

DAVID'S PRAYER IN THE CAVE

NO. 2282

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1892.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave."

Title of Psalm 142.

"A PRAYER when he was in the cave." David prayed when he was in the cave. If he had prayed half as much when he was in the palace as he did when he was in the cave, it would have been better for him. But, alas, when he was king, we find him rising from his bed in the *evening*, looking from the roof of the house, and falling into temptation. If he had been looking up to heaven—if his heart had been in communion with God—he might never have committed that great crime which has so deeply stained his whole character.

"A prayer when he was in the cave." God will hear prayer on land, on the sea and even under the sea. I remember a brother, when in prayer, making use of that last expression. Somebody who was at the prayer meeting was rather astonished at it and asked, "How would God hear prayer under the sea?" On enquiry, we found out that the man who uttered those words was a diver and often went down to the bottom of the sea after wrecks. And he said that he had held communion with God while he had been at work in the depths of the ocean. Our God is not only the God of the hills, but of the valleys, also! He is God of both sea and land. He heard Jonah when the disobedient prophet was at the bottom of the mountains and the earth with her bars seemed to be about him forever. Wherever you work, you can pray! Wherever you lie sick, you can pray! There is no place to which you can be banished where God is not near—and there is no time of day or night when His throne is inaccessible!

"A prayer when he was in the cave." The caves have heard the best prayers. Some birds sing best in cages. I have heard that some of God's people shine brightest in the dark. There is many an heir of heaven who never prays so well as when he is driven by necessity to pray. Some shall sing aloud upon their beds of sickness, whose voices were hardly heard when they were well. And some shall sing God's high praises in the fire, who did not praise Him as they should before the trial came. In the furnace of affliction the saints are often seen at their best! If any of you tonight are in dark and gloomy positions—if your souls are bowed down within you—may this become a special time for peculiarly prevalent communion and intercession! And may the prayer of the cave be the very best of your prayers!

I shall, tonight, use David's prayer in the cave to represent the prayers of godly men in trouble. But, first, I will talk of it as a picture of *the condition of a soul under a deep sense of sin*. This Psalm of the cave has a great likeness to the character of a man under a sense of sin. I shall then use it to represent *the condition of a persecuted believer*. And, thirdly, I shall speak of it as revealing *the condition of a believer who is being prepared for greater honor and wider service* than he has ever attained before.

I. First, let me try and use this Psalm as a picture of THE CONDITION OF A SOUL UNDER A DEEP SENSE OF SIN.

A little while ago you were out in the open field of the world, sinning with a high hand, plucking the flowers which grow in those poisoned vales, and enjoying their deadly perfume. You were as happy as your sinful heart could be, for you were giddy, careless and thoughtless—but it has pleased God to arrest you. You have been apprehended by Christ and you have been put in prison—and now your feet are fast in the stocks. Tonight you feel like one who has come out of the bright sunshine and balmy air into a dark, noisome cavern where you can see but little, where there is no comfort, and where there appears to you to be no hope of escape.

Well, now, according to the Psalm before us, which is meant for you as well as for David, your first business should be to *appeal to God*. I know your doubts. I know your fears of God. I know how frightened you are at the very mention of His name, but I charge you, if you would come out of your present gloom, go to God at once! See, the Psalm begins, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication." Get home and cry to God with your voice; but if you have no place where you can use your voice, cry to God in silence—only cry to Him! Look Godward. if you look any other way, all is darkness. Look Godward. There, and only there, is hope. "But I have sinned against God," you say. But God is ready to pardon—He has provided a great atonement through which He can justly forgive the greatest offenses. Look Godward and begin to pray! I have known men who have hardly believed in God, do this, but they have had some faint desire to do so and they have cried. It has been a poor prayer and yet God has heard it. I have known some cry to God in despair. When they hardly believed that there could be any use in it, still it was that or nothing and they knew that it could not hurt them to pray and so they took to their knees and they cried. It is wonderful what poor prayers God will hear, and answer, too! Prayers that have no legs to run with and no hands to grasp with, and very little heart, but still, God has heard them and He has accepted them. Get to your knees, you who feel yourselves guilty! Get to your knees if your hearts are sighing on account of sin! If the dark gloom of your iniquities is gathering about you, cry to God and He will hear you!

