forgiveness from the Lord for their sins that had separated them from Him.

This seems to be the correct and beautiful perspective of this psalm.

7 Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

"Let Israel hope in the LORD" is the rallying cry of Israel -- an ordinance for the nation.

The word "plenteous" means "great, abundant, multiple" -- a term describing one super rich in mercy. God is so rich in mercy his silk-stockings treasure chest has no bottom or ceiling - "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Psalm 103:11)

"There is no pit so deep, that God's love is not deeper still." - Corrie ten Boom

The psalmist does not see the Lord as some scrooge-like, dis-inclined Benefactor . . . but a Lord that delights in saving and comforting His people; that warms to a boil in showing mercy; that shines with eagerness to grant forgiveness; that remains resolute and undisturbed in hearing our pleas or sharing His wealth with sinners.

Is our view of God this positive?

Years can go by where nothing happens, then there are days when a year of changes happen in one day to the delight of the saints.

8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

The word "redeem" (padah) means "to rescue, redeem, and deliver."

He redeems men not only from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin; not only from the consequences of sin, but from its dominion over the man; not only from punishment of sin, but from the problems that sin causes; not only from feelings of guilt, but from true guilt; not only from sins known, but from sins unknown; not only from the height and width of sin, but from its "depths" (130:1)

The psalm ends with hope. Not only does the psalmist gain assurance the LORD forgives his sins, but he blossoms with confidence that God will redeem Israel from all their iniquities . . .

. . . and He did redeem the elect of Israel at Calvary with "the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19) "for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22).

Psalm 131 - When Accused

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself . . ."



As did this psalmist, every man of God will find himself the target of criticism. And, like this author, he must walk on the path of patience with humility.

Psalm 131:1 <A Song of degrees of David.> LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

Body language experts tell us that proud people have their chin up and nose in the air while looking down with disdain at the lower classes.

Possibly, the psalmist spoke his mind on the political issues of his time and his opponents accused him of being arrogant and talking about matters "above his pay grade." Quite possibly, the Levite was correct and his opponents wrong; that his critics walked by sight, and the psalmist walked by faith; that the nitpickers determined reality based on circumstances and human reason, and the Levite evaluated matters using the Word of God. Unable to refute his logic, his adversaries conceivably recoiled with an ad hominem attack on this man of faith.

More than likely, the psalmist expressed hope that God would bring the exiles back to the land of Israel. Perhaps, brazen doubters blasted his optimism that the LORD was going to pave the way for the Jews to return to the Holy Land -- a lofty, heavenly faith to be sure.

The accusers of the psalmist charged him with the very thing they were guilty of doing -- being proud and arrogant.

In his own defense, this writer claims not to have a proud heart; that he did not envy the higher class nor show contempt for the less fortunate. It was not his habit to arrogate to himself things above his station in life nor to speak of matters outside of his study and experience. He aimed at nothing extreme; rather, he expressed contentment with his place in life.

"The love of God reigning in the heart, will subdue self-love. Where there is a proud heart, there is commonly a proud look." - Matthew Henry

The goal of knowing God and doing our duty in all thing challenges most of us. Let us be content with pursuing God and carrying out the assignments He gives us.

Let us be humble and content with our calling in life -- something hard for Americans who are conditioned by idealists to do the impossible and to reach for the stars. Christians need to be weaned from idealism to focus on realism; from fantasy to connect to reality; from fiction in order to focus on the Great Commission.

Contentment does not mean complacency. The former gives thanks and looks up; the latter looks down and gives up.

Contentment makes poor men rich, and discontentment makes rich men poor.

A woman clothed with cheerfulness will never be cold.

A grateful heart is the beginning of greatness; a complaining heart is the beginning of smallness, puniness, powerlessness, and meanness.

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.

To describe his repose, the psalmist draws a lesson from the first crisis of a child -- that of being weaned from his mother's breasts. A baby fusses at first, but then calms down and learns to be content in his mother's arms. The psalmist had his complaints with the exile, but after a while he found shalom and accepted his predicament.

The word "behaved" (shavah) means "agree with" or "to resemble."

Apparently, this Hebrew idiom infers, "I made myself as a contented as weaned child;" that is, he willed himself to stop fussing about matters he could not change and to quiet his soul. Behind every crime you fill find untamed ambition; and, behind an honest, likeable man you will find a contented soul.

An application: When accused, stop talking, and listen. Zip it! See yourself as a "Question Machine" and not an "Answering Machine." What you say can and will be used against you. Silence is good. Let your soul rest in the comforts of the Lord.

"The heart yearns for worldly things, but by the grace of God he is weaned of these things" - Matthew Henry.

When our spiritual condition is not in tune with the cross; we must tune our minds by considering the cross.

Cruci Dum Spiro Fido

3 Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.

While it is not good to have utopian ambitions, it is good to have spiritual passions and to trust God to accomplish them; to claim His promises and to hope in the LORD to fulfill them.

Apparently, the psalmist went through a season of criticism. He believed what others could not understand, dreamed of what others could not conceive, stood on promises that others had abandoned. He did not let the chilly hearts of his brethren cool his own faith. He simply gave them reasons why they too should hope in the LORD.

"David is the model of the state of mind which the poet expresses here. He did not push himself forward, but suffered himself to be drawn forth out of seclusion. He did not take possession of the throne violently, but after Samuel has anointed him he willingly and patiently traverses the long, thorny, circuitous

way of deep abasement, until he receives from God's hand that which God's promise had assured to him." - Keil & Delitzsch

Accused of being too lofty and optimistic, the psalmist rested his case, "Let Israel hope in the LORD" in the nowtime and forever.

When accused, be humble or stumble; be content or experience resentment; be silent or begin to fragment. Defend principles, and then rest in the LORD. Sometimes, the best we can do is to state our case, and then trust the Lord with the results.

"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." - 2 Timothy 1:12

Psalm 129 - He Cuts Asunder the Cords of the Wicked

"The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked."



This post exilic psalm considers the temporal state of affliction by Israel combined with the confident assurance of the Lord's deliverance from oppression.

Psalm 129:1 <A Song of degrees.> Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:

The "me" is the voice of the nation Israel – also true of Christ and His holy church.

"Many a time" can be translated "much."

"Youth" refers to Israel as a young nation. Glancing over their enslavement in Egypt to their exile in Babylon, the psalmist personifies Israel as a literary device to address the nation's afflictions at the hands of pagan empires.

The godly among true Israel have always been a target for oppression. They were not persecuted because of their race, but because of their faith.

Biblical faith is a mystery to the world and for this reason rulers oppress gospel preachers.

Moreover, it would be a mistake to confuse modern manufactured anti-Semitism and fabricated racism for political advantage with the genuine maltreatment of outspoken Christians. The former is artificial; the latter is authentic.

2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.

The psalmist recalls the nation's oppressions by Egypt, the Amorites, Midianites, Ammonites, Philistines, Syrians, Assyrians, and now Babylon.

He repeats his primary thought in verse one to impress upon the mind of the exiles that maltreatment by foreign federations was nothing new. It is as if the psalmist is saying, *we've always been unwelcome and treated unfairly. Our present predicament is not a national emergency. Our enemies have attempted to hurt us, kill us, and destroy us, BUT they have never prevailed! Our present experience is not unlike the troubles our fathers endured, so do not fear or be discouraged. We will prevail again. We will not only survive, but thrive. Don't panic. Accept the trials. Trust the LORD for His remedy. Shalom.*

[But, modern Ashkenazi, Jewish Zionists have no right to play the victim as they are behind much of the suffering in this world.]

3 The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.

Continuing his theme of national suffering, the psalmist compares ancient Israel's distress to an abused slave whose back has been brutally beaten with whips and cords - a back that looks like a furrowed field with long, deep grooves.

Modern scholars inform us that over 50 wars have been fought at the gates of Jerusalem . . . more than any other city in the world.

What happened to Israel, happened to our Lord Jesus Christ by whose wounds we are healed.

1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Let us remember that one of the callings of Christians is to suffer as He suffered, not for suffering sake, but that we might be perfected instruments for the healing of others.

1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

"The enemies of God's people have very barbarously endeavoured to wear out the saints of the Most High. But the church has been always graciously delivered." - Matthew Henry.

4 The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

Righteousness has the sense of faithfulness in this passage.

The verb "hath cut asunder" (qatsats) is a Piel Perfect implying intense historic deliverances by the LORD. Something all Christian would do well to consider when they are going through distressing circumstances.

The author does not play the blame game nor does he plunge into self-pity. He does not accuse the LORD of wrongdoing. He infers the sovereign LORD ordains periods of persecution to come upon God's people for their good and perfection.

The "wicked" include God-haters, anti-Christians, and persecutors of the church. Consider Nero and the martyrs of the early church.

During the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211), Clement of Alexandria reported "... *we have exhibited before our eyes every day abundant sources of martyrs that are burnt, impaled, beheaded.*" - Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, ii. 20.

"cut asunder the cords" is likened unto a rescuer cutting the rope and nets that trap little animals and birds.

"he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked" informs us that enslavement is only temporary; that our righteous Lord breaks the chains that bind and sets us free. The history of Israel is like nets being broken and birds escaping. Likewise for the church! It has been built on the rock and shall prosper until the Lord returns.

5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.

The word "confounded" (buwsh) means "to be ashamed, confused, and deeply disappointed." "turned back" (cuwg) means "to be moved back." The idea is that the persecutors will suffer utter defeat and frustration.

Israel suffered much, but in all her affliction the faithful LORD set her free; that is, be assured that no enslavement is permanent.

Based upon the LORD's frequent rescues, the psalmist lays down his **first ordinance** (a jussive): Let the oppressors who hate Zion "be confounded and turned back;" i.e. be broken and ashamed like Pharaoh who drowned in the Red Sea.

6 Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up:

The homes of Israelites had roofs made of sticks, mud, and grass. Consequently, when turf sprouted the hot sun baked the grass turning it brown.

Likewise, the psalmist delivers his **second ordinance**: let those that hate Israel dry up and wither away like the grass on house tops.

"*which withereth afore it groweth up*" implies the psalmist wished Zion-haters to dry up before they matured and produced seedlings.

"While God's people shall flourish as the loaded palm-tree, or the green and fruitful olive, their enemies shall wither as the grass upon the house-tops" -
Matthew Henry.

7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.

The "mowers" are gleaners who take their scythe, cut the grass, and bundle it into sheaves to feed the sheep and cattle during the winter months. Uncut grass remained, withered, and was good for nothing; that is, may the enemies of true Israel be like reapers with empty hands and with no grass to cut because of withered grass and empty fields.

Building on the wilting grass metaphor, the psalmist expands his ordinance in verse six wishing that the God-haters might be like the grass left behind by the mowers that withers and dies . . . like farmers with no bales of hay in their barns.

8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

We learn from Ruth 2 that farmers in Israel pronounced daily blessings upon the reapers - "The blessing of the Lord be upon you"; and, that reapers returned the greeting. Such courtesy and grace made Israel a worker's paradise.

Can you imagine going to work and saying to your boss, "The Lord bless you," and your boss responding with, "The Lord bless you. I am thankful for your service to this company"?

The psalmist wishes that the God-haters might never hear or experience the pleasantries common to the business climate in Israel; that is, may the wicked never experience the blessing of the LORD. *May they be mowed down like grass and be left to rot in the open fields.*

Good men do not pronounce blessings over pagans: feminists, secularists, atheists, humanists, and anti-Christians. Our best prayer for the wicked is, "May God have mercy on their soul." The benediction "May the Lord bless you" belongs to the righteous for the righteous.

Psalm 132 - Remember the Afflictions of David

"LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions"



The exile tested the faith of the nation of Israel as to their standing in the eyes of the Lord.

Moreover, when the exile ended and Cyrus issued the order for the Jews to return to Israel to rebuild a temple and a nation out of the rubble must have seemed like God was calling them to resurrect the dead -- a task that called the people to forsake all and follow Christ.

The Jews, however, were not united in their faith before the great decree of Cyrus, nor were the Jews united after the order was issued.

Some Levites saw Cyrus' decree as a huge opportunity to rebuild the temple. The psalmist wrote this hymn to encourage the nation to accept the duty and to rebuild the temple out of the ruins of the city. The psalmist compares the opportunity of the Jews in Babylon to bring the ark back to the dilapidated city to David's troubles in bringing the ark from Obed-Edom to Jerusalem in his day.

Psalm 24, Psalm 68, and Psalm 132 are dedicated to the glories of the ark coming to Jerusalem.

Psalm 132:1 A Song of degrees. LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions:

The psalmist addresses his prayer to the LORD requesting him to remember the difficulties that King David experienced in shuttling the ark to Jerusalem when there was no vision to do so.

Think of the difficulties, the organizational challenge, the squabbles among the people, the death of Uzzah when he touched the ark, and the order to cease the procession. It took time to heal and great courage to issue a second order for the sullen Levites to organize and to escort the Ark to Jerusalem.

Consider how David had to endure squabbles among his cabinet members, military officers, and standing soldiers. David even deflected "flak" from his wife Michal who shamed him for celebrating the Ark's entrance into the city.

The plea to remember is not so much for the LORD as it was for the Jews in Babylon to remember David's troubles in bringing the ark to Jerusalem. As David faced difficulties, so did the Jews. Leaving their homes in Babylon and caravanning a thousand miles to the ruins of Jerusalem was no "cake-walk" in the park.

King David found strength in the LORD to issue the order and to organize the nation to bring the ark to the capital city. Likewise, the exiles in Babylon needed a downpour of grace to return the Ark of the Covenant to its home which in their day was an archaeological ruin.

Consider the difficulties these Babylonian Levites faced: leadership, selling their homes, halting their careers, raising funds for the impossible task, organizing the Levites and the settlers in a cavalcade, obtaining supplies, saying good bye to family and friends, and dealing with the nitty-gritty problems of traveling a thousand miles to a land in shambles.

2 How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;

David had a vision to bring the ark to Jerusalem and to make the city the religious center as well as the civil hub of the nation -- to organize his people around the worship of YHWH rather than the work of government.

Preparing a suitable place for the ark in the city, raising funds, answering the skeptics, and organizing the Levites and recruiting 30,000 chief men was such a daunting assignment, David placed himself under duty to accomplish the task.

So important was this project, David took an oath to stay focused on the operation. This vow was made in the Name of YHWH the sovereign God of Israel and in the Name of the God of Jacob, the One Who gives grace to the weak -- the One Who defended Jacob in all his afflictions -- the One who gives strength to accomplish the task.

Taking an oath is a serious undertaking as it binds a man to a "do or die" obligation. Get it done or perish!

In other words, David placed himself between a rock and a hard place; between God on one side and the duties of a military king on the other side.

Remember, the people were very content with the tabernacle being in the west, out of the way, as a peripheral part of national life. David, on the other hand, desired the worship of YHWH to have center stage in Israel. His pragmatic generals weren't so enthusiastic about the project (Vows: Numbers 30:2; Ecclesiastes 5:5; Matthew 5:33).

Consider the afflictions of David

Take time to examine the price this young king paid to escort the ark from Shiloh-Kiriath Jearim, Obed-Edom to Jerusalem in order to construct a temple in the nation's capital.

3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

Figuratively speaking, David did not go home to rest or relax. He worked 24 hours a day until the ark-project was accomplished.

4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids,

Figuratively speaking, David refused to sleep or close his eyes until the Ark was brought to Jerusalem.

5 Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

During this period, King David bypassed all family and administrative duties focusing on one task -- to enthrone the LORD as the true King in Israel by bringing the symbol of His authority to the nation's capital.

Only the LORD was strong enough to unite the divided tribes and to defend the nation from its powerful enemies in the east, north, south, and west.

Likewise, only the LORD is strong enough to unite husband and wife, citizens and princes, and the warring factions in the church.

Consider the flak David received from pushing aside his military and governmental duties; his loss of sleep, his deprivation of food, his disregard for a social life, his abandonment of intimacy with his wives, his postponement of fatherly responsibilities, and neglect of national concerns.

David must have also alienated statesmen and tribal dignitaries. Who can imagine the angst and hullabaloo storming in the king's court over this "pointless" religious project? He even lost his wife (Michal) who meant the world to him in discharging his ministry assignment.

6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.

"Ephratah" was the ancient name of Bethlehem in Judah (Genesis 35:16, 19; 48:7). Because Rachael and Leah faithfully mothered the tribes of Israel, "Ephratah" means "place of fruitfulness." Prior to the Israelite conquest of Canaan, Jerusalem was inhabited by Canaanites.

In Ruth 1:2, it is called "Bethlehem-Judah," but the inhabitants are called "Ephrathites;" in Micah 5:2, "Bethlehem-Ephratah;" in Matthew 2:6, "Bethlehem in the land of Judah." (Christiananswer.net).

We have to ask, "Where did this vision to develop a God-centered nation come from? Where did the idea of bringing the ark to Jerusalem originate?"

Apparently, the hope of a God-centered nation with Jerusalem as the capital and the ark as the symbol of the LORD's authority as the paramount nucleus of national life was birthed by Caleb and Ruth and Boaz in Bethlehem in the hill country of Ephratah.

Later, Mary the mother of our Lord gave birth to Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords in Bethlehem of Ephratah (Luke 2:1-4).

Micah 5:2 But thou, **Bethlehem Ephratah**, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is **to be ruler in Israel**; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

7 We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

"tabernacles" and "footstool" are metaphors for the Ark, God's throne, and God's temple in the Holy City.

So important was bringing the ark to Jerusalem that David took an oath to overcome the obstacles and to accomplish this mega-task.

Likewise, the psalmist speaking for the people grounds the commission of bringing the ark from Babylon to the Holy City with a profound commitment: "We will go . . . we will worship at His footstool" in Jerusalem!

8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.

First Petition: "Arise" (imperative) is a holy invocation pronounced by God's people before they enter holy duties and formidable tasks. In any undertaking for the Lord, men need His Wisdom, His power, His strength, and His patience to accomplish the task: "Arise, O LORD" was a call for God to assist the Jews in returning to Israel to rebuild the temple . . . a setting of the stage for arrival of the Messiah.

Consider the "Song of the Ark"

Numbers 10:35-36 And it came to pass, when the ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, LORD, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O LORD, unto the many thousands of Israel. (Pronounced by Moses, not Aaron)

Psalms 3:7 Arise, O Lord and save me . . .

Psalms 7:6 Arise, O LORD . . .

Psalms 9:19 Arise, O LORD; let not (sinful) man prevail:

Psalms 10:12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.

1 Chronicles 22:19 . . . arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God . . . (Solomon)

"rest" is a metonym for "home" – a reference to God's home among his people who enjoy His peace and His presence.

9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

Second Petition: This is a call for Israel to shape up and to clean up -- to rebuild the temple and re-establish worship services in Jerusalem.

"Clothed with righteousness" refers to priestly garments ordained by God for the sons of Aaron fitting for worshiping Him in the "beauty of holiness" (Psalm 96:9).

Repairing Jerusalem and constructing a second temple with regular Levitical services was not only a duty . . . but the joy of the people. Shouting with joy could not happen until the temple was finished; and, it was completed by the grace of God in 516 B.C.

10 For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

Petition three: "turn not away . . ."

The word "anointed" (maschiah) refers to Israel – the exiles in Babylon.

Israel enjoyed a perfect position before God as part of his elect, but their spiritual condition was another matter. Positionally, Israel was His firstborn, the apple of his eye. Conditionally, the nation was tattered and full of doubters and complainers. Concerned about the defects of the people, the psalter pleads with the Lord not to abandon His flawed people.

"Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine

iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." -
Zechariah 3:3-4

He offers the Messianic Promises to David as the main reason the Lord should honor his prayers:

" . . . appoint a place for His people Israel that they may dwell in a place of their own . . . " and, "I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom . . ." (2 Samuel 7:10ff).

The psalmist did not plead the goodness of the people. Rather, he pleads the good promises of the Word of God.

Since the Messiah (Christ) had to come through the family of David, Israel had to survive the captivity in order for the Christ to appear in history.

His reasoning is sound. The LORD's integrity was at stake. If the Jews did not return from Babylon then all skeptics had a reason to consider God's promises as frivolous and fraudulent.

