

A VISIT FROM THE LORD

NO. 2599

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 4, 1898.
 DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“O visit me with Your salvation.”
Psalm 106:4.

THIS is the prayer of a man who understood the art of praise. He begins this Psalm with a Hallelujah. “Praise you the Lord. O, give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good.” Now, mark, there is no prayer that is purer, more spiritual, more heavenly, than the prayer which comes out of a heart full of praise. How often have I said that prayer is the breathing in of the air of heaven, and praise is the breathing of it out again? Prayer and praise make up the best life of the Christian man, and he is not yet thoroughly in spiritual health that is all for prayer and not at all for praise; but he is the soundly healthy Christian who has these two things rightly balanced. Such a man one moment cries, “O, give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever;” and then, directly afterwards, prays, “Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people.” Is it not possible, my dear brother, that you have lost some of your power in prayer because you have somewhat neglected praise? If we do not bless God for the mercies we have received, how can we go and ask Him for more? If we have already been heard in our prayers, and yet have failed to acknowledge our obligation to the Giver, do we not come to prayer with a very bad attitude? Might not God say to us, “You did not thank Me the last time I granted your request; why should I answer you this time?” Let us, therefore, each one, take care that our prayer is the petition of one who can and who does praise the Lord.

Next, observe that this prayer was offered by one who knew the blessedness of the saints. In the third verse he says, “Blessed are they that keep judgement, and he that does righteousness at all times.” I introduce this remark because, to a large extent, the prayer of the text is the prayer of a sinner—the prayer of one who felt that he did not bear the character of a saint as fully as he ought to have done. And, beloved, if we were more saintly we should have much more power in prayer, and we should be much happier. If we walked with God more closely, and kept judgement, and did righteousness at all times, we should be saved from many of those trials and afflictions and downcastings which now fall to our lot. The psalmist tells us about what troubles the children of Israel had in the wilderness; but those troubles resulted from their sin. They need not have had to endure half what they suffered, if they had only been right with God. And so, in the later days of their history, they would never have been captives to their enemies if they had not first been captives to their sins. If they had walked as God would have had them walk, their peace would have been like a river, one of them would have chased a thousand, and two would have put ten thousand to flight. There will be, practically, hardly any limit to the blessedness which a child of God may enjoy even in this life if he will but walk carefully with his God. So, dear friends, if you and I feel that we have wandered, and if our prayer has to be presented “out of the depths,” yet I trust that we have not forgotten that there is a peace, a rest, a joy which God bestows upon those who walk uprightly, those who live more carefully than we have done, and keep nearer to Him than some of His erring children do.

Now, coming to the text, I want you to notice the prayer itself. I have nothing new to say, but I shall try just to utter some very simple truths suggested by the psalmist's prayer: “O visit me with Your salvation.”

I. The first thought is, that the psalmist here prays for SALVATION.

What a wonderful word that word “salvation” is! Well might Dr. Watts say—

*“Salvation! Let the echo fly
 The spacious earth around,”—*

for there is something in it to be heard by all who dwell on this spacious earth. Salvation is the one thing which all men need; and when it is given to them, it conveys to them innumerable mercies for time and for eternity. Indeed, everything good is wrapped up in that word salvation. As we read this Psalm, you probably noticed how the psalmist sings in it concerning salvation. He says, first, that *God saved the people out of Egypt*. There they were, a nation of captives and bond slaves; and He began to work with a high hand and an outstretched arm to bring them out of their captivity; and though they did not understand His wonders, yet, nevertheless, He saved them. That is a salvation in which you and I also delight—salvation by the sprinkled blood—salvation by the Paschal Lamb—salvation by the right hand of God and His out-stretched arm—a salvation which reveals His faithfulness, His mercy, and His power. Let us bless God if we know experientially what this salvation means; and if we do not, let this be the prayer of each one of us, “O visit me with Your salvation.”