The next thing to do is *make a full confession*. David says, "I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble." The human heart longs to express itself. An unuttered grief will lie and smolder in the soul till its black smoke puts out the very eyes of the spirit. It is not a bad thing, sometimes, to speak to some Christian friend about the anguish of your heart. I would not encourage you to put that in the *first* place—far from it—but still it may be helpful to some. But, anyway, make a full confession unto the Lord. Tell Him how you have sinned. Tell Him how you have tried to save yourself and broken down. Tell Him what a wretch you are, how changeable, how fickle, how proud, how wanton, how your ambition carries you away like an unbridled steed! Tell Him all your faults, as far as you can remember them. Do not attempt to hide anything from God—you cannot do it, for He knows all. Therefore, hesitate not to tell Him everything—the darkest secret—the sin you would not wish, even, to whisper to the evening's gale. Tell it all! Tell it all! Confession to God is good for the soul. "Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy." I press upon any of you who are now in the gloomy cave, that you seek a secret and quiet place and, alone with God, pour out your heart before Him. David says, "I showed before Him my trouble." Do not think that the use of pious words can be of any use—it is not merely words that you have to utter—you have to lay all your trouble before God. As a child tells its mother its griefs, tell the Lord all your griefs, your complaints, your miseries, your fears! Tell them all out and great relief will come to your spirit! So, first, appeal to God. Secondly, make confession to Him.

Thirdly, *acknowledge to God that there is no hope for you but in His mercy*. Put it as David did, "I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me." There is but one hope for you—acknowledge that. Perhaps you have been trying to be saved by your good works. They are altogether worthless when you heap them together. Possibly you expect to be saved by your religiousness. Half of it is hypocrisy—how can a man hope to be saved by his hypocrisy? Do you hope to be saved by your feelings? What are your feelings? As changeable as the weather! A puff of wind will change all your fine feelings into murmuring and rebellion against God! Oh, friend, you cannot keep the law of God! That is the only other way to heaven. The *perfect keeping of God's commandments* would save you if you had never committed a sin! But, having sinned, even that will not save you, now, for future obedience will not wipe out past disobedience. Here, in Christ Jesus, whom God sets forth as a propitiation for sin, is the only hope for you! Lay hold on it. In the cave of your doubts and fears, with the clinging dampness of your despair about you, chilled and numbed by the dread of the wrath to come, yet venture to make God in Christ your *only* confidence—and you shall yet have perfect peace!

Then, further, if you are still in the cave of doubt and sin, venture to *plead with God to set you free*. You cannot present a better prayer than this one of David in the cave, "Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Your name." You are in prison tonight and you cannot get out of it by yourself. You may get a hold of those bars and try to shake them to and fro, but they are fast in their sockets—they will not break in your hands. You may meditate, think, invent, contemplate, but you cannot open that great iron gate! But there is a hand that *can* break gates of brass and there is a power that can cut in sunder bars of

iron! O man in the iron cage, there is a hand that can crumble up your cage and set you free! You need not be a prisoner. You need not be shut up. You may walk at will through Jesus Christ the Savior! Only trust Him and believingly pray that prayer, tonight, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name," and He will set you free! Ah, sinners praise God's name when they get out of prison! I remember how, when I was set free, I felt like singing all the time and I could quite well use the language of Dr. Watts—

*"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise!"*

My old friend, Dr. Alexander Fletcher, seems to rise before me now, for I remember hearing him say to the children that when men came out of prison, they did praise him who had set them free. He said that he was going down the Old Bailey one day and he saw a boy standing on his head, turning cartwheels, dancing and jumping about in all manner of ways, and he said to the boy, "What are you doing? You seem to be tremendously happy." And the boy replied, "Ah, old gentleman, if you had been locked up six months and had just got out, you would be happy, too!" I have no doubt that is very true. When a soul gets out of a far worse prison than there ever was at Newgate, then he must praise "free grace and dying love," and, "ring those charming bells," again, and again, and again, and make his whole life musical with the praise of the emancipating Christ!

