

LIFE PROVED BY LOVE

NO. 2556

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1898.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 18, 1883.

*“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”
1 John 3:14.*

I HAVE heard it said, by those who would be thought philosophers that in religion we must believe, but cannot know. I am not very clear about the distinction they draw between knowledge and faith, nor do I care to inquire; because I assert that, in matters relating to religion, we *know*; in the things of God, we both believe and know. If you will read this Epistle through, and with a pencil draw a line under the word “know” wherever it occurs, you will be astonished to see how John continually asserts about the great verities of our faith, “We know, we know, we know, we know.” He does not admit that any one of these things is the subject of conjecture, but he asserts it to be a matter of positive knowledge. These philosophical gentlemen call themselves Agnostics; that is a word derived from the Greek, and has the same meaning as the word “ignoramus,” which comes from the Latin, and is the English equivalent for a “know-nothing.” Well, if they like to be called ignoramuses, I have not the slightest objection to their keeping the title, but they should never presume to argue with Christian men. They put themselves out of court directly, for we say, “*We know.*” They cannot deny anything we choose to affirm after that, because confessedly they do not know. If we do know, and they cannot allege against us that we are deceivers—if, in any court of law, they will admit that our testimony would be taken quite as quickly as theirs, and that our general repute is that we are as upright and as honest as they are—then they ought, in modesty, never to contradict us in anything, but to believe what we declare to be true. As they do not know anything themselves, let them be guided by those who do know. At any rate, whether they choose to agree with us or not, we shall always affirm that we know what we know; and there are some things about God, and about the future, and about prayer, and about the work of the Spirit of God in our own souls, which we do not fancy, or imagine, or even make to be merely matters of faith. We know them, we are sure of them, for we have felt them, tasted them, handled them, and we know them as surely as we know the fact of our own existence. My text seems to me to speak of four things about which believers in Christ are and ought to be positive and certain.

I. First, WE KNOW THAT ONCE WE WERE DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS.

That is implied in the text: “We know that we have passed from death unto life.” We could not have passed from death if we were not in death; neither would there have been a change in bringing us into life if we were in life before. Herein, I believe, lies the doctrine of the natural ruin of man—his original sin, the depravity of his heart. I have heard it said that the children of some Christians are so very good—I suppose on account of their having such wonderfully good fathers and mothers—that they may be considered to have been born in the church; they have no need of any conversion, and they never ought to need it. There are such principles within the dear little souls that you have only to nourish those blessed principles, and they will turn into veritable angels. I have seen some of these children, and I regret to say that I have not found them different in nature from other people’s boys and girls, neither have they grown up to be better than the children of the most ungodly. I believe, concerning everybody’s child, that it must be born again, that the Spirit of God must change its natural heart if it is to become a child of God. At any rate, whatever may be the theory as regards other people, we know that we were once dead in sin; we have no question about that.

We who have been converted, and become the subjects of the work of the Spirit of God, know that we were once fast bound in spiritual death; *at one time we were utterly insensible.* We heard the Word of

God, and were pleased, perhaps, with the oratory of the speaker, or moved by his earnestness, but we were never led, by all his pleadings, to hate sin, and to believe in Christ. We were shaken, but we were not awakened; we were insensible, spiritually, to the power of the law. We heard it preached, and we might be for a moment disquieted, but we never felt the terror of the condemnation which God pronounces upon the sinner who breaks His law. If we did feel anything of it, we strived to get away from its influence, and drowned in pleasure and in sin all thoughts of the wrath of God. We could also hear the gospel, as well as the law, and the sweetest note in it had no music for our ears. What cared we for Jesus and His bleeding wounds? What respect had we for infinite love, and the invitations of the precious Word? We came, and we went, yet continued just as we were. We saw our face in the glass, but we did not wash it, and the spots of sin still remained. Some of you, dear friends, remember that you had grown so insensible to spiritual things that you did not even care to hear the gospel. The Sabbath was to some of you, just like any other day in the week, except that, sometimes, you took most of your pleasure then, which meant that you went further in sin than you ordinarily did, for your daily labor kept you pretty steady through the week. You know how often Sunday brought “St. Monday” after it, with all sorts of mischief in its train; and the Sabbath became to you rather a door of sin than a gate of mercy. Some of you had godly parents, yet you took no notice of your father’s God, and your mother’s Savior. You saw others go to the house of prayer, but you were in your shirt-sleeves all the morning, and in the evening you “did not care to go,” you said, “to be crammed up with a crowd to listen to dry talk.” Just so; all this was because you were quite insensible to divine things. Charm he ever so wisely, the charmer cannot allure the deaf adder; and, for a time, the gospel’s charming music could not reach your ears. That was one proof of your being dead—that you were spiritually insensible.

