

AN EARNEST ENTREATY NO. 3470

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1915
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.”
Psalm 17:7*

IF one were about to have an audience with the Queen, or with some other royal personage, he might be apt to say, “How shall I behave myself? What am I expected to do? What is the proper form of address?” Now, in entering into the presence of the great King of Kings, the eternal God, we may suppose the trembling penitent saying, “What shall I do? How shall I come before the Most High God? What words shall I use and into what fashion shall I cast my desires?”

Well, Holy Scripture has been very rich in answers to this question, for you have hundreds of most appropriate prayers made ready to your hand. We might readily enough compose a Biblical Liturgy, if one believed in Liturgies at all. Nor would it be difficult to find Scriptural words for every desire that could possibly strike the human heart.

The Bible, besides all its other excellences, is a great and universal prayer book, and has in it petitions suited to all classes and conditions of men at all times, whatever their desires and necessities may be. Now I take out of this prayer book this one short supplication. I know the children of God will join with me in praying it, and I trust that ere we have done, some who never prayed before may make this their firm prayer, “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

Now, in the first place, we may offer up this prayer—

I. DESIRING THAT GOD WOULD SHOW MARVELLOUS LOVINGKINDNESS IN OUR MEDITATIONS.

What marvellous lovingkindness there is for us to look at. Old as the everlasting hills—but old as it is and majestic as it ever must be, there are some eyes that never saw it. Others, too, who, though they have read their Bibles and heard Gospel sermons from their infancy, have never yet seen God’s marvellous lovingkindness. Let us spend, then, a few minutes in meditation, in order that the Lord may hear this prayer and show us His lovingkindness while we muse upon it.

You see the *root-word, the core-word, of the text* is “love.” The rest is a description of that love. Well now, in meditating upon God’s love, let us remember how extraordinary it has been. It was in love that, or ever the world was formed, God chose His people and enrolled them in His covenant. When, with prescient eye, the Almighty beheld all men immersed in ruin by their sin, His finger pointed to one man and another, “There will I dwell for ever; there shall be my rest,” said the Lord of Hosts, “for I have chosen him.”

What love was that which made him choose you and me? Or what motive could prompt Him but that He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion? Electing love having digged the fountain, consider, beloved, how vast that love which entered into the covenant of grace to effect the purpose of our redemption, when there was a striking of hands between the persons of the Trinity, that by that covenant transaction promises might be made sure to all the seed by the covenanting God in Christ.

Ponder, I pray you, upon the love that did not cool when the covenant required sacrifice—which did not refrain when the well-beloved Son of the Father must be the victim! Surely Solomon must have had this in his mind when he said, “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” Did not Jesus leave His Father and His mother that He might cleave unto His Spouse, and that they twain

might be made one flesh? Herein was love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us, and sent His Son to be our Redeemer.

Need I tell the story of the sufferings of Calvary again? We have painted that picture a thousand times in crimson colors. Dipping our brush into the bloody sweat, we have tried to set forth the agonies of the saints' great Substitute. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God! You know the results of that love.

'Twas love that called you when you were afar off, quickened you when you were dead in sin, and raised you out of the grave of your corruption. It was love that turned your face Zionward, and is it not love that has kept it there? Shall we not say that love laid the foundation stone, and love has gone on piling up the fabric, stone by stone, and love shall bring in the top-stone with shoutings of, "Grace, Grace unto it"?

Oh! as I read the matchless story of love without beginning, which can never, never cease, I wonder that our hearts are not all on fire, that our passions do not boil over, and that our lips do not become like the red lips of Vesuvius when the burning lava sweeps down her sides. Surely our souls ought to feel a fervor and a heavenly flame for love like this. Lord, while we turn these matters over, "show thy marvellous lovingkindness."

But you perceive that *this love issues in "kindness."* There may be a sort of kindness that is not loving, and on the other hand there may be a sort of love that is not kindness. We have known a man to be very kind to the poor, but he never thought of loving them. What thousands of people we meet with every day who would be kind to Negroes, but they would not think of loving them.