Now, that is my advice to you who are in the cave through soul-trouble. May God bless it to you! You need not notice anything else that I am going to say tonight. If you are under a sense of sin, heed well what I have been saying, and let other people have the rest of the sermon that belongs more especially to them.

II. I pass on to my second point. This Psalm may well help to set forth THE CONDITION OF A PERSECUTED BELIEVER.

A persecuted believer? Are there any such nowadays? Ah, dear friends, there are many such! When a man becomes a Christian, he straightway becomes different from the rest of his fellows. When I lived in a street, I was standing, one day, at the window, meditating what my sermon should be, and I could not find a text, when, all of a sudden, I saw a flight of birds. There was a canary which had escaped from its cage and was flying over the slates of the opposite houses—and it was being chased by some 20 sparrows and other rough birds. I thought of that text, "My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her." Why, they seemed to say to one another, "Here is a *yellow* fellow! We have not seen the likes of him in London. He has no business here—let us pull off his bright coat—let us kill him, or make him as dark and dull as ourselves." That is just what men of the world try to do with Christians! Here is a godly man who works in a factory, or a Christian girl who is occupied in folding books, or some other work where there is a large number employed—such persons will have a sad tale to tell of how they have been hunted about, ridiculed and scoffed at by ungodly companions. Now *you* are in the cave.

It may be that you are in the condition described here and *you hardly know what to do*. You are as David was when he wrote the third verse, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me." The persecutors have so turned against you and it is so new a thing to you as a young believer, that you are quite perplexed and hard put to it to know what you should do. They are so severe, they are so ferocious, and they are so incessant! And they discover your tender points and they know how to touch you on the raw places that you really do not know what to do! You are like a lamb in the midst of wolves—you know not which way to turn. Well, then, say to the Lord, as David did, "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path." God knows exactly where you are and what you have to bear. Have confidence that when you know not what to do, *He* can and will direct your ways if you trust Him!

In addition to that, it may be that you are *greatly tempted*. David said, "They privily laid a snare for me." It is often so with young men in a warehouse, or with a number of clerks in an establishment. They find that a young fellow has become a Christian and they try to trip him up. If they can, they will get up some scheme by which they can make him appear to have been guilty, even if he is not. Ah, you will need much wisdom! I pray God that you may never yield to temptation, but may hold your ground by divine grace. Young Christian soldiers often have a very rough time of it in the barracks, but I hope that they will prove themselves true soldiers and not yield an inch to those who would lead them astray.

It will be very painful if, in addition to that, *your friends turn against you*. David said, "There was no man that would know me." Is it so with you? Are your father and mother against you? Is your wife or your husband against you? Do your brothers and sisters call you "a canting hypocrite"? Do they call you a "Methodist," or a "Presbyterian," not knowing, themselves, the meaning of the words? Do they point the finger of scorn at you when you get home? And often, when you go from the Lord's Table, where you have been so happy, do you have to hear an oath the first thing when you enter the door? I know that it is so with many of you. The Church of Christ in London is like Lot in Sodom. In this particular neighborhood, especially, it is hard for Christian people to live at all. You cannot walk down the streets anywhere without having your ears assailed with filthy language—and your children cannot be permitted to run these streets because of the abominable impurity that is, on every hand, round about us. Things are growing worse with us, instead of better. They who look for brighter times must be looking with their eyes shut. There is grave occasion for Christians to pray for young people who are converted in such a city as this, for their worst enemies are often those of their own household. "I should not mind so much," says one, "if I had a Christian friend to fly to. I spoke to one the other day and he did not seem to interest himself in me at all." I will tell you what hurts a young convert. Here is one just saved. He has really, lovingly, given his heart to Christ and the principal or manager where he works is a Christian. He finds himself ridiculed and he ventures to say a word to this Christian. He snuffs him out in a moment! He has no sympathy with him. Well, there is another old professing Christian working near at the same bench and so the young convert begins to tell *him* a little about his trouble, but he is very grumpy and cross. I have noticed some Christian people who appear to be shut up in themselves and they do not seem to notice the troubles of beginners in the divine life. Let it not be so among you! My dear brothers and sisters, cultivate great love to those who, having come into the army of Christ, are much beset by adversaries! They are in the cave. Do not disown them—they are trying to do their best—stand side by side with them. Say, "I, too, am a Christian. If you are honoring that young man with your ridicule, let me have my portion of it! If you are pouring contempt upon him, give me a share of it, for I, also, believe as he believes." Will you do that? Some of you will I am sure; will you stand by the man of God who vindicates the Lord's revealed truths? Some of you will, but there are plenty of fellows who want to keep a whole skin on their body, and if they can sneak away out of any fight for the right, they are glad to get home and go to bed—and there slumber till the battle is over. God help us to have more of the lion in us and not so much of the cur! God grant us grace to stand by those who are out and out for God and for His Christ, that we may be remembered with them in the day of His appearing!

