

THE SAVIOR'S SILENCE

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A SERMON

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"But he answered her not a word."

Matthew 15:23

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2841, Prayer—Its Discouragements and Encouragements]

THE diary of a physician, one would think, must necessarily be deeply interesting. What a variety of cases must come under the doctor's observation in the course of one year! And some of these must be very strange cases indeed. The details of their cures, if one could understand them, and if the doctor would only translate his hard Latin terms, must be of the greatest interest.

But you need not wish to read them, for you have here, in this Gospel according to Matthew, the diary of the greatest of all physicians—Jesus Christ—who healed all manner of diseases and who met with cases of the most peculiar and eccentric kind. Our gracious Master always walked the hospital, for the whole world was that to Him, and wherever He went His supreme business here below was by touch, or look, or word to bestow healing on the soul and body.

His cures were gratis—this was something to be admired, but He also journeyed to His patients. It is generous when the physician treats freely those who came crowding to his door, but our Master—the physician beloved—traveled to the utmost end of His all-embracing circuit that He might meet and bless all who dwelt therein.

There were some who lived just over the edge and verge—just beyond the people to whom He was specially sent—and when He touched the borders of Tyre and Sidon, the Syro-Phoenician woman came and shared in the healing reserved for the Jews. This is great comfort for some of us. However sick we may be, it is Jesus Christ's great office to heal—it is His honor to lay hold of the sorely wounded and helpless and restore health to them.

And if by reason of infirmity we cannot come to Him, He is ready to come to us, and if we will not come by reason of impenitence, such is the force of His love, that He comes unasked. Oh! Jesus Christ, Master, able to heal a soul impotent or willing, and to work fresh cures by Your undecaying power, come to this great crowd—mightier far than ever gathered round Bethesda's porch—and let Your healing presence remain with us tonight!

Let us now come closely to the case before us. It is quite familiar to most of us. It was that of a poor woman whose daughter was plagued and who had come to ask Christ to heal her. In a few pathetic words she uttered her passionate desire. Our Lord was usually ready to answer at once—His generous heart overflowed with sympathy and was eager to gratify the longing soul—but on this occasion, "He answered her not a word." He went on with His preaching and other works, and this needy, distracted woman was apparently ignored—"He answered her not a word." That is our topic for tonight.

We shall first, then, have a word to say on, *The silence of the Savior*. Then we shall notice in the second place, that *Though He was silent, He was not unkind*. And then to finish with, in the third place, that *Though the answer was delayed, this good woman was not discouraged, and not denied*.

Let us think, then, on—

I. THE SAVIOR'S SILENCE.

Generally, our Lord was like the father in the parable, eagerly on the look-out for the returning sinner, but here He seems distant, reserved, and when appealed to, silent. Usually the tear was waiting to weep in sympathy with those that wept, but now His eyes are strangely dry and His soul seemed not to be stirred by the mother's earnest entreaty.

Generally, there was no need to ask—He looks upon distress and like the Good Samaritan is moved with pity and hastens to help. But here He is sought with tears, entreated with piteous pertinacity, yet “He answered her not a word.”

This is more remarkable as we remind ourselves that this woman *had a distinct sense of need*. There is no vagueness or cloud as to her desire. She utters most precisely the yearning of her heart. She knew what she longed for, and that intensely, and yet—yet—she had no immediate answer. Is not this the case with many of you?

You want a Savior, have cried to Him for months. That little room can witness the prayers and tears, and since no answer has come, you have said, “It is because I do not enough feel my need.” But that may not be the real reason at all. Repentance is necessary, but much which is called by that name is not true repentance.

Terrors of conscience are not repentance—though they may lead to it. And though you may never have been filled with alarm, yet if you are sorry for sin, hate sin, and would be rid of it root and branch, your repentance is genuine. The thing to be inquired of is not quantity but quality. For even deep repentance is not an absolute essential to salvation.

*“All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him.”*

Your repentance may be true and your sense of need deep, and yet you may have to wait, and wait, and wait still, before His peace floods your soul.

Besides this, this poor woman *knew where to come for help*. She looked at the right door. She asked for “mercy, mercy.” This was her one plea. And if we come to God with any other, we know not who we are seeking, and to whom we are speaking.