One of the worst results of the Fall is that men who are spiritually dead do not pray for life; but if there is one here who is sufficiently under the influence of the Holy Spirit to know that he needs spiritual life, he may begin at once to pray, “O visit me with Your salvation.” If you have not yet felt the burden of sin, if you do not yet savingly know the Sin-bearer, if you are still a bond slave to your sin, you have indeed need to pray this prayer. If you know that you are not what you ought to be, and that, living and dying as you now are, you will perish everlastingly, then with all your heart, and with as much desire as there may be in you, do breathe the prayer to God, “O visit me with Your salvation.”

O poor heart, as soon as you begin to pray, you begin to live. You may have very little power in prayer; in fact, your prayer may be no better than the first feeble cry of a newborn child; but it is a sign of life and the Lord hears even a groan; and the tear that falls without a sound is liquid music to Jehovah, for He knows what it means. May I not hope that somebody here, if he cannot pray spiritually, will yet pray as do the young ravens who, in their nests, when they are hungry, cry, and the Lord hears them and relieves their hunger? If you think that your prayer is no better than the cry of a poor bird, or the roaring of a wild beast, yet still cry, do pray. One trick of the devil is to try to stop you from praying; he will tell you that you will not be heard. But I can assure you that the cry of misery, the sob of inward grief, is certain to be heard by the tender and gracious God whom we worship. Somewhere in this building, I think, there must be some heart that has been up to now giddy, thoughtless, careless, that will now begin to pray, “O visit me with Your salvation.”

Further on in the Psalm, the writer sings of *a second salvation when the people were delivered at the Red Sea*. Its waves rolled before them, and they could not tell how they were to escape from Pharaoh who was close behind with all the chariots and horsemen of Egypt pursuing them. Ah, poor timid Israelites! They could almost hear the whips of their taskmasters; and they probably feared that something worse would come upon them, and that they would feel their oppressors’ swords, and that their blood would soon be shed. They were in a state of great anxiety and trouble, yet we read just now, “Nevertheless He saved them for His name’s sake. He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: and He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.”

Perhaps I am addressing some who are so fully conscious of their sin that they are driven almost to despair by it. Instead of believing that this awakened conscience of theirs is an evidence of God’s grace, they are afraid that it is a sign of condemnation. The weight of their sin crushes them; they hardly dare hope that there may be a way of escape for them; but, poor soul, if this is your sad state, I do trust that you will be able to pray, “‘O visit me with Your salvation.’ O God, the Red Sea rolls in front of me, the rocks frown upon me on either hand, and my sins pursue me, and seek to slay me. ‘O, visit me with Your salvation.’ Come, and dry up this Red Sea of iniquity. Come, and destroy these adversaries of mine, and let me sing with the psalmist, ‘And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.’ ‘O, visit me with Your salvation.’” You know how it was with Israel—I always delight to dwell upon it—how the Lord brought again the waters of the Red Sea, and Pharaoh and all his hosts were swallowed up. And then Miriam took her timbrel, and all the women went forth after her, and sang unto the Lord who had triumphed gloriously, and thrown the horses and their riders into the sea; and this was one of the most jubilant notes of their song, “The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left.” So it was, beloved, when you and I, having cried to God for mercy, at last found it through Jesus Christ our Savior. Then we saw our sins cast into the depths of the sea, and we were ready to dance for joy as we said, “The depths have covered them; there is not one of them left.” Our experience ought to be an encouragement to others. Come, despairing soul, you that are like a mouse in a hole, and hardly dare to pop up your head to look out; never mind about coming out. Stay where you are, and

there breathe the prayer, “O visit me with Your salvation,” and you shall yet come out into light and liberty, and you shall joy and rejoice in God.