11 The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

Like a competent advocate, the psalmist reminds God of His promises to David, and holds Him to it. The LORD also has a blood-bond rooted in the promise to set the son of David upon his throne.

And, our Father did it in the "Christ event" with one difference. **The fulfillment was greater than the promise!!**

Not only did the Father set the Messiah on the throne of David . . . the throne of David was mysteriously and mystically merged with the throne of God (Acts 2). The son of David, the Son of God, and our Savior is sat down on the Throne at the right hand of the Father in and through the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

The psalmist continues to plead his case based on the covenant. The covenant contained a conditional cause; that is, that blessing is delimited to the nation's obedience.

But, even so, the Lord promised not to remove his love from His people nor let them utterly fail; that is, *human failure will **not** frustrate the purposes of God* (Psalm 89:30-33).

" . . . Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

Oh, how vast is the love of God, deeper than the deepest ocean. The LORD also placed Himself under oath; i.e. "**man's faithlessness cannot finally defeat God's purpose**" (Cambridge).

13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.

The marvelous promise to David is connected with establishing Mt. Zion (Psalm 78:67-70); *that is, for God to keep his promise to David, Jerusalem and the temple had to be rebuilt.*

Jehovah speaks. The expression of His Will in the facts of history is translated into the form of an utterance. Observe the stress laid on the Divine choice: in making Jerusalem the religious center of the nation (and ultimately of the world) David was fulfilling Jehovah's purpose. (Cambridge)

Broadly speaking, the reconstruction period was the setting of the stage for the appearance of the Christ of God in this drama we call prophetic history.

14 This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

The psalmist continues to quote the stipulations of the contract:

Jehovah speaks: The expression of His Will in the facts of history is translated into the form of an utterance. Observe the stress laid on the Divine choice: in making Jerusalem the religious center of the nation (and ultimately of the world) David was fulfilling Jehovah's purpose. " (Cambridge).

15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

The psalmist grasps the proposed blessing of the covenant with an iron fist. These divine blessings are extended to the people, kings, rulers, priests, and *even the poor*. The common, ordinary poor, sick, and aged are **not** left out of the promise! Even those "below average," which includes half of us, are not considered pariahs in the eyes of God. Praise the Lord!

16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

The term "clothe" is a verbal metaphor for sovereign action; and "salvation" is a general term implying God will save and bless His servants. Those ministers who do the hard work of ministry and faithfully perform their duties are marked for special blessings, healing, and reward.

17 There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

Use of the "term" horn refers to vigor and strength. It implies that God will restore the prosperity and might of the house of David. The LORD will bring the exiled Jews back to the Holy Land; they will rebuild the temple and repair Jerusalem. The Messiah will come at the proper time . . . and, He did.

18 His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

As the LORD has a promise for His people, He also has a promise for anti-Christ.

"His enemies" are those that resist His authority and purpose.

God swore an oath promising to bless His people. Regardless of their past failures, God will not withdraw His love from them. There is nothing in history that can prevent His intent to bless. Furthermore, *there is NOTHING the global elite can do to frustrate the purpose of God.*

Clothing “with shame” is the opposite of being clothed with salvation. His enemies are marked for downfall, damnation, doom, and destruction (Psalm 37).

“but upon himself shall his crown flourish” refers to His eternal sovereignty and authority. He is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, the Author and Finisher of the Faith. He reigns, and His purpose will be accomplished. Hallelu-jah!

Let us remember the afflictions of our Greater David, and what it cost our Lord to bring us into His kingdom so we can have an inheritance with the saints in the Jerusalem above (Hebrews 12:22).

Psalm 133 - Sweet Oil of the Spirit

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"



We can call this the viscosity of the Spirit psalm.

The exile tested the faith of the nation of Israel as to their standing in the eyes of the Lord.

When the exile ended and Cyrus issued the order for the Jews to return to their land to rebuild a temple, the bar-bell task overwhelmed the exiles.

The Jews were not united in their faith before the great decree of Cyrus, nor were they united after it was issued. Their bickering, complaining, and whining smelled foul all through the Middle East.

Some Levites saw Cyrus' decree as a huge opportunity to rebuild the temple . . . others saw it as a mammoth difficulty . . . like pushing a 1000 pound boulder up Mt. Hermon nine thousand feet above sea level.

The psalmist penned this hymn to unite the squabbling tribes around the return and the back breaking task of rebuilding the temple out of the rubble in their ancient capital.

Psalm 133:1 <A Song of degrees of David.> Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

The Jews in Babylon were like all people: complaining, testy, and divided.

The injection "Behold" (hegeh) means to stop what you are doing and observe the wonder of unity around godly ambitions.

The word "unity" (yachad) is translated "together," "altogether," "alike," and "yea." Ellicott notes that the term is much like the French word *tous deux* which means "all two" (i.e. both).

The author of the hymn describes unity as "good" and "pleasant." The word "good"(tov) means excellent, healthy, and wholesome. The word "pleasant" (na'iyim) conveys the idea of something delightful and sweet - - like candy to the soul -- like the taste of freshly baked bread -- like the pleasant fragrance of vanilla from a flowering orchid.

To the psalmist it was good for Israel to unite in rebuilding the temple . . . to overcome the naysayers . . . to come together at the yearly festivals . . . to triumph over the political division of the tribes. Unity is rare and difficult to achieve. Only the LORD is strong enough to overcome the divided interests of Jacob's irascible sons.

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

Unity is so precious it is compared to the one of a kind oil that flowed down Aarons beard, collar, shoulders, and ordination garments when He was anointed by God to the priesthood - "an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary" (Exodus 30:22-23).

Consider not only the lovely aroma of the anointing oil, but **the abundance** of it emptied on Aaron. While all the garments of the priests were sprinkled with the fragrant oil, it was poured upon Aaron.

In modern times we say about men's cologne - "a little dab will do ya." But, no less than a cup was decanted on the High Priest -- an olfactory rush he could never forget.

The words "run down" or "descend" (yarad) are used three times in this short psalm. Terms like "flowing," "streaming," and "cascading down with sensual delights" fail to describe this holy experience.

The oil became a symbol of "joy" and "fragrance," and "consecration" (verse one).

In this text, the emphasis is on **the abundance** of oil running down Aaron's beard and garments.

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

The psalmist provides two more metaphors to describe the blessedness and unity among brothers -- the "dew of Hermon" and the dew "that gently descended upon the mountains of Zion" revitalizing all living things.

"This feature of the picture is taken from the natural reality, for an abundant dew, when warm days have preceded, might very well be diverted to Jerusalem by the operation of the cold current of air, sweeping down from the north over Hermon. " (Ellicott)

While dew refreshes, the emphasis in this text is **not** upon sweet "pleasantness" (sweetness) in verse one, or the "abundance of the oil" (verse 2), **but upon the cohesive "descension" (yarad) of the anointing perfume and dew** -- upon how every molecule of oil clings to each other with a stubborn refusal to separate from its brotherly molecules.

Consider the spiritual implications of the science behind the viscosity of oil: fluidity, density, and consistency - "the state of being thick, sticky, and semifluid in consistency" - the force resisting flow and separation.

"Oil is, without question, the finest emblem of union that ever was conceived! . . . beginning in the prince, and diffused through the people, is here illustrated by two images, the most apt and beautiful that ever were imagined." (Dr. Delaney quoted by Benson).

Notice **the triple reference** to the cadence of this anointing in verse 2 and 3: "ran down" (yarad), "went down" (yarad), and "descended upon" (yarad) (verse 3) upon Aaron -- a triple emphasis on elemental structure, unity, and flow of oil gently rolling down the priest's beard and garments in a slow, unified stream that provided a banquet of fragrances to be enjoyed by the

Lord -- a symbol of the believer being clothed with the virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit qualifying the minister to serve Him. (see Psalm 110:3)

The lesson here is that human nature stinks. Man's flesh, thinking, motivations, anger, fret, worry, wordiness, and best intentions stink. The stench of human flesh must not emanate from the pulpit. His ministers must be filled with the Spirit. Any and all work of the "flesh" defiles the ministry. A work performed by the power of the Spirit sweetens the aroma in every ministry.

"For there the LORD commanded His blessing." But, where is the "there"?

"the dew descending on Zion, in this latter clause, is to be taken allegorically for the favour or blessing of God" (Benson).

"No doubt the poet intended to write, 'As the oil poured on Aaron's head flowed down to his beard, and as the dew of Hermon flowed down on Mount Zion, so *let* the covenant blessing descended on Jehovah's people;" (Ellicott). (Italics mine).

"We must evidently take "the dew of Hermon" as a poetical synonym for "choice dew" (Ellicott).

This is an OT Pentecostal Prayer -- a prayer that God's people would have the same mind, same tongue, same purpose, and the same faith -- that the cherished anointing oil might be poured on the remnant.

The "blessing" of the LORD is found in the pouring out of His Spirit upon God's people. Where the dew of the Spirit descends on God's covenant people, there is refreshing unity. Where there is unity in the gospel, there is blessings to be enjoyed. And, the remnant experienced a Pentecost in their day.

Ezekiel 39:28-29 Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led **into captivity** among the heathen: but **I have gathered them unto their own land**, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

There are two Pentecosts: The Civil Pentecost in Numbers 11 that fell upon Israel and the spiritual Pentecost that fell upon the new Israel (the church) in Acts 2.

Moreover, there were numerous civil Pentecosts in the Old Testament: Numbers 11, 1 Samuel 16, the times of Jehoshaphat (1 Chronicles 20:15) and those involved in the Return - Ezra 1:5, Ezekiel 39:28-29.

Where husband and wife are united to Christ . . . there the Lord commands His blessing.

Where the pastor is united to the Lord Jesus Christ and the people united with their pastor, there is a waterfall of blessing . . . 'for evermore' refreshing sinners who believe with the gift of eternal life. For "of his fullness have we all received . . ." (John 1:16). Like Mary's box of

expensive perfume the house is filled with the aroma of our Lord Jesus Christ in and through gospel proclamation (John 12).

Let's remember that our Savior was anointed with the sweet fragrances of Spirit. Wherever He went men were pleasantly invigorated by his pantry of heavenly spices -- so fitting for the Son Who is "altogether lovely" (Song of Songs 5:16). Wherever believing men meet to remember Christ in the breaking of bread, the whole church is reinvigorated by the bouquet of fragrances emanating from our Lord.

The priest worked in the temple complex, but they were not permitted to "sweat" because human sweat is obnoxious to the Lord. The Spirit forbids priests to wear wool turbans or cloaks lest they sweat and their odors offend the holiness of God. (Ezekiel 44:17-18).

There is a foul odor in many pulpits of America today. The pews are in need of the sweetness of Christ, an abundance of the Spirit, and a holy unity to descend upon the people.

In the beginning of Elijah's ministry, the Spirit commanded him: "Go hide yourself." And, good ministers of the gospel would do well to do the same.

May an aroma from an abundance of anointing oil of the Spirit descend upon pulpits today!

Oh, the joy when petty interests and division cease. When spiritual Israel and angels stand up and sing this song together.

Psalm 134 - Praising God During the Night Shift

Wake Up and Bless the Lord

" . . . which by night stand in the house of the LORD . "



Psalm 134 was the pinnacle psalm that exhorts night watchmen to wake up and to concentrated on the duty to not only to guard the temple, but to occupy themselves with the wonders of God dwelling among the people.

Psalm 134:1 <A Song of degrees.> Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

The psalm addresses "all ye servants of the LORD" working the night shift.

The name "LORD" is repeated five times in this brief psalm. Imagine a tender Levitical commander touching the shoulders of younger guards on duty during the graveyard shift exhorting them to wake up and to bless the LORD.

Who can doubt these sentinels armed with swords and spears were a little bored and sleepy. Standing is hard. Standing at night while doing guard duty was triple-tough as these security officers tended to doze off.

Not only were these men charged with guard duty, the psalmist charges these sentries to "bless the LORD;" that is, to think great thoughts about Him and to praise Him while serving the night shift. *Our blessed LORD deserves praise during the night as well as during the day.*

So important is staying awake and blessing the LORD the captain uses the particle of interjection "Behold" or "Lo" (hey'geh); that is, "Hey there! Wake up. Remember the privilege of serving Him!"

"Bless ye the LORD!" "Bless" is a Piel imperative -- an intense command requiring maximum energy. But, it was more likely a deliberate kind touch on the shoulder by a Levitical captain gently reminding his fellow guard to awaken and to bless Him while on duty.

Many evils happen during the witching hour so do not fall asleep. Blessing the LORD keeps the Devil away.

Those of you who have the privilege of serving the LORD during the night shift must "Bless the LORD" and not grumble. "Bless Him" and not yawn. "Bless Him" and not slumber.

Praise Him in the morning: Praise Him at noon: Praise Him in the evening: and Praise Him in the dead of night. He is worthy of praise twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Can't sleep? Bless the Lord!

2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

"Lift up your hands" is a Piel imperative -- a deliberate gentle order for the dozing guard to lift up his hands, stretch a bit, and wake up. But, more than this! Lifting up your hands implies fulfilling your vow to serve Him and to focus on the wonders of the great "I am."

The imperative "bless" is repeated a second time; that is, to consider his greatness and respond to Him with joy in the heart and praise on the lips -- even at night!

3 The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.

The Levitical captain gently gives the dozing soldier one reason to wake up and to bless the LORD -- the LORD created the heavens and the earth -- to praise Him for the rays of the Sun conquering darkness, and for the canvas colors of reds and yellows in the evening.

Because of the promotion of the "Big Bang Theory" by speculative scientists, many need to know that the LORD is the Creator of heaven with all its twinkling stars. He is the Creator of the green earth with its majestic mountains, calm valleys, and blue seas.

Remembering the Creator keeps one upright. Wake up, stand up, and Man up to bless the Lord. He is worthy of our praise and adoration.

Psalm 135 - Reasons to Praise God

“Praise Him, O ye Servants of the LORD”



This is not part of the Song of Degrees, but it fits well with the Pilgrim Songs.

The more you contemplate the LORD, the easier life gets. The more you complain, the more your face looks like the front cover on the Book of Lamentations.

Yes, there is madness in the world that can suck joy and hope out of hearts. Consequently, the world needs praising Christians with their eye on the throne, which smell the roses, and who hip-hop to the dance of joy.

The Quadruple Command

Psalm 135:1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD. 2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God,

The word “praise” is used three times in the first verse and five times in the first three verses.

“Praise” (halal) forms the root of “Hallelujah.” Used three times as a triple emphasis in this text, it means “to rise and shine and to boast in the Lord” -- an expansion of the thoughts in Psalm 116 and 134:1. Repeating words is the Hebrew way of punctuating a sentence with an exclamation point. In this case, there are three of them (!!!).

The object of praise is “the LORD,” the Great “I Am,” – an inexhaustible subject of admiration and worship.

The verb “praise” is an imperative; i.e. it is not an option nor is it the caboose on the train. Look at this triple command as “the little engine that could.”

Moreover, the verb is a Piel Imperative requiring intense, vigorous action. The Piel verb pattern acts like a fireman or stoker on a locomotive fueling the furnace of a steam boiler.

Complaining is natural; praise is supernatural. Grouchiness is as ordinary as rocks; thankfulness is extraordinary like diamonds on the sidewalk. Worry springs from common soil; trust emerges from a rare cultivated garden.

The fires of praise must be stoked to fuel the furnace of God's work. Praise performs like sunshine to the soul; like rains in a dry climate. The Lord loves it; the Devil hates it.

Addressed to the “servants of the Lord, “Ye that stand in the house of the Lord,” the psalmist exhorts the priestly class to forcefully, energetically, and enthusiastically reach deep into their soul and to press the praise button. Stand and praise; sit and praise; work and praise the Lord.

"How beautiful are the feet of them" that praise the Lord saying, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:1-7).

With so much negativity in the world, men lose hope. Hope blooms when God's ministers sprinkle every conversation with the sweetness of Christ. Everyone talks about the madness of politics and the lunacy of government officials. Where are the men with an eye on the Lord boasting of His work on earth?

Reasons to Praise God

3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.

This is the fourth time the Spirit exhorts His servants to praise the LORD. "Praise" includes verbal expressions of honor, but it is so much more.

These priests were working men, and God did not expect them to say, "Praise the Lord" every time they took a step. Rather, the word "praise" refers to living consciously of His presence and doing our best to perform our duties in a way that honors Him. Sometimes, keeping our mouth shut and working carefully is a means of praising God (Habakkuk 2:20).

The psalmist gives two reasons to praise in this text and at least ten reasons to do so in this psalm:

- (1) Praise the LORD for He is good (tov). Praise leads to wholesomeness, health, righteousness, and godliness. Manly men praise god; craven men act in their own self-interest,
- (2) Praise the LORD for He is pleasant (na'iym), delightful, sweet, lovely, agreeable, and satisfying.

4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.

(3) Praise the LORD for His gracious election of Israel. Consider His mercies, and praise swells in the heart. Consider His election of us and we will spend our life praising Him (Ephesians 1:1-7; Romans 9; and 1 Peter 11-3).

Out of all the people ever born He chose us before the foundation of the world to share in the glories of His kingdom. Consider His love. He loves not because of who we are but because of Who He is -- a God of love.

God calls Israel a "Peculiar treasure;" that is, His valuable property; His joy and His riches. Likewise, His election anoints us with value . . . with worth. Yes, we are sinners, but we are not trash. We are washed and cleansed by an operation of the Spirit (Hebrews 10:22; Titus 3:5). Moreover, His election beautifies us with dignity and honor as "sons of God." Praise His Name!!!

5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

(4) Praise the LORD for His greatness. There is nothing petite about the LORD. He is great in tender mercy, great in infinite power, great in incomprehensible knowledge, great in perfect righteousness and great in inexhaustible grace. How could any of us be ashamed to call Him "our God"?

6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

(5) Praise the LORD for His sovereignty. Objects in heaven and under heaven; on the earth and under the earth; in the seas and under the seas are His work. Man has yet to discover all of His accomplishments in the deep places, high places, and broad places.

Moreover, the LORD is pleased with His work and takes pleasure in His creation.

If we are honest, we get frustrated when the grocery bag breaks or a shoelace comes untied. In fact, ambitious men fight frustration all day long. But the Lord is never frustrated, never disappointed, and never agitated. If He wills it, it is done!

His sovereign power and jurisdiction are universal. Unlike pagan deities who are confined by local customs, the Lord reigns freely over the skies, seas, land, and people.

The psalmist announces the supremacy of YHWH above all the gods of the nations. He makes plans, and carries them out. A moth can't stop a rolling semi nor can frail creatures among men hinder the purposes of God. There is not a prime minister, parliamentarian, major, or judge that can demoralize God's will.

The LORD created and formed those powers of nature which operate in the heavens, on the earth, and in the waters *nunc pro tunc* -- powers which creatures are so quick to attribute to "Mother Nature" and the ostensible laws of science.

As the universal sovereign, He has a right to claim our praises.

"God is, and will be always, the same to his church -- a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God. And his church is, and will be, the same to him, a thankful, praising people: thus his name endures forever. He will return in ways of mercy to them, and will delight to do them good" – Matthew Henry.

More Reasons to be positive and to praise God

7 He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures.

(6) Praise the LORD for His power and the marvels of creation. The psalmist sees God as the Source of mists that watered the earth before the great flood; the lightning and the thunder that announce the coming showers that refresh land, crops, and beast; and, the Source of the winds that spread seeds that act like giant fans that cool those working during the heat of the day. The twinkling stars at night, and the white lilies waving in the meadows are His work.

8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast?

The "who" refers to the LORD God, not Moses.

(7) Praise the LORD for His work of providence in history . . . for the power of God in judgment. Smiting the firstborn of Egyptian nobles broke Pharaoh's stubborn will -- the final act that motivated the tyrant to release the Hebrew slaves. Likewise, let us praise the Lord for His acts of providence in our times that makes wars to cease, rains to fall, and fields to grow.

The New Testament consideration of these events is the death of the Passover Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ, at Calvary.

9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.