It may be that the worst point about you is that *you feel very feeble*. You say, "I should not mind the persecution if I felt strong, but I am so feeble." Well, now, always distinguish between *feeling* strong and *being* strong. The man who feels strong is weak! The man who feels weak is the man who is strong! Paul said, "When I am weak, then am I strong." David prays, "Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I." Just hide yourself away in the strength of God. Pray much. Take God for your refuge and your portion. Have faith in Him and you will be stronger than your adversaries. They may seem to pull you over, but you will soon be up again. They may set before you puzzles that you cannot solve. They may come up with their scientific knowledge and you may be at a discount—but never mind that—the God who has led you into the cave will turn the tables for you one of these days! Only hold on and hold out, even to the end. I am rather glad that there should be some trouble in being a Christian, for it has become such a very general thing, now, to profess to be one. If I am right, it is going to be a very much less common thing than it is now for a man to say, "I am a Christian." There will come times when there will be sharp lines drawn. Some of us will help to draw them if we can, when men shall not wear the Christian garb, but bear the Christian name and act like worldlings, and love the amusements and the follies of worldlings. It is time that there was a division in the House of the Lord and that the "ayes" went into one lobby, and the "nays" into the other lobby. We have too long been mixed together! And I, for one, say, may the day soon come when every Christian will have to run the gauntlet! It will be a good thing for genuine believers. It will blow some of the chaff away from the wheat. We shall have all the purer gold when the fire gets hot and the crucible is put into it, for then the dross will be separated from the precious metal. Be of good courage, my brothers and sisters, if you are now in the cave—the Lord will bring you out of it in His own good time!

III. Now, to close, I want to speak a little about THE CONDITION OF A BELIEVER WHO IS BEING PREPARED FOR GREATER HONOR AND WIDER SERVICE.

Is it not a curious thing that whenever God means to make a man great, He always first breaks him in pieces? There was a man whom the Lord meant to make into a prince. How did He do it? Why, He met him one night and wrestled with him! You always hear about *Jacob's* wrestling. Well, I dare say he did, but it was not Jacob who was the principal wrestler—"There wrestled a man with Him until the breaking of the day." God touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh and put it out of joint before He called him "Israel," that is, "a prince of God." The wrestling was to take all his strength out of him, and when his strength was gone, *then* God called him a prince. Now, David was to be king over all Israel. What was the way to Jerusalem for David? What was the way to the throne? Well, it was round by the cave of Adullam. He must go there and be an outlaw and an outcast, for that was the way by which he would be made king. Have none of you ever noticed, in your own lives, that whenever God is going to give you an enlargement and bring you out to a larger sphere of service, or a higher platform of spiritual life, you always get thrown down? That is His usual way of working! He makes you hungry before He feeds you! He strips you before He robes you! He makes nothing of you before He makes something of you! This was the way with David. He is to be king in Jerusalem, but He must go to the throne by the way of the cave. Now, are any of you here going to heaven, or going to a more heavenly state of sanctification, or going to a greater sphere of usefulness? Do not wonder if you go by the way of the cave. Why is that?