More than that, we *had not the appetites of living men and women*. You know that, if a man is alive, he will be hungry in due time. There is a bell that is sure to ring inside to tell him that it is time to coal up, and set the fires going again. He will be thirsty, too; the body will need moisture, and there will be a summons for him to drink if he is alive. He may be just on the borders of life, perhaps almost gone, and then hunger and thirst may be forgotten; but the healthy man has these tokens of life about him at fit seasons, that he must eat and drink. There was a time when you and I had no hunger for the Bread of life. “Pshaw!” we said, “what cant! What nonsense!” We did not desire to drink of “the river of the water of life.” We did not believe in its existence; and, though now every drop of the gospel is sweet to us as honey, we cared not an atom about it once. We despised the doctrines of grace, and we did not wish for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He, who is the Bread of heaven, was without any attraction for us; we did not feel any need of Him. We thought that we were strong, and could find our own way into heaven; we did not know our own weakness, or His strength. We believed that we were fat and flourishing, and therefore we did not want to feed upon Him. It is perfectly true that, with regard to grace and all spiritual things, we were dead. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” But dead are they unto whom no spiritual hunger or thirst ever comes. This was the second proof of our spiritual death.

There was this further evidence that *we were without power of movement of a spiritual kind*. You remember the philosopher, who was asked to prove that he lived, and he did it by simply walking; for movement is a proof of life. Certainly, spiritual movement proves spiritual life. To draw near to You, my God, proves that I am alive. To approach You—though it is with faltering steps, like a tottering infant who any moment may fall—yet, to draw near to You, though I do but crawl like a baby of a few months old, proves that I am alive. The movement of godly desire, the movement of a humble hope, the movement of a holy wish, the movement of a penitential sigh or cry—if there are any of these in the soul, they are proofs of life. It is not so very long ago since some of you had none of them. I had the great delight, yesterday, of seeing many who have just lately been quickened by divine grace; and many of them, as they looked me in the face with holy shame, told how dead they had been towards God—they were alive, indeed, unto transgression and unrighteousness; but stone dead as to any movement of the Spirit of God, who now has made them alive in Christ Jesus.

There is another sign which proves death, namely, *the want of breath*. That is one of the last tokens of expiring life. You have heard of friends holding a mirror to the man’s mouth, and as long as there is a little dimness to be seen upon the glass, they say, “He still lives;” but when the breath is all gone, then the life has gone. The poet truly said—

“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath;”

but there was a time with us when we did not pray. Perhaps some of you from your childhood always said a form of prayer, and if you ever went to bed without saying it, you dared not go to sleep; yet how much of that formality was but a mockery of God! I will not speak too harshly about the child's form of prayer, for sometimes that form has been made use of by God to lead on to true spiritual supplication. Still, it would be idle for us to imagine that the mere repetition of certain words was prayer; we know now that it was not prayer. We did not really ask anything of God, we did not truly speak to God at all; we might just as well have said our prayers backward as forward for any good there was in them. I have heard of some people who, even at thirty and forty years of age, have repeated the same form of prayer that they used when they were children; I have even read of one who, at sixty or seventy, used to pray God to bless his father and mother who had been dead thirty years before! When men once get into the way of using a form of prayer, they are apt to keep to that form, when there is positively no meaning whatever in it. That is the state in which some of us were; we used dead prayers, for there was no life in us. Ah! But it is not so now, beloved; now, we *pray*. I think that some of us could more easily tell when we pray than when we do not pray. As we walk the crowded streets, we cry to God in secret, "Oh, that You would be with me!" We cannot read a book without praying that we may have help from God to spy out the meaning. We do not even go to look at a baby without pleading with God to save the soul of that dear child. We feel habitually in the spirit of prayer; if it is not so with any of us, we ought to pray that it may be so. Mark you; the spirit of prayer is better than any mere act of prayer. The act of prayer is good, the habit of prayer is good; but to have the spirit of prayer always with us, so that we as naturally pray as we breathe, this is the highest blessing of all, and one of the surest signs of spiritual life.