(8) Praise the LORD for His judgment miracles in Egypt. The psalmist showcases the plagues of Egypt as a reason to praise God - signs and wonders that exhibited the power of God; disasters that cannot be explained by natural law; selective judgments that fell upon the Egyptians, but not upon Israel. Consider the death angel that struck the firstborn of the Egyptians, but "passed over" the firstborn of the Hebrews because of blood on their doorposts.

10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings; 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:

(9) Praise the LORD for victory in war. The psalmist praises God for giving the young, tender nation military-success over Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan, and the city-state kings in Canaan -- conquests over giants that can only be explained by the power of God.

[Note: Do not confuse modern military Ashkenazi Israel with ancient Israel: the latter was directed by the correctness of God; the former by the cleverness of man.

12 And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.

(10) Praise the LORD for the land. The hymn writer exhorts the Levites to strike up the drums, to strum the harps, and to carol praises to God because of His generosity and grace in giving them the land. He did not give the hills and meadows to Israel's government, but to families and tribes within the nation.

Having land is one of the four cultural foundations of a nation. The other three blocks include a common race, a common religion, and a common language. Having been given land and victory over the Canaanites, Israel had all the elements that make up a nation – a grand subject of praise.

A Contrast between the LORD and the gods of the nations

13 Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.

How could any Hebrew forget the wonders of the exodus?

There is no verb in this verse, only nouns. Nouns are facts. It is a fact the Name of the LORD endures forever and that His Name (YHWH) is a sacred memorial to the true Israel of God. Generations come and go, but the name of this unchanging, eternal God does not melt away, morph, or mutate. *He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

"God is, and will be always, the same to his church, a gracious, faithful, wonder-working God. " - Matthew Henry.

"will judge His people" does **not** refer to dishing out punishment, but to His salvic interposition (mediation) on their behalf.

If necessary "He will repent" and change His mind **if a change of mind will benefit His people**. The Lord is not so inflexible that He cannot reverse His course for the good of the nation. He will not permit His decrees to destroy the people. He has immutable principles that He cannot bend, but He also has tender mercy that will always find a way to preserve His people from ruin.

In 2 Samuel 15, David's sense of justice butted heads with his fatherly compassion. As a king, Absalom deserved to die for murdering his brother. Justice demanded death; but, as a Father, David could not issue the order to execute his own son. Remember the wisdom of the woman of Tekoa. She slipped in this advice to David during his moral conflict, "God devises ways so that a banished person does not remain banished from him." (2 Samuel 14:14)

"Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other." - Psalm 84:10

Mercy and truth kissed at the cross, Praise the Lord!!! *Cruci dum spiro fido.*

15 The idols of the heathen 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 are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.

The psalmist contrast the impotency of idols with the Lord's marvelous sovereignty, power, knowledge, and mercy; that is, he romances the diamond attributes of the living God against the black velvet of lifeless idols.

"These verses arm believers against idolatry and all false worship, by showing what sort of gods the heathen worshipped." - Matthew Henry.

Men make idols from the gold and silver God created. While the LORD is self-existent, idols are the product of men's faithless hearts.

Thus, the psalmist mocks them because they are mute, blind, deaf, and breathless. Likewise, the craftsmen make idols because they too are mute, blind, and deaf to the true God.

The Triple Command Expanded

**19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:
20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.
21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.**

The psalm begins with four Piel (intense) imperatives for the servants of God – "Praise the LORD!!!" The psalmist ends the psalm with four Piel imperatives – "Bless the LORD" and one Piel imperative to "Praise ye the LORD" !

The term "blessed" in verse 21 is not a command but a fact. Because He is blessed in His attributes, men should recognize His greatness and "Bless" Him.

The command "bless" (barak) means to bow and adore while the command "praise" means to rise and shine with enthusiasm; the former refers to careful, reverent, accurate confession of His greatness; the latter refers to igniting the passions to proclaim the Excellencies of our Lord.

The Hebrew command "Bless" orders men *to speak well of . . . to honor . . . and to esteem the LORD*. A plural command, it applies to all men. Obedience to any command of the LORD, even silence, is a means of praising Him. A holy life praises Him. The reason given is that the LORD has proved Himself exceedingly superior to the gods of the nations. i.e. He furnishes His claim of existence with infallible proofs.

Unlike verse one, this psalm expands the command from the house of Aaron to the house of Levi and to all those living in Jerusalem (Psalm 115:9).

Let the church and all those that fear the LORD, bless His holy name.

However, the fulfillment of this command is greater than the ordinance. Because the church took His commands seriously, redeemed men in every nation on earth "Bless the LORD" today. Hallelujah!!!

"Let us endeavour to glorify his name, and recommend his truth, not only with our lips, but by holy lives, copying the example of Christ's goodness and truth." -
Matthew Henry.

Bless the LORD, O my Soul!

Psalm 136 - Reasons to Give Thanks



Benson has an excellent introduction to this psalm:

“We are called upon to praise Jehovah, first for his own essential attributes; then for the exertion of those attributes in his works. The attributes here mentioned are those of goodness and power; the one renders him willing, and the other able, to save: and what can we desire more, but that he should continue to be so! Of this likewise we are assured, by contemplating the unchangeableness of his nature. His disposition altereth not, and his kingdom none can take from him; his mercy endureth for ever.” —
Horne.

Since thankfulness is the Queen of Virtues and unthankfulness is the gremlin of naughtiness, we would do well to bow to her majesty.

The imperative “O give thanks” (yadah) means to throw up the hands. Used three times, it leads the Levitical band as a drum major in a parade of grateful prayers.

“For his mercy endureth forever” or unto eternity; that is, it is never exhausted, tired, or depleted.

Psalm 136:1 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The LORD is not only good; He is the very definition of good. Only the LORD has the authority to define good . . . and, His law is the best description of good in the universe of man’s knowledge.

2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever.

There are many so called “gods” in this world but the LORD is the one, absolute, unchanging, Supreme Being of the Universe. Therefore, His mercy endureth forever.

3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.

There are many governors on this earth, but He is the Lord of lords; the Captain of captains; the Ruler of rulers; the Chief of chiefs; the King of kings. He sits on a throne of grace; that is, He is sovereign and his reign is marked by mercy.

4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.

From creation to the cross, all His works are a wonder of wonders. Let us consider His works in creation and his redemptive works in the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17): justification, regeneration, and sanctification.

5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Who can duplicate the creation of the Sun, moon, and stars? He not only has the wisdom to design it, and the power to create it. That the same stars faithfully march across the sky every night in perfect unison is an act of mercy.

6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The word “stretched out” means to “properly to beat out with the feet, then to overlay with a plate of metal (Isaiah 40:12).”

“The earth is regarded as a flat plate that has been beaten out and spread on the face of the waters, whereas in Genesis it is pictured as emerging out of the waters.” – Ellicott.

As creatures on the earth our natural terrain is marvelously preserved from global floods, downpours, and tidal waves. His mercy endures forever.

7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The “great lights” are the Sun, Moon, and stars whose constancy stabilizes life on earth. That the Sun appears every day and the stars appear every night in the same place for six thousand years is attributed to the mercy of God.

8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The order of the Sun rules the day from sunrise to sunset; that is, days are measured by rising and the setting of the Sun. The constancy of this brilliant ruler is attributed to the mercy of God.

9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Who can live in pitch black? The lumens of these celestial lanterns provides light and beauty for man to enjoy. They are guide stones of mariners and wonders to astronomers.

10 To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The death of the firstborn was the “straw that broke the camel’s back” — the death blow that melted Pharaoh leaving him no choice but to “let my people go.” This judgment death for Egyptians and the exemption by Israelites under the blood is attribute to the mercy of God — the key that unlocked the chains of slavery for His people.

11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever:

Israel’s redemption in Egypt by blood and crossing the Red Sea by power is attributed to the mercy of God, not the merits of the people.

12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The exodus event is not attributed to the slow, gradual outworking of politics, but the dynamic, merciful intervention of the LORD to deliver His people and to crush Pharaoh's armies.

13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The Red Sea did not slowly dry up so the people could walk across the seabed, but it was vigorously divided by the sword of the LORD. That heat simultaneously dried the muddy bottom so the people could escape from Egypt's tyrant was an act of mercy.

14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever:

Israel walked on dry land between walls of water and the bulwarks of the sea did not collapse on them — an act of mercy.

15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.

As Pharaoh's armies pursued Israel onto the dry sea bed, the walls of water collapse on the charioteers — a catastrophe for the Egyptians but mercy for God's people.

16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.

Two million people traveling in a huge caravan across a hot, dry wasteland -- How could they survive the heat, thirst, and hunger? The LORD provided a cloud by day, light for the night, manna for food, and water out of rocks from His reservoir of mercy.

17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The possessions of these mighty kings, Sihon and Og, were transferred to the people of God by the mercy of the LORD. Lands which had been devoted to idols, ambition, tyranny, and crime came under the authority of God's righteous people — a terrible act of judgment for these tribes, but an act of mercy to the twelve tribes of Israel.

18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever:

In verse 17 we are informed that the defeated kings were great kings – great in organization, great in building, great in wealth and great in political power. In verse 18 we are informed that these Amorite kings were famous and well known among other nations.

The thought in verse 19 is separated by the thought in verse 18 by the theme, "His mercy endures forever."

19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever:

Sihon king of the Amorites had such a powerful military the only way Israel could defeat them was by the assistance and intervention of God in the minute details of flying arrows and clashing of swords — an act of mercy.

20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:

Bashan was the capital of the Amorites and it was also the capital of the Romans in the first century. A beautiful and well watered area, Bashan was the travel destination of caravans. The conquest of Bashan by a nation of escaped slaves stunned the news channels in the Levant striking fear into the Canaanites — an act attributed to the mercy of God.

21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The LORD gave Israel ancient Palestine by routing 31 kings and destroying their armies — an act of mercy.

Land is one of the four cultural foundations. Without a land and borders, there is no such thing as a nation. The land grant, therefore, was an act of mercy.

22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The heritage refers to the commonwealth of Israel — a common people with a common language, common religion-law and their blessing under the covenant, and a common land – an act of mercy.

23 Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:

The low estate refers to Hebrews living in the land of Egypt as slaves of the Nile tyrant. The Lord did not redeem them when they were rich, affluent, educated, and free, but when they were they were the serfs on the Delta Basin.

24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The word “redeemed” (parak) means “to tear away,” or “to snatch away” — a sudden, violent event. The LORD literally tore them away their chains and ripped them out of Egypt — an act of mercy.

25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.

The psalmist moves from God’s mercy to Israel to His mercy on all men . . . al sinners. Every meal we enjoy is an act of mercy. He provides for all, but the covenant of grace was for Israel alone — an act of mercy.

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.

God’s blessed home is in heaven, but He looks down in heavenly love to provide for all — His mercy endureth then, now, and tomorrow. Praise the Lord.

Psalm 137 - By the Rivers of Babylon

The Triumph of Hope

A Lesson for Those Disappointed with God



Before us is a backslider, a true believer under severe discipline who has been marked with a Tav (Ezekiel 9). With his dreams crushed, he faces a choice between leaving the faith or clinging to the hope of his Hebrew religion.

Most psalms involve a conflict and a resolution. This Post Exilic Psalm does the same.

Crushed by despair, this Hebrew leaves us with a poetic record of his struggle and the triumph of his faith — **arguably one of the greatest spiritual victories in the Inspired Hymnal.**

Psalm 137:1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

Babylon? What are God's people doing in Mesopotamia by the muddy Euphrates and Tigris Rivers? Isn't this the birth place of Abraham? Jeremiah answers the question: "all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon" (40:1).

The term "remember" (zakar) is a pivotal word used three times in this psalm. In one sense, it is the psalmist's key response to his suffering — the singular duty of this saint — his invitation term for salvation — the prescription for backsliding — the remedy for a broken heart.

Weeping? Why are rivers of tears running down the sun-burned cheeks of God's people? The psalmist answers, "we remembered Zion." These liquid sorrows are caused (1) by remembering the joy of having God in the capital city, and (2) by remembering the fall of Jerusalem, and (3) by remembering the sins of the people that led to the fall of Zion.

Tears about beautiful Zion? Shouldn't the sweet thoughts about Jerusalem and its beloved temple fuel the fires of joy in the hearts of these Hebrews? Wet cheeks are good when the sweet thoughts of Zion cause us to remember Christ and motivate us to repent of our sins.

Oh, the daggers that pierced the souls of the remnant: prisoners suffering; comforts stripped; Israel devastated; Jerusalem broken; the temple demolished; ceremonies halted; the land ravished; homes destroyed; crops burned; friends killed; parents dead; hope buried; love frustrated; happiness poisoned; faith doubted; hope lifeless; body exhausted; and, a thousand miles from home surrounded by Chaldeans speaking gibberish in a foreign language.

Oh, the pain of remembering the sweetness of Zion and her yearly festivals: pilgrims camping; men praying; women dancing; children laughing; Levites singing; priests serving; kings ruling;

teachers instructing; people trusting; vendors bartering; friends hugging — Oh, the joyful sounds! Silent forever? Sing? How could they sing? Impossible!

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

“Harps upon the willows” informs us that musical instruments were unemployed; that the captives had stopped singing, stopped composing, stopped hoping, stopped celebrating, and even stopped praising the LORD God.

Everyone loves a festival with bands, guitars, violins, base fiddles, drums, pianos, and coronets, but the laws surrounding human nature instruct us that hearts filled with sorrow and doubt cannot sing.

3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

Can anything be more cruel than for tormentors to require “mirth” and songs from the acidic hearts of prisoners who lost their families, land, and religion?

How can you sing a song in a vacuum where you can’t hear the sweet sounds of His presence moving in your heart?

4 How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land?

“In a strange land” – The feeling expressed in this question is too natural to need any such explanation (Ellicott). “The Lord’s song(s)” are for redeemed, freed sinners. It is totally contrary to human nature to sing a sacred song in a strange land, among strange people, amidst a strange language with a future in custody of pagans.

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

Forget Jerusalem: Forgetting Zion is a mark of unbelief and rebellion that causes all men to spiral downward. Forgetting starves the soul of life (Romans 12:1-3).

Jeremiah 2:32 Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

Though Jerusalem was the City of the Living God, it was now in ruins having been reduced to rubble by the Babylonians. Though destroyed, Jeremiah commanded the survivors to remember Zion and what took place there . . . for their good . . . for their spiritual survival.

Jeremiah 51:50 Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

Though remembering her former glory and her present gloom depressed the remnant, they had to remember Zion. An archeological ruin, the holy city becomes a metonym for the LORD, the throne, the presence of God, the priesthood, the Levitical sacrifices, and reconciliation.

What a paradox! Every thought about Zion inflamed sorrow, yet; at the same time, the psalmist couldn’t bring himself to forget Jerusalem, the temple, the Lord, or His promises. Pulled in two different directions, the dove of peace found no rest in his conflicted heart.

What a place to be! He couldn't go forward, nor backward; looking behind crushed him, and looking ahead smashed him; forgetting Zion hurt, and remembering Zion pained his soul; leaving the LORD was too painful to contemplate, and loving the LORD became complex and confusing.

Decision time: Both forgetfulness and remembrance of the LORD were clashing swords in his soul. At a crossroad in his faith, he had to make a decision. He had to choose between looking at his distressing circumstances or looking at the foggy mirage of God's promises; to doubt God's love or to believe God's love; to walk by sight or to walk by faith; to look at his cold chains in Babylon and embrace the frosty presumption of being abandoned by the LORD, or to embrace the chilly pledges frozen to icy texts in Holy Writ.

He couldn't control his captors, his circumstances, or his future, but he could control his beliefs. Therefore, this man chose the path of faith, the path of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He chose to cling to the hope found in the Holy Scriptures — a frosty belief that seemed frozen in an ice age of the past — a belief so contrary to his conflicted feeling due to his captivity.

He decides to error on the side of hope; to never forget Jerusalem or his Lord. Better to have a stroke that paralyzes the right hand, than forget Him Who sits at the right hand of the Father.

Psalm 27: 13 I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

Thus, remembering the LORD and the Levitical practices is a holy exercise. The term "remember" (zakar) is used three times in this psalm as the key response required of the remnant. "Remember" is a work of faith. The word "forget" is the product of doubt.

Psalm 20:7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

Psalm 77:10-11 And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

Luke 22:19-20 "And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'"

Those staring at crushed hopes and feeling the chill of cold circumstances would do well to learn the lesson conferred in this psalm. If presented with a choice to give up your beliefs, or to go deeper into the faith, choose the struggle associated with believing "that all things work together for good to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

The chastised psalmist pounds in the stakes of his commitment. He chose to go deeper into the faith and to make Jerusalem (the LORD) his chief joy. Better to never speak another word than

to have a mind void of hope in Christ; better to be alone sitting on the iceberg of His promises than in the chains of unbelief by a sparkling fire; better to remember Christ than forget his love at the cross.

The diamond-triumph of this psalmist must be romanced against the black fact that these captives were beaten down, bewildered, and befuddled by their dark circumstances. Their feelings were all wrapped up in their suffering; and, they could not escape the pounding drums of their defeat to acknowledge, must less rejoice in, the love of the LORD their God.

This may be one of the greatest comebacks in history. Like base drums, everything about his circumstances pounded home the message: God has forsaken you! But, this man ignores the cadence of abandonment, and stakes down his claim found in the pledges of Holy Scripture. In remembering Zion, he was healed.

Psalm 42:6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar (Mt Hermon).

There will be a day when the cold circumstances of a Christian shout, "God has forsaken you!" And, when that happens, you will need to follow the model of this chastened saint; to invest all that you have in the promises of the gospel: "the Lord reigns!" And, he "will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Psalm 97:1; Hebrews 13:5).

7 Remember (zakar), O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

Having done his duty in remembering Zion, the psalmist prays that God would do his duty and judge the enemies of Zion.

When the Babylonians seized Jerusalem and began their campaign of destruction, the Edomites cheered the Chaldeans.

Knowing and identifying your true enemies is almost as important as knowing the Lord.

Having identified the black flag of the Edomites, the psalmist continues to sail his cargo-ship through the storm toward the harbor of holiness. In his tossing on the waves of faith and doubt, this stricken Hebrew was forced to identify the real pirates of faith. The marauders were not only the Babylonians, but those with an Edomite spirit who cheered on the Chaldeans as they ravaged the Holy City.

These descendants of Esau hated God; and, God hated them (Malachi 1:3ff). Like Esau, the Edomites were sensual, fleshly, worldly men with an ambition to kill the descendants of Jacob. They represent the battle between the lost and the saved; between Amalek and Joshua; between Haman and Esther; between the un-regenerated man and the regenerated believer, between the flesh and Spirit in Galatian 5.

This is a battle to the death, and this psalmist chose to "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater

riches than the treasures in Babylon: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.” (Hebrews 11:25-26).

Now, this psalmist transitions out of spiritual neutrality to become a hated man because he testified that the works of the world (Edomites) thereof are evil (John 7:7).

8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

With the eye of faith, the psalmist joins hands with the prophets and announces the doom of Babylon — a nation destined to be destroyed by the Persian Messiah, Cyrus the Great (Isaiah 45:1); — a judgment on Babylon that was fast approaching (Isaiah 13:1, 16).

Here is a chastised saint that returns to the LORD standing on the pledges of Holy Scripture. Choosing to believe rather than doubt, he rises above the clangs and gongs of Babylonians challenging his faith. Though he could not feel the presence of God, he believed the sure Word of God. Eventually his feelings followed his faith. That the Christian must find his hope in something other than Scripture is denied.

9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

This psalmist was forced to see the dashing of Israelite infants against a stone in the Babylon raid on Jerusalem. Having returned to the LORD, he envisions a time when the Judge of Mankind would execute His perfect justice against the Babylonians and all enemies of restored Israel.

Remembering the mercy upon the remnant, he also reflects on the destiny of the wicked. Their seed shall be destroyed in judgment – Psalm 37:28.

Let us remember His mercy on us . . . and, the Day of Judgment coming upon all men (Hebrews 9:27).