It may be that you and I, dear friends, have gone further on than this. We have been saved from our natural ruin, and saved from the power of despair worked in us by conviction; and *now we are fighting with our uprising corruptions*. Our inbred sin is like the deep that lies under, and perhaps, lately, the fountains of the great deep have been broken up within us. We cannot sin without being grieved and troubled by it; it is a vexation even to hear the report of it. Oh, that we could live without sinning at all! Well, now, beloved, if you are struggling against it, let this be your prayer to the Most High, “O, visit me with Your salvation.” The Lord is able at once to come into your heart, and to put an end to your temptation whatever it may be. Is it unbelief? He can strengthen your faith. Is it covetousness? He can deliver you from that abomination, and give you a contented spirit. Is it anger? Oh, how sweetly can He come, and fill you with love! Whatever may be the evil against which you are fighting, He can help you overthrow it, and you shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved you. I earnestly commend this prayer to every struggling believer, to everyone who feels the two natures within him striving for the mastery, and who is sometimes in doubt whether the house of David or the house of Saul will get the victory. Doubt not, my brother; the Lord is with the true seed. He that quickened you will keep the new life in you; it cannot die, for it is born of God, and you shall yet overcome sin and death and hell. Only forget not to breathe the cry from your very soul, “O visit me with Your salvation,” and you shall prove what a salvation it is to be saved from the power of sin.

Our text may also be used in another sense, for salvation means *deliverance from grievous affliction*, just as, in this Psalm, when the children of Israel were brought into great distress by their enemies, God came, and saved them from their foes. So, at this time, dear friend, you may be in great distress. It may be temporal distress, or mental distress, or spiritual distress. Whether you are suffering in body, or in mind, or in heart, God knows how to deliver you. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” “He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.” If you should ever get so low in spirit that you can only compare yourself to Jonah when the whale went down to the very bottom of the sea, and he felt that the earth with her bars was about him forever, and he was at the very foundations of the everlasting hills, yet even then the God who brought up Jonah from the depths can bring you up. See how the wheel turns; that spoke which was lowest just now has become the highest. Mark how the stars which shall tonight descend, and shall not be seen all day long, shall yet, when night comes round again, climb once more to their zenith, and occupy their appointed places. You are not doomed to be down forever, you shall yet mount up again; and you may say to the adversary, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall arise.” “The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring My people again from the depths of the sea.” To every tried and troubled one, then, I suggest the prayer of our text, “O visit me with Your salvation,” for it points out the way of deliverance for them whatever their trouble may be, and it specially concerns the all-important matter of salvation.

II. Now let us think for a few minutes upon the second thing which is very manifest in the text, and that is, VISITATION: “O visit me with Your salvation.”

You have read in the newspapers of men having “died by the visitation of God.” Sometimes, that has been the verdict of the jury at the close of an inquest; but here is a man who lived by the visitation of God! And, truly, it is a most blessed thing to know that the very best and truest way of living is to live by being visited by God—visited by His salvation. I admire the wording of this prayer. It does not say, “O save me.” That would be a very proper petition. It does not say, “O, send me salvation.” That, under some aspects, would be proper enough; but the petition is, “Lord, come Yourself, and bring the salvation that I need, by Yourself coming to me. ‘O, visit me with Your salvation.’” What a blessed prayer this is! “O, visit me. Lord, visit me.” It takes some faith to pray it, for humility prompts us to say, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof.” Yet faith, and a childlike spirit, teaches us to pray, “Lord, visit me. I hear that You do visit Your people; Lord, visit me. I have heard one of them say that you did come under his roof, and stayed with him all through the night, and make him unspeakably glad. ‘Remember me, O Lord, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me’—yes, even me—‘with Your salvation.’” Though the heaven of heavens cannot contain You, for You are so great, yet I know that You do dwell in every humble and contrite heart; Lord, come and visit me, and dwell within me.” I think this is indeed a blessed prayer.

Mark the *condescension* which the psalmist feels that the Lord will thus manifest. “‘O, visit me with Your salvation.’ Lord, I cannot be saved unless You will visit me. Visit me not as a saved one, but ‘visit

me with Your salvation.’ I am lost until You come to me. O come, Lord, and visit me as a Savior. Come and visit me as a Physician, for I am sick. Pay me a visit of mercy, a visit of grace and tenderness. O You great and glorious Lord, I beseech You, come and visit me. By the remembrance of Bethlehem’s manger, the horned oxen, the straw, and the stable, so ill fitted for Your reception, come and visit me. And, as the angels sang when You did thus descend to the lowliest of lowliness, so shall my heart sing yet more sweetly if You will visit me—even me. It will be great condescension on Your part, but ‘O visit me with Your salvation.’”

