

SOUL THRESHING

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“For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.”

Isaiah 28:27-28

THE art of husbandry was taught to man by God. He would have starved while he was discovering it, and so the Lord, when he sent him out of the Garden of Eden, gave him a measure of elementary instruction in agriculture, even as the prophet puts it, “His God doth instruct him to discretion and doth teach him.” God has taught man to plough, to break the clods, to sow the different kinds of grain, and to thresh out the different orders of seeds.

The Eastern husbandman could not thresh by machinery as we do, but still he was ingenious and discreet in that operation. Sometimes a heavy instrument was dragged over the corn to tear out the grain. This is what is intended in the first clause by the “threshing instrument,” as also in that passage, “I have made thee a sharp threshing instrument having teeth.”

When the corn-drag was not used, they often turned the heavy solid wheel of a country cart over the straw. This is alluded to in the next sentence—“Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin.” They had also flails not very unlike our own, and then for still smaller seeds, such as dill and cummin, they used a simple staff or a slender switch. “The fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod.”

This is not the time or place to give a dissertation upon threshing. We find every information upon that subject in proper books, but the meaning of the illustration is this—that as God has taught husbandmen to distinguish between different kinds of grain in the threshing, so does He in His infinite wisdom deal discreetly with different sorts of men. He does not try us all alike, seeing we are differently constituted. He does not pass us all through the same agony of conviction, we are not all to the same extent threshed with terrors. He does not give us all to endure the same family or bodily affliction, one escapes with only being beaten with a rod, while another feels, as it were, the feet of horses in his heavy tribulations.

Our subject is just this. *Threshing*, all kinds of seeds need it, *all sorts of men need it*. Secondly, *the threshing is done with discretion*, and thirdly, *the threshing will not last forever*, for so the second verse of the text says, “Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.”

First, then—

I. WE ALL NEED THRESHING.

Some have a foolish conceit of themselves that they have no sin, but they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them. The best of men are men at the best, and being men, they are not perfect but are still compassed about with infirmity. What is the object of threshing the grain? Is it not to separate it from the straw and the chaff?

About the best of men there is still a measure of chaff. All is not grain that lies upon the threshing floor. All is not grain even in those golden sheaves which have been brought into our garner so joyfully.

Even the wheat is joined to the straw, which was necessary to it at one time. About the kernel of the wheat the husk is wrapped, and this still clings to it, even when it lies upon the threshing floor.

About the holiest of men there is something superfluous, something which must be removed. We either sin by omission or by trespass. Either in spirit, or motive, or lack of zeal, or want of discretion, we are faulty. If we escape one error, we usually glide into its opposite. If before an action we are right, we err in the doing of it, or if not, we become proud after it is over. If sin be shut out at the front door, it tries the back gate, or climbs in at the window, or comes down the chimney. Those who cannot perceive it in themselves are frequently blinded by its smoke. They are so thoroughly in the water that they do not know that it rains.

So far as my own observation goes, I have found out no man whom the old divines would have called perfectly perfect, the absolutely all-round man is a being whom I expect to see in heaven, but not in this poor fallen world. We all need such cleansing and purging as the threshing floor is intended to work for us.

Now, *threshing is useful in loosening the connection between the good corn and the husk*. Of course, if it would slip out easily from its husk, the corn would only need to be shaken. There would be no necessity for a staff or a rod, much less for the feet of horses, or the wheel of a cart to separate it. But there's the rub, our soul not only lieth in the dust, but "cleaveth" to it. There is a fearful intimacy between fallen human nature and the evil which is in the world, and this compact is not soon broken.

In our hearts we hate every false way, and yet we sorrowfully confess, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." Sometimes when our spirit cries out most ardently after God, a holy will is present with us, but how to perform that which is good we find not. Flesh and blood have tendencies and weaknesses which, if not sinful in themselves, yet tend in that direction. Appetites need but slight excitement to germinate into lusts.