“Far be it from us to avenge ourselves; we will leave it to Him who has said, Vengeance is mine. Those that are glad at calamities, especially at the calamities of Jerusalem, shall not go unpunished.” – Matthew Henry.

The songwriter predicts that “Happy” will be the man who conquers Babylon. And, indeed he was. Isaiah informs us that God went before Cyrus, His servant, to reward his campaign and to make him the most successful monarch in history — a Persian “messiah” who was given “the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that he might know that I am the LORD” (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1-3ff).

No discipline is pleasant (Hebrews 12). But, here we see a man under chastisement who strengthens his faith and not his doubts; who became a better man instead of a bitter man; a lawful man instead of a lawless man; a hoper in Scripture, rather than a doubter of God’s Word; a recovered backslider, rather than a wretched apostate.

With his dreams crushed, this psalmist faced a choice between leaving the faith or clinging to the hope of his faith. He chose hope, and his faith triumphed over his despairing circumstances.

1 John 5:4 For whatsoever is born of God overcometh (nike) the world: and this is the victory (nike) that overcometh (nike) the world (Edomites a type), even our faith (the nike).

“Do not pray for easy lives; pray to be stronger men!” – President John F. Kennedy

Oh, that backsliding Christians would respond so well.

Moreover, God is calling sinners around the world to remember Zion, Christ, and the cross as his remedy for transgressors of His law.

Psalm 138 - A King's Praise

"All the kings of the earth shall praise (yadah) thee, O LORD,"



This is a kingly hymn composed by a manly king praising the merits of his eternal King to other kings.

It has been said that thankfulness is the queen of virtues. This being so, then praise is the king of virtues while complaining is the gremlin that pours grit and grime in our gears.

A King's Praise is Wholehearted

Psalm 138:1 <A Psalm of David.> I will praise (todah) thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise (zamar) unto thee.

This great king shares a great song to great men about a great God and His great deliverance from a great battle.

We learn from David that praise is a king's business, and that all who praise God are the true kings upon the earth.

What a healthy heart!

Though composed by a king, before us is a snapshot of a healthy kingdom saint. This is not a monarch drunk with power or intoxicated with his own self-importance.

What a healthy will!

Think of the wonder of a man who is totally occupied with the beauty of Another.

Praise is a choice: "I will" praise thee—another indicator of a solid, wholesome, resolute, vigorous, confirmed strong, unwavering soul. Man is altogether better when He expresses thankfulness for the blessings of God in his life.

What a healthy occupation!

Notice the term "praise" (toda). It means to "throw up the hands" either as an act of worship or as one taking an oath.

Notice the object of praise, "Thee" (LORD God). Men are more often than not occupied with self. Our psychologized society has taught men to turn inward and to take archaeological journeys into their feelings. Self-discovery has become the great occupation of neo-pagans. But, here is a saint that is outside of himself enthralled with the glories of Heaven's King. He is Theocentric, not anthropocentric; Christ-centered, not self-centered.

Men are often enthralled with the beauty of women, beautiful weather, or beautiful mountain scenes. But, here is a vigorous heart that has been captured by the loveliness of the LORD God.

Delivered from wretched subjectivism, he takes us outside of ourselves to behold the wonders of the one, true God.

What a healthy commitment!

This is no bifurcated, double-minded, divided, bi-polar, duplicitous, partite, half-hearted man: "I will praise Thee with my whole heart."

The phrase "before the gods" informs us that David was not afraid to sing the praises of God before kings, magistrates, judges, parliamentarians, and government agents who think of themselves as some kind of god.

Psalm 138: 2 I will worship (shachah) toward thy holy temple, and praise (yada) thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

The word "worship" (shachah) means to bow in honor of another. It is in the emphatic position in the sentence. Men bow to One greater than themselves. David is no idolater. He "bowed down" to the God Who made heaven and earth; the God who revealed himself to Israel and tabernacled among them.

David's first concern was the honor of God's name and the glorious fountain of virtue and truth flowing from all that His name represents. All that is wrong with society begins with the neglect of God and the debasement of His name in the minds of men. When men are blasphemous, they turn towards darkness. To remedy man's dark, dwarfed, and diluted views of God, the king interjects steroids of praise about YHWH to increase man's faith.

Moreover, David was more spirited about revelation than creation. The preposition "above" could just as easily be translated "over thy name." All truth about God is controlled by His Word. All that a man needs to know about God is found in the Bible; and, if a truth claim cannot be verified by the Scriptures "there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). To study Scripture, is to know God; to know God, is to study Scripture.

When you think of God what comes to your mind? When David reflected on the character of God, he was astonished by his "loving kindness;" that is, His *royal hesed* — the graciousness of this King. Here is a King that overlooks the flaws, fractures, and faults of His people when they appear before Him.

Psalm 138:3 In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.

David takes us to the first sweet reason for his hymn of praise. God rescues. Deliverances, protections, provisions, disentanglements, and answers to prayer create a waterfall of blessings that fill the healthy heart with praise. A man who knows and feels God's emancipations will rise to be a king that emancipates men. It is fitting for a king to praise the Creator; that is, those who praise God become kingly.

The noblest men among us think about Christ and extol His greatness. Praise is the excellence of princes.

[Note: the word "strengthenest" (rahab) means "to storm" or "to make bold."]

A King's Praise is Kingly

Psalm 138: 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise (yadah) thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.

The Bible is good for me because it is good for all men. It not only commands my attention, but it commands the obedience of princes. Scripture was made for kings, and true kings honor Him. Those who possess the praises of God are priest-kings on earth, and all true kings praise God (Revelation 1:5).

Psalm 138: 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.

A second sweet reason to praise God is addressed: "Great is the glory of the LORD."

David anticipated a time when the kings of the earth would unite and sing praises to the ways of the Lord; that is, they would promote the righteousness and justice of God (Genesis 18:19). All the virtues of the King are compacted into the term "glory." Like clouds, the glory of the Lord is in full view of the nations. Jeremiah confirms the international intrigue by announcing Him as the "King of Nations" (Jeremiah 10:7); just, good, wise, fair, tough, tender, and stable.

Again, kings sing the praises of God, and all who praise Him are the true kings. And, all kings who do not praise God are twigs assigned to the fires of hell.

The knowledge of the God of Scripture is not only good for all men but for all civil rulers. Oh, how much better our world would be if politicians would take time to reflect on the greatness of God and their duty to Honor Him!

In the present order of things, the world is dangerously crowded with crazy people. Spiritual paupers rule the nations. Madmen sit on thrones. Parliaments are filled with psychopaths. The insane bark out orders to the bewilderment of all. True kings are afoot, and fools ride on horseback. One day, the true kings of the earth (Christians) will be revealed and they shall reign with Him forever and ever (Ecclesiastes 10:7; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6).

Psalm 138: 6 Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

We have a contrast between the LORD on high (ruwn), the lowly (shaphal), and the proud who masquerade as being high (gaboahh).

David expounds a third sweet reason to praise God. God's greatness, majesty, and power reach into the stars. Yet, this transcendent God condescends to listen to the likes of you and me. He stands tall among the gods, but he bends his ear to hear the prayers of peasants. But . . . the proud? He has had enough of their blabbering, whining, and boasting.

[Note: The word "high" (fuwm) is first translated "lift up above the earth" in Genesis 7:17. The term "lowly" (shapal) is translated "lower" in Leviticus 13:20, 21 and the context refers to an indentation or depression in the skin — a pox mark. It is often translated "low." The Hebrew word *shapel* (lowly) ends in with a Lamed (ל), the tallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, a symbol of a lightning strike from heaven to earth. Stand tall by being small in your own eyes.

The word “respect” is the Hebrew word ra’ah which means “to see.” It is first translated in Genesis 1:4 as “God saw the light . . .” In this text the Spirit wants us to know that God sees the lowly (the dependent man) but is blind to the proud (the high man). It is translated “the LORD appeared” unto Abraham in Genesis 18:1-2 inferring in our text that God makes Himself known to small, humble, child-like people. Be humble or stumble.]

A King’s Praise Paves the Way for Revival

Psalm 138: 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

The term “trouble” (tsarah) refers to distress and adversity (Genesis 35:3) and is translated “adversary” in 1 Samuel 1:6. What saint does not feel the distress of our times due to adversaries in high places promoting the total subjection of the total man to total government? The stress of living in a society that promotes feminism, homosexuality, and war is the work of enemies. Troubles torment us and tear our sails into tattered rags.

Notice the subject and object of the verb “revive.” “(You) will revive ME! Revival is of God, not man. Revival does not happen because a church plans it. Revival is an act of God in response to thankful people (Psalm 50:23). Furthermore, you can’t revive a corpse. You can only revive the living. Revival is for Christians, not the neo-pagans buried under rubble caused by their sins.

Having given three sweet reasons to praise God, the psalmist rises from his chapel of praise with a new assurance that though his life is complex and has its ups and downs and its twists and turns, God will revive him in the midst of the dangers. A new confidence emerges that God will protect him from the plots of those whose tongues are like daggers with mouth-a-foul.

David not only expected general protection from gremlins with an evil eye, but he anticipated more answers to prayer that could be characterized as personal, special, specific, particular, timely, powerful deliverances by the mighty hand of this condescending God. No wonder David expected kings to praise Him! And, all kingly Christians do (Revelation 1:6).

Psalm 138: 8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me . . .

A second assurance grows within this king’s heart like a mighty oak. The trials of life were not there to make him bitter, but to make him better; that through it all, God would be with him to protect, to purify, and to perfect the outcome of his duties both temporal and eternal.

[Note: The word “perfect” means “to complete.” It is translated “come to an end” in Psalm 7:10, and “performs” or “accomplishes” in Psalm 57:2.]

Psalm 138:8 . . . thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands

A third assurance breaks the ground. The mercy of the LORD endure through time. David did not attribute his survival and military successes to his own talent, skills, or acumen. Before us is a humble man aided by a humble God. This king attributed his escapes on the battlefield and victories in combat to the mercy of God.

This king ends his praise with a prayer: “forsake not the work of thy hands!” Perhaps, being aware of his own moral frailty, faults, and failures to do what he ought, he cries out to God, “Forsake me not.”

Being “forsaken” by God seems to be a common fear among God’s children. Men who are in touch with the greatness of God are also in touch with great weaknesses of their own. That God will not forsake His people, even when they fail, is expressed in the most emphatic terms in Hebrews 13:5 wherein God uses five negations to express the impossibility of abandonment, “I will never, never, desert you, no never never forsake (abandon) you.”

Though having much to praise God for, the king closes his song in utter dependence on his God for future deliverances. Creation was a colossal prize, but the “new creation” is His greatest treasure (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The most intelligent, knowledgeable, skilled men among us know God, think about God, and are inspired by His Spirit to speak about Him, write about Him, and exhort others to surrender to Him. If you are not praising the King of the Nations, you are not the King’s son; and if you are not a king’s son, then you are not in His kingdom. True kings surrender to God’s law-order, and worship the King of kings (Matthew 11:29; Romans 10:9; Revelation 17:14)

1 O worship the King all-glorious above,
O gratefully sing his power and his love:
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

2 O tell of his might and sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.

3 Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

4 Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail.
Your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!

5 O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
whom angels delight to worship above!
Your ransomed creation, with glory ablaze,
in true adoration shall sing to your praise!

Psalter Hymnal, (Gray)

A man never stands taller than when he is on his knees. Be humble, or stumble. Be prayerful and cheerful. Praise is a manly and thoughtfully kingly. When done regularly and joyfully, praise adds power to our life.

Psalm 139 - The Crown Jewel of Theological Hymns

"For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether."



This is the crown jewel in the Divine Library of Theological Hymns because it addresses the attributes of the infinite, personal God Who created us.

It turns the dark, cold winters of life into bright warm summer days, and acts like an ice pack for the bruises we receive on the journey through life.

In this sacred hymn, we learn that the LORD God is not only infinite — omniscient, omnipresent and omnipotent, but that He is a touchingly personal — a God who knows us and guides us.

When men speak of "God," to which God are they referring? All roads do not lead to Rome. All religions do not worship the same God. When men speak of "God" we need to know of which God they are referring. All gods are not the same.

When Christians discuss God, they are talking about a specific Deity whose name is "the LORD" (YHWH). God is not just an idea or concept. He is not merely a force or a power. He is not the Ying and the Yang or summation of material energy in the universe.

First and foremost, the God of the Bible exists; that is, He is an actual Being. All other "gods" are fictions of men's imaginations.

"God" is not His name. His name is YHWH (Yahweh or Jehovah) or "LORD" in most English Bibles. His name comes from four Hebrew letters called the Tetragrammaton. YHWH is translated "I Am" and it means "the One Who exists" or "I will be what I will be."

Because YHWH revealed Himself to mankind, He can be defined.

Notice how David distinguishes the God of the Bible in the rest of this psalm from the gods of his day.

In this chapter, we can see this emerging definition of the one true God — an infinite (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent), personal, virtuous Spirit Being who is the Creator and Judge of all men.

The Omniscience of God

1 (To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.)

So wonderful is this psalm it was delivered to the Chief Musician to create a melody appropriate for its lofty truth.

According to Keil and Delitzsch this psalm was a post-exilic psalm composed after the Davidic model and dedicated “to David.”

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known (me).

There is no “me” after the word “known.” It is supplied by the translators because of the context, but the omission is deliberate: God searches and knows “all things.”

The word “search” (hachartani) is a Qal perfect, 2nd singular verb indicating completed action. It should be translated, “You have examined me.” The word “searched” (examined) originally meant “to dig” (Job 28:3). The visual picture of “dig” informs us that before we searched for God, the All Seeing Eye digs into our inner man to examine our development.

The most fundamental truth of this psalm is not that we are seeking God, but that He is seeking us. He knows us physically and spiritually, the seen and the unseen, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the flowers and the thorns — not to shame us, but to be a Companion and Guide for us. Since He seeks us, shouldn’t we seek Him?

The phrase “and known me” is an imperfect, vaw consecutive meaning “you have known me.” The idea is that God searches us, and he knows all about us. Using the pronoun “me” shows us that the psalmist applied this personally. We should do the same. He knows me!

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

The psalmist now discusses the particulars of God’s knowledge. He knows our movements.

The psalmist wants us to know that God sees the specific actions of every man as if that man were the only living creature on earth. He knows when we sit down and rise up; when we walk and when we stand still; when we work and when we play.

3 Thou compasseth my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

The Hebrew word “compasseth” (zarah) means “to scatter, cast away, or to winnow”. Its noun form is “pitchfork.”

Zarah is a Piel verb expressing intense action. God goes before us vigorously clearing the path of tripping stones and piercing thorns that might injure us. Everything remaining on this journey is for His glory and our good . . . the discipline of a wise father . . . a lesson for growth and maturity.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

The word “altogether” means “perfectly.” Before we own a word, our word is known to Him. He knows our thoughts before we think them; our words before we speak them; our knowledge before we learn it. His perception reaches to the fountain of our thinking. Before our sentences are fully formed out of the whirlpool of consonants and vowels, God knows them perfectly—the good and the bad, those private and those public. Our thoughts are His thoughts before they become our thoughts. Who can grasp the amazing knowledge of our Creator?

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

The word “beset” (tsarnani) means “to dig a trench” or “to build a battle ramp.” Picture an ancient mote. God builds a battle ramp, a mote, around us to protect us. Our camp is surrounded by the LORD.

The phrase “laid thine hand upon me” could be translated “laid me in your hand.” The idea is that God cupped his hand and covered his servant. The perfect implies completed action. God has already placed a wall around us to protect us.

Why should we fear invaders? His grace and power is above us, below us, beside us, behind us, and before us. There is no escape from Him. We cannot turn back. Not only can we not escape Him, our enemies cannot advance toward us without His consent.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

The Hebrew word “wonderful” is *pali* – This word has a marginal note called a *qere* -- a scribal note on what the scribes thought the word should be. So it is translated “wonderful.” Like a little puppy is inspired by the new smells of his world, contemplation of the knowledge of God arouses fresh raspberry wonders in the poet.

The word “too” means to number or apportion. The word “high” means just that: it is a high figure! The psalmist is saying this wonderful knowledge out numbers me! This mountain is too high to climb; an ocean too large to swim; a sky so full of stars we cannot count them. God is not in the process of knowing. He always knows! Think about it! God has never learned anything in all eternity. Such knowledge is incomprehensible. Such a theme overwhelms us! We cannot grasp it!

The Omnipresence of God

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 hell, 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 cover me; even the night shall be light about me. 12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

Now this composer introduces us to a second aspect of His infinite character — the LORD’s omnipresence.

The psalmist asks, “Where can I go from your Spirit?”

In using the term “Spirit” (*ruah*), David informs us that YHWH is composed of spirit or wind; that is, He is not composed of flesh and blood. He is not a material substance. Rather, He is an unseen but existent Spirit. Whatever “spirit” is, He is composed of spirit (John 4:24).

The psalmist now makes a series of proposals: “If I ascend,” “If I take,” “If I dwell,” and “If I say.”

The psalmist contemplates the presence of God by using a series of contrasts. Heaven and Sheol represent two extreme spheres of possible existence, the super terrestrial and the sub terrestrial.

Wings of the morning and remotest part of the sea represent light and darkness, east and west, sunrise and sunset.

Twice the psalmist exclaims, "God is there!"

There is no island, no sea, no land, no country, no sphere, and no cave where the poet can go to escape the presence of God. "The eyes of the LORD are in every place watching the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3).

Omnipresence means that He is at the center of everything and the circumference of nothing. He has no limitations and knows no boundaries. While the psalmist is teaching that God is everywhere, he is not saying that God is in everything (pantheism). The Creator remains distinct from his creation.

Notice the two verbs in verse ten: "lead" and "lay hold." East or west, morning or evening, God leads His people. He guides them in "paths of righteousness" (Psalm 23:3) . . . and also into times of testing (Psalm 11:5; Matthew 4:1).

The word "lay hold" (achaz) means either "to hold" or "to snatch" with the hand. The psalmist seems assured that God will protect him and deliver him wherever he may go.

Finally, the psalmist contemplates a possibility by using an "If, then" argument.

By darkness, the poet is either referring to physical darkness or to darkness as a symbol of terrible evil. "If darkness over takes me," reasons the scribe, "then darkness shall be light to Thee." Because I cannot see my way in the dark does not mean that God cannot see. Nothing can hide the child of God from the All-Seeing Eye. Even darkness is light to Him. He is superior to all created things, and He is unhindered by natural forces.

Having contemplated the divine presence, the psalmist appears to come to a place of rest and peace in his life.

The Omnipotence of God

13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. 14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. 15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

The word "possessed" means "to create." We are **not** a product of Time + Chance. We are **not** a product or an intelligent microbe that evolved from some primeval swamp. God created us.

The word "reins" refers to the kidneys. To the Hebrew, the kidneys were the seat of thoughts. That may seem strange to us, but it should not. We often refer to the thoughts of the heart when we know quite well the heart organ only pumps blood.

For example, consider this humorous story: There was a young lad who couldn't learn his body parts very well. Hip, elbow, knee, thigh, chest, belly, always got mixed up. Frustrated, the

teacher made him stay after school to study biology. On test day, he got 100% of his answers correct. Shocked, the teacher asked how he managed to make such a turn around. Pointing to his head, the boy said, "Kidneys, teacher. Kidneys!"

The poet burst into praise saying, "I will give thanks (praise) to Thee."

The term for "thanks" comes from the word "hands" (yad) and it means "to throw up the hands." Lifting the hands was a sign of respect, of surrender, and of worship. The reason for this outbreak of thanksgiving is the poet's contemplation of God's creation of man. There is no high like the most High.

The two verbs are Niphal stems meaning the poet is the recipient of God's powerful construction. The term "fearfully" can be translated "awesomely made," and the verb "wonderfully made" literally means "distinctly made" or "uniquely created." Because man is the crown and prince of God's creation, the poet is compelled to lift his hands in thanksgiving and praise.