And it will be *compassion*, too. “‘O visit me.’ I am a prisoner; yet come, Lord, and visit me. I am lame and very weak. Lord, I have not a leg to carry me to Your house; so, come to my house, Lord. ‘O visit me.’ My heart is heavy, and sorely burdened; my very wishes lag, my prayers limp, my desires halt. O come and visit me. If I cannot come to You, yet come You to me, my God.” It seems to me that this is a sweet, sweet prayer for one who is under a sense of inability, and whose strength is utterly gone. “O visit me with Your salvation.” In it I see condescension and compassion.

But there is more in it even than that, there is also *communion*: “O visit me with Your salvation.” This means more than a complimentary call such as ladies and gentlemen make when they spend half a day in going around to their friends distributing little bits of cardboard. I believe it is a wonderful token of friendship to do that; but you and I do not move in that artificial region. When we visit anyone, we mean it, and we do not make calls of mere ceremony or custom; but a visit from a beloved friend—oh, what a joy it is! Occasionally I have the opportunity of meeting dear friends who have been asking me to pay them a visit, and I can see, by the very way that they receive me, that they are almost as happy as the black men were when Mungo Park went to them. They said that they began to date their existence from the day when the white man came that way. Most of you must have some friends who love you so much that, when they see you at their house, they do not need to know when you are going, but, if they could, they would make you always stay there. Dr. Watts went to see Sir Thomas Abney, at Abney Park, to spend a week; but that week lasted through all the rest of his life, for he never went away from there, and he lies buried in Abney Park, and Sir Thomas is buried there also, so that even in death the friends are not separated from one another. They never meant to part after they once came together. That is the kind of visit we want from the Lord, so let us breathe this prayer now, “O Lord, come and visit me; but do not merely pay me a brief visit, but come to stay with me.”

“That is a bold request,” says one, “to ask God to come and abide with us.” Listen, listen, listen. There was a certain church—you know the name of it—Laodicea, of which Christ said that it made Him sick. But what did He say next? “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” That passage is not a call from Christ to sinners, as it is often used; it may, perhaps, be so used by way of illustration. But that is not its first meaning; it is this. Here are some people of God who have fallen so low in grace that they are neither cold nor hot, and Christ prescribes this remedy for their lukewarmness—that He should come, and sup with them—that He should come and pay them a visit. Now, if our blessed Lord was willing to visit the Laodiceans who were neither cold nor hot, I am sure that He will come to us who are cold, and He will come to us who are hot; He would rather come to such than to the lukewarm. Let us, then, each one, breathe the prayer, “Come, Lord, and tarry not; come now, and visit me with Your salvation.” And when He does come, brethren, let us do as Sir Thomas Abney did with Dr. Watts, let us get Him to protract His visit. He will make as though He would go further, as He did when at Emmaus, but our wisdom will be to say, as the two disciples did, “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And when He says, “No, I must go,” we must not take His “No” for an answer, but we must do as they did, “They constrained Him.” He will go, if you let Him, but you must not let Him go. Perhaps He will say, “Let Me go, for the day breaks;” but you must follow Jacob’s example and say, “I will not let You go,” and you need not add, “except You bless me,” but you may say, “I will not let you go at all; I mean to hold to You on and on and on, by day and night; You shall not leave me.” You will be indeed blessed if you can pray the prayer of our text in this sense: “O visit me with Your salvation.”

III. Now, with great brevity, I turn to a third thing in my text and that is, **PERSONALITY**: “O visit me with Your salvation.” We ought to pray for one another; we must pray for the peace and prosperity of the whole Church of Christ; but there are times when it will be well that all our desire should run in this direction, and that we should cry to the Lord, “O visit me with Your salvation.”