I grieve to add, but it is true of some of us, in a very special degree, that we know we were dead in sin because *we had begun to corrupt*. If a man has lost his life for only a certain number of hours, he may still look very much as he did; and, if the eye were the only guide, we might scarcely know whether he was a living man or not. But that appearance will not last many days; you soon perceive the signs of an inward dissolution. Corruption is beginning to take possession of the place which death has conquered, and very soon you will have to say, "Bury my dead out of my sight." It happened to some of us to be, in our salvation, like the little girl to whom Christ went soon after the breath was out of her body; He took her by the hand, and said, "Talitha, cumi"—"Maid, arise;" and she lived again before corruption had worked any great change within her. Happy are they who are saved in their youth, before the inward death has begun to show itself in outward corruption. Yet, some of us, who were converted while we were yet boys, remember enough of our wanderings to make us fear what we might have been if grace had not interposed. I have often told the story of Rowland Hill and the good Scotchman who sat for some time looking at the preacher's face, and at the strange, comic twinkling about his eyes. "What are you doing?" he asked. "I am looking at the lines of your face," said the Scotchman. "And what do you make of them?" "Oh, I was thinking what a bad fellow you would have become if it had not been for the grace of God." And some of us, as we look back at the lines of our young character before it was allowed to develop, cannot help saying to ourselves, "What great sinners we would have been but for the grace of God!" There were tokens already of commenced corruption.

But there are others in whom the corruption has become more apparent. They have gone into actual transgression, and have become familiar with what are called the pleasures of this world, its vanities, and gaieties, and pollutions. They have not been worse than others; indeed, even while dead in sin, they compliment themselves that they are not as bad as others; yet they would not like to have their secret deeds proclaimed before the face of all men, as they will be at the judgment day; they would be ashamed to have them known. You, my friend, are like that young man, who was carried out at the gate of Nain, whom Christ met on the way to the sepulcher, and raised from the dead. You are dead, surely enough; but there are some others who are dead, like Lazarus, who had lain four days in the grave, and of whom his sister said, "Lord, by this time he stinks." God's grace has come to some, who will easily recognize my description of them, when they were as far gone in evil as they could be. There was not any other sin left for them to commit, they had sinned up to their neck; they had plunged into it, and done as much evil as they could. Rottenness was in their very soul, corruption was in everything they said, for it was full of obscenity and blasphemy; it was in all they did, for the more nauseous the sin was in the nostrils of God, the more pleasing it was to them. There are some here who will always say, "I know that I was dead, for I was corrupt. Death had set his seal upon me with a stamp that could not be mistaken. I was indeed dead before God, for I had begun to be offensive even in the nostrils of good men."

That will suffice for this part of our subject. Let us look back with shame on our original. Let us remember the hole of the pit from where we were dug, and then stand fast in this one certainty; we know that we were dead.

II. Secondly, we know another thing, and a brighter thing. WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE UNDERGONE A VERY AMAZING CHANGE: “We know that we have passed from death unto life.”