The word "substance" (KJV) or "frame" (NASB) is the word for "embryo." The poet is contemplating the work of God in his own prenatal development. As the egg in a mother's womb is penetrated by a single spermatozoa the ovum immediately creates a chemical, electrical fence around itself. Within 2 hours the egg and the sperm fuse into a 46 chromosome HUMAN cells. Within 18 hours of conception, the single cell divides into two cells, then four, eight, sixteen, and so on. Within 18 days, the heart begins to beat. Within 4 weeks the baby has fingerprints. By seven weeks, the baby begins to suck its thumb. This little being can make noises and feel pain. Life begins at conception, not birth. At birth the little baby has 26 billion cells with a billion biochemical reactions occur per second. When grown the average person has around 37 billion trillion biochemical reactions taking place in his body every single second (chemicals.co.UK).

What we call the "chromosomes" or "genetic code" or "DNA" is called "Thy book" by the psalmist. The psalmist, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, says all his days were "ordained" or "fashioned" before one of them existed. As a tiny embryo growing in the "secret place" or "earth" of his mother's womb, this little one was not hidden from the sight and touch of his Creator.

What a concept! The poet did not see himself as an "it" or "a fetus" or "a blob" or "non-person" or some kind of "animal life." He was the product of design—a genuine human being formed by His Heavenly Creator with "certain unalienable rights." We must always keep in mind that pregnancy involves the development of a HUMAN BABY and that "the thing" growing in the womb is HUMAN LIFE!! "Believest thou this?"

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.

As the poet contemplates his existence, he realizes that he is the product of a divine plan—a detailed plan. The divine plan for his existence was “precious.” The word “precious” means “esteemed,” “prized,” or “valuable.”

The word “sum” is the term for “head” meaning “total.” The fact that he was not an accident, but the result of a well-thought-out, total PLAN was precious to this child of God.

On 9/11 in NYC three thousand Americans were killed in a terrorist act.. But everyday in America four thousand little ones are murdered by Americans. We must remember that in our present homicidal culture, every attempt to “terminate” a pregnancy by the powerful towards the powerless by stabbing or burning or cutting is an assault on God’s Sovereignty. Killing of innocent babies are acts of pre-meditated murder (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The “fetus” is HUMAN LIFE and if left alone will go through the stages of HUMAN LIFE including birth, growing, crawling, walking, learning, speaking, loving, working, marrying, and parenting. The right to life is an unalienable right that is not given by government, but by God. And, the only one who can lawfully take away that right is the One Who created it!!

YHWH is the infinite (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent) Spirit Being Who is the Creator of all men.

A Prayer to God

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.

This student of YHWH suddenly switches themes. He pleads with God to “slay the wicked.” The term “wicked” means “sinner” or “criminal” or “breaker of God’s law.” What crime is to society; sin is to God. The principle of common law applies to all: “Do your neighbor no harm.” If you do not injure people by what you say and do, there is no crime . . . no sin.

In praying such a prayer, David reveals to us that YHWH has moral sensitivities (virtues). He is not only the Creator of all men, but the Judge of all men. God is a virtuous Being. There are things He loves and things He hates. And, the follower of Christ must learn to love what He loves and hate what He hates (Psalm 5:5; 2:12; Proverbs 6:16).

David is angered by the thoughts and words of the ungodly toward the God he loved. He says, “I hate them.” In light of Christ’s teaching on love, and in light of the cry for tolerance, hating people seems out of the question for Christians. But, hating evildoers is a biblical mandate. Hate is an attribute of God. A heart that cannot hate, cannot love.

Love is often a choice. Hate is a choice. Both should have adequate cause and appropriate expression. God hates. The psalmists hated. And we have a duty to hate evil men because hate is a virtue of the living God.

You have heard it said, “We should love the sinner, and hate the sin.” But, is that cliché completely Biblical in light of Psalm 5:4-5? Further, note who/what David hated! It was not his

wife, or neighbor. No names are mentioned. It was “bloody” men; i.e. murderers or lawbreakers sold out to evil. It was not just the actions he hated, but the godless people who manufacture evil. We too, must learn to love what God loves and hate who/what God hates.

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.

Next, David completes an attribute of God that he has alluded to all through this psalm. The God of the Bible is a personal God. He knows and is known. He is not distant and uninvolved in the affairs of men, but personally engaged in the lives of the each of us.

As the psalmist contemplates the character of God and remembers that God hates evil, he blurts out a prayer asking God to search him to see if there be any wickedness in his own heart that displeases Him. He begins this psalm with a statement that God has examined him. Realizing God hates the wicked; he wants to be sure there is nothing in him that God hates. The psalmist is aware that he has “anxious thoughts;” i.e. imperfect thoughts. He knows he has all the potential to do evil and asks God to reveal any energy that might be a “hurt way” to others. Whenever a man is ready to uncover his sins, he will discover that God is always ready to cover them with the blood of Christ (1 John 1:5-7).

Interestingly, the psalmist targets his own thought life for reconstruction. We are a culture that is swept off its feet by feelings. We evaluate things by asking, “Does it feel good and does it work?” Feeling good has become our highest good. Not so with the psalmist! He wanted to think well. He needed reformation, not revival. Truth, not feelings, was his ultimate concern. The poet knew that if he lacked truth about theology, anthropology, and morality, then the poet had “a hurtful way” in him. Without truth, he could not live accurately.

Application

Going through the Valley of the Shadow of Death? Rest your head on three pillows:

the omniscience of God- He knows all your difficulties.

the omnipresence of God – He is near to you

the omnipotence of God – He can do anything.

After coming home from Sunday school, a mother asked her little girl, “What did you learn in Sunday school?” She replied, “A song!” “What song” asked the mother? The girl began to sing:

“Jesus knows me this I love . . . “

“Jesus loves me this I know . . .” Either way, both are true!!

God knows all about us. Every detail of our existence is ordained in His book. He goes before us and removes the stones over which we might stumble. What remains is for our good and His glory. The One Who attends the funeral of every sparrow takes a fresh count of the hairs on our head every day. Nothing escapes His notice. God has a unique plan for each of our lives. Even what we deem as weakness or calamity can glorify our Creator.

Great men have great deficiencies. Moses was slow of speech. St. Augustine was a moral degenerate until he came to know Christ. Beethoven was deaf at age 30. Napoleon was only 5'2" tall. Abraham Lincoln was an illegitimate child. He was so ugly he was called the "original gorilla." Thomas Edison who was almost deaf was asked if this ever bothered him. He responded by saying, "No. It enables me to concentrate." We must, therefore, come to place of thanksgiving and say with the poet, "I too am fearfully and wonderfully made."

While God knows us, we know little about Him. If we want to live accurately, we must possess a true knowledge about the Creator and learn to trust Him.

It is an error to think that when men speak of "God" that they are speaking of the Biblical God. David has revealed to us that the God of the Bible is YHWH and that He is the infinite (omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent), personal, virtuous Spirit Being who is the Creator and Judge of all men.

How can we live accurately when our theology is weak and incomplete? ALL EVIL stems from ignorance and neglect of God (Psalm 14:1)!!

We are at our best when we contemplate the One greater than ourselves. We will never rise higher than when we are on our knees seeking Him. Since there is no greater occupation than preoccupation with His glory, let us determine to pursue God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. For this is the whole duty of man (Deuteronomy 6:4-6).

Psalm 140 - The Cause of the Righteous

Deliver Me From the Violent Man



David is the author of this psalm and it appears to have been written when the young prince was fleeing from Saul's death squads.

The golden thought in this psalm is that the poor and the afflicted, if righteous, shall enjoy the favor and protection of God; that God will maintain the cause of the righteous and restrain the wicked for the good of

His people.

This is a perfect prayer to pray for those concerned about the wicked agenda of the global elite to control the world and to enslave mankind to their passions. Pray this prayer and these puppeteers will be the most frustrated people on earth.

A Prayer for Deliverance

Psalm 140:1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.> Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man;

"evil man" and "violent man" refer to the same kind of man. The description "evil" (ra) refers to one who is morally depraved because he rebels against God's law-word. The adjective "violent" (chamach) means "cruel," "false," "wrong" or "unjust" — a man who has no qualms about injuring the rights of others. A man dead-set on controlling the world and who, without hesitation, will kill men to achieve his lofty ambitions.

The "evil man" includes certain politicians, governors, cops, doctors, journalists, Jews, business men, professors, school board members, and palm readers that lie and steal your money:

Mark 5:26 And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,

"Deliver" and "preserve" are metonyms with the word "preserve" (natsar) meaning "keep me from" or "guard me from."

David has in mind a personal enemy like King Saul. David is not praying against an act, but a man who has committed so much violence that savagery has been weaved into his predatory nature. This applies to the repeated acts of Saul pursuing the young general.

2 Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war.

The word "mischiefs" and "evil" are the same word (ra) except here it is in the plural referring to "evils"; that is, this ra-man embraced all kinds of wickedness while committing many wrongs against God's anointed.

“gathered together for war” can be translated “all day long they gather for war”; that is, these ra-men thought about war, loved war, embraced war. All day long they dreamed of killing, planned on how to kill, and murdered innocent people in their aggressive raids. Solomon referred to the ra-men that hate our Lord as lovers of death.

Proverbs 8:36 But he that sinneth against me (Christ) wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.

Wicked men are known by what they say (v. 3) and what they do (v. 4).

“Sharpened their tongue” refers to injurious, piercing rhetoric. “like a serpent” is a metaphor for a forked tongue filled with lies. “poison” refers to toxic words that kill, hurt, and wound.

Wars begin with wicked words, untrue accusations, exaggerated reports, false allegations, and inaccurate commentary of and adversary against his opponent.

Deception is a fact of war after a war is started, but the international laws of war prohibit propaganda to start a war.

Prior to WWI the NYT and other Jewish newspapers printed political cartoons showing German soldiers bayonetting babies — all of which was untrue. Likewise, prior to the Hama-Israel War (October 2023) Zionist newspapers claimed Hama killed and burned over 30 babies with no evidence to support their claim. All the lies inflamed the West and lured many into supporting Zionist genocide against Palestinians — a war crime in itself.

Consider that all church wars and national wars begin with wicked words, untrue accusations, exaggerated reports, false allegations, dehumanizing propaganda, and inaccurate commentary of an adversary.

4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.

David slides dexterously from words to deeds. “Keep” (shamar) means “to guard.” “Hands” refer to the campaigns and operations of the violent men hell bent on overthrowing the institutions of the righteous. Fake news, fake vaccines, claims of racism or anti-Semitism that create Greek-like god conflicts come to mind.

The “violent man” in David’s mind is Saul and his henchmen, but broadly speaking this category of men can be found in politics, political offices, universities, the media, the medical and business professions.

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.

David now identifies these wicked ones as “proud” men (ge’eh); that is, self-willed, self-ruled, self-directed despoilers who swear bitterly against God.

“snare,” “cords,” “nets” and “gins” are metaphors for breaking bones and trapping victims.

Consider all the thundering devices of modern man uses: advertisements, vaccine marketing, and digital currency promotions that are cast into news channels to lure men into slavery and death.

6 I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.

In contrast to the wicked that serve gain as their god, David reminds his nation that the LORD is his God; that He seeks the LORD's will and guidance. Therefore, he prays that God will hear his struggling prayers. God hears many prayers, but LORD, hear my prayers!

7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

God not only hears prayers, he strengthened David and preserved him on the day of his blood and guts battle.

8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah.

This imprecatory plea begs God to deny the desires and ambition of the wicked; that is, for God to frustrate their bloody plans . . . not only to preserve the righteous but to keep these gloating miscreants from getting a "big head" and puffing up like an Indian Peacock.

Consider the cruel plans of the new world order for universal vaccines, digital currency, safe cities, and guaranteed income — a cast system designed to enslave and control every man, woman, and child on earth.

9 As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.

Luther renders this, "The calamity which my enemies design against me must fall upon their own heads" (Barnes); that is may the fall on their own knife, but trapped in their own snare, and forced to drink their own poison.

10 Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.

Though never employed against his enemies, David was familiar with reports of torture techniques of the pagans. The tenor of this sensual metaphor is "let them be punished with burning coals poured upon their heads" to be tormented, burned in the eyes, and left to die.

11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.

The "evil speaker" refers to a man with an over-active tongue boasting of great powers — the careless, crude, violent foul-mouthed man.

"be established in the earth" is an imprecatory prayer against the wicked. Let him not be successful or prosperous; let him not succeed in all his grandiose plans. It just isn't right for a wicked man to prosper; thus, this is not a prayer for vengeance but a prayer of benevolence —

for the good of the people. These psychopaths must be stopped by the power of God for the good of society.

12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.

The previous imprecatory prayers were bold and quixotic, but necessary in light of the grandiose dreams of these wicked men. Though daring and audacious, David expresses confidence that the LORD will sustain his cause as a victim of violent ambitions and protect the rights of the poor.

13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

“will give thanks” means the righteous, due to their bold prayers, will have occasion to give thanks and they will be disposed to do so (Barnes).

“the upright shall dwell in thy presence” implies the righteous shall be under the Lord’s protection; under His care, and under the bounty and blessings of His companionship.

In summary, the golden thought in this psalm is that the poor and the afflicted, if righteous, shall enjoy the favor and protection of God; that God will maintain the cause of the righteous and restrain the wicked for the good of His people.

Psalm 141 - The Snares of the Wicked



This is another deliverance psalm by David showing us how to posture ourselves during the tests of life.

David's first concern was that God would hear his prayer. He doesn't presume entitlement or that God is somehow obligated to grant his petition. Rather, he humbly secures his God-given right to pray.

David's Prayer

Psalm 141:1 <A Psalm of David.> LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

The term "voice" causes us to conclude this was a verbal prayer.

"give hear" even though I am weak and flawed; even though my prayers are childlike; even though I am subject to temptations like all sinners.

"save me" from bad advice given by friends, from my own twisted reasoning, from my wrongdoing, from taking the easy way out.

2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

Most casual prayers from sinners stink because they are thoughtless, fleshly, self-centered, repetitious, and trite.

David realized his prayers were weak. Consequently, he prays that his prayer would ascend with incense based on the power of an evening sacrifice. Remember Manoah and his wife where they saw the angel of the Lord ascend in the flames of their sacrifice (Judges 13).

We would do well to smoothen every prayer with the sweetness of Christ (incense) through thankfulness, and to ground our prayers on His accomplishments at the cross. The right to be heard is based on the efficacy of Another.

David's Personal Petitions

Apparently, in these difficult circumstances one of David's men advised him to do something of questionable character — something pragmatic that would have resolved his dilemma — antics typical of flawed men. While this suggestion may have brought him immediate relief, it would have subjected him to greater criticism by his enemies. Walking on a fence between good and evil, David prayed that God would post a watchman over his words and works.

3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips

The word “watch” (shamar) refers to a guard or watchman. The tongue is in a slippery place and David asks the LORD to tether his tongue down so as to avoid speaking recklessly, rashly, and carelessly under his pressures.

The tongue of modern man can be so banal and profane. Dirty talk is unbecoming for a child of a King. Let us therefore get our minds out of the gutter and speak only that which is wholesome.

He does not ask God to silence the wicked, but to tether his own tongue.

4 to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

“evil” should be taken in a general sense. Do not let me do wrong.

“Incline not my heart” is not suggesting that God moves men to do evil. This is prayer that God will not allow him to be in circumstances where he might be tempted to sin against the Lord; that is, do not permit me to be tempted above my abilities to resist.

“To practice wicked works with people that work iniquity” — David understood the pressure to join hands with people who do wrong in settling life’s conflicts. Therefore, he prays the Lord will delivered from temptation and the lure towards vengeance.

“let me not eat of their dainties” — People that compromise moral principles to get ahead and do wrong to increase their assets enjoy many luxuries. Because there are men “who are clothed in purple and fine linen and who feast sumptuously every day” David prayed that he would not be tempted by dainties from Satan’s Yum Yum Tree.

The word “dainties” refers to things which are pleasureable and attractive to men; the term embraces “all” that the world has to offer. It is no test to turn down the worst the world has to give, but it takes power to turn down the best the world has to offer.

David’s Preference

5 Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

This is a difficult verse to translate correctly.

The word “smite” means to hammer or strike with a blow (Judges 5:26) and “it shall be a kindness.”

“oil” seems to be a metaphor for “comforting advice.”

“it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head” seems better interpreted, “Do let the wicked man anoint my head with oil” or “do not anoint my head with the oil of the wicked.”

“A righteous man may smite me in mercy and reprove me, but let not a wicked man’s oil anoint my head;” (Ellicott).

The context is concerned about injurious counsel. The idea seems to be that David welcomed the reproof of the righteous as an act of mercy, but rejected the furtive oil offered by the wicked. Apparently, David was offered bad advice (oil) which appeared to soothe, but he rejected it.

6 When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

Again, this verse is filled with interpretive challenges;

“Let their judges be broken to pieces by the force (literally, hands) of the rock; or, let their judges be cast down by the sides of the cliff— i.e. hurled down the precipitous face of the ravine” (Ellicott).

“Their princes have been dismissed in safety when I had them at an advantage in those rocky deserts, and they only heard me expostulate with them in the gentlest words;” (Barnes).

If this be the case, David is referring to Saul’s pursuit of him in the wilderness.

David’s Peril

7 Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.

Our “bones” appears to refer to the clods of dirt left behind by the tiller’s plow: “The reference is not to the ground strewn with the logs left by a woodcutter, but to the clods of earth left by the plough” (Ellicott).

Benson renders this text literally as referring to the cruelty of the oppressors who leave their carcasses strewn in the battlefield to rot in the burning sun.

8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.

“eyes are unto thee” refers to David’ hope. When pressures are real, where do you go for help? David did not rely on his own skills, or on the loyalty of his army, or on the pragmatic advice by officers, but on the care of Providence.

“destitute” means “nude” or “naked.” David may be referring to death as if his bones were left like clods of dirt to cook under the desert sun.

9 Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.

“snares” and “gins” refers to the counsel of his enemies — to their schemes and plots to kill him — snares laid in order to capture and kill David.

“snares” and “gins” are possessed by professors, politicians, medical doctors, and political pundits. Beware!

David’s Plea Against the Wicked

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

Barnes read it this way: “The word ‘withal’ means, in the Hebrew, “together, at the same time;” that is, at the same time that they fall into the net, let me pass over it in safety. See the notes at [Job 5:13](#).”

“withal” means “all together” or at the same time.

In pursuing David, Saul used deception and false accusation to ruin David and to turn public sentiment against him. David prays his enemies would fall into their own traps, and at the same time that God would provide a way of escape. And, He did.

All of us need to escape some pressure in life. When the tests are real and the way forward seems dark, we must look to God for a way of escape. Perhaps, the great lesson in this chapter is “to guard the means.” The end does not justify the means. Not only should we desire an escape route, but that the means of escape is honorable. Abraham courageously lied to Pharaoh. Moses crossed the Red Sea. Elijah hid in a cave. Jesus and His parents fled to Egypt. Stephen had no way out and died a martyr. Paul was let down over a wall in a basket.

May the Lord show each of us the way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Psalm 142 - A Prayer for the Accused

No Man Cared for my Soul



Have you ever been falsely accused by state actors?

Maybe, you have been falsely accused of violating “the law” (a man-made statute) in some “commercial scheme” by gang members working for a State corporation dressed in a black uniform—a scheme wherein the corporation makes millions every year by falsely accusing citizens of “crimes” (mala prohibita) – a statutory prohibition but not a crime.

Maybe, you are involved in politics, and your opponent used the “politics of personal destruction” to slander and malign you. Maybe a feminist accused you to the board for sexual harassment because you simply tried to open the door for this woman.

Slander is Satan’s favorite weapon to destroy the godly man. A six inch tongue can slay a man six feet tall.

In this psalm, we have a glimpse into the terrified soul of young David who was falsely accused of treason against the State by King Saul. Hiding in the Cave of Adullam from the man hunt, David uttered this prayer.

The Jerusalem Times was saturated with sick lies and personal attacks by the bias media quoting politicians loyal to Saul’s administration.

David was simple and naïve—unprepared to deal with a covert war against him by vicious political adversaries. In this psalm, he bears his soul.

Furthermore, if you are not on some government hate list, you are either young in the Lord, or you are not living for Christ.