It is not easy for us to forget our own kindred and our father's house, even when the king doth most greatly desire our beauty. Our alien nature remembers Egypt and the flesh-pots while yet the manna is in our mouths. We were all born in the house of evil, and some of us were nursed upon the lap of iniquity, so that our first companionships were among the heirs of wrath. That which was bred in the bone is hard to get out of the flesh.

Threshing is used to loosen our hold of earthly things and break us away from evil. This needs a divine hand, and nothing but the grace of God can make the threshing effectual. Something is done by threshing when the soul ceases to be bound up with its sin, and sin is no longer pleasurable or satisfactory. Still, as the work of threshing is never done till the corn is separated together from the husk, so chastening and discipline have never accomplished their design till God's people give up every form of evil and abhor all iniquity. When we shake right out of the straw, and have nothing further to do with sin, then the flail will lie quiet.

It has taken a good deal of threshing to bring some of us anywhere near that mark, and I am afraid many more heavy blows will be struck before we shall reach the total separation. From a certain sort of sins, we are very easily separated by the grace of God early in our spiritual life, but when those are gone, another layer of evils comes into sight, and the work has to be repeated. The complete removal of our connection with sin is a work demanding the divine skill and power of the Holy Ghost, and by Him only will it be accomplished.

Threshing becomes needful for the sake of our usefulness, for the wheat must come out of the husk to be of service. We can only honor God and bless men by being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. O corn of the Lord's threshing floor, thou must be beaten and bruised, or perish as a worthless heap! Eminent usefulness usually necessitates eminent affliction.

Unless thus severed from sin, we cannot be gathered into the garner. God's pure wheat must not be defiled by an admixture of chaff. There shall in no wise enter into heaven anything that defileth, therefore, every sort of imperfection must come away from us by some means or other, ere we can enter

into the state of eternal blessedness and perfection. Yea, even here we cannot have true fellowship with the Father unless we are daily delivered from sin.

Peradventure, some of us today are lying up on the threshing floor, suffering from the blows of chastisement. What then? Why, let us rejoice therein, for *this testifies to our value in the sight of God*. If the wheat were to cry out and say, “The great drag has gone over me, therefore the husbandman has no care for me,” we should instantly reply, The husbandman does not pass the corn drag over the darnel or the nettles, it is only over the precious wheat that he turns the wheel of his cart, or the feet of his oxen. Because he esteems the wheat, therefore he deals sternly with it and spares it not.

Judge not, O believer, that God hates you because He afflicts you, but interpret truly, and see that He honors you by every stroke which He lays upon you. Thus saith the Lord, “You only have I known of all the nations of the earth; therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities.”

Because a full atonement has been made by the Lord Jesus for all His people’s sins, therefore, He will not punish us as a judge, but because we are His dear children, therefore He will chastise us as a father. In love He corrects His own children that He may perfect them in His own image and make them partakers of His holiness. Is it not written, “I will bring them under the rod of the covenant”? Has He not said, “I have refined thee, but not with silver, I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction”?

Therefore, do not judge according to the sight of the eyes or the feeling of the flesh, but judge according to faith, and understand that, as threshing is a testimony to the value of the wheat, so affliction is a token of God’s delight in His people.

Remember, however, that as threshing is a sign of the impurity of the wheat, so is *affliction an indication of the present imperfection of the Christian*. If you were no more connected with evil, you would be no more corrected with sorrow. The sound of a flail is never heard in heaven, for it is not the threshing floor of the imperfect, but the garner of the completely sanctified. The threshing instrument is, therefore, a humbling token, and so long as we feel it we should humble ourselves under the hand of God, for it is clear that we are not yet free from the straw and the chaff of fallen nature.