This woman was deeply humbled with a sense of unworthiness, but she turned even that into an argument for the Savior's pity, for the mercy of God. I know there are some who fear that because they have not heard, “Thy sins are forgiven thee,” that they have not come to Christ aright. Nay! this woman came aright and yet for the present she is kept without a word.

If we come to Christ at all, we do come aright. I have often said, “There is no true coming—which can be wrong.” “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” So if God draws, He cannot draw the wrong way. Looking for the mercy of Christ, trusting the merits of His sacrificial death, then you have come and come aright to the door of mercy. And yet you may for a time not have a word to comfort you.

Yet again, this woman *had some clear idea of our Lord's character*. She calls Him, “Lord.” Her first appeal is, “Have mercy.” Her second, “Help me.” But in both it is to the Lord she appeals. She had some idea of His deity, His omnipotence, even more than some of His disciples. Nor need this surprise us. A deep sense of need often reveals to us Christ's all-sufficiency.

And yet with all this insight into our Lord, “He answered her not a word.” So you may know the Master, sit at the foot of His cross and view the flowing of the precious blood, your eyes may be familiar with His marred visage, your faith may have beheld Him exalted on high, and you may have no doubt as to the might of His deity, and the sympathy of His manhood, and yet though saved, may have no joy of salvation. Doubtless you shall never see death, but as yet you have no exhilaration of life.

This woman, too, *had a humble but determined faith*. Our Lord admired and extolled this, for He said, “Oh! woman, great is thy faith!” She had faith before her wishes were granted—and we may have

faith that saves and yet have no sweet assurance. There are, I believe, multitudes who have trusted Christ, who are described by the prophet Isaiah as, "walking in darkness, and seeing no light."

Many there are who, believing, have eternal life, but have not yet entered into the peace and joy that are its fruits. They are saved. They have their title-deeds, but they do not read them clearly. Heaven is theirs, but their eyesight is imperfect, and so "the mansion in the skies" is still in the land of far distances. Christ may have heard you in His heart, without having answered you in your ear. He may have filed your prayer in heaven, but for some reason He may permit you for a time to struggle without comfort and without light.

Yet once again, notwithstanding all this, she was *a soul Christ meant to bless*. There was never a question in His heart whether He would heal her daughter. He had ordained to give her what she sought—had never for an instant meant to deny it. It had ever been stored for her on high. He willed once for all that she should go away in peace.

And so, wearisome nights may have been appointed for you, strong crying and tears—but keep on, for if God has given you genuine faith, He must give you eternal salvation, unless He breaks His promise—which He can never do. He must save those who come unto Him through Jesus Christ. Your business is with His command, and when you have obeyed, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, then, even if you weep in the dark, your tears will be for your spiritual strengthening.

This was my own case for nearly five years. If ever a soul did pray with anguish, I know I did. I could never rest. God had put the desire after His son into my heart, and I could never rest satisfied until I had heard the Father whisper, "You are Mine." Some drops of mercy fell, but the next day they were all dried up. Sometimes I seized hold of a promise, but it appeared to melt away in my hands.

Though but a child I turned over His Word, seeking for something to suit my case, but nothing would come until God's appointed day had struck—and then the darkness vanished and light came and I rejoiced in Jesus and the light which only He can give. Many who are ordained unto eternal life, are yet held back, as John Bunyan was, for many a day and even years, in doubt and perplexity and trouble. "He answered her not a word."

In the second place we see that—

II. THOUGH THE SAVIOR WAS SILENT, HE WAS NOT UNKIND.

He had good reasons for refusing to give her a word. Here is one. It is His delight *to put faith to the test*. Great kings have ever had exploits performed before them for their pleasure. And in order to prove faith's mighty power, the Lord God even sends it upon strange errands. He delights to see the daring it can display when relying on His power.

He said to it when but a stripling, "Go and cut off the giant's head!" And faith did it. He said, "Go and compass the city and destroy it, and rush rejoicing over the ruined walls." And faith did it. Again He said, "Go, and for My sake enter the burning fiery furnace"—and faith did it and came out unscathed. "Go to the lions' den," said the king—and faith went and shut the lions' mouths.

And our Lord, finding faith incarnate in this poor woman, puts it to the test. Her faith now has to struggle with the King Himself. Be not alarmed! Jesus said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." And she answered, "Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their Master's table." So the King tests faith and puts the crown upon its head as He answers, "Oh! woman, great is thy faith!"