If you are falsely accused, you can obtain injunctive relief by appealing your case to the Supreme Court of Heaven.

An Appeal to the Supreme Court in Heaven

Psalm 142:1 <Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave.> I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

Trouble is good if it leads us to seek Him.

When David penned this prayer, he was considered an outlaw, a fugitive from “justice,” and a traitor to his king.

A meritless warrant was issued for his arrest by the de facto government. Hiding in a mountain shelter, this prince-in-training had to take a course on the art of prayer. Thus, we have a Maschil of David—a psalm that teaches us lessons on supplications—a prayer from a cave by a fugitive from tyranny.

Concealed in the Cave of Adullam from political ambush, this innocent patriot pleaded his case before the Supreme Court of Heaven.

2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

The imagery before us is that of a boy holding his clay jug while pouring water into another vessel. David took the burden he carried and placed it into the lap of the Lord.

The word “trouble” is compared to a “broken tooth or a sprained ankle” (Proverbs 25:19). The false charges hurt.

The term “shewed” means “to announce, publish, and fully declare.” Literally, the last phrase could be translated, “I caused my anguish to be published before His face.” Like a forensic accountant, David lays bare his books. The troubles on his ledger were opened for the Judge’s inspection.

A plaintiff, David introduces his cause to the Honorable Judge in the Superior Court.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

David wanted us to know the importance of the timing of his plea. This was not a “now I lay myself down to sleep” prayer.

He coughed up his plea when his spirit was submerged under the waves of legal concerns.

The term “overwhelmed” means “enveloped” or “fully covered.” The word is used to describe “feeble” starving cattle during Egypt’s terrible famine in Genesis 30:42. It is translated “swoon” in Jonah 2:8 when Jonah woke up in the belly of a whale; that is, this prayer gushed out of him when he was hiding from Saul’s Gestapo in his mountain hide-away; when he was shelled by political slander.

David was innocent of the charges against him. He had injured no man or his property—and he was a true patriot.

The de facto king saw the prince as a threat to his position. Saul was desperately trying to retain his power as head of state. Engaged in the politics of personal destruction, the king’s hatchet men slanderously accused David in order to prejudice the court of public opinion.

Saul’s officials set a political trap in order to snare David and destroy his military career. Branded a threat to national security, Saul placed the Captain of his Special Guard on his “Wanted Dead or Alive List.” The plan was simple: accuse, capture, and kill!

Saul’s Special Forces were ordered to kill first and ask questions later. Saul’s equivalent of the FBI, CIA, IRS, and federal S.W.A.T. teams searched for this fugitive from justice in order to terminate him.

A dead David was better than a popular giant slayer. Stunned by the shifting winds of these events, God's man prayed . . . and oh, how he must have prayed.

4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

The term "know" (makir) means "to discern" or "recognize" or "analyze"; that is, there was no man that could objectively and impartially investigate David's meritorious actions and advocate his innocence in the king's court.

David was truly alone and no one understood his personal distress. He had no friends to come along side to comfort him.

When indicted by "THE GOVERNMENT", true friends are hard to find. Most people will believe government propaganda, and the rest will scurry like cockroaches for cover in order to avoid guilt by association.

When the government must be obeyed in the minds of men, they will turn you over to the State to be abused by a goon squad.

Think of it! David said there was no man that cared about his soul, whether he was healthy or sick, glad or mad, saved or unsaved. How many unbelievers attend church and never get a visit from a deacon; or be asked a question about the state of their soul; or be queried about their relationship to their Creator?

When was the last time you took an interest in the condition of a person's soul? People care more about their pet gerbil than about the souls of men.

The statement "no man cared for my soul" is perhaps one of the greatest indictments against Christian people in the Word of God.

What is it about Christian folk that they abandon their wounded—especially those that are falsely accused by the godless, tyrannical State? Why is it believers avoid the hurting, the troubled, and the accused? Why it is Christians will believe the media, the gossip columns, and police blogs and seldom request evidence or proof of claim from government officials? Why do churchmen make it their duty to assist government agents in their lawless, tyrannical unconstitutional commercial schemes?

When government is god in the minds of Christians, they cannot be trusted not to betray you.

5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

Having no kindred spirit, David appealed his case to the Supreme Court of Heaven.

God was not just important to David, He was all important. The LORD was his refuge; his fortress; his hiding place.

Alone, David identified the LORD as his "portion" in the land of the living. The word "portion" refers to a "tract of land" or one's personal property. On the street without a roof over his head and foraging for food on the land, his relationship to God was the only possession of which he

could boast. David had one jewel in his pouch and that gem was a personal relationship with His Creator.

6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

David had three petitions (6-7). Each are Hiphil imperatives. The use of the command is the language of prayer just as “demands” and “orders” are the language of the court. David moved the Judge to stir Himself and to grant him injunctive relief from his political adversary.

His first plea is for the Lord to hear his prayer. “Open your eyes! Open your ears! Don’t ignore my request,” was David’s argument.

The second plea was for deliverance from his adversaries. What is a man supposed to do when the putative government as protector of the people becomes the agent of destruction of its citizens? What is a man supposed to do when the government that should be obeying God’s law disobeys its own laws and terrorizes the people?

David was maligned, misjudged, and slandered. Media personalities are especially good at this. Assassins and the dog hounds hunted for his den in order to devour him. He needed God to defend him against this government plot to murder him.

What a statement: “They are stronger than I.” Who can fight against the State with all its financial resources, paramilitary SWAT teams, and hoards of unscrupulous Philadelphia lawyers?

What individual has the wealth to prevail against a State indictment with government paid prosecutors and government paid witnesses and government paid juries and government paid judges? Who can match the government’s war chest or survive it law-fare?

This court with wolf-like, flunky bailiffs in attendance was looking for a sacrifice—and David was their lamb.

It wasn’t until 1215 AD in England that the legal plying field was leveled.

Thank God for the Barons who remedied the imbalance of power by insisting King John sign the Magna Carta — a legal charter that prevented agents of the king from bringing charges against a baron by government paid prosecutors and government paid witnesses (sheriffs) to government paid judges. We call it bias, favoritism, and prejudice.

Out of this stew of injustice, the barons devised the whole concept of a trial by jury—a jury made up of fellow barons.

To be charged for a crime in England, government prosecutors needed “faithful witnesses;” that is, two witness from the private sector that were not suckin’ slop at the king’s trough.

[Note, if you are being charged for a victimless crime, insist the state follow the “rules of common law” – 7th Amendment).

7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

David's third plea was for deliverance from prison. Oh, how the chains of fear, or doubt, or anxiety, or anger, or terror, or discouragement can imprison a soul.

When falsely accused, the litigant finds himself in an emotional, legal prison. Warrants for victimless crimes strangle liberty.

With a frivolous warrant for his arrest, David's freedom to travel upon public highways became impossibility. He was on the run! He was behind bars in his own prison of despair.

Confined in southern Judah, David was in hiding from Saul's secret police. Fear and bewilderment shackled his soul. In spiritual chains and hunted like a mad dog, David cried out to God for a remedy.

The purpose of David's prayer was not limited to his own well-being, but included the glory of God. Praise is the grand objective of history (Revelation 5).

How could he join the throng of the redeemed in joyful adoration if he did not have a story to tell about God's deliverance? How could he praise God if he was not free of these unfounded charges?

More was at stake here than David's comfort. At stake was the reputation of his God. No test; no testimony. No problems; no praise. No help; no honor. No deliverance; no dancing; no contest; no victory!

David expresses a confidence that God heard his prayer, and that his loneliness would end — that he would soon be joined by righteous men — non-government agents; regular folk who shared his love of God's law and God's glory.

Further, he ends this prayer with a quiet confidence that God would deal "bountifully" with him; that is, that God would provide a remedy in his case against the false statutory charges against him; that Christ would advocate his cause and that his plea would be granted.

If you have not been falsely accused because you have broken the common law, you need to repent deeply, make restitution, and plead the mercy of the court.

If you have been falsely accused by State actors and trapped in some commercial scheme and you have harmed no man or his property, this is a prayer for you.

Fellow Christians will not understand. But, God is your refuge and your portion. Appeal your case to the Supreme Court of Heaven.

Psalm 143 - Smitten to the Ground

"He hath smitten my life down to the ground."



Thirsty for God?

Before us is another prayer for deliverance by David. We don't know when it was written. It could have been composed after the persecutions of Saul or after the rebellion of Absalom.

Written in a time of trouble, it provides comfort for those traveling a hundred miles of bad road.

To touch the great lessons of this psalm, one has to feel his way through David's desolation and his jumbled emotions of fear for his life and love for his God.

While David was hiding from Saul, God was hiding from David. Saul is trying to find David, and David is trying to find God . . . and a way of escape. What a predicament! All men of God face it.

While his trials terrified him, they also produced a hunger to know God. Only by thirsting for God can a man find Him!

Pleading from a state of destitution

Psalm 143:1 <A Psalm of David.> Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.

David entered into a covenant with God and now he claims the benefits of that agreement: hear me; answer me based on your faithfulness.

God is not only good and righteous, He is faithful.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

"enter not into judgment" — Do not deal with me on the grounds of justice; do not mark my wrongs or count my sins when I pray for justice against my adversaries. I plead the gentle hand of mercy and grace and not the gavel of justice.

"in thy sight shall no man living be justified" — no man, black or white, male or female, rich or poor, righteous or unrighteous, religious or non-religious can make a claim on Thee based on justice. All would be condemned. Therefore, Thy servant pleads mercy from Your throne.

Pleading from a State of Defeat

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.

David pleads his case from a position of defeat: “persecuted,” “smitten down,” “in darkness” as one who is “long dead.”

“my soul” refers to David, but the reader can assume that it includes the souls of all his soldiers. David speaks in the first person as a literary device to avoid the confusion that plural pronouns like “we,” “us,” “they,” and “them” can convey in a literary work.

Chased, smitten, in darkness, groveling among the dead, what should a man do?

Pleading from a State of Desolation

The English word “desolation” means “deserted,” “barren,” or “lifeless” ; that is, this prayer does not come from a victorious, hyper-positive saint, but from one who has been beaten to the ground by his circumstances.

4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.

The word “overwhelmed” means “turned upside down,” “weak,” or “feeble.”

The word “desolate” means “abandoned” or “alone.”

This trial lasted years, not months.

5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.

In contrast to his present condition, David reflects on better days — on the sweet days of fellowship with his Lord; on the days of grace and mercy; on days when he ate the meat and not the bone; days of wine and not vinegar; days of plenty and not poverty; days of honor and not shame; of safety and not stress; of strength and not weakness.

6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

“I stretch forth my hands unto thee” — David reached out for God but couldn’t find Him. Saul was a few steps behind him, and God was nowhere to be found.

He compares his state to one of a draught. The land was weary for want of water from a lack of rain, and David’s soul was weary for want of blessing from Heaven. In fleeing from Saul in the wilderness of Ziph, David was not only parched and in need of water, he longed to feel the presence of the Lord. In his state of desolation and dehydration, David did not thirst for wine, money, or pleasure, but for fellowship with the living God.

While David was hiding from Saul, God was hiding from David. Saul is trying to find David, and David is trying to find God . . . and a way of escape. Ever been there? You may be in better shape than you think!

Be careful for what you hunger, for you will surely find it! You will become the sum total of your desires.

Even in desperate times, a healthy soul thirst for God. Whether in good times or bad times, a sick soul does not have an appetite for the Savior or His Word.

Pleading from a State of Desperation

7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

David was not being impatient. He needed relief now – “speedily.” Like a man dying of thirst, David felt his soul growing weaker and weaker for a lack of communion with God.

“my spirit faileth” show us that David’s strength declined; Surely, he felt like a man hanging on to a cliff by his tippy-fingers loosing strength by the second. How could he hold on?

“hide not thy face” – in his desperate circumstance David could not see God, feel God, or hear God – a plight worse than his fight with Saul.

“that go down into the pit” is the last stop on the highway of life – a state of desperation for sure!

While David was being chased by Saul he was not only in danger of being caught and killed, the eclipse of God cast his soul into a cloud of despair even to the point of going “down into the pit” of hopelessness. Where was God?

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.

“Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness” reveals the spiritual healthiness of David’s soul. Even at the gates of death, his priority was to hear the love of God. He placed his trust in God as a young man, and now that trust was put to the test. David could shear and feel the foul breath of Saul’s hunt for his life, but he could not see the face of God or feel his presence – the most terrifying trial a God-seeker can go through.

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.

In praying, “Deliver me . . . from my enemies,” David returns to the pragmatic problem of Saul’s hot pursuit for his life. In need of physical relief and spiritual reassurance, David prays for deliverance.

“I flee unto thee to hide me” – David not only fled from Saul, he fled to God. Because the LORD was his sanctuary, he expected some kind of miraculous deliverance during this deadly manhunt.

Death, poverty, and isolation stalk us all. Flee to the Lord.

Pleading the Disposition of God

10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

“Teach me to do thy will”; i.e. teach me to do what is right in the present crisis and provide me a way of escape – a way that you approve – a way that will best secure my deliverance. Consider God’s marvelous deliverance at the Cave of Adullam (1 Samuel 22).

“thy spirit is good” – Since your Spirit is good, holy, righteous, prudent, and reasonable, guide me to do what is good and right.

“Lead me into the land of uprightness” — “uprightness” refers to level ground. David fled on rocky ground in wilderness. He expresses hope that God will deliver him and place him on even ground so that he would not stumble in his flight from Saul.

11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name’s sake: for thy righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble.

“Quicken me” – Strengthen me for the task . . . don’t let me faint or give up. I need help. Because of the stand I have taken for you, bring me out of this trouble so men will speak well of you.

12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

Out of “mercy” to me and the world, cut them off. Display justice toward them and mercy towards me.

“I am thy servant” — Destroy my enemies, not for personal vengeance, but for Thy honor and the progress of your kingdom.

David’s enemies are God’s enemies. Because the world is better off without criminals vexing men, cut them off. Improve the world by purging society of these reprobates. Lord, I am not asking this for my pleasure, but because “I am Thy servant.” Free me that I might pursue the work you have given me to do.

There are two ways to improve the world: (1) convert men to Christ; and, (2) to purge the wicked from society by enforcing penalties. Here David prays for swift and effective justice on lawbreakers knowing that society would be improved by their absence.

Psalm 144 - God Gives the Victory

"Happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."



This psalm is ascribed to David and there is no reason not to assume that he is the author.

As a newly installed king, David raises this prayer against the nations that attempted to crush the Hebrews by warring against the commonwealth and pillaging the countryside.

Psalm 144:1 <A Psalm of David.> Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:

Because Satan seeks to overthrow the church in every generation, each believer must learn the art of war. Fight or become a slave.

Considering the LORD equipped him with the skills of a warrior, David blessed the God of his strength. In this case, the dexterity of an archer, swordsman, and commander.

David's example teaches us that every man must gain skills in the art of self-defense; that is, he must become a man who can defend life, liberty, and property. Likewise, every Christian must become competent in the art of apologetics so he can defend the faith against critics of the gospel.

2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

David saw the Lord as his Source of goodness, virtue, and strength. All that he hoped to be as a warrior-king was found in God.

Note the defensive nature of this text: fortress, high tower, deliverer, and shield.

Enemy soldiers desired to have David's head. To this general in the Lord's army, God was his defender, "fortress, high tower, deliverer, and shield. He expresses that it was the power of God and not his prowess that gave his army victory on the battlefield.

3 LORD, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

King David seems to lack the pride and arrogance characteristic of most military men. Impressed by the Lord's care of him, he marvels that the Most High God would take such an interest in the affairs of such tiny, little, creatures as himself here below.

"What is man" is an analytical question designed to provoke admiration for the Lord. We think too much of ourselves and not enough of the majesty of God. The same question is asked in Psalm 8.

On the other hand, there is a crisis in anthropology. Man is more than a speck of dust.

Bernard of Clairvaux on man (1091-1153): ". . . nothing but fetid sperm, a sack of dung . . . Oh, food for worms! Oh heap of dust! oh vanity of dew!

On the tomb of Cardinal Lagrange has written: "Miserable one, what reason have you to be proud? Soon you will be as we, a fetid cadaver, food for worms.

Prince William, a member of the illuminati and royal family, once said, "I want to come back as a virus and kill most of the population."

Francis Pharcellus Church wrote (1839-1906), "In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge."

Daphne Du Maurier, English author and playwright (1907-1988), called man a "fungus on the surface of one of the minor planets."

What claim has one so weak and temporal upon the unchanging, eternal God? What is there in man that entitles him to so much consideration by the Creator? Why has he placed such an imperfect creature over the works of his hands? Why did He send the Son of God to save His people from their sins? Why has so much honor and authority been conferred on him, and why did the LORD give man dominion over the world (Genesis 1:26-38)?

The answer of course is not in man, but in the mind of God. He loves, not because of who we are, but because of Who Is, a God of love — a God of humility that bows to hear men pray.

4 Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.

For men who think too much of themselves, the psalmist requires us to consider the meaning of the term "vanity."

By "vanity" David refers to the shortness of man's life on earth. He appears as a shadow, a puff of smoke, a tap on the drum in a back alley band, and in a moment he is gone never to be seen or heard from again?

We need balance. Man is not a god to be worshiped, nor is man a worm to be crushed under foot.

A Prayer for Intervention

5 Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

Though as tiny as an ant in the eyes of God, David pleads with the LORD to stoop to hear his prayer and to assist him in his fight against man-haters.

One glance, one touch and the mountains smoke like a volcano — a metaphor for God's intervention in a duel between armies.

6 Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

Drawing illustrations from nature like bolts of lightning, David pleads with the LORD to pull back his bow and strike the enemy in order to scatter them. The wicked must die in order for sheep to live.

7 Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;

Using anthropomorphism as a literary device, David calls upon God to employ his hands to reach down and to save him from drowning in sea of angry soldiers.

“strange children” refer to alien armies hostile to the law of the LORD God; i.e., sinners in rebellion against God’s law-order.

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

“vanity” refers to the lies, slander, fictions, and distortions that promoted an unjust war against the Hebrews.

“right hand” is the dominant hand meaning that the whole culture of these foreign nations were dominated by deceit and lies.

Consider all the lies and propaganda that the U.S. government has inflicted up the people in regards to fake science, politics, religion, taxation, and law. Evolution, “gay” marriage, feminism, and fake vaccines come to mind.

9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

While the heathen curse and spout lies, David sang praises to the God of truth. Drawing deep upon his musical skills David employed all his talents to worship.

10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

“salvation” refers to acts of God that rescue kings from defeat and shame. Kings seem to be powerful, invincible men, but like all men, they are dependent on God for deliverance. As great a warrior as the Goliath-killer was, he attributes his victories and survival to the LORD.

11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:

David repeats his plea found in verse 10 so that he might highlight the marvelous benefits of trusting God in such dangerous wars.

12 That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:

Family: David fought the battles of the LORD against violent men who would enslave men and abuse women. He prayed for victory so that the nation’s sons might grow up and flourish alike carefully nurtured plants; that their little girls might mature to be works of art like polished stones in a king’s palace.

13 That our garner may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:

Commerce and production: David fought battles against pirates, thieves, and plunderers. He sought the LORD for victory in battle that the nation's farmers and ranchers might experience prosperity and surplus in their businesses.

14 That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets.

David fought against lusty butchers who would have slaughtered the nation's livestock for banquets in honor of their gods. He prayed for victory so that domesticated animals might be safe.

15 Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.

The whole purpose of religion is to produce a happy, productive people contented with peace and provision from the LORD. Worthless idols disappoint and embitter men. True happiness and joy comes from the religion of YHWH.

The nation that wants to be happy must put away its idols, speak truth, and keep His laws.

Psalm 145 - Exploring the Greatness of God

"His greatness is unsearchable."



This psalm of David is simply titled, "David's Psalm of Praise."

It is an alphabetic acrostic psalm composed of 21 verses with three stanzas.

For some unknown reason, the letter Nun is left out; possibly to balance the three sections with seven verses each.