That passage, “from death unto life,” is *the reverse of the natural one*. We all expect to pass from life unto death. The heathen talks of a Charon to ferry men across the river into the unseen world. Long ago the poet said, “Easy is the descent to Avernus; but to retrace your steps—that is the work; that is the difficulty.” Yet that is just what God has done for us who believe; we have not gone from life to death, but He has brought us up from death unto life. There has been such a change in us as is altogether supernatural, such a change as never would have occurred had we been left to ourselves. We now are sure that it is so; I speak to some, in whom the change is so evident to themselves that they often wonder at it. One of the surest proofs to any man of the existence of a God consists in His dealings with that man in turning him from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan, unto God. All the arguments that ever were written by Butler, or Paley, or any of the defenders of religion, will never convince a man like coming into personal dealings with God; and when those dealings assume this form—that we have passed from death unto life—they become indisputable proofs of the Godhead, and of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I do not think that it is easy to describe the passage from life to death; I could not describe it, though I have seen many pass away; and *it is almost impossible to describe the passage from death unto life*. I know what it is, as you do, brothers and sisters, many of you. It has happened in your own case, yet you could not explain it. What a wonderful process it is! It is not dying; it is quite the reverse, it is being quickened. Can you tell another person how it happened? You can speak of the outward means and the external circumstances, but you cannot picture to anyone the secret way of the Spirit. His methods of quickening are deep mysteries, and even he who has felt them cannot translate them into human language. Yet believe us, O unbelievers, we are before you men and women as different from what we used to be, as though we had died and risen from the dead! We are some of us here, so changed and altered that, if we met our old selves, we would not know them; we are no longer ourselves, though now most truly we are ourselves by the effectual working of the almighty grace of God.

We can tell you, however, that *this passing from death unto life usually begins with pain*. I have heard that when men have been nearly drowned, and animation has been restored by rubbing and other processes, their first sensation was that of intense anguish. When the blood began to move again, and the lungs began gently to heave, the first feeling was one of great pain. You know how, if your foot “goes to sleep,” as we say, when it begins to get right again, what pain there often is! That is, on a very small scale, what happens to a man who is being resuscitated; it is just a faint picture of the pain that is usually felt by those who pass from death to life. Yet let me lay down no hard and fast rule; I am not giving a description that is to be stereotyped, but I only say what usually happens. I do not know that the little girl, to whom the Lord Jesus said, “Talitha, cumi,” had any pain at all. I expect that she just opened her eyes, and sat up, and as soon as she saw that it was Jesus, she wanted to wait upon Him, but He commanded that something should be given her to eat. And there are some dear children, and some persons of older age, who are brought to Jesus very gently. There are not so many pangs in their birth as there are in the births of others; yet they are as truly regenerated, and born into the family of God. Still, I think that the new life usually begins with pain.

One of the first signs of it is that *it is accompanied with great self-depreciation*. The man who is passing from death to life grows very little in his own esteem. He gets to despise what he once thought to be his beauty and his comeliness. As to his supposed excellence, he is not half the man he used to be. He would never have been able to go through the needle’s eye while he was such a size as that, so he had to be reduced, and then still further reduced, till he became less than nothing in his own eyes.

At the same time, when that life really does begin in a soul, *it begins very quickly*. There may be at first only enough light to make the darkness visible, only enough life to incarnate itself in a sigh. The prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” is rather a large-sized form of the heavenly life. Sometimes the poor, trembling soul cannot get as far as that. Yet, not a single spark of the divine life ever did die out or ever can. The living and incorruptible seed of the Word of God lives and abides forever; if it is but as a grain of mustard seed, and it falls into the ground which God has prepared for it, it must live, and it must grow. But, often, it is at first exceedingly weak. The test of its reality is that the man trusts in

Jesus, for “he that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” That is a sure word, for He has Himself spoken it: “Whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” The renewed man, however feeble his life may be, does believe in Jesus, and therefore he is saved.

When that life comes to the birth, *it is usually attended with great joy*. When at last the man has believed in Jesus, and rested in Him, then he passes from darkness to light in the sense of passing from sorrow into overflowing joy. It is not always so, but that is the general way; there is a joy, unspeakable and full of glory, which attends this passing from death unto life; it is a period to which a man may always look back with gratitude to God. I am always glad when our friends get a very decided conversion, because, though I am not going to say a word about those who come to Christ very gradually, yet their experience is rather cloudy. No doubt they are just as safe as others, but they lack a good deal of comfort afterwards; and sometimes persons who are very readily converted, and who have no very deep sense of sin, are more apt to play with evil than others are who have had a clearer sight of its enormity.

So, we know—however it came to pass—we do know that we have undergone a very singular change.

III. Thirdly, we know something else. WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE: “We know that we have passed from death unto life.”