And we know, too, that there is a sort of love that is not kind—or if there is kindness at the bottom, it is not very gentle and tender in its manifestation. Love can sometimes be cruel, or at least it can give hard cuts and cause acute pain, forgetful of that debt of mercy and compassion which is due to the infirmities of man's nature.

Now we ought, while we look over the Lord's dealings with us, to remember the minute traits of His kindness as well as the majestic tokens of His love. Beloved, when the Lord made provision for us in the covenant, He did not merely provide bread and water for us—just enough to keep His people alive—but He provided for you the generous wine of Jesus' blood. He provided for you the scarlet and fine linen of Jesus' righteousness, the downy pillow of the divine promise, and the soft bed of gracious, sweet, everlasting peace.

He did not provide for you a place where you might take refuge from the storm and solace your soul with humble contentment, but He provided for you a heaven of delights—a heaven which eye has not seen, of which ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive. There are streams of kindness gushing up and flowing out from the fountain of love.

When He called you by His grace, how kindly He did it! You were not whipped to Christ, or if you were, how soon the stripes disappeared from off your back! How kindly He met you! Oh! that day when you tremblingly came to the foot of His cross! How He fell upon your neck and kissed you! How He cried, "Take off his rags and put on the best robe."

How He healed the blisters of your weary feet, put silver sandals upon them, and taught you how to dance! How generously He attired you in the sumptuous robe of a prince's son, put a crown of pure gold upon your head, and gave you such thoughts of mercy and such gentle words of lovingkindness that your heart, which was erst ready to burst with grief, was well nigh bursting with joy!

Lord, while we think how kind You have been to us from the day when we first knew You even until now, we may truly wonder that we do not love You better, and pray that while we turn over Your acts of mercy, You will show Your marvellous lovingkindness.

Oh! yes, it is indeed "marvellous!" We must say a word upon that. *What is so fit to excite wonder and keep up a sense of continual surprise as the love of God?* Do men tell us there are no such things as miracles? Why, every Christian is a living reply to their allegation. No such thing as a miracle! The existence of a believer from day to day is a string of miracles which the laws of nature will not account

for. Every Christian will tell you that his experience is miraculous from the beginning of his faith to this day, and so will it continue to be to the end.

What a marvel it was, brethren, that God should ever have bestowed His lovingkindness upon such as we have been. We were not among those good people who never did anything wrong. There was nothing in our disposition or character to recommend us. We were sinners, and in our own esteem, sinners of the most crimsoned dye, whose iniquities were like scarlet double-dyed.

Yet He had mercy on us! We were poor and unlettered, feeble and unbefriended, yet He was moved with compassion toward us. Passing by many of the great and estimable, He called the base things of our order and the things that men despise, that these might be nurslings of His care and precious in His sight.

From what did He call us? From the revellings of the foolish, some of us, from the fellowship of drunkards, from the harlot's haunts, or it may be others of you from the thief's den, from the seat of the scorner, or from the chair of the blasphemer. And if not steeped in crime, you were, perhaps, puffed up with self-righteousness and so fast held in Satan's stronghold. When we think of what we were and what we came from, we see that the lovingkindness must be marvellous indeed.

And then, if you recollect what you would have been if He had not called you, here again is a marvel! Why, we might have been in hell. Certainly we should have been ripening for it, going on with rapid footsteps down to the place where hope could never reach us. And think yet further of what He has called us to. Oh! how marvellous is this!

The criminal has become a child, the rebel has become a prince, the traitor wears a crown—we who were like firebrands fitted for the flame are waving the palm, and wearing the crown, and singing the song. I know not what you think of it, brethren, but in every view I take of the great acts of God's grace towards believers, it is to me marvellous lovingkindness, till we become very bleary-eyed, and want to pray this prayer, "Lord, show thy marvellous lovingkindness."

Meditation upon these great acts of grace might tend very much to promote gratitude, and it were well if we sometimes set apart a time to go over in our thought and recollection all the mighty acts of the gracious God of Israel.