The value of the psalm is that it shows us what a healthy mind looks like. There is no mental illness here; that is, there is nothing that resembles a narcissistic, personality disorder. A healthy mind is occupied with the greatness of Another . . . the greatness of God.

David's positive perspective on the character of God is nothing short of stunning. He did not start his pilgrim journey with this perfected theology; rather, he ended up with this marvelous perspective. In his early life he sought God and determined to follow Him . . . to trust Him . . . to adore Him. He did not waiver. His confidence in the Lord only became stronger. Notice the first and last verse of this psalm . . . both dedicated to praise.

He does not exaggerate or idealize the virtues of God. Rather, he strains his poetic skills to accurately express the glories of our Lord.

Stanza One

Psalm 145:1 <David's Psalm of praise.>

(Aleph) I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

The verb "extol" (a-ruwm) is formed from a Polel stem — intense action, cohortive in meaning; i.e. a call for others to join David in praising God now and for all eternity, in the beginning of one's spiritual life and at the end of one's physical life.

"Praise" refers to the devotion and adoration of God as one's primary purpose in life — a pious life.

"And I will bless thy name forever and ever – I will bless or praise thee. I will do it now; I will do it in all the future. I will do it in time; I will do it in eternity"
(Barnes).

(Bet) 2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

The word "bless" (barak) means to "salute with respect," "to adore," and "to speak well of."

"Every day" implies a daily lifetime habit of pursuing the Lord and contemplating His character.

Praise is appropriate for one who is blessed everyday by God with food, friends, and finances. A healthy soul counts his blessings and names them “one by one” today, tomorrow, and into the age to come.

Greatness

(Gimel) 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

The word “great” (gadowl) is used twice in this text and basically refers to a “large number” — to something big or loud or bright; that is, His beauty, wisdom, goodness, and treasures are unsearchable, unlimited, unbounded, immeasurable, and unfathomable.

The word “greatly” (me’od) is an adverb modifying the verb “praised.” It means exceedingly, extremely, intensely, and immensely. Who among us has exhausted himself in expressing His greatness in words, poems, and songs?

(Dalet) 4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

Because the Lord’s greatness is unsearchable, unlimited, unbounded, immeasurable, and unfathomable our praise should be perpetual.

Not only is God’s greatness everlasting, praise from the redeemed is never-ending. Because His goodness extends to every generation, every generation yields men who gladly join His choir to praise Him.

Honor

(Hey) 5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

Because God’s goodness reaches every generation, David gladly joins the eternal chorus, “I will speak of the glorious honor of the majesty.”

“honour (hadar) of thy majesty (howd)”: The word “honor” means splendor, beauty, and glory. The word “majesty” refers to His impressive dignity, character, and abilities.

To speak of His “works” implies David was conscious of God’s undertaking in creation, and perceptive of His work of Providence; that is, God’s work of salvation and injunction among men.

David labors to find appropriate words to accurately articulate the wonders of God. Both the Hebrew and English language are sadly inadequate to express the glory, grandeur, and greatness of the Lord. They do not do Him justice.

(Vav) 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

“terrible acts” means “awesome,” and is one word containing 8 Hebrew letters and 8 sounds. The word is used twice in succession to each other in the Hebrew text — a construction for emphasis: “speak of. . . thy terrible acts, thy terrible acts I will declare.”

In the major scale, the eight notes go up the steps from bottom to top. Because there are no words in English to express the magnitude of God's glories, English translators settle for the austere term, "terrible acts."

Though language is inadequate to couch his worthiness, every generation yields spiritual phonologists, poets, and musicians who plow through their dictionaries and poetic arts searching for words, notes, and tunes adequate to express the marvels of His majesty . . . and, David pioneered these songsmiths, "I will declare Thy greatness."

The verb "declare" (caphar) is a Piel stem implying intense energy; that is, David was fully employed in the privilege of proclaiming God's greatness to his generation.

Goodness

(Zayin) 7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

The word "abundantly utter" (naba) means to bud forth, to gush out, to flow as a fountain.

"goodness" (tov) includes all of God's attributes, including, but not limited to, His holiness and righteousness, and His mercy and kindness.

The "they" refers to the spiritual phonologists, poets, and musicians who fill generations with sermons, hymns, poems, choruses, and brainy insights into the wonders of our personal, infinite Triune God. All of God's people have an evangelical drive to make known to others the wonders of the Lord.

No man can count the greatness of His majesty and no man can count all the hymns that have been composed expressing adoration for the Lord throughout the centuries. We have 150 psalms in the royal hymnbook but their melodies are lost in history.

With only 8 basic notes on a scale, men have yet to exhaust sounds, themes, and rhythms from voices, horns, flutes, and violins to express the greatness of His goodness. Who has the mind-skills to express the attractiveness and loveliness of His mercy which is higher than the heavens?

We are finite beings and it is our privilege to lend our minds, voices, and hands to praise His glory.

Stanza Two

Gracious

(Chet) 8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

The word rendered "abundantly utter" in verse 7 means "to bud forth, to gush out, and to flow as a fountain."

In reflecting on God's lovingkindness, David hits a gusher of virtues worthy of praise: grace, compassion, patience, and mercy — all of which are higher than the heavens.

Benevolent

(Tet) 9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

The word “good” (tov) is used 63 times in Psalms, and it is the first word in this text. While only the LORD can define good, we know it involves restraining evil and providing the necessities of life whether it be edibles or trials for our edification.

“The Lord is good to all” and will continue to do good to all his creatures. What a sweeping statement — “all”! He abides without bias, prejudice, or favoritism. Strangely, however, only sons of the kingdom can grasp, appreciate, and energetically proclaim His universal goodness.

The LORD is kind and gracious to all His creatures and ready to do good towards all of them.

“There is not one of them whom he is not ready and willing to bless; not one whose happiness would not be agreeable to him, or whose welfare he is not ready to promote . . . There is not one of them whom he is not ready and willing to bless” (Barnes).

“When on earth, he showed his compassion both to the bodies and souls of men, by healing the one, and making wise the other. He is of great mercy, a merciful High Priest, through whom God is merciful to sinners” (Matthew Henry).

“his tender mercies are over all his works” — day and night, morning and evening, in the spring, summer, fall, and winter we see the sun parade across the sky inspiring the earth to yield its harvest and to provide heat and warmth for man and all of creation.

(Yod) 10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

“all thy works” include creation, providence, and redemption. He creates; He sustains; He redeems.

The word “praise” (yadah) means to “throw up the hands” in victory or as in joy.

All His works praise Him; and all true saints praise Him. If you are not praising God, you are not one of His saints. Selah.

Glory and Power

(Kaf) 11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

“They” refers to the “saints” in verse 10. The world speaks about the accomplishments of man; believers speak of the law of God, the accomplishments of Christ . . . of the cross . . . of the glories of His kingdom.

The media likes to talk about Tinsel Town and the shiny, bright and often unreal nature of Hollywood and the movie industry; but, sensible, solid, sound minds are focused on the person of Christ, His incarnate presence on earth, and the power of His kingdom.

“Of thy reign; of the great principles of thy government and laws. They see in that reign evidence that thou art worthy of universal praise” (Barnes).

(Lamed) 12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

Here we see the great desire of the saints — to make known his power and glory to men . . . the evangelical nature of redeemed men . . . to urge others to surrender to His authority and to receive the benefits of His salvation.

If a person does not have an evangelical spirit, they are not redeemed! A person who keeps his religion to himself is not of the religion of Christ. “If you are not witnessing, you are not following” (Evangelist Marion Michaux).

Everlasting Authority

(Mem) 13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.

The word “kingdom” (malkuth) refers to the power, dominion, reign, and rule of Almighty God.

“The Lord reigns” is the gospel of the Old Testament (Psalm 97), and the major message of our Lord was that the rule of God entered history in and through the Son (Matthew 4:17). Thus, the first duty of every man is “to seek first the kingdom of God” — that is, to live under the rule of God. To enter that kingdom one must acknowledge His authority, His dominion, and His Lordship over all.

Thus, we pray, “Thy kingdom come;” i.e. may men acknowledge Your authority and surrender to it now.

The kingdom comes “violently” (dynamically) and men ought to do all they can to enter into it (Matthew 11:12).

Protection

The psalmist skips the letter Nun.

(Samekh) 14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

What amazing theology! David sees the LORD not only as the transcendent Maker of Heaven and Earth, but a personal, condescending Savior who protects and guards all that are prone to fall — a Redeemer who heals, restores, repairs, and mends those that stumble on the road to the celestial city (Galatians 6:1ff).

“fall” is not defined in this verse. It can apply to a financial let down, or health mishap, or a failure to maintain a good habit, or a moral blunder.

The verb “upholdeth” means “to lean,” “to rest,” “to sustain.” He condescends to help the weak and frail. He has pity on those in want. He helps all who fall . . . who are bowed down by the problems of life . . . and who cannot help themselves.

Psalm 146:8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:

“all” includes you and me.

Stanza Three

Provision

(Ayin) 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

The eyes of all include sheep, fish, seagulls, elk, and spiders.

All creatures in heaven and on earth, in the sky and in the water, are dependent on God and exist by the mercy and grace of God. A world looking to the LORD for their provision is a healthy world.

“The eyes of all wait upon thee” — Oh, that all men would acknowledge His goodness and kindness to them! They exist by His decree and are sustained by His mercy and power. He is our Heavenly Father, the Great Giver, and the Provider of our abundance.

(Pey) 16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

Jesus taught us, “Your heavenly Father feedeth them:” little birds, giant giraffes, tiny insects, and all people who live in the deserts, the mountains, and the valleys of the earth. It is the nature of God to give men what they need, and the happiness of His creatures is His delight.

The psalmist employs personification, “openeth thine hand,” to shine light on God’s power, benevolence, and generosity; that He takes joy and pleasure in providing for the needs of “every living thing.”

The word “desire” refers to the fundamental needs of men: food, water, shelter.

“Every living thing . . . makes a claim on God, and whatever desires arise in the living creature by reason of its life, God would be untrue to Himself, a cruel Parent, an unnatural Father, if He did not satisfy them” (MacLaren).

Believest thou this, my soul?

Holiness

(Tzadi) 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

“righteous” in this text means that God acts consistent with His nature to be kind and generous. All His ways are just. He injures no man.

“In all his acts of government he is just, injurious to none, but administering justice to all: his ways are equal, though ours are unequal” (Benson).

“holy” (chacyd) refers to righteousness and piety, but includes the concept of kindness, mercy, and faithfulness (Strong’s); that is, this word informs us that there is a mixture of mercy and holiness in all the allotments of God.

Omnipresence

(Kuf) 18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

Because the LORD is omnipresent, he is always near. We move, but He never moves. We are not always near Him, but He is always near us.

“Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet” (Ellicott).

“He is very ready to hear and answer the prayers of his people. He is present every where; but in a special way he is nigh to them,” that “come to Christ by faith” (Matthew Henry).

Our Lord is not like earthly kings with working hours. He does not display “open” and “closed” signs. He is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Court is always open and He awaits our entrance into His holy chambers. Will you be there?

(Resh) 19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

So far as men’s wills are agreeable to His will, He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him.

The word “desire” (ratsown) is the first word in the sentence. It means “delight” or “pleasure.” He takes pleasure in meeting the needs of His creatures so far as those desires conform to his law-order.

In the Hebrew text “He will” (an imperfect verb) is employed three times. It is a strong thrice fold promise — a Hebrew form of absolute certainty – He will fulfill; He will hear; He will save.

Because God promises to meet all our reasonable desires in a tertiary way, we can rest and attend to the duties of the day knowing that He will provide for our future needs. Our future is in His capable hands. Why worry?

Guardianship

(Shin) 20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.

The word “preserveth” (shamar) means “to guard and to protect.” The word “destroy” (shamad) means to abolish, ruin, or exterminate.

“Notice this recurrent thought, that the guardianship of the good implies the destruction of the wicked” (Ellicott)

“He violates no right; he wrongs no one; he demands of no one a service which would be unjust; he makes no arrangements for pardon and salvation which it is not best should be made” (Barnes)

Preservation includes protection from sin, from losing one’s integrity, as well as protection from physical harm — a protection provided to all even till their work is finished.

Note the condition of preservation (unto eternity) is one of “love;” that is, His protection is available to those that recognize and appreciate Him.

But, how do we deal with the sudden, unexpected death of a loved one?

Barnes provides this insight, “He violates no right; he wrongs no one . . . They lie exposed to many dangers in this world from men and things, from visible and invisible foes; but he, by preserving them in their integrity, and enabling them to continue in his love, ([John 15:9](#)) effectually secures them, so that no real evil befalls them.”

(Tav) 21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

“praise” (tehillah) is the first word of the Hebrew text: “Praise to the LORD shall I speak . . .” — a commitment “all flesh” would do well to make.

“for ever and ever” reaches into eternity.

David expresses the hope of all the redeemed. Because they have tasted the goodness of the LORD, they occupy themselves with praise. After all, it is the duty and privilege of the recipients of grace to “bless his holy name for ever and ever.”

Note that the first and last verse of this psalm ends with praise “forever;” i.e. there is something enduring and lasting about cherishing the Lord. Moreover, this psalm expresses no doubt . . . and no fear. From the beginning of one’s birth in Christ until the end of time, it is the desire of the Redeemed to praise God.

Though I cannot prove it, I suspect this psalm was penned toward the end of David’s life. He did not start his pilgrim journey with this electrifying theology; rather, as he matured, he ended up with this galvanized perspective. Our pilgrim journey begins with Aleph (a desire to honor God) and ends with Tav (Tehillah); i.e. invigorated praise for all God’s goodness and assistance through life.

A young Christian would do well to practice praise even though he lacks the sincerity of a mature David who learned about God’s goodness in the heat of battle and the trials of life. Perhaps, we begin our journey in fear while pursuing God (Psalm 119:120) , pass through trials and tribulations, and end up in our senior years discerning the Lord is truly good to His creatures.

During these troubles we claim the promise that “all things work together for good” and end our journey knowing that “all things work together for good.”

Blessed be the name of the Lord!

Psalm 146 - An Election Psalm

Self Talk of a Godly Man



Do ever ever talk to yourself? What do you talk about?

This is one of the Hallelujah Psalms that records the self-talk of a godly man.

There are three commands in this psalm. In verse one the psalmist orders his own soul to hallelu-jah twice. The conclusion of the psalm contains the same command.

Does your self-talk include commands to your own soul to praise God?

This psalm is also called an “artillery” psalm because preachers fired their blazing cannons from the pulpit before elections at carnal minds warning their parishioners not to trust political figures. Voters would do well to reflect on this psalm during election season.

In verse 3, we have a Jussive verb enjoining God’s people to trust God and not to trust princes (nadiyb) – the ruling class. This is the Spirit’s way of telling us, “Don’t put your trust in politicians!” but, put your trust in the LORD.

1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

Every psalm tells the story of the author’s spiritual quest. This psalmist begins his chorus with the conclusion of His investigation. With renewed conviction, he engraves his purpose in Holy Writ: *Hallelu-jah!!*

The verb “Praise” is a Piel imperative – a jolt to the soul to get out of doldrums and to shift his focus to the glories of the LORD. Praise is evidence of spiritual fitness– visible, tangible, empirical proof of a healthy heart. What health is to the body, praise is to the soul.

A sick soul can’t praise God, and a wicked soul won’t praise God. An obsessive, impulsive mind with a heart two-sizes to small is wrapped up with the ups and downs and the ins and outs of politics.

Possibly, the fire in the hearth of the psalmist’s heart had cooled to the point where the author needed to incite the flames of wonder so he could fully adore his Creator. People drowning in the sea of politics have a way of splashing cold water on fires of devotion to Christ. Twice the psalmist lifts his head above the surf and foam of politics to summon his own soul to praise HaShem (LORD).

The issue isn’t whether the Lord is worthy of praise, but whether men can escape their idolatrous fixation on politics on earth to explore the wonders of the Creator in Heaven. Because we live in a humanistic culture where man is fascinated with the accomplishments of

man, worship takes holy energy. It must be fueled by a desire to know God and reflection on His revelation.

He did not praise his own soul. He was not concerned about self-esteem, but Christ-esteem.

2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

I will not live forever, but while I live on this earth, I will focus on the beauties of Another. Charged with the duty to love the Lord with all my heart and soul, let my flame in this holy choir glow to the ends of the earth.

If ever a redeemed man had a duty to sing His praises, it is me. Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb . . . Praise the LORD, Oh my soul. Sing, soul, sing!

Rising stars in government compete for our affections, but the psalmist would have none of it. We can't be too daring in our devotion to our Redeemer. This saint shares the reasons why.

Six Reasons to trust God and not the Government

#1 Princes cannot help you.

3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

The great error among us is to trust man below instead of God above; to depend on fickle princes on this earth instead of the faithful Creator in heaven. The Spirit commands us not to put our trust in candidates, political parties, legislatures, utopian agendas, and popular trends.

To be disappointed with politicians is to have trusted them. Why should we look to flawed, frail, fickle men lusting for power to help us with our personal problems? Corruptocrats are often the most psychotic imbalanced, spiritually-sick people on the planet.

The middle verse in the middle of the Bible warns us against trusting the rich and powerful (Psalm 118):

⁸It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

⁹It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes

#2 Princes are flawed and perish like every man.

4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

No matter how high a prince rises in government, he ends up six feet underground. Only a fool trusts a dying man.

“Dead men tell no tales.” When the wicked die, their dreams die with them. But, those who invest praise to HaShem obtain stock in the kingdom of God.

When a politician is in office, citizens consider him an expert on everything, and after he leaves office he returns to the status of a moron. He begins his political career with lofty dreams, and ends his career with failed policies and nightmares for all. He promises his constituents heaven

in the cosmos, but creates hell on earth. These envied creatures are made of dust and return to dust. Why build on the ground of men who will end up under the ground? Their dreams will fall like drops of rain because they are built upon earthly hopes.

The Christian hope, on the other hand, is established on Christ raised from the grave sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven. Trust the Prince of the kings of earth and not pauper princes proudly parading around like pied-pipers with magical flutes and alluring powers.

#3 The God of Jacob (grace) is the true Source of happiness.

5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: 6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:

True happiness lies in an understanding of law and grace. The LORD was pleased to declare Himself as “the God of Jacob” because God loved him when no other man cared for his soul. This title of grace used 25 times informs us that when man fails us, there is a God in Heaven the helps broken men. He that made the cosmos can move heaven and earth to help us. He who preserves all can preserve us. He who protects the poor can protect us from rich politicians. He that saved Israel from the wrath of Pharaoh can save us from the ambitions of princes. He who prepared a path to save His people at the Red Sea can save us from pet projects planned by black-hat bureaucrats.

The ground of this hope is that the God of Jacob will never permit His promises to pass away. He is the One who keeps truth forever; that is, He is true to His character, true to His promises, true to His Word, and true to His people. He is the God Who is (YHWH); and because He is, He is the God who can be trusted now and forever.

Like the Sun that appears from behind the clouds, truth cannot hide forever. Like the Sun sends its golden rays to the earth for the benefit of all, God’s truth blesses all men.

#4 The Lord helps the oppressed.

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners: 8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow:

Feel oppressed by the difficulties of life . . . by political ineptitude? There is help for you.

The LORD surpasses all because He does not regard the rank and status of men. He loves His creatures unmindful of their wealth and power. He is the Champion of the poor and powerless. Politicians rob, oppress, and enslave. His triple blessings are food, justice, and liberty.

Oscar Ameringer said, “politics is the gentle art of getting votes from the poor and campaign funds from the rich, by promising to protect each from the other.”

When criminal politicians hide behind the majority, the God of Jacob acts in history to deliver the helpless from their ambitions. Nine types of people are beneficiaries of His love: the

oppressed, the hungry, prisoners, and the blind, the bowed down, the righteous, aliens / strangers, the fatherless, and the widows.

Eight redemptive acts are highlighted: executeth judgment, giveth food, looseth, openeth, raiseth, loveth, preserveth, and relieveth. In using these terms we see justice, provision, freedom, enlightenment, restoration, grace, protection, and relief.

#5 The Lord frustrates the plans of criminals.