In that life, first of all, is included *non-condemnation*. A man who is condemned to die can hardly be said to live, but he who has believed in Jesus Christ knows that there is for him no condemnation. Nothing shall ever be laid to his charge, for all his sins were punished on Christ; a full atonement was made for them, and they were forever put away. This we do know, and we rejoice to know it; it is the very glory and bliss of our life.

We live now, dear friends, in this way: *we have entered into a new state of being*. We have made the acquaintance of a great many things that we did not know anything of before. “All things have become new.” “Ah, sir!” said one to me once, “either all the world has altered, or else I have, for people I once delighted in I am now afraid of. The things that once made me glad now make me unhappy, and those that I thought melancholy, are now the very things in which I find my highest joy.” Yes, we have not merely to talk about God now, but to know Him; not simply to speak about Christ, but to live on Him; not now to dream or read about the Spirit of God, but to feel Him working in us. We have come now to know the blood of Jesus as applied to our souls to make us clean, the promises are now our riches, and prayer is a reality to us. We never need anybody to tell us that there is a power in prayer, for we have tokens from day to day that the Lord hears our petitions. We are living in a new world altogether, we know we are; these things were unknown and unperceived by us once, but they are perceived by us now.

Beside that, *we are now introduced into spiritual society*. I hardly know how to explain the great change to some here, but suppose you had been a pig all your life and that you were suddenly made into a man. Well, now you are a man, you look through a telescope; swine cannot do that. You look through a microscope; I never knew a pig do that in my life. Swine do not talk, but you speak, you sing, you pray, you are quite a different creature from what you were before. It is just so with some of us; we have another life than we ever possessed before, we live in a different world to what we used to live in, we know things that were unknowable to us once, we enjoy what we never had enjoyed, and we have griefs that never occurred to us before we passed from death unto life. By all these things we know that we do really live.

Further, *this new life necessitates new food*. We feel now an appetite which nothing but Christ can satisfy; we love the house of God, we delight in God’s Word; and when the Holy Spirit blesses us, then are we filled as with marrow and fatness. We believe, too, that *this life guarantees to us eternal life*—that, in fact, *it is eternal life*—life that can never die, or be taken away from us. Let me tell you, my unconverted friend, that we are very happy. “But,” you say “you said that you had sorrows which we do not have.” Exactly so. Men, you know, have sorrows which swine do not have. Do I compare you to swine? Well, if you do not like that image, I cannot help it; I will take any other that is true, but there is as great a difference between a living Christian and a mere man as there is between a living man and a dog. He has another life, and a higher life, and he has entered another realm. I would not try to teach a dog astronomy, and it is impossible for an unrenewed man to know the things of God. I should not think of putting my dog into a chair, and beginning to explain theology to him; and until you are born again, you will never understand the meaning of God’s grace. You must get a new life, pass from death unto life, or you cannot know these things; but we who believe in Jesus know that we have this life.

IV. Now, fourthly, WE KNOW THAT WE LIVE BECAUSE WE LOVE.

The inquiry as to whether we are alive or not, is a very curious thing. This morning, I received a letter informing me that the High Court of Chancery has ordered investigation, with affidavit, as to whether “the said Charles Haddon Spurgeon” is still alive. I replied to the lawyer that I would not make an affidavit to that effect, for I would not take an oath for any purpose; but that I was willing most solemnly to affirm that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, I am still alive; and I expect to have to do that before long. I did not say to myself, “Am I really alive or not?” But I have known some Christian people, who have so often sung—

“Tis a point I long to know,”—

which all of us have to sing some time or other—that they are not sure whether they are alive or not. Making themselves sad, and miserable, and melancholy, they think is a proof of life; perhaps it is, but there are other proofs of life beside that, and I like the one that is given in the text: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

So, brethren, if we can say that *we love God’s people, as God’s people, because they are God’s people*, that is a mark that we have passed from death unto life. Do you love them *for Christ’s sake*? Do you say to yourself, “That is one of Christ’s people; that is one who bears Christ’s cross; that is one of the children of God; therefore I love him, and take delight in his company”? Then that is an evidence that you are not of the world. If you were, you would love the world, but, belonging to Christ, you love those who are Christ’s, and you love them for Christ’s sake.