But I have said enough upon the first point—so let me proceed briefly to speak upon a second. Surely David meant to say—

II. "SHOW THY MARVELLOUS LOVINGKINDNESS IN OUR EXPERIENCE."

It may be there is a man over yonder who did not think of coming in here tonight at all, till, as he was passing by the house, he saw so large a crowd that he even thought he would step in, though he fully meant to go out again. But somehow or other, here he is.

Man, you know what you have been. It is not for me to recount your sins before this assembly, but be assured the darkness of night has not covered them—neither has the silence of your confederates concealed them. The Lord that searches all hearts and tries the reins knows your iniquity. No feature of it is hidden from His eyes.

Still, thus says the Lord of Hosts unto you this night, "Turn thee, turn thee; why wilt thou die?" And thus say I unto you—Pray this prayer this evening and who can tell but God may have mercy upon you, that you perish not? Pray it now. Let me offer it aloud for you, "Show thy lovingkindness."

I know you say, "If God should have mercy on me, it will be a great wonder. If He should change my heart and make me a saint, it would be a marvel indeed!" Just so, sinner, but that is just why I put this prayer into your mouth, for it just suits you. "Show me thy marvellous lovingkindness."

Do you not see that you have been a marvellous sinner? Marvellously ungrateful have you been. Marvellously have you aggravated your sins. Marvellously did you kick against a mother's tears. Marvellously did you defy a father's counsel. Marvellously have you laughed at death. Marvellously have you made a covenant with death and a league with hell.

But your covenant with death is broken, and your league with hell is disannulled, and He who does great wonders meets you tonight and says, "Come, now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they be red like crimson, they shall be whiter than snow." Believe

on Him that died upon the tree, who Himself bare our sins in His own body. There is life in Jesus Christ for those who turn their eyes on Him. Look to Him. Look to Him now, and live. I wish this prayer might be taken up in many parts of this congregation by some who have been outcasts in Israel, that they might pray, “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

Yes, I know that young man yonder, and his history. He has been for months anxious about his soul. Sermon after sermon has stirred him up. He gets no sleep. He goes to his little chamber and cries to his God. He is almost despairing now, and the devil almost tempts him to make away with himself, or to give up all hope.

“Oh!” says he, “God will never have mercy on me. It is too great a thing to hope, too great a wonder to expect!” Young man, here is a new prayer for you, “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.” I have heard of a poor old woman who had long been bowed down with a sense of guilt, who said, when she found the Savior, that if Jesus Christ would but save her, He would never hear the last of it, for she would praise Him as long as she had any being.

I remember that I thought, myself, if Jesus Christ would but save me, that I would do anything for His sake—and if anybody had told me that I should ever be such a sorry coldhearted dolt as I have been, I would not have believed him nor would any Christian believe it if he were told it about himself. We thought we could do anything for Christ, burn like martyrs, or live like servants. We have not done it, but yet it is a marvellous thing that God should save us.

Young man, take that prayer. I was going to say, take it home, but I do not like to put even half an hour between you and this prayer. Now put your hands to your eyes, or if you do not care to do that, yet say in your soul, “Oh! God, You that do great wonders, You who are the Miracle-Worker, show Your marvellous lovingkindness.”

Why, this prayer will just suit my Christian brother there who has come in here tonight. He is a Christian, but he has long been a backslider. Poor man! His brethren have looked very coolly on him—and well they may—for he certainly did disgrace the cause. But he is a child of God for all that, and the Lord loves him still.

Brother, you have been much depressed—you have thought the Lord had forsaken you and now you almost think it is impossible that you should be one of His. Well now, here is a prayer that will suit you, “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.” Surely it will be a marvel if He should again make your bones which have been broken to rejoice, and restore unto you the joy of His salvation! And He will do it, if you can but plead this prayer.