On the other hand, the threshing instrument is *a prophecy of our future perfection*. We are undergoing from the hand of God a discipline which will not fail, we shall by His prudence and wisdom be clean delivered from the husk of sin. We are feeling the blows of the staff, but we are being effectually separated from the evil which has so long surrounded us, and for certain we shall one day be pure and perfect. Every tendency to sin shall be beaten off. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”

If we, being evil, yet succeed with our children by our poor, imperfect chastening, how much more shall the Father of spirits cause us to live unto Himself by His holy discipline? If the corn could know the necessary uses of the flail, it would invite the thresher to his work, and since we know whereunto tribulation tendeth, let us glory in it, and yield ourselves with cheerfulness to its processes. We need threshing, the threshing proves our value in God’s sight, and while it marks our imperfection, it secures our ultimate cleansing.

In the next place, I would remark that—

II. GOD’S THRESHING IS DONE WITH GREAT DISCRETION, “for the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument.”

The poor little fitches, a kind of small seed used for flavoring cakes, were not crushed out with a heavy drag, for by such rough usage they would have been broken up and spoiled. “Neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin,” this little seed, perhaps the caraway, would have been ground by so great a weight, it would have been preposterous to treat it in that rough manner. The fitches were soon removed from the stalks by being “beaten out with a staff,” and the cummin needed nothing but a touch of a rod. For tender seeds the farmer uses gentle means, and for the hardier grains he reserves the sterner processes. Let us think of this, as it conveys a valuable spiritual lesson.

Reflect, my brother, that your threshing and mine *are in God’s hands*. Our chastening is not left to servants, much less to enemies, “we are chastened of the Lord!” The Great Husbandman Himself

personally bids the laborers do this and that, for they know not the time or the way, except as divine wisdom shall direct, they would turn the wheel upon the cummin, or attempt to thresh wheat with a staff.

I have seen God's servants trying both these follies, they have crushed the weak and tender, and they have dealt with partiality and softness with those who needed to be sternly rebuked. How roughly some ministers, some elders, some good men and women will go to work with timid, tender souls, yet we need not fear that they will destroy the true-hearted, for however much they may vex them, the Lord will not leave His chosen in their hands, but will overrule their mistaken severity, and preserve His own from being destroyed thereby. How glad I am of this, for there are many nowadays who would grind the tender ones to powder if they could!

As the Lord has not left us in the power of man, so also He has not left us in the power of the devil. Satan may sift us as wheat, but he shall not thresh us as fitches. He may blow away the chaff from us even with his foul breath, but he shall not have the management of the Lord's corn, "the LORD preserveth the righteous."

Not a stroke in providence is left to chance, the Lord ordains it, and arranges the time, the force, and the place of it. The divine decree leaves nothing uncertain, the jurisdiction of supreme love occupies itself with the smallest events of our daily lives. Whether we bear the teeth of the corn drag, or men do ride over our heads, or we endure the gentler touches of the divine hand, everything is by appointment, and the appointment is fixed by infallible wisdom. Let this be a mine of comfort to the afflicted.

Next, remark that *the instruments used for our threshing are chosen also by the Great Husbandman*. The Eastern farmer, according to the text, has several instruments, and so has our God. No form of threshing is pleasant to the seed which bears it, indeed, each one seems to the sufferer to be peculiarly objectionable. We say, "I think I could bear anything but this sad trouble." We cry, "It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it," and so on. Perhaps the tender cummin foolishly fancies that the horse hoofs would be a less terrible ordeal than the rod, and the fitches might even prefer the wheel to the staff, but happily the matter is left to the choice of One who judges unerringly.

What dost thou know about it, poor sufferer? How canst thou judge of what is good for thee? "Ah!" cries a mother, "I would not mind poverty, but to lose my darling child is too terrible!" Another laments, "I could have parted with all my wealth, but to be slandered cuts me to the quick." There is no pleasing us in the matter of chastisement.

When I was at school, with my uncle for master, it often happened that he would send me out to find a cane for him. It was not a very pleasant task, and I noticed that I never once succeeded in selecting a stick which was liked by the boy who had to feel it. Either it was too thin, or too stout, and in consequence I was threatened by the suffers with condign punishment if I did not do better next time. I learned from that experience never to expect God's children to like the particular rod with which they are chastened.