So with some of you, seeking Jesus, but not yet finding Him. He knows your faith but He delays comfort, to let men see what that faith will do. And when that is done, He will disperse the clouds and fill your soul with rejoicing. I have no doubt the Savior did this, not for His pleasure, but for her profit. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in the youth of his faith.

The Spartans would never have been a nation of conquerors if they had not been trained in the school of hardness in their childhood. They had to smart, and struggle, and feel sometimes the pangs of hunger, that in the day of battle they should never retreat from the strongest foe. So we may have sore temptations to meet before reaching heaven and He is hardening us.

As the florist takes the plants from the hothouse into the open air to harden them, so the Lord removes us from the light and warmth of His loving countenance and hardens us so that frosts shall not wither us if they come by and by.

The Savior, too, may have had an eye *to the onlookers*. Towards us who this day are the onlookers upon the fine exhibition of this woman's faith, surely He had a gracious purpose. Surely He did it that there might be a well of comfort and instruction to troubled souls in ages past, in this age, and in ages yet to come. Who knows?

This woman was kept for a time in suspense, for your comfort poor woman, for you young man, with your poor despairing soul. "There," He seems to say, "in this one case I will set an example to all who do not at once get comfort, that they may see that their faith shall yet prevail. If they still believe and continue to plead until I come, then shall the answer be peace." Jesus was not unkind, even in His silence.

The last point for our reverent study is this—

III. THOUGH THE ANSWER WAS DELAYED, THIS WOMAN WAS NOT DISCOURAGED NOR DENIED.

When she could not get a word, she did not go away and sulk, as some professed penitents do, but gathered more boldness. She appears to have come nearer to the Lord, for we read in the twenty-fifth verse, "then she came and worshipped him." As if standing in the outer circle, she now pushed through the crowd and *came nearer*—but not irreverently—she came to worship.

Herein she reads us all a lesson. If we have had no answer to our pleading, do not give up, but go nearer to Christ. Make it more solemnly the resolve of your soul that you have real dealings with Him. Some persons rest satisfied with saying a number of phrases beginning one way, and ending with "Amen."

I do not like to rise from my knees until I have had assured dealings with the Master. There are fifty words to the air, but it is the one word with the Master which effects our soul's purpose. Lay hold upon the cross, put your fingers by faith into the print of the nails, thrust your hand in His side, and realize that He is really there. And this shall be your way of obtaining true comfort.

Nor was this all. When she thus came nearer, *she cried more earnestly*. The disciples said, "Send her away, for she crieth after us." But her cry came to Him with a plaintive pathos in her words. She wept—she cried—such a cry as a mother wails out over her dying child. It seemed to hold in it these words, "I must have this blessing, give it to me or I die, thou Son of David. I am not one who speaks with the lips only—my heart cries to You. Hear a woman's heart that breaks, unless You speak the comfortable words to her."

Ah! cold prayers will never open the gates of heaven—you must go and knock, and knock, and knock, and knock again if you would make swing open the celestial portals. You must use the golden knocker not with a languid tap, but with the loud stroke of one who must get entrance, for the cold street of the everlasting storm is already falling, and if shut out, there will be "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Remember how powerfully the Savior Himself exhorted to this, in His parable of the importunate friend who needed bread for his friend, come to him after a journey, and who never rested until he secured it from his neighbor, though he roused him out of bed at midnight to obtain it. Homely is the picture, but notable is the meaning and lesson of it.

You must knock, and knock, and knock, and redouble your blows—take heaven by storm—for as our Lord declared, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence," so be numbered with the violent, who "take it by force." The longer you are made to wait, the more earnestly must you pray, and your prayers will yet prevail.

But I want us particularly to notice, that the *longer she prayed, the shorter became the prayer*. You may generally measure the worth of prayer by this rule—the longer the worse, the shorter the better. She

began, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." That is a good prayer, but the next is shorter. "Lord, help me!" It is just those prayers that win the day.

It would be well if we remembered to let our words be few when we come before the Most High. When we get intensely and solemnly earnest before God, we generally have more thoughts than words—more intensity than sentences. Some may say, "I cannot pray at all," but if God has given you desire for His mercy, you can surely pray, "Lord, help me." That is not too long for memory or for time. "Lord, help me."