And I know my friend over yonder, too, who has had so many losses in business, and such a succession of trials, wave upon wave—

*“You see each day new straits attend,
And wonder where the scene will end.”*

Brother, God can deliver you. Oh! what a blessing it is to have such a God to deal with! Come to Him with your great load and say, “Lord, here is wondrous work wanted—show Your marvellous lovingkindness.”

But you say, you are placed in very peculiar circumstances. Just so. Now take the words of my text, you that are growing old in grace, and are growing feeble in body at the same time—can you not say, “Now, Lord, now, ere Your servant goes hence, ere these grey hairs shall lie with the clods of the valley, show me once more Your marvellous lovingkindness.”

And I think, this is a prayer I would like to die with, when the cold stream begins to rise above the ankles, even up to the knees—when the floods overflow till they come even unto the chin—how sweet it will be to say in death, “Show thy lovingkindness.” This will help you to die. It will enable you to meet the adversary with the shout of victory. Yea, as you stand on Jordan’s shore, you shall raise one sacred pillar more, and then mount with joy and sing in heaven, “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

So this prayer will do for beginners, and it is alike suitable for those who are ending their course. I may call it the Alpha-prayer and the Omega-prayer—fit for babes and fit for strong men. Take it up, each one of you, and say, “Show me thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

Having thus taken this prayer first as to meditation, and then as to experience, we will now take it as—

III. A REQUEST PREFERRED FOR SOME SIGNAL BOON.

“Show thy marvellous lovingkindness by some special revelation to me at this time.” I think one of the best translators of the Hebrew gives it, “Distinguish thy lovingkindness.” I do not know which to quote, but several of them seem to treat the passage in this way, “Lord, You have a great many lovingkindnesses. I am just now in great trouble. Pick out one of Your lovingkindnesses—distinguish—give me in my time of extraordinary need some extra-ordinary lovingkindness. Show thy *marvellous* lovingkindness.”

If you lay the stress on the word “marvellous,” you will then get the pith of it. I think it is Trapp who said that “God is good at a dead-lift”—and he has put a deal of meaning into that homely phrase. When you and I can do nothing, and it has come to a dead-lift, then we want our God and then we may say to Him, “Now, Lord, show me more than Your wonted goodness—show Your marvellous lovingkindness. Oh! let us see what Omnipotence can do! Human wisdom fails—let Omniscience come to our aid. Lord, we are at our wits’ end—may this, our extremity, prove to be Your opportunity. Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

Do you not think we shall be warranted in using this prayer as we gather round the table tonight to partake of the Lord’s Supper? (My sermon seems to have more praying than preaching in it). Lord, here are the emblems that set forth Your body and Your blood—now “show thy marvellous lovingkindness.” Oh! do give us some choice token for good, some special mercy, such as we received not when last we met for this communion.

Lord, we are very weary. We have been harassed in the world. We want rest—give us some marvellous peace, some sacred calm, some sweet repose which we have not known before. Gathered as we are here, can we not as believers cry, “Have You not a blessing, O my Father? Give it to me, even to me, O my Father”?

I am always afraid lest, as a church, your graces should droop, lest your zeal should cool, lest your prayers should grow feeble, lest the green, vigorous life of the church should begin to wither and lose its force. I put up this prayer for you all—Lord, give us a revival season tonight. “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

Let us now feel the quickening touch of Your divine presence. Let us now be illuminated by the presence of Your Spirit, and comforted with the whispers of Your Son. If any of you have got despondent, I pray that you have “marvellous lovingkindness” shown you tonight, that the Lord may dip your morsel in His cup, that you may lean on His bosom and feed from His table.

You feeble saints, I pray that the Lord your Strength may manifest Himself to you—that He would be pleased to cheer and refresh you by choice revelations, by the outgoings of His grace towards you, and by the drawings of your heart towards Himself. Thus you may get the full meaning of this prayer unfolded and verified to you tonight, “Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.”

I do not know, dear brethren and sisters, how it is with you, but there are times with me when I do get visions of “marvellous lovingkindness.” No doubts cast their shadows across my soul then. No fears alarm, no cares distract me then. Even my anxieties for you are hushed. I have no remembrance of anybody’s faults, no recollection of my own troubles, no thought about the pressure of work, or the perils of adversity—all is lovingkindness from beginning to end. My soul revels in it.