You smile at my simile, but you may smile also at yourself when you find yourself crying, "Any trouble but this, Lord. Any affliction but this." How idle it is to expect a pleasant trial, for it would then be no trial at all. Almost every really useful medicine is unpleasant, almost all effectual surgery is painful, no trial for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, yet it is the right trial, and none the less right because it is bitter.

Notice too, that God not only selects the instruments, but *He chooses the place*. Farmers in the East have large threshing floors, upon which they throw the sheaves of corn or barley, and upon these they turn horses and drags, but near the house door I have often noticed in Italy a much smaller circle of hardened clay or cement, and here I have seen the peasants beating out their garden seeds in a more careful manner than would naturally be used towards the greater heaps upon the larger area.

Some saints are not afflicted in the common affairs of life, but they have peculiar sorrow in their innermost spirits, they are beaten on the smaller and more private threshing floor, but the process is none the less effectual. How foolish are we when we rebel against our Lord's appointment and speak as if we had a right to choose our own afflictions! "Should it be according to thy mind?" Should a child select

the rod? Should the grain appoint its own thresher? Are not these things to be left to a higher wisdom? Some complain of the time of their trial, it is hard to be crippled in youth, or to be poor in age, or to be widowed when your children are young. Yet in all this there is wisdom.

A part of the skill of the physician may lie not only in writing a prescription, but in arranging the hours at which the medicine shall be taken. One draught may be most useful in the morning, and another may be more beneficial in the evening, and so the Lord knows when it is best for us to drink of the cup which He has prepared for us. I know a dear child of God who is enduring a severe trial in his old age, and I would fain screen him from it because of his feebleness, but our heavenly Father knows best, and there we must leave it. The instrument of the threshing, the place, the measure, the time, the end, are all appointed by infallible love.

It is interesting to notice in the text the limit of this threshing. The husbandman is zealous to beat out the seed, but he is careful not to break it in pieces by too severe a process. His wheel is not to grind, but to thresh, the horses' feet are not to break, but to separate. He intends to get the cummin out of its husk, but he will not turn a heavy drag upon it utterly to smash it up and destroy it.

In the same way the Lord has a measure in all His chastening. Courage, tried friend, you shall be afflicted as you need, but not as you deserve, tribulation shall come as you are able to bear it. As is the strength such shall the affliction be, the wheat may feel the wheel, but the fitches shall bear nothing heavier than a staff. No saint shall be tempted beyond the proper measure, and the limit is fixed by a tenderness which never deals a needless stroke.

It is very easy to talk like this in cool blood, and quite another thing to remember it when the flail is hammering you, yet have I personally realized this truth upon the bed of pain, and in the furnace of mental distress. I thank God at every remembrance of my afflictions, I did not doubt His wisdom, then, nor have I had any reason to question it since. Our Great Husbandman understands how to divide us from the husk, and He goes about His work in a way for which He deserves to be adored forever.

It is a pleasant thought that God's limit is one beyond which trials never go—

*“If trials six be fix'd for men
They shall not suffer seven.
If God appoint afflictions ten,
They ne'er can be eleven.”*

The old law ordained forty stripes save one, and in all our scourgings there always comes in that “save one.” When the Lord multiplies our sorrows up to a hundred, it is because ninety-and-nine failed to effect His purpose, but all the powers of earth and hell cannot give us one blow above the settled number. We shall never endure a superfluity of threshing. The Lord never sports with the feelings of His saints. “He does not afflict willingly,” and so we may be sure He never gives an unnecessary blow.

The wisdom of the husbandman in limiting his threshing is far exceeded in the wisdom of God by which He sets a limit to our griefs. Some escape with little trouble, and perhaps it is because they are frail and sensitive. The little garden seeds must not be beaten too heavily lest they be injured, those saints who bear about with them a delicate body must not be roughly handled, nor shall they be. Possibly they have a feeble mind also, and that which others would laugh at would be death to them, they shall be kept as the apple of the eye.