It is, first, because if God would make you greatly useful, He must *teach you how to pray!* The man who is a great preacher, and yet cannot pray, will come to a bad end. A woman who cannot pray, and yet is noted for the conducting of Bible classes, has *already* come to a bad end. If you can be great without prayer, your greatness will be your ruin! If God means to bless you greatly, He will make you pray greatly, as He does David who says in this part of his preparation for coming to his throne, "I cried unto the Lord with my voice: with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication."

Next, the man whom God would greatly honor must *always believe in God when he is at his wits' end.* "When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path." Are you *never* at your wits' end? God has not sent you to do business in great waters, for, if He has, you will reel to and fro and be at your wits' end, in a great storm, before long! Oh, it is easy to trust when you can trust yourself, but when you cannot trust yourself—when you are dead beat, when your spirit sinks below zero in the chill of utter despair—then is the time to trust in God. If that is your case, you have the marks of a man who can lead God's people and be a comforter of others.

Next, in order to greater usefulness, many a man of God must be taught *to stand alone.* "I looked on my right hand, and behold, but there was no man that would know me." If you need men to help you, you may make a very decent follower. But if you need no man and can stand alone, God being your helper, you shall be helped to be a leader. Oh, it was a grand thing when Luther stepped out from the ranks of Rome! There were many good men round him who said, "Be quiet, Martin. You will get burnt if you do not hold your tongue! Let us keep where we are, in the Church of Rome, even if we have to swallow down great lumps of dirt. We can believe the gospel and still remain where we are." But Luther knew that he must defy Antichrist and declare the pure gospel of the blessed God! And he must stand alone for the truth of God even if there were as many devils against him as there were tiles on the house-tops at Worms! That is the kind of man whom God blesses! I would to God that many a young man here might have the courage to feel, in his particular position, "I can stand alone, if need be. I am glad to have my master and my fellow workmen with me, but if nobody will go to heaven with me, I will say farewell to them and go to heaven alone through the grace of God's dear Son."

Once more, the man whom God will bless must be the man who *delights in God alone.* David says, "I cried unto You, O Lord: I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." Oh, to have God as our refuge and to make God our portion! "You will lose your job! You will lose your income. You will lose the approbation of your fellow men." "Ah," says the believer, "but I shall not lose my portion, for God is my portion! He is job, and income, and everything to me—and I will hold by Him, come what may." If you have learned to "delight yourself in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart." Now you are come into such a state that God can use you and make much of you—but until you make much of God, He never will make much of you! God deliver us from having our portion in this life, for, if we have, we are not among His people at all!

He whom God would use must be taught *sympathy with God's poor people*. Hence we get these words of David, in the sixth verse, "I am brought very low." Mr. Greatheart, though he must be strong to kill Giant Grim and any others of the giants that infest the pilgrim path, must be a man who has gone that road himself if he is to be a leader of others. If the Lord means to bless you, my brother, and to make you very useful in His church, depend upon it, He will try you. Half, perhaps nine-tenths of the trials of God's ministers are not sent to them on their own account. They are sent for the good of other people. Many a child of God who goes very smoothly to heaven, does very little for others. But another of the Lord's children who has all the ins and outs and changes of an experienced believer's life, has them only that he may be better fitted to help others! That he may be able to sit down and weep with them that weep, or to stand up and rejoice with them that rejoice. So then, dear brothers who have got into the cave, and you, my sisters, who have deep spiritual exercises, I want to comfort you by showing you that this is God's way of making something of you. He is digging you out! You are like an old ditch—you cannot hold any more—and God is digging you out to make more room for more grace. That spade will cut sharply and dig up sod after sod, and throw it to one side. The very thing you would like to keep shall be cast away and you shall be hollowed out, and dug out, that the word of Elisha may be fulfilled, "Make this valley full of ditches. For thus says the Lord, You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water." You are to be tried, my friend, that God may be glorified in you!