You can pray that before going to work in the morning, pray it at night, however late you may return. Some say the Lord's prayer, but I beg you not to do so if unconverted. How can you say, "Our Father," unless you are saved and belong to the family of God? What right have you to call Him, "Father," unless you have passed from death unto life? Use it when the Spirit of adoption is yours, but not until then.

This is an infinitely better prayer for you, "Lord, help me." It makes no profession but of helplessness. It confesses, "I cannot help myself. I am most unworthy and most needy. Lord, help me to repent. Break my heart for me. Help me to believe. To keep me from sin. To serve You and to be like Jesus Christ Himself." I cannot suggest a prayer shorter or more full of meaning.

It was not, however, the prayer, but her faith that captured the heart and commanded the blessing of the Lord. She would not let go her hold of Him and she would not take, "No," even out of His own mouth. She knew He must be true. Now, sinner, Christ has said, "He that believeth on me is not condemned." If you believe in Christ you are not condemned, and though the delays to your prayers may seem to say you are condemned, believe it is seeming only, and that He must and will keep His promise to save every sinner that trusts Him.

Do not let even your conscience fill you with fear. Would to God you would say, "I will believe that Jesus Christ died for me. I will cast myself upon Him. I am black—I believe that He will wash me. I am foul and evil, but I will believe in Him to create me anew. I have nothing, but I take Christ to be my all in all. Here, tonight, I trust Him, just as I am. I trust Him to bring me where He is to dwell with Him forever."

If God enables you to do this, depend upon it, your eternal life is sure. God help you thus to pray and believe, ere long you shall go your way, and "according to your faith, so shall it be done unto you." The Lord dismiss you with His blessing for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

MATTHEW 15 AND PSALM 42

Verse 1. *Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,*

Our Lord had been busily engaged in healing the sick, and now these pettifoggers came round about Him to try and worry Him. They were a kind of mosquito swarm to Christ—had He not been a perfect man they might have worried Him.

2. *Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.*

"Why do thy disciples transgress the traditions of the elders?" Generally a good man is held responsible for the acts of his followers. If they cannot find fault with Christ, they will find fault with His disciples, who must have been men of admirable character when even scribes and Pharisees had no worse charge to bring than the following—"For they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

The Savior must have been gentle, indeed, to bear with such people as these. It would have given us the fidgets to have such folks round about us. Here is He healing the sick, curing the lepers, feeding the hungry, and these people are talking about washing their hands. Oh! how many religious people there

are that are occupying their time about nothing of vital importance at all, questions of washing their hands or something of that kind.

3. *But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?*

He did not deign to answer their question, but posed them with another.

4-6. *For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.*

They actually taught that a man might escape the happy duty of succoring his father and mother, the first duty surely of a son, by saying, "I have dedicated so much of my goods to the temple and the worship of God that I cannot afford it."

There are not many in these days that talk that way—they generally cannot afford to dedicate anything to the temple because they are keeping their father and mother, they go the other way, but one way or another, men will if possible escape from moral or religious duty.

Now God loves not that we should bring one duty to Him smeared with the blood of another, and for a man to give his money to the temple which he ought to have given to his father and mother was a violation of the strict law of God, and could not possibly be acceptable to Him. Thus they made void the law of God by their traditions.

7-9. *Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

Christ spoke very plainly to them, there is no dealing with hypocrites with kid gloves—these nettles must be boldly grasped, and the Savior did so. Brethren, stick to the Scriptures in doctrine and in precept—what have you to do with modern thought, the imaginations of men, the vain thoughts of crazy brains? Hold to God's thoughts, which are as high above men's thoughts as the heavens are above the earth.

One word of God is worth a whole world full of the thoughts of men and time shall yet show us yet that it is so. We have but to wait and we shall see that the thoughts of man are vanity, but the Word of God abides forever. "And he called the multitude"—one of the finest ways of rebuking the Pharisees and scribes—He seemed to turn His back on these gentlemen who knew so much.

10-11. *And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

Religion stands not in meats and drinks and divers washings or anything external—it lies in the heart. It is that which comes out of the heart that is the true index of the character, not that which is done externally.

12-13. *Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.*

They stand like a grove of trees, men take shelter under their great knowledge, but God never planted them, and therefore they shall be plucked up. And He did pluck them up without ceremony.