This petition of the psalmist shows *great necessity*. It is as if he had said, “Lord, I need You more than any others do; therefore, do visit me. Unless you do come to me, I shall be a wretch undone forever. ‘O visit me with Your salvation.’” It is always unwise to make your necessity appear little. It is so great

that you never can exaggerate it; take care that you do not set it in a diminished form. When you come before God, do not try to make yourself out to be a little sinner. You are not likely to make yourself appear more guilty than you are; but your highest wisdom is to state your case to the Lord in all its blackness and its badness, and then to cry to Him, “O visit *me* with Your salvation.”

It seems to me that this personality of the prayer also betokens *great unworthiness*, as if the psalmist felt that the Lord might go and visit others, and perhaps find some reason for so doing; but, as for him, he must cry, and cry mightily, too, or else he would be passed by, for he felt himself so unworthy: “O Lord, visit me; visit me to save me. If ever a soul needed saving, I am that one. If ever there was a sinner near despair, I am that sinner. Lord, come and visit me with Your salvation.”

The prayer also reveals *great concentration of desire*: “O visit me with Your salvation.” It seems to me as if the psalmist put all his thoughts, all his desires, yes, and his very life into that prayer. Let us imitate him in this earnestness and concentration. Where are you, my dear friend?—for I feel certain that there is somebody present who can pray this prayer: “O visit *me*.” If you are growing old, well may you say, “O visit *me*.” If you are feeling ill—if the doctor tells you that there is something amiss with that heart of yours—you may well pray, “O visit *me*.” Or do you feel yourself very weak and feeble in spirit? Well, then, do not hesitate to make your prayer tonight a personal one; there is nothing selfish in crying, with the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” If anybody says that it is selfish to pray for yourself so much, just ask him what he would do if he were drowning? Does anybody say that it is selfish for him to strike out and try to swim, or selfish to seize the lifebuoy that is thrown to him? If you were in a fire, and likely to be burned to death, would anybody call you selfish because you looked for the fire escape, and climbed on it as soon as it touched your window? And when your very soul is in danger, it is a hallowed selfishness to seek first its salvation. If your own soul is lost, what can you do for the salvation of other people? If you perish, what benefit can you be to your fellow men? Truly, this is a holy charity which ought to begin at home, and I do not believe that any man really cares for the souls of others, which does not first and foremost care about his own soul. If you do not pray, “O visit me with Your salvation,” I am sure that you do not pray, “O visit my wife with Your salvation. O visit my children with Your salvation.” Therefore, keep to this personal prayer till it is answered, and when it is, then pray for all others as earnestly as you have prayed for yourself.

IV. And now to finish, notice one thing more in this text, and that is, A SPECIALTY: “O visit me with *Your* salvation”—the kind of salvation he has been describing in this Psalm, the salvation worked by omnipotent grace, the salvation of enduring love.

Dear friends, I have heard of a good many so-called salvations in my time. I heard, some time ago, of a woman who said that she had been saved already six times, and it had not done her much good. She had been to different revival meetings, and joined various societies that make a great row, and call it salvation, and in that way she had been “saved” six times, and she did not know that she was any better. No, and you may be “saved” in such a fashion as that six thousand times, and be none the better, for that is not God’s salvation.

The psalmist prayed, “O visit me with Your salvation,” and by that he meant *real salvation*, a radical change, a thorough work of grace. God’s salvation includes a perfect cleansing in the precious blood of Jesus, a supernatural work in renewing the heart, a resurrection work in raising the dead, and giving a new life. So, when you pray, “O visit me with *Your* salvation,” you ask the Lord to give you real salvation, not a sham.

This salvation is also *complete salvation*. It saves the man from the love of sin. It not merely saves him from getting drunk, from lying, from thieving, and from uncleanness; but it saves him within as well as without. It is a thorough renewal—a work of grace that takes effect upon every part of his nature. God grant that you and I may never be content with a salvation which is not the work of divine grace! You remember that it is said of Mr. Rowland Hill that he was met, somewhere about the New Cut, by a drunk who reeled up to him, and said, “Well, Mr. Hill, I am glad to see you, sir. I am one of your converts.” “Yes,” replied the good minister, “you may be one of my converts; if you had been one of the Lord’s converts, you would not be drunk.” There are too many of *our* converts about; we may find them everywhere except in heaven; but woe unto the man who is content with being the convert of his fellow man! What we want is a visitation from God Himself, and therefore we pray with the psalmist, “O visit me with *Your* salvation.”