If you are free from tribulation, never ask for it, that would be a great folly. I did meet with a brother a little while ago who said that he was much perplexed because he had no trouble. I said, “Do not worry about *that*, but be happy while you may.” Only a queer child would beg to be flogged. Certain sweet and shining saints are of such a gentle spirit that the Lord does not expose them to the same treatment as He metes out to others, they do not need it, and they could not bear it, why should they wish for it?

Others, again, are very heavily pressed, but what of that, if they are a superior grain, a seed of larger usefulness, intended for higher purposes? Let not such regret that they have to endure a heavier

threshing since their use is greater. It is the bread corn that must go under the feet of the horseman and must feel the wheel of the cart, and so the most useful have to pass through the sternest processes.

There is not one amongst us but what would say, "I could wish that I were Martin Luther, or that I could play as noble a part as he did." Yes, but in addition to the outward perils of his life, the inward experiences of that remarkable man were such as none of us would wish to feel. He was frequently tormented with Satanic temptations and driven to the verge of despair.

At one hour he rode the whirlwind and the storm, master of all the world, and then after days of fighting with the pope and the devil, he would go home to his bed and lie there broken down and trembling. You see God's heroes only in the pulpit, or in other public places, you know not what they are before God in secret. You do not know their inner life, else you might discover that the bread corn is bruised, and that those who are most useful in comforting others have to endure frequent sorrow themselves. Envy no man, for you do not know how he may have to be threshed to make him right and keep him so.

Brethren, we see that our God uses discretion in the chastisement of His people, let us use a loving prudence when we have to deal with others in that way. Be gentle as well as firm with your children, and if you have to rebuke your brother, do it very tenderly. Do not drive your horses over the tender seed. Recollect that the cummin is beaten out with a staff, and not crushed out with a wheel. Take a very light rod. Perhaps it would be as well if you had no rod at all, but left that work to wiser hands. Go you and sow and leave your elders to thresh.

Next, let us firmly believe in God's discretion, and be sure that He is doing the right thing by us. Let us not be anxious to be screened from affliction. When we ask that the cup may pass from us, let it be with a "nevertheless not as I will." Best of all, let us freely part with our chaff. The likeliest way to escape the flail is to separate from the husk as quickly as possible. "Come ye out from among them." Separate yourselves from sin and sinners, from the world and worldliness, and the process of threshing will all the sooner be completed. God make us wise in this matter!

A word or two is all we can afford upon the third head, which is that—

III. THE THRESHING WILL NOT LAST FOREVER.

The threshing will not last all our days even here, "Bread corn is bruised, but he will not always be threshing it." Oh! no. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Rejoice, ye daughters of sorrow! Be comforted, ye sons of grief! Have hope in God, for you shall yet praise him who is the health of your countenance. The rain does not always fall, nor will the clouds always return. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Threshing is not an operation which the corn requires all the year round, for the most part the flail is idle. Bless the Lord, O my soul! The Lord will yet bring home His banished ones.

Above all, tribulation will not last forever, for we shall soon be gone to another and better world. We shall soon be carried to the land where there are neither threshing floors nor corn drags. I sometimes think I hear the herald calling me. His trumpet sounds, "Up and away! Boot and saddle! Up and away! Leave the camp and the battle and return in triumph."

The night is far spent with some of you, but the morning cometh. The daylight breaks above yon hills. The day is coming—the day that shall go no more down for ever. Come, eat your bread with joy, and march onward with a merry heart, for the land which floweth with milk and honey is but a little way before you. Until the day break and the shadows flee away, abide the Great Husbandman's will, and may the Lord glorify Himself in you. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 90, 119:21-32

“A prayer of Moses the man of God.”

I think this Psalm has been very much misunderstood, because the title has been forgotten. It is not a psalm for us in its entirety, it cannot be read by the Christian man and taken as it stands. It is a Psalm of Moses as far as Moses can get. It goes a long way, but there was a Joshua that lead the people into the promised land, and there is a Jesus who has “brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.” That light shines through the gloomy haze of this dark psalm.