Like a strong swimmer, we bathe and swim in the river of His pleasure. We dive to the bottom and rise up again. The spirit is filled with ecstasy and flooded with delight. These seasons, when they do come, give us strength to perform fresh labor and to endure future trial. They are, indeed, the wells of

Elim and the palm trees thereof under which we sit and drink. May this night be to us some such season as that.

But you are going away, many of you. I beg you not to pass from under yonder columns until you have paused a minute and said, "Show thy marvellous lovingkindness." Let us all pray that prayer, "O Lord, show thy marvellous lovingkindness. Show it to me."—

*"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.*

'Show thy marvellous lovingkindness.' Oh! forgive me. I do accept Your Son. I do believe in Jesus, that He is able to save my soul, and my soul does rest on Him alone. Lord, for Jesus' sake 'show thy marvellous lovingkindness.'" Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 51; PSALM 119:145-168

PSALM 51

There are seven penitential Psalms, but this seems to be the chief one of the seven. The language of David is as suitable to us today as it was to him, and though much was lost to the cause of righteousness by David's sin, yet the church is enriched for all ages by the possession of such a Psalm as this. It is a marvellous recompense. Surely here the Lord reigns, bringing good out of evil, blessing generation after generation through that which in itself was a great evil.

VERSE 1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.*

Observe he appeals to mercy, and mercy only—to mercy, abounding mercy in its tenderest and kindest aspect. "According to thy tender mercies." Note here David does not use his name. He does not say, "Lord remember David"—he is ashamed of his name. And he does not seem to want God to remember that, but to remember mercy—and to have pity upon this nameless sinner.

He does not say, "Save the son of thine handmaid," or "Deliver thy servant," as he was wont to do. He just appeals to mercy, and that is all. And observe it is not, "Have mercy upon me, oh! my God." He is far off now. He has lost the comfortable assurance of the covenant of grace and so it is rather more like the cry of the prodigal when he returned and said, "I am not worthy to be called thy son." Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness—according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out—(or as more correctly it might be rendered, "wash out"—"wipe out")—my transgressions.

The allusion is rather to a dish—wipe it out, turn it upside down and turn out all that is in it, sweep it away—wipe out all my transgressions. Or it may be as a withdrawal of a record in court when the indictment is withdrawn, "Lord be pleased to quash the indictment against me. Blot out all my transgressions."

2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*

Nothing about the punishment observe—he does not mention that. The true penitent, though he dreads punishment, much more dreads sin. It is sinfulness—sin that he would be delivered from. "Wash me." *You* must do it, no other washing will suffice. Wash me thoroughly, till I am perfectly cleansed. Cleanse me from my sin—*my* sin. I do not lay it on anyone else. Cleanse me from it.

3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*

Unless sin is before us, we shall not be likely to spread it before God. But when we have knowledge of it, then we shall make acknowledgment of it to God. "My sin is ever before me." He was in such a

state of heart that the remembrance of sin seemed painted on his eyeballs. Even in his dreams he remembered it—he was never free from the dread remembrance of it.

4. *Against thee only have I sinned.*

Yet he had sinned against many more. But just now the thought of his sin against God swallowed up all else. All his offenses against his fellow men were trivial compared with the high treason which he had committed against his God. This is the virus of sin—that it is sin against God.

4. *And done this evil in thy sight.*

Whilst You were looking on. For a thief to steal in the presence of the Judge is impudence indeed, but yet in Your presence, O my God, I have done this evil.

4. *That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*

As much as to say, “I make this confession of sin, which is so black that if You should judge me, however severely, or sentence me to however exemplary a punishment, You will be quite clear and quite just. I could put in no plea against whatever You should command. I richly deserve all Your wrath can bring upon me.”