Another is you love them *for the truth’s sake*. We are but earthen vessels, yet there is the excellence of the treasure of God put within us; so, when you can say, “I love that man because of the truth he preaches, I do not care about his talents, but I do care about his gospel”—when you can say, “I love that woman, I delight to hear her speak of Jesus, her experience comforts me because it is full of Christ; I love to read the writings of such a brother, because there is a savor of Christ about every letter that he writes”—that is a mark that you have passed from death unto life. If you love the children, you love the Father, I am pretty sure of that; and if you love Him, it is because He first loved you.

It is another mark of our passing from death unto life when we love God’s people *for their own sake*, when we wish that we were like them, when we say to ourselves, “I would gladly be the least among them, washing their feet, and filling the humblest place, so that I might share the love which is their joy.” It is a sure token that you are a child of God when you love God’s people even *when the world hates them*, taking their part, being willing to be reproached with them; when you say, “You scoff at such a saint, do you? I am one of the same family, so give me some of your scorn. If you have any rotten stuff to fling, and you set this Christian man in the stocks, I will stand by his side, and count it a great honor to share the contempt that comes upon a child of God.” If you thus love the saints, you need not be afraid whether you have passed from death unto life.

It is also a sure mark of grace when *we love the company of God’s people as a people*, when we are willing to go to the little prayer meeting to hear them pray, when we hear them groaning, and yet feel, “That is just the kind of sorrow that I would like to feel;” when we hear them joyful, and say, “That is the kind of joy I want to feel;” when we hear them tell about what the Lord has done for them, and though we have not felt quite the same joy ourselves, yet say, “I love them because the Lord has loved them. If He has not yet worked all this in me, I love them because He has worked it in them. I rejoice to see my Father’s finger anywhere, on anyone, whoever he may be.” Well, if that is your case, go your way in peace. It seems but a very small token of the inward life that we love the brethren, yet it is one of the surest in the world, and it is one of which even you high and mighty saints may be glad to avail yourselves in the cloudy and dark day which sooner or later may come upon you.

God grant us all to have a share in this precious knowledge, for Christ’s sake! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

PSALM 32.

A Psalm of David, giving instruction.

The 32nd Psalm is a gospel benediction. It belongs not to the law; it is a word which can only come of sovereign grace to the guilty. The very first sentence tells us that—

Verse 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

Blessed would have been the man who never transgressed, who never sinned; but, be encouraged, O sinner, there is blessedness even for the likes of you! Blessed is he who, though he has transgressed, has

had his transgression forgiven—who, though he has sinned, and sinned often, and sinned foully, yet, nevertheless, has had his sin covered. There is such blessedness in this forgiveness that scarcely can the bliss of an unfallen spirit excel it. There is a tenderness, a delicacy, a fragrance, a love, about the dealings of God with pardoned sinners, that even angels can scarcely tell the excessive sweetness of it. They have never known the joy of redeeming grace and dying love; and although they are blessed, yet peculiarly and especially is he blessed “whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

2. *Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*

He is blessed twice over; God multiplies the blessing. He blesses him effectually, He blesses him emphatically, He blesses him in body, He blesses him in soul. He is blessed; he has iniquities, but God does not impute them to him. They have been of old imputed to Another, who stood in the sinner's place, and bore the sinner's guilt, and put it all away by His own expiatory sufferings. Therefore, as these deeds were put to Christ's account, they are not laid to the account of the Lord's people: “Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputes not iniquity.” But even pardon and deliverance from guilt would not be sufficient to make a man blessed if they stood alone, for, as long as our heart is full of sin and deceit, and follows crooked ways, there can be no true rest to us. Therefore the blessedness comes to the man “in whose spirit there is no guile”—no falsehood. The guile and the guilt have gone together, and the gall is gone, too. Now the man is truthful, so he confesses his sin; he is also trustful, so he lays hold on the sinner's Substitute, and thus he finds peace. Dear friends, do you all know this blessedness? If you do not, I pray that you may, for it is heaven begun below—the heaven of a poor sinner whose sin is covered, and whose heart is purified from guile.

Now see the way by which we come to this blessedness—

3. *When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.*

Sin was in his heart, but he would not confess it. He was silent before God in hardness of heart; and then his sorrow grew worse and worse, till not only his flesh began to fail, but his bones—the most solid part of his frame began to grow old, too. He felt like a man prematurely aged, melting away into the grave.