Lastly, if God means to use you, you must get to be *full of praise*. Listen to what David says, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name: the righteous shall compass me about; for You shall deal bountifully with me." May God give to my brothers and sisters here, who are being tried for their good and afflicted for their promotion, grace to begin to praise Him! It is the singers that go before—they who can praise best shall be fit to lead others in the work. Do not set me to follow a gloomy leader. Oh, no, dear sirs, we cannot work to the tune of "The Dead March in *Saul!*" Our soldiers would never have won Waterloo if that had been the music for the day of battle! No, no! Give us a rejoicer—"Sing unto the Lord who has triumphed gloriously; praise His great name again and again." Draw the sword and strike home! If you are of a cheerful spirit, glad in the Lord and joyous after all your trials and afflictions, and if you can rejoice more because you have been brought so low, then God is making something of you and He will yet use you to lead His people to greater works of grace!

I have talked to three kinds of people tonight. May God grant each of you grace to take what belongs to you! But if you see any of the *first* sort before you go out of the building—any who are in the cave of gloom under a sense of sin—if you want to go to the communion, but feel that you ought to stop and comfort them, mind that you do the latter! Put yourself second! There is a wonderful work to be done in those lobbies and in those pews after a service. There are some dear brothers and sisters who are always doing it—they call themselves my "dogs"—for they go and pick up the birds that I have wounded! I wish that they might be able to pick up many tonight. Oh, that some of you might always be on the alert to watch a face and see whether there is any emotion there! Just paddle your own canoe alongside that little ship and see whether you cannot get into communication with the poor troubled one on board and say a word to cheer a sad heart. Always be doing this, for if you are in prison, yourself, the way out of it is to help another out! God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. When we begin to look after others and seek to help others, God will bless us. So may it be, for His name's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON *PSALM 57.*

To the chief Musician, Al-Taschith, Michtaim of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave. This is one of the "Destroy not" Psalms, for that is the meaning of the title, Al-Taschith, which is used here, and in Psalms 58, 59 and 75.

Michtam of David. David's golden Psalm, "when he fled from Saul in the cave." In this Psalm we see the calmness of David's heart when he was in great peril. He was a man of peace and to be hunted cruelly, as he was by Saul, greatly pained him. Yet with all the sensitiveness of his nature, he did not fall into unbelief, for his sensitiveness was balanced by his confidence in his God. You will see how, greatly as he was afflicted, he was greatly strengthened.

Verse 1. *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.* He pleads twice, for his was an urgent case. He would have the Lord help him at once, for, perhaps, if the Lord's mercy came not to him at once, it would be too late. So he cried, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me."

1. *For my soul trusts in You.* This is the feather on the arrow of prayer that guides it straight to the heart of God! This is the condition attached to the promise, "According to your faith be it unto you." If you can truly plead that your soul is trusting in God, you may be assured that He will not deny you His mercy.

1. *Yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities are overpast.* What a sweet realization there is, here, of the power of God to protect him! Just as the little chick hides beneath the mother's wing and knows no fear, so says David, "in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge." There was no refuge to be seen, but David does not ask to see—an unseen God is all that faith needs. If it is only a shadow, yet the shadow of Jehovah's wings is substantial enough for our confidence—"In the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities are overpast." They will be overpast—the worst calamity will not last forever. We shall think differently of these rough times, by-and-by. We ought not to give up in despair and cast away our confidence while we are in the thick of the fight. Until the calamities are overpast, it should be our joy to run under God's protecting wings and hide ourselves securely there.

2. *I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performs all things for me.* Faith is never dumb. True faith is a crying faith. If you have a confidence in God of such a kind that you do not need to pray, get rid of it! For it is of no use to you—it is a false confidence, it is presumption! Only a crying faith will be a prevailing faith. "I will cry unto God most high"—the very height and sublimity of God is an attraction to faith, for though He is so high, He can and will stoop. Though God is so high, He can lift me up above the storm, for He is above it, Himself, and He can set me above it, too. "I will cry unto God most high" and David sweetly adds, "unto God that performs for me." The translators have inserted the words, "all things," and very properly, too. But David leaves, as it were, a gap, so that we may fill in anything that we please. Thus do we—

*"Sing the sweet promise of His grace,
And the performing God."*

He is not one who gives us promises and then puts us off without the thing promised—but He fulfils the promises He has made—He is the Faithful Promiser! "God that performs for me."