5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin, did my mother conceive me.*

The black stream leads him to look at the black fountain. How can we expect from parents who have sinned that there should be born unto them pure and spotless children? No! the tendencies in us all towards evil are there at the very first. He does not at all venture to excuse himself, but rather to aggravate his sin, that he had been a sinner from his very birth.

6-7. *Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean:*

He had seen the leper pronounced clean when the hyssop was dipped in blood and sprinkled on him—but then the leper had to be clean beforehand before this could make him ceremonially clean. He is leaping through the first process and coming to the closing one—his soul anxious to be accepted with God at once.

7. *Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

Yet what can be whiter than snow? Snow is not like a white wall that is but white on the surface—it is white all through. And yet when God washes the believer, He makes him whiter than snow, for the snow soon becomes tainted, soon loses its purity—but we never shall if God shall wash us. There was no provision made for the cleansing of an adulterer under the law. David, therefore, had to look beyond all the sacrifices of the law to the cleansing power of the great coming sacrifice, and he so believed in it that with a brave faith—(I know no more brave expression in all Scripture than this)—he says, “Wash me, filthy as I am, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

8. *Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice.*

The original expression is “bones cracked,” or as one puts it, smashed. His sense of sin had been so great that he felt as one might feel whose very bones had been smashed by some terrible blow. So he seems to say that, as there may be a delightful pleasure in having every one of these broken bones restored, such would be his pleasure if God would pardon his sins.

9. *Hide thy face from my sins,*

If we set our sins before our faces, then God will turn His face away from our sins. If we hide our sins from our faces, God will set them before His face, but when they are ever before us they shall never be before Him.

9-10. *And blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God:*

It is a creation—the very word is used which is employed concerning the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*

11. *Cast me not away from thy presence: and take not thy holy spirit from me.*

I have put You away from my presence by forgetting You, but put me not away from Your presence. I have been filled with an unholy spirit, but oh! take not your Holy Spirit from me.

12. *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and uphold me.*

He feels how much he needs it. The burnt child dreads the fire. “Uphold me with Your free spirit.”

13. *Then will I teach transgressors thy ways: and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

And David has been doing that ever since, for this Psalm has been a continual sermon to sinners, teaching them God’s ways in pardoning sin. And many, I doubt not, have been converted unto God by His Spirit through the language of this Psalm. When you and I find Christ, let us tell of our blessed finding. Have you honey? Eat it not all yourself—go, tell your fellow men. Are you saved? Tarry not, but go and spread the news that others may be saved, too.

14. *Deliver me from the bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation;*

His faith is growing. He has humbled himself. It is the way to rise. Weaken yourself before God and you shall grow strong. Empty yourself and you shall be filled. Bow low and He will lift you up. “Thou God of my salvation.”

14. *And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.*

Those tongues that confess sins are the best tongues to sing with. That tongue which has been salted with the brine of penitence is fitted to be sweet with the honey of praise.

15. *O LORD, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.*

You know the leper when he was unclean—what did he do? He covered his lips, as much as to confess that he was not fit to speak. So here the unclean David, with the covering of his lips, will not venture to speak until the Lord has taken away his sin and opened his mouth for him. It was this that Isaiah meant when he said, “Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips”—but when it was said concerning the live coal, “Lo, this hath touched thy lips,” then he spake right eloquently. “LORD, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.”

16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering.*

Here we have what God does desire, and what He does not. If you turn to the sixth verse, you will see what He does desire. “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.” Now here He does not desire the mere outward and external worship rendered by sacrifice. It was not the type alone that satisfied Him.

17. *The sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

There are some spices that are never perfect in fragrance till they are pounded with the pestle in the mortar, and so is a broken heart. If it is made to suffer and to smart, yet there is sweet pleasure to the Lord when He perceives in His people the smart concerning sin—when they hate and loathe it.

18-19. *Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. 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.*

Gratitude ascends when sin is forgiven, and when God appears to bless His church, then she blesses her God.