9 . . . but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

The Hebrew term for “wicked” (*rasha’-m-im*) refers to criminals. The world of troubles God has planned for these lawbreakers is compressed into the Hebrew word *avath*, a Piel imperfect (intense action), which can be translated “flip upside down,” “turn inside out,” or “toss around in circles.”

This is God’s way of informing us that behind the scenes of history, He is at work frustrating the schemes of corrupt politicians setting up roadblocks and throwing sand in their gears. For this reason ambitious politicians are generally angry, frustrated folks because the opposing party defies their agenda, and because of a lack of money to achieve their ambitions to control the world. Frustrated party officials are evidence God is at work turning the way of the wicked upside down.

We tend to worry about politics when we lose sight of God’s work of frustrating the evil schemes of politicians. “Fret not thyself because of evil doers . . . for they shall be cut down like grass” (Psalm 37:1-2).

Believest thou this, my soul?

#6 The Lord reigns continually.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

Mark Twain said, “Politicians and diapers must be changed often, and for the same reason.”

In contrast to the topsy turvy world of politics is the sovereign reign of the Lord Christ.

That the Lord reigns is the gospel of the Old Testament. Unlike politicians that you can never talk to or get an appointment to see, God’s Court is always in session. This King never sleeps. His office is open 24/7.

The great joy of Christians is that God’s rule entered history in and through the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat man’s great enemies: Satan, sin, and death. He reigns, not Satan; He rules, not man. He is moving history towards its ultimate destiny – the will of God and not the will of princes, potentates, and politicians.

The great prayer of Christians is, “Thy kingdom come,” may your will be done now, on earth. May men recognize your kingdom rule and submit to it now.

The great message of this psalm is to trust God and not princes; to praise Him and not politicians.

May we be like the psalmist with self-talk that orders our own soul to praise the Lord and not to be so focused on the turbulent world of politics. Our spiritual health depends on it.

Psalm 147 - Reasons to Praise God

For it is good to sing praises unto our God



Praise ye the Lord.

This jewel is called a Hallelujah psalm because it begins and ends with Hallelu-jah signifying our daily lives should begin and end with "Praise the Lord!"

God builds up His People

Psalms 147:1-2. For it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem:

Worship is the brick and mortar of Jerusalem, the city of God.

Praise is good – beneficial, wholesome, delightfully, necessary, esthetic, and restorative.

Praise is to the soul what health is to the body. A heart filled with hallelujah sparkles with spiritual life. Praise is to God what complaining is to the Devil. The attitude of gratitude plays like a hymn in the heart of the LORD and like funeral dirge in heart of Satan.

The Lord build up Jerusalem; i.e. He protects and provides all His people need to be safe, happy, and secure.

He Shepherds His People

Psalms 147:2. He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

Sheep get frightened, lost, and endangered. He seeks and finds his lost sheep and brings them back into the fold.

The term "outcasts of Israel" hints this psalm was written during the post exilic period.. This in-gathering and reunion of the exiles ignited grateful hearts.

What praise meant to the outcasts of Israel, praise is to the church. Where ever the gospel goes the music of the redeemed travels with it. Even the pagans love to sing, "Amazing Grace." Focusing on the glories of reconciliation is the means of building up the body of Christ.

He Heals the Weak

Psalms 147:3. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

The Hebrews in Babylon were like pelicans in the desert. Confusion in Babel multiplied misery for the exiles, but the One with the rod also has the balm of Gilead. He Who chastened the nation also cured the people of their idolatry. He healed them of their idolatry, fear, and gloom.

Sermons that address the broken heart never lack an audience. People short of integrity multiply pain, but there is healing in the presence of Him Who was wounded for our transgressions.

He Knows all Things

Psalms 147:4. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.

In this text, the psalmist draws our attention to the infinite attributes of Almighty God — attributes which only He possesses — virtues that no human being shares.

The psalmist challenges our small minds. Who can count the stars? There are billions. The Creator names every one of them!

Furthermore, the infinite Creator is also a personal God Who reveals Himself to men who counts every hair on our heads!

We can be assured the One who knows the stars by name knows our aches and pains.

He Understands all Things

Psalms 147:5-6. Great is our lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite. The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

We are finite; He alone is infinite. It is one thing to possess power and another to know how to use it. Not only does God use power, He uses it to produce good and to restrain evil.

The term “meek” (anav) generally refers to one who is poor; but here, it seems to apply to those who are physically and economically weak.

The word “infinite” (micpar) means “without number.”

The Lord is great in power, great in mercy, great in knowledge and wisdom.

The verb “lifteth” is a Polel verb expressing intensive action; that is, when God restores the broken, He does it with profound effect — making the man whole. In contrast to His saving work, when God body-slams the wicked to the ground, they do not recover. Oh, Lord, do it now! Amen.

He Provides for His Creation

Psalms 147:6-11. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Presidents treasure their accomplishments and generals treasure the size and might of their armies. But, our God takes pleasure in those who fear him; that is, He treasures His people. Christians who flee to the cross for mercy and grace are the grand prize of redemption. He takes no joy in the size of armies or the strength of horses, but He rejoices in those that find hope in His mercy.

Kings have limited power and limited jurisdictions. But, our Lord has power to manage the speed of winds in the sky above, waters in the clouds, and to cause the grass to grow on mountains below. Moreover, he uses His power to provide food for His creation. He even responds to crows that cry for food to eat (Psalm 147:9). And, this God over nature is the same God watching over us. If He cares for little birds, surely He cares for you and me ([Luke 12:24](#)).

He Blesses His People with Good Things

Psalms 147:12-16. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee. He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

As Jerusalem had special reasons to praise the LORD, so the church has special reasons to rejoice in Christ. The One who strengthened the gates of Jerusalem from invasions from without, is the One who provides strength to Christian soldiers warring for the souls of men at the gates of hell. The One Who provided wheat for the nation provides bread for the church. He is sovereign over nature and over nations.

The King of Israel is also Head of the New Israel Who commands blessings for His people. The One Who commands snow, rain, hail, frost, ice, cold, and heat issues His warrant to every man to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. "His word runneth very swiftly." All obey Him, will we?

He Commands the Weather

Psalms 147:16-18 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.

The Hebrews saw God's hand in all the wonders of nature. We would do well to do the same. Let us see His craftsmanship in every snow-flake and attribute to Him all the marvels of ice and frost.

He that controls the chill of winter controls the winds of March and the heat of summer. He makes the wind to blow and the waters to flow. He owns the winds of the north that chill to the bone, and the winds of the south that bring sweat to the brow. Let us never forget Him Who is above us, under us, and around us — "for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

He Reveals His Truth to His People

Psalms 147:19. He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

The world can see Him as the God of nature that quickly slides into idolatry attributing the formation of space, time, and matter to Mother Nature. He reveals Himself to believers not only as the God of creation, but the God of revelation; not only as the one Lawgiver but as the One and only Savior.

He is Good to the Elect

Psalms 147:20. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord.

Who has been so blessed as the nation of Israel? They knew the blessings His law, but the pagan countries never received such revelation.

And, the church? Oh, the church: "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places our God" (Ephesians 1:3), for He "did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1Thessalonians 5:9).

Smothered with amazing grace, let us compose songs in our hearts and choruses to sing with our lips: Hallelujah! "Praise ye the Lord."

Psalm 148 - The Call to Heaven and Earth to Praise God

Let them Praise the Name of the LORD: for His Name Alone is Excellent

This is one of the Hallelujah psalms. The author is unknown.

The LORD is so great, the psalmist calls the heavens to praise the LORD; and, then he calls everything and everyone on earth to join the chorus of praise.

The psalm behaves like a triumphant march abounding with energy. Since we were created to praise God, let us do so vigorously.

There is power yet to be released for a praising heart. A thankful, worshipful spirit prepares the way for God to work in one's life.

The Lord call us to praise Him so that we might become better. Men are at their best when their hearts are in tune with Him.

A Call to the Heavens to Praise God

Psalm 148:1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

The word praise is used three times in this text and twelve times in this psalm. It means to know, study, admire, to proclaim the virtues and attributes of the Creator.

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

Angels and the armies of heaven are called to join this mighty chorus of praise.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

The psalmist charges celestial bodies to praise the Creator.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

The psalmist exhorts the skies and waters above the skies to intermix with the procession.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

The reason these heavenly bodies are called to enthusiastically integrate with the members of this choir is because He is their Creator; that is, they owe their existence to His command, will, and wishes. Each are created by His word.

6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

Moreover, praise is due the Creator because He made these heavenly spectacles stable and enduring. If there is an argument for the eternal nature of these entities it is here. Each is bound by fixed principles that cannot be altered by the fickleness of man. Nightly these celestial wonders appear in the same place sharing their light as a gift to humanity.

A Call to the Earth to Praise God

Notice how the psalmist uses the literary technique of personification. He addresses animals and inanimate objects and endows them with human characteristics – a tool designed to enlarge man’s perception about the greatness of God and the need for men to be fully engaged in living a life worthy of the LORD.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

The world is at its best when the earth hums with adoration of its Creator.

“dragons” may refer to all sea creatures; that is, everything on land and in the sea ought to join the choir.

8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

Inconstant and erratic forces like fire, hail, snow, steam, and wind obey His word and are subject to His command. Therefore, let them praise the Lord! Moreover, let us recognize that these phenomenon are not random acts of “nature,” but that they are subject to His will and pleasure.

9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

All stable and lofty things like mountains and cedar trees are exhorted to participate in this symphony.

10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

Wild beasts and domesticated cattle along with birds and insects are invited to add their chants and chirps to this celebration.

The Call to the People of the Earth to Praise God

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

Kings, princes, judges, and common people, the most unstable of all creatures, have a duty to consider His majesty and add their voices to this corale.

12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

Praise is fitting for young men and old men; maidens and madams; children and teens. All at their best with their eyes on the Lord and praise on their lips.

Reasons to Praise God

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

All heaven and earth are summoned to join this chorus of praise, but now the psalmist adds an artistic touch declaring His name to be above earth and heaven; i.e. He is not part of his creation. He is above and beyond nature; He is independent of heaven and earth. He exist apart from space and matter. He is not limited by His creation nor is he dependent on His creation for His happiness. He is complete in Himself. Moreover, He is greater than parliaments, legislatures, and kings.

The reason for earth being exhorted to join this heavenly corale is the solitariness of God and his excellence. He surpasses His creation in knowlege, power, and glory. All things owe their acclaim to the god of glory. Neither the sun, moon, and stars, or the earth, sea, and sky, or man, animals, birds, or fish are above the LORD. He is the Source of their existence and He rules over all.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

“exalteth the horn of his people” may refer to some victory, or it may refer to the privilege of his people being selected as the focal point of redemption, the objects of special covenant care, and the stewards of His revelation for the benefit of the nations.

Praise the LORD!

Psalm 149 - Praise and Punishment

“Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;”

This psalm belongs to the Hallelujah Psalms (146-150), and appears to be written after the captivity (586-536 B.C.).

It reflects the thinking a free people — a nation in right standing with God.

In this psalm we hear cries for vengeance, singing soldiers, and clanging swords. It expresses balance between truth and grace. A new beginning, these people are ready to act righteously, to execute justice, and punish lawbreakers.

This is a must study psalm for Christians who have been programed to misapply the doctrines of grace to the injury of law. In this hymn, we find the legal basis for self-defense, concealed carry, and the sword of justice.

The Call to Praise

1 Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.

In this text we hear the ringing pitch of the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the re-dedication of the Temple circa 536-516 B.C. There are two commands, “praise” and “sing.” A new nation in the making, we hear the golden sounds of joy gushing from the people.

Praise is the high occupation of the saints, and free men have many reasons to praise God. God loves it; the Devil hates it. Praise is the start of Christian growth and the peak of Christian maturity; the beginning and end of the religious life and the circumference of all this is holy.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

The gospel of the Old Testament is that God reigns over the whole the earth. The issue, of course, is not whether God is King, but whether men will recognize Him as such.

The Hebrew remnant is called “Israel” (a prince with God) and “Children of Zion” (people under the reign of the Lord God). There are two jussives exhorting all to join in the jubilee (rejoice and be joyful).

Let all creatures join this heavenly choir to celebrate the wonders of the Creator.

3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

This worship leader calls the Hebrews to engage the whole man in celebration through aesthetic dancing, the tapping beat of timbrels, and maestros plucking their stringed instruments.

Here Christians should distinguish between holy, artistic dancing and unholy jigs and gyrations. There is an acceptable dance like when Miriam led the congregation in celebratory joy after crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 15), and there are unholy twists and turns that brought the judgment of God on Israel during the golden calf event (Exodus 32).

There are seasons that call for expressions of joy and may good men embrace them.

4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

What did the Lord think about this chorus of praise, stringed orchestra, and celebratory dances? The text says he approved of their conduct: “the LORD taketh pleasure in his people.” Who are his people? The text calls them the meek (poor, humble, innocent) adorned with salvation.

The seventy years of desolation ended, Israel began a new era of Divine favor and prosperity.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

Some men rejoice in wealth, lands, servants, and the acquisition of art, but here the psalmist calls the holy ones to rejoice in the glory — the glory of being in a right relationship to their Creator-God. Though ragged poor, they were the apple of God’s eye. So blessed were these celebratory people, they went to bed rejoicing and dreaming of their Heavenly riches. No stress here!

The Call to Praise and Judgment

6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand;

This is the high calling of the saints.

“high praise” = exaltations of celebration (Ellicott).

“Literally, “Praises of God in their throat; and a sword of two edges in their hand.” (Barnes)

What a paradox — manly men with hands on swords with open lips singing praises to God!

This must be a reference to the Levitical choir . . . the temple police . . . the elite Levitical strike force under the command of the Lord of Hosts. Men marching to war singing the high praises of God with drums beating and swords clanging.

Praise is the first defense against the wiles of the Devil.

God’s children are not raised to be victims. They are “locked and loaded” wearing the insignia, “Don’t tread on me.” Armed men are no threat to good people, but they are a threat to criminals. Selah.

This reference reminds us of the war when King Jehoshaphat sent out an army from Jerusalem led by Levitical singers to engage the Moabite-Ammonite invaders from Edom marching into the southern borders of Judah to pirate the bounty of the Hebrews (2 Chronicles 20).

Here is the ideal man — a songbird bellowing out the high praises of God with a sword in hand marching to the killing fields against the forces of evil . . . a man of truth and grace . . . tender towards God and a terror towards felons.

Where God is at work, men are armed with praise and powder; when Satan is at work, men are disgruntled and disarmed.

7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;

The word “heathen” refers to rebel nations and their tyrant leaders who trample on the rights of men.

The word “vengeance” (negamah) is translated “avenge” in Numbers 31:2-3; that is, the organized execution of just punishment for crimes committed against innocent people by men responsible to execute justice.

In Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary, the word “avenge” refers to taking “satisfaction for an injury by punishing the injuring party; afflicting pain or evil on the wrong doer.”

The word “punishment” (towkechah) means “to rebuke,” “correct”, “punish,” and “chastise.” Evil deeds call for the executioner’s ax to purge society of wicked men. Wolves entering the dominions of Christ must be executed. Truth can never yield to lies. The golden eye of justice works to restore those injured by criminals. It is every man’s business to see that justice is done. Justice delayed is justice denied. Delayed justice is injustice. Ideal justice is accurate, swift, and final.

Praise honors God and paves the way for God to avenge Himself against the heathen.

In the Divine library of holy attributes, justice precedes mercy. Because God is just, He can also be merciful. Because God punished Christ for our sins at Calvary, He can now forgive men of their sins: “it was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

Praise and swords are used to control the nations. There are two way to improve the world: the salvation of souls (praise) and executing justice against criminals (swords). Praise (preaching the gospel) is a means of changing hearts; swords are used to purge society of evil men.

The idea of afflicting steel punishment on tyrants continues. A holy War is not a crime. Unjust wars are a curse on humanity.

The whole idea that sugar and spice and everything nice can lead to peace exists only in the Emerald City in the Land of Oz.

As long as criminals shed the blood of innocent creatures and maliciously destroy property, righteous men vigorously pursue them with the sword of justice shadowing their every move striking fear into their hearts. No nation on earth has authority to commit genocide against its enemies.

Where the rights of men are abrogated, blood must be shed to restore law and order. Justice is a bloody business, and the tree of liberty can only be nourished by the blood of tyrants.

9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

“Judgment written” refers to God’s law and His orders to punish criminals. There is a ministry of justice, and justice is best served when righteous men (saints) hold the sword (political office).

To wield the sword against evil doers is the high honor of the saints. People who are “peace officers,” “magistrates,” “captains” of men should hold their heads high as they pursue peace and justice. But, because law is written, law is limited; that is, “judgment” must conform to the rule of law and not the rule of men — men prone to be punitive or permissive.

Being forced to endure injustice and permissive policies tests the faith of the saints.

Lessons for Christians:

(1) It is a duty of Christians to be girded with steel as well as the satin of praise. There is no contradiction between praising God and being outfitted for conflict. Both the saving of life and the taking of life are duties of men. Psalm 149:6 grants Divine authority to bear arms.

(2) The opposite of law is not grace, but lawlessness. The opposite of grace is not law, but unbridled passion.

(3) There are two ways to improve society. First, is to save sinners by preaching the gospel. Second, is to purge society of evil by punishing wrongdoers. Both are needed. Both government and the church are approved ministries in the Word of God.

(4) The ministry of justice is as important as the ministry of grace; the first saves society, the second saves the soul. The ideal church serves the high calling of the gospel; the ideal government serves the high calling of justice.

(5) There is no place for girly boys or sugar-puff pacifists in the church. Good men don’t turn the other cheek to criminal acts. Christians are called to be tough and tender . . . harmless as doves, but meaner than a junk-yard dog on a Saturday night towards transgressors.

Psalm 150 - Let Everything that Hath Breath Praise the Lord

The Highest Calling of Man



This lovely hymn completes the Hallelujah Psalms (146-150).

The word “praise” is employed 160 times in psalms and 13 times in this song. It is the chief duty of men and the highest calling of men.

One who feels the heartbeat of the psalmists and understands the Book of Psalms will be a praising saint, a victorious soldier, and competent servant of the LORD.

Praise is a suitable ending to the Book but only the beginning of a delightful walk with God. Wise men praise Him; fools blaze forward grumbling as they go.

With so much negativity in the media, the need of the hour is men focused on the greatness of God.

Psalm 150:1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

The word “praise” (halel) is used three times in the verse; thirteen times in this psalm; and, one hundred and sixty times in the Book of Psalms. The Hebrew word “halel” is used specifically one hundred and fifty times.

We read the word “praise” so often in God’s Hymnal we lose sight of the significance of the term as well as the importance of acclaiming the greatness of the Lord. Praise is necessary for spiritual health. The Spirit orders us to praise God for our good. Healthy souls are occupied with the glory of God while sick souls are consumed by problems. Strong men extol the greatness of LORD, weak men complain about their circumstances. Champions are occupied with the strength of Another, while failures are tense with troubles.

Praise His character and His works; praise him in the sanctuary; praise him under the expanse of skies (firmament) of His powerful creation.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

“excellence” (rob) means “multitude” or “abundance.”

Praise Him for the revelation of His omnipotence; praise Him for the wealth of His great attributes — for his transient virtues and for His intransient attributes.

3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs. 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

The idea behind these texts is that men should exercise all their gifts and talents and employ every instrument in praising God. Praise Him with our voices, our instruments, and with holy dances – with sounds and movements that harmonize with the great themes of worship.

There is a place for shouts and dance in worship services. We are not talking about uncontrolled gyrations or outburst of fleshly behavior but organized steps and movements that honor the Lord and that are appropriate for the occasion.

6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

“every thing” includes all living creatures in the air, the earth, the waters.

Praise is the goal of life and the reason for our existence. We are made to praise God and to glorify Him. This is an ideal that we work toward – and ideal that will not fully be realized until the fullness of the kingdom arrives in history. Until then, let his praises be celebrated with musical instruments by wholehearted souls. Further, let all living creatures tune their hearts to His will and unite in a chorus of praise to the glory of God. The Lord loves it; the Devil hates it.



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