Please remember that Moses was a man peculiarly tried. We have never duly given weight to the afflictions of Moses. All the people that he brought out of Egypt, with two exceptions, died, and he saw most of them die, he himself having the sentence of death in himself, that he, like the rest, must not cross into the Land of Promise, so that with two millions or more of people round about him, that forty years he stood in the valley of the shadow of death, and with all the mercies that surrounded him, yet still, he must have had continual sorrow of heart, all his old friends and companions passing away one by one. It is a brave psalm, if you read it in that light, it is a grand specimen of heroic faith.

Psalm Chapter 90. Verse 1. *LORD, thou has been our dwelling place in all generations.*

All thy saints abide in thee. Thy fiery, cloudy pillar covers and protects us.

2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

Oh! that is grand to feel that there is something stable, there is a rock that never crumbles—God from everlasting to everlasting the same. As for us, what are we?

3. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

A breath gave them life, a word makes them die.

4-6. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

We have seen this over and over again, as we shall see it yet again this year in the flourishing and the cutting down of the grass, but we forget it for ourselves. Too often we forget it for our companions, we think that they are immortal where all are mortal. Let us correct our estimate that we may somewhat correct our sorrows.

7. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

Which was true of that generation. They died because of God’s anger, but we bless God, as many of us as have believed in Christ Jesus are not under the divine anger, it is taken away. When it does fall upon us, it is as a father is angry with his children, it troubles and consumes us, but blessed be God, we usually walk in the light of His countenance, and joy, and rejoice therein. Let us value His mercy as we see the misery of His wrath.

8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.

That is true of you that know not God. Your sins are always before His face, but it is not true of believers. Thou hast cast all their sins behind Thy back. God has forgotten the sins of His chosen, according to His own promise, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more for ever.” O blessed Gospel, Moses cannot reach to that.

9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told.

“For all our days are passed away in thy wrath.” So it was with those that were round about Moses, but our days are passed in God’s goodness, they shall pass away in infinite love, “We spend our years as a tale that is told.”

10. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Speaking of the mass of men, this is all that can be said of them, but as for the godly, where do they fly? They fly into His bosom who has loved them with an everlasting love. What is death but an open

cage to bid us fly and build our happy nests on high? Blessed be God that we do fly away. Have not we often wished for it and said, “O that I had the wings of a dove that I might fly away and be at rest”—that will come by and by.

11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.*

As He is greatly to be revered, so is He greatly to be feared. But the Lord has said of His people, “As I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more cover the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wrath with thee, nor rebuke thee.” Blessed be His name.

12-14. *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

Poor Israel was greatly afflicted. These deaths in the wilderness made her a perpetual mourner, but Moses asks that God will return to His people, cheer and encourage them, and let the few days they have to live be bright with His presence.

15-17. *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.*

Psalms Chapter 119. Verse 21. *Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.*

Wherever there is pride in the heart, there is sure to be error in the life. A proud man is wrong, to begin with, and as long as he continues proud, he must be wrong. It is not possible for him to be right. God has rebuked him, and God has cursed him. How wise it would be of him to be humble. Remember, we shall have either to be humble or to be humbled, and it is much better to be humble than to have to come under the humbling dispensations of God’s hand.

22. *Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.*

O Lord, do not suffer men to believe lies and slanders against me, or if they do, let my conscience sustain my courage by the consciousness that I have kept thy testimonies.

23. *Princes also did sit and speak against me:*

Had they nothing else to do, but talk against God’s servants? No, they sat down to do it with deliberation. “Princes also did sit and speak against me.”

23. *But thy servant did—*

“Go to law with them?” No, not so here. “But thy servant got in the face and defended himself?” No, no. Look, you will not read those words. But “Thy servant was broken-hearted about it, to have the great men of the earth speaking against him?” No, it is not so either. “But thy servant did.”