PSALM 119:145-168

Verse 145. *I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.*

It is sweet to look back upon our prayers, if those prayers were uttered with our whole heart, for it is no small work of divine grace to enable us to throw the whole heart into prayer. And when we get that, we may be quite sure that our prayer will succeed. The God who gives us grace to pray with the whole heart will be sure to reply to the prayer.

After prayer David uttered a resolution, “I will keep thy statutes.” He was resolved upon this with his whole heart, and though a resolution is not enough, for many make resolves and break them, yet no man is likely to keep God’s Word who does not resolve to do so. Therefore it is needful, first, to cry in prayer, and then to resolve with the whole heart to walk according to God’s will.

146. *I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.*

He has got on this string, you see, and he touches it again. First he said, “I cried with my whole heart.” Now again he says, “I cried unto thee.” When you are in trouble, if you can remember that you were much in prayer before you entered into the experience which led into the trouble, you can plead with God that you did not rush into it carelessly and prayerlessly—and you have a good argument to urge with Him why He should help you in your time of need.

147-148. *I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word. Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.*

It was not now and then that David was in a devotional frame of mind. He continued so. He began early, but he continued late. The prayer of the dawn was followed by the watch of the midnight.

149. *Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.*

He is accustomed to put these two things together, all through this judgment—as much as if he felt that he could as if he felt that he could appeal both to the tenderness and to the justice of God for help in his time of need. For with a God who has entered into the bonds of the covenant with us, and pledged Himself by promise and by oath, we may plead both His lovingkindness and His judgment.

150-151. *They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law. Thou art near, O LORD: and all thy commandments are truth.*

How beautiful this. The enemies are coming near, but You are nearer. They approach me, but I abide with You, and You abide with me. I am safe.

152. *Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.*

Oh! believer, what comfort there is in this for you! If you have known it all your years, it has been a blessed thing to know that God changes not—that as He spoke before the earth was, so will that Word abide when this world shall cease to be.

153. *Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forgot thy law.*

Lord, Your grace has helped me to remember You. I pray You, therefore, remember my affliction. Look at it with Your eyes of wisdom and deliver me.

154-155. *Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.*

Salvation is near to any man who seeks it, but the ungodly, as they will not have God’s Word, so shall they not have God’s saving grace They are far from it.

156. *Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.*

Here again, you see, he puts judgment and mercy together—the justice and the tenderness of God—and he leans on both. It is a mark of an instructed Christian when he is able to derive comfort, not merely from the love of God, but also from the holiness and the justice of God, seeing that these are on his side through Jesus Christ’s atoning blood.

157-158. *Many are my persecutors and my enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.*

O child of God, whenever you look upon the transgressors, your heart should bleed that they should transgress so good a law—that they should grieve so gracious a God—that they should bring upon themselves so terrible a penalty. “I beheld the transgressors and was grieved.”

159-160. *Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness. Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.*

And here is the very sweetness of the Gospel—that it is not a thing of today, which will lose its efficiency tomorrow. “It endureth for ever.” You that have got it have chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from you. All the blessings of the covenant are everlasting blessings. They are “the sure mercies of David.” And he that gets them gets an inheritance which he shall not lose.

161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.*

Not in awe of their word, but in awe of Your Word. The fear of God is the best cure for the fear of men. No man who is devout is cowardly. If you fear God with all your heart, you will defy all the devils in hell, and fear none.

162-165. *I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.*

Whatever happens, they shall suffer no ill from it. “There shall no evil befall such, neither shall any plague come nigh their dwelling,” for they “dwell under the shadow of the Almighty.”

166. *LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.*

Now, cannot some of you feeble people say that? You that cannot talk of full assurance and are half afraid that you are none of the Lord’s people at all, yet you can say, “LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.” And if so, you have done that which proves you to be His.

167-168. *My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.*

And no man will ever take comfort in that if he is not a renewed man, for to know that all our ways are before God is ground for great distress if we are ungodly—if we are walking contrary to His mind. But if we are, indeed, His children, we love to feel that we are always living under His eye—that there is nothing about us unknown to Him—no secret sorrow which He does not read—no invisible burden which He does not see.

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