3. *He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.* If He cannot find any means upon earth for saving David, He will send from heaven to do it, but He will save him. God is sure to find an ark for His Noahs if the floods should cover the whole earth. And when they cannot be preserved any longer on the earth, He will take them away to Himself in heaven, but He will surely take care of His own—"He shall send from heaven, and save me." If there were only one of His people in danger, He would rend the heavens in order to save him—"He shall send from heaven and save me," not only from the danger to my life, but from danger to my character—"from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." Often, the enemies of the righteous are so fierce and cruel that they would, like some huge python, swallow up the godly man, devour him, make an end of him, make one meal of him if they could. But God will not allow them to do so. He will send from heaven and deliver us from the reproach of them that would swallow us up.

3. *God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.* The Psalmist had only prayed for mercy. Twice he had said, "Be merciful unto me." But God always answers us more largely than we ask in our prayers. He does exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. So His truth comes with His mercy, as a double guard to protect His people—"God shall send forth His mercy and His truth."

4. *My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.* Yet, notice that David says, "I lie," there. That is the emphatic word and the force of that word conveys this idea, "I recline there. I feel at ease, notwithstanding the danger of my position. I recline, and rest, even among them that are set on fire." Oh, the calm confidence of the faith that forgets the adversary when once she has hidden herself under the shadow of Jehovah's wings! The description given of ungodly persecutors is very strong—"whose teeth are spears and arrows." Their mouth seems to contain deadly armory—they have no molars to grind their food, they are all canine teeth, cruel, cutting. You must know some such critical spirits

that seem to be all teeth, and whose every tooth is a spear or an arrow. But their *tongue* is worse than their teeth, for it is not only a sword, but, "a sharp sword," a sharpened sword. Oh, how tongues will cut and wound! You may heal the cut of a sword, but who shall heal the cut of a deadly, cruel, malicious, slanderous *tongue*? Yet for all that, David was not dismayed, but he said, "I lie down among such men, my soul is among lions." Like Daniel among the lions, so does this man of God take his night's rest as calmly as though he were sleeping in his own bed at home.

5. *Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.* David so rises above his present circumstances that he begins to praise his God. O beloved, there is no condition in which God ought to be robbed of a song! What if I am sick? Yet my Lord must have my music, even if the harp strings are not well tuned. What if I am poor? Yet why should I be poor towards Him and deny Him my need of praise? What if I am busy? Yet I must still find time for praising Him. How sweetly David seeks to exalt and glorify his God, "Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth."

6. *They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.* They hunted him as they spread a snare for a bird, or as they sought to entrap a wild beast by digging a pit and covering it over that he might stumble into it. David scarcely has time to tell us of their devices before he discovers that their plans have come to nothing—"they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves." You may go calmly on, my persecuted friend, for those who seek to hurt the righteous will only hurt themselves—their bows shall be broken, their arrows shall fall back into their own bosoms! Only be still and let the wicked alone—let God fight for you—and you hold your peace.

7. *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.* That is enough for me, I will not stop my singing for all my adversaries. Let them howl like lions, I will sing on! Let them dig their pits, I will sing on! I find this my best employment, to keep on praising my God—

*"All that remains for me
Is but to love and sing,
And wait until the angels come
To bear me to the King."*

8. *Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.* My tongue, the glory of my frame, be not silent! Bestir yourself! "I myself will awake early," or, "I will awake the dawning." I will call the sun up to be shining! I will bid him wake to shine to the honor of my Lord! With the earliest birds I will make one more singer in the great concert hall of God. I will not need more rest, or a longer time to myself to consider all my troubles—I will give my best time, the first hour of the day, to the praise of my God.

9. *I will praise You, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto You among the nations.* I will make the Gentiles hear it. They who know not the Lord shall be astonished when they hear me praising Him and they shall ask, "Who is this God of whom this man makes so much?"

10, 11. *For Your mercy is great unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens: let Your glory be above all the earth.* God give us that same calm praiseful frame of mind that David possessed if we are called to endure such trials as fell to his lot!

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