23. *Meditate in thy statutes.*

Is not that a very blessed and admirable way of enduring slander—simply to take your Bible and read a little more than usual? You will cure it so.

24. *Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.*

Because I love them and delight in them. I submit my life to their guidance. I go to Thy Book to ask what I shall do. I consult it as the oracle of God. I take my doubts, and difficulties, and dilemmas there, and I find that they are all met. “Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors.”

25. *My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.*

Ah! there is a note of sadness here. The psalmist complains of himself. He found himself very sorrowful, and he could not get out of the sorrow, or he found himself very full of business cares, and he could not get rid of them. “My soul cleaveth to the dust”—as though it was stuck to the dust, and the dust to it, and could not rise.

Then how sweet the prayer, “Quicken thou me.” “Didst Thou not first make me of dust, and wilt Thou not at the last quicken my mortal body out of the dust? Then, now, my Lord quicken Thou me

according to Thy Word.” See, here is an evil complained of. He finds himself cleaving to the dust. Here is a remedy sought, “Quicken thou me.” And here is an argument pleaded with God—“according to thy Word.” There is a promise for it. Lord, fulfill thy word.

26. *I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.*

A confession had been made, “I have declared my ways.” That confession had been accepted, “Thou heardest me.” Then a petition is offered, “Teach me thy statutes.” “Thou seest that I confess how wrong I was. Now give me grace that I may not go wrong again.” May that be our spirit always.

27-28. *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.*

“I am poured out like water,” says the Savior. “My heart is like wax. It is melted in the midst of my bowels.” It is the greatness of pain, the greatness of fear, the greatness of sorrow, till He seems to melt away in the fire like wax. “For heaviness,” says He, “my soul melts. Then strengthen thou me.”

Oh! it is so sweet to turn to God when your soul is burdened—to look to Him, and say—not “deliver me.” Observe that, The child of God is not so anxious to get rid of trouble, as he is to know how to behave worthily under it. “Strengthen thou me, according to thy Word.” How he harps on that “according to thy Word.” The child of God does not expect God to do otherwise than He has promised to do, and He is quite content if the Lord will act according to His Word, for well does our poet put it—

*“What more can He say than to you He hath said—
You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?”*

In this book, dear brother, whatever your trouble, there is a promise to meet it. If you lose a key and you send for the whitesmith, as a general rule, somewhere in that bunch of keys he has a key that will fit your lock. And so here is a bunch of keys, and there is a key here that will exactly fit the lock of your trouble, whatever it may be, for God foresaw the circumstances of all His people, and prepared a promise for every circumstance.

29. *Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.*

“Take away the evil, give me the good.” “The way of lying.” Oh! it is a dreadful thing to get into that. There are some that have a way of doing it—some that do it jocosely—some that do it by implication. Some think it shrewd to deceive. “Remove from me the way of lying.” If truth should be banished from all the world besides, it ought to find a shelter in the breasts of Christians. The Christian man is forbidden to take an oath, because there should never be any necessity for it. His word—his, “Yea, yea”—his “Nay, nay” should always be sufficient. Thank God it is, where the grace of God is.

30-31. *I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.*

Here is, first, choice, “I have chosen the way of truth.” Here is his practically carrying it out, “Thy judgments have I laid before me.” Here is his perseverance in it, “I have stuck unto thy testimonies.” And then there is his prayer about it, “O Lord, put me not to shame.” And it is a prayer which is sure to be answered. “Truth may be blamed, but it cannot be shamed.” Truth is God’s daughter, and he will take care of her. If you have chosen the way of truth, it is a way in which, though some may censure and slander, your righteousness shall come forth, in due time, as the noonday.

32. *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*

“When I get liberty of heart, then will I take as my choice, thy ways.” The Christian is never so much at liberty as when he is under law to Christ. He knows the difference between license and liberty. He has a liberty to do as he wills, because he wills to do as God wills him to do, and herein lies the only freedom which we desire.

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.