

Psalms for the Troubled Heart



by

Brooky R Stockton

Psalms for the Troubled Heart 1.1



Brooky R Stockton, Ph.D.
Pastor / Professor Theology, ret.
PO Box 884
Tijeras, New Mexico (87059)

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Preface

“Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD” (Psalm 70:1)

All the psalms minister to the troubled soul, but here is a list of psalms that the saints have used to strengthen their soul throughout the ages.

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Psalms for the Troubled Heart

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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 – שְׁמִינִיתַּהּ shemifnyfth – 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. Worn 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 choleric 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 idyll, 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 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 – שְׁמִינִיִּת shemfynfýth – 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 choleric 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 idyll, 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 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 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 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.

Until the journey’s done,
Until the crown is won,
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,

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 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 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 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 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 Menninger most people have a mental disorder; that is, mental illness is normal. What? Is Menninger 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 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?

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 prospective. 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” (zānach) 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 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 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 shouldest 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).

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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,
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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. Furthermore, saith naught . . . well, almost.

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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, somehow, 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 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” (hegey) 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 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.

3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

“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 “tellest” 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, Al-taschith, 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 straits 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 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 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 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" (mātsah) - 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 innocence.

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).

Psalms 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 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 (oniy: 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." (he 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 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 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" (hegy) 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.

6 Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

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 singing 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, someway, 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 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 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 a 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 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 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 Solomon 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 moping 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 builder 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 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, somehow 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 Phineas, 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.

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 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, vav 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 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 losing 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 hear 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 garners 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.

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