14. *Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

So you need not trouble to shove them in, you let them alone, it will come to an end. There are some forms of error which Christ may denounce, but which His disciples had better let alone—there is a ditch ready and waiting for them somewhere or other.

15-20. *Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the*

mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.

By and by in the chapter we shall see thousands of people eating with unwashed hands, who could not have eaten at all, if it had been requisite first for them to wash their hands, for they were in a desert place. Not but what it is well even to wash the hands and every other part of the flesh. It should be true of every Christian, "Having your bodies washed with pure water," cleanliness should always go with godliness. But this was a mere ceremonial rite, a washing of the hands whether they wanted it or not for form's sake, and the Savior pours contempt upon it.

21-22. *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.*

He made a long journey to go and meet one woman. An instance of how far you and I ought to be willing to go to save a soul. "And behold a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts." She came a little way but He had come a long way. Perhaps some sinner has come here today. Ah, Christ has come too.

The woman "cried unto him." Sinners and the Savior will meet, for the sinners are seeking Him and they will perhaps meet sooner than they expect. Perhaps she meant to have gone a long journey, but He met her and she "cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David." She knew His deity—"O Lord." She knew His humanity—"The Son of David." She knew His royalty, "The Son of David." She had but one prayer, "Have mercy on me."

That prayer suits me very well, too, today—is it too humble for you? I pity you then. "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David." And yet her prayer was not for herself. "Have mercy on me, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Many a mother feels that the greatest mercy to herself would be salvation for her child. How we are wrapped up in these who are the offspring of our body. How we desire their salvation, how careful we should be if they are saved, how should we pray for the children of others, that God would have mercy on mothers by healing daughters.

"But he answered her not a word." You may pray, and pray acceptably, and yet not get an immediate answer.

23. *But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.*

She makes too much noise. Oh! the poor disciples! "She crieth after us." That she did not—she cried after the Master, not after them. Oh! the big disciples, how large they are, and how easily troubled. "She crieth after us."

24. *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

My mission as a prophet is to Israel, not to the Gentiles just now.

25-27. *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*

Splendid faith, to make it out, that to heal her daughter would be after all to Christ nothing but to give her a lot of crumbs! She thought so much of Him—He was so great in her estimation that as much as she valued the healing of her daughter, she reckoned it to be to His royal majesty only as a bit of dog's food. Oh! splendid faith!

28. *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

Write, sir, out a blank check. She may fill it in just as she likes—there is no limit to what God will give an unlimited faith. If we limit our faith, then we limit the Holy One of Israel. "And Jesus departed from thence." He had done His business, He is always on the move, but loiters never.

29-30. *And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:*

What an assemblage and in the middle of a great hospital. What a sight for Him to see all these sick people carried like so many burdens and then laid down at His feet! Cannot we today each one bring somebody? Think of somebody, some friend of yours, that is yet unsaved. Take him on your back, nay, carry him in your bosom, and bring him by faith, and lay him down at Jesus' feet just now. Who shall it be? Think about it.

31-34. *Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.*

And I daresay they thought, "We shall want all these ourselves." It was noble on their part that they were willing to give away all they had—every bit of it, little fish and loaves and all—none too much for the company, and yet they parted with all at the Master's bidding.

35. *And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.*

I think I see Him rising from the place where He sat, and saying, "Now you have been standing up and you are all hungry, sit down all of you." What a sight to see them all dropping into their places. According to Mark they fell into order by rank, by hundreds and by fifties. What a Commander-in-Chief Christ is. When He makes a banquet it is not a scramble, it is always orderly, and when there is anything very disorderly it is generally because Christ is not there—if He is there, everything seems to fit into its place.

36. *And He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.*

"They did all eat and were filled." I remember a country brother putting it, "And they *did* all eat," which I think is very likely—they were very hungry, they *did* all eat, and were filled. They were ravenous, but they were not stinted.

37-39. *And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala.*

And if the women and children bore any proportion to most congregations, they would make a larger number than the men. And then comes the finish, "And he sent away the multitude." You and I, if we had done this, would have let them stay for an hour while somebody proposed and somebody else seconded a vote of thanks for this good dinner that they had had, but not He. He fed them and then He sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala. May we learn Our Lord's blessed absence of self-seeking!