4. *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.*

When a man gets God's hand on him, I guarantee you that he will want no other burden. This hand of God goes with him wherever he goes; it is like his own shadow. Whenever you meet with persons who are self-righteous, you may pray God to lay his hand on them; that will drive the pride and unbelief out of them. David says that he was so pressed under God's hand that the very essence of his soul was squeezed out of him.

5. *I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sins. Selah.*

“And You forgave”—blessed, “and.” How very simple it was! The floods of divine wrath were swelling; David just pulled up the sluices of confession, the floods ran away, and all was quiet. Oh, what a simple plan this is! But pride cannot stand it; to humble oneself, and confess before God that one is utterly undone and ruined and sinful, is what our proud spirit will not bring itself to do if it can help it. Yet that is the way of peace. Down, down, down, flat on your face! “He that is down need fear no fall.” But we do not like that going down, that acknowledgment of transgression. Still, we must come to it; and the sooner, the better. The Lord bring every proud soul here to a full acknowledgment and confession of sin, and then forgiveness will surely follow.

6. *For this shall everyone who is godly pray unto You in a time when You may be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come near unto him.*

The fact that God hears us at the first, and gives us a great deliverance when we are under a sense of sin, makes us pray to Him as long as we live. We shall never forget how God heard us then; and something whispers into our heart, “He heard you then; He will hear you now.” One thing I know, if you do not. I never can come to God again in such a plight as I came to Him at the first. Whatever happens to me—if I am bereaved a thousand times—if I am covered from head to foot with sores, and sit like Job on a dunghill—I can never be brought so low as I was when, in my despair, I was ready to lay violent hands on myself rather than live any longer under a sense of sin. I looked unto Him, and I was lightened; and that first grand deliverance ensures that, in every other time of trial, in every other flood of great waters, when I cry unto God, He will deliver me.

7. *You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.*

Here is a threefold declaration: “You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance.” “Yes,” says God, “I will;” and now He speaks to His servant. When we speak to God, we may expect that God will speak to us; and what a happy dialog it is when a soul can pray, and praise, and magnify the Lord, and then the Lord condescends to speak to His poor servant after this fashion!

8. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go:*

“I have led you so far; I have brought you up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay; I will not let you perish now; I will not leave you to your own folly.”

8. *I will guide you with My eye.*

It is a very gentle way of guidance when a mistress just turns her eye towards her servant, who understands her without a word. So God is quite willing to guide His people with His eye, if they are willing to be so guided.

9. *Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you.*

Alas! There are some hard-mouthed Christians; they will not take a hint from God. They do not watch God’s eye, and so do not learn by that gentle means; and therefore they require having a bit and a bridle, and such things are not at all nice in one’s mouth. Some Christians must always be in trouble, or else they would be in sin. It seems as if some could never be allowed a furlough from sorrow, or else they would spend it in the tents of wickedness: “Be you not as the horse, or as the mule.” Be tender-mouthed; be willing to be guided; yield to the gentle admonitions of the Divine Spirit that you may have a truly happy life.

10. *Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:*

It is all merriment with them now; they “count it one of the wisest things, to drive dull care away.” But hark to this knell of all their joys, “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” If not today, or tomorrow, yet by and by, and in *that* day, it shall be so. All the future is dark to the wicked; the further they go, the worse they will grow.

10. *But he that trusts in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.*

“He that trusts in the Lord”—he is the very opposite of the wicked. Do *you* trust in the Lord, my friend? If not, you will have to be put among the wicked, for there are only two sorts of people in the world—the wicked, and those that trust in the Lord. If you are not a believer in Christ, you must go with the other company.

“He that trusts in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.” Mercy shall go all round him, before him, behind him, above him, beneath him, within him, and around him everywhere. As you see the moon sometimes with a halo around it, so shall you be; you shall have brightness within and round about you, mercy shall compass you about.

11. *Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, you righteous: and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.*

If anybody has a right to be glad, you have; so indulge the gladness, and magnify the name of the Lord.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—30, 561, 560.

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