Psalm 42. Verse 1. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*

Hunted, hot, weary, thirsty. It must drink or die. You see the poor creature with the big tears in its eyes, with the sweat distilling from it, moving to and fro as it pants in its longing for the water, "even so does our soul long after God." I must have my God. I must die if I have not God. It is the refrain of our hymn, "Give me Christ, or else I die."

It is not verbal. It is the soul that is panting. And when you grow very weary with the world and very heavy of heart—ay, and when without any trouble you are led to see the emptiness of all carnal joys—then is the time when this panting comes.

2. *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?*

Not sacraments, not sermons, but God. Not books, not even prayers, but God. Three times He puts it, “for God”—“for the living God”—“that I may come and appear before God.” We could not pant after an idol or an image, but we do thirst after a living God that He would come to our living souls. We feel as if we could not live without the living God.

Is it so with you? You shall have your desire. If for a while He delays, He must come at the cry of His children.

3. *My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?*

That is a very stinging question and the enemy knows that, and he takes care to put it often to the Christian. “Where is thy God.” “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That was the bitterest bitter in Christ’s cup. When our adversaries think that we are altogether left, and to cry, “Where is thy God?” it is not a wonder that we begin to weep until our tears become the salt meat of every meal. “My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?”

4. *When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me:*

You could not help it. It is not the best thing in the world. Meditation is always good, but it needs to be done in a wise way, else we may meditate ourselves into still deeper griefs. “I pour out my soul in me.”

4. *For I had gone with the multitude,*

Here were memories which made him sorrowful, but yet made him hopeful.

4. *I went with them to the house of God,*

Time was when I had many with me, when I did not stand alone—when they were glad of my company, and I of theirs. I did not go the wrong way, but I went with them to the house of God. And the house of God is all the more delightful because of the many that go to it.

***“At once they sing, at once they pray;
They hear of heaven and learn the way.”***

4. *With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.*

And I felt it to be a true holiday. There are some that turn holy days into holidays. Blessed are they that turn holidays into holy days. It is indeed a great solace for the heart to enjoy Christian fellowship, and to go with the many to the worship of God. But if he cannot—if his pathway is to be a lonely one, then let him still trust in God though I should not wonder that he has his grief.

5. *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me?*

As old Master Trapp says, “David tries to talk David out of the dumps—and he does well.” Here were two Davids—David that was down and David that was up, and David draws David up. So you, too, if you are a little low tonight, should let your better, godlier self talk to yourself.

5. *Hope thou in God:*

If you cannot do anything else, yet hope. The New Zealanders call hope “the swimming thought,” because when everything else is drowned, up comes hope at the top of the wave. You cannot drown hope.

5. *For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.*

Snatch from the altars of the future fire-brands with which to kindle the altar of today. “I shall yet praise him.” I am not always going to be low. I have hung the harp upon the willows, but I have not broken its strings. I shall take it down again. “I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.” If He does but look upon us—if He does but have pity upon us—let us be content with that and abide His time.

6. *O my God, my soul is cast down within me:*

Is it not a blessed thing that, even when he is down, he says, “Oh, my God”? He gets hold of his God. He has lost his company, but he has not lost his God. See—“my soul—“my God.” His God is as much his as his soul is his. He puts them together—“my God”—“my soul.”

6. *Therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.*

Were these places where he was then wandering? He would remember God wherever he was. He would remember happier days—seasons long past when he did walk in fellowship with God. So let us remember how He kept His tryst with us in former days of sorrow—how He manifested Himself unto us as He does not to the world. He will do the same now. Let us be of good courage.

7. *Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.*

They are God's waves and God's billows, so he will not mind them. Our Father rules the stormiest deeps and the noisiest depths of the soul only speak as He permits them. Be of good cheer.

8-9. *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. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?*

He had tried his "whys" on himself. Now he comes with his "whys" to his God, and God will answer him. Our Father permits His children to plead with Him. You are permitted to say, "O God, show me wherefore thou contendest with me." And He will be pleased to let you see the reason, or, if not, to give you faith enough to be satisfied without a reason.

10. *As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?*

Rather monotonous this. "Where is thy God?" is all they can say. They are rather short of wit when they must always hang on to the same old taunt. If ever you hear of a new heresy, it is only an old heresy with a new soul put to it.

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.*

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.