Lastly, and chiefly, God’s salvation is *eternal salvation*. We hear, in various quarters, from time to time, about a salvation that is only temporary. I have been told, again and again, of men who are said to have been children of God one day, and children of the devil the next. Now, I believe that a temporary

salvation is a trumpety salvation and that it is neither worth preaching nor receiving; but God's salvation is both worth preaching and receiving, because it is everlasting salvation. A good old divine was once asked whether he believed in the final perseverance of the saints. "Well," said he, "I do not know much about that matter, but I firmly believe in the final perseverance of God, that where He has begun a good work He will carry it on until it is complete." To my mind, that truth includes the final perseverance of the saints; they persevere in the way of salvation because God keeps them in it. Does the Holy Spirit renew the heart of a man, and then is His work after all undone, so that the man goes back again to his unregenerate state? What is to become of him then? "Oh!" says someone, "he may be born again." What! A man to be born again, and again, and again? Is there anything in the Bible to warrant such teaching as that? I believe not. If the Holy Spirit's work in renewing the heart could ever be undone, then this text would come in: "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance"—for God's greatest work has been already worked upon them, and if it could fail, nothing more could be done for them. "But, beloved," says the apostle, after making this solemn declaration, "we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak." So, dear friends, if the Lord saves you, you are saved forever. If He has worked within you a work of grace, it will assuredly end in glory—

*"All needful grace will God bestow,
And crown that grace with glory too;
He gives us all things, and withholds
No real good from upright souls."*

"Lord, visit me with Your salvation." Others may have their own salvation of any sort or kind that they please, but do visit me with *Your* salvation; do take my case in hand, then the work will be done, well done, and done forever." Pray thus, dear friend, for yourself: "O visit *me* with *Your* salvation," and He will do so. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned." God lead you all to accept His great salvation even now, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 106.*

This Psalm relates the story of God's mercy to Israel, of the people's provocation of Jehovah, and of His great patience with them. It commences with an exhortation to praise the Lord.

Verse 1. *Praise you Jehovah.*

Or, "Hallelujah." I cannot help remarking here that this is one of the most sacred words in the whole Bible, and it ought always to be pronounced with the utmost reverence. I sometimes feel my blood chill when I hear of "hallelujah lasses" and "hallelujah bonnets." If those who use such expressions rightly understood the meaning of the word, they would not thus take the name of the Lord in vain.

1. *O give thanks unto Jehovah; for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.*

As long as you and I are sinners, this will be one of the sweetest notes in our song of thanksgiving unto Jehovah: "His mercy endures forever."

2. *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can show forth all His praise?*

Neither the angels nor the perfect spirits who day without night circle His throne rejoicing can show forth all Jehovah's praise.

3. *Blessed are they that keep judgement, and he that does righteousness at all times.*

There is great comfort in walking near to God; the way of peace, the way of blessing, is the way of righteousness; but, alas! My brethren, we do not always keep in that way as we should. The psalmist himself felt that he did not, therefore he prayed—

4. *Remember me, O LORD, with the favor that You bear unto Your people: O visit me with Your salvation;*

He felt that he needed God's grace in all its saving power.

5. *That I may see the good of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.*

He longs to get in among the people of God. He wants to share the favor which God bestows upon them—the free grace which He manifests to them. He wants to be included in their election, to rejoice in their gladness, and to glory in their inheritance.

6, 7. *We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt;—*

Very great wonders were worked there when God's time came to set His people free from their cruel bondage. There was a marvelous display of power on God's part; yet the psalmist had to say, "Our fathers understood not Your wonders in Egypt;"—

7. *They remembered not the multitude of Your mercies; but provoked Him at the sea, even at the Red Sea.*

They had hardly started out of Egypt before they provoked Jehovah. They had only just caught sight of the rolling waters of the Red Sea, when they began to murmur against God and against His servant, Moses.

8. *Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake,—*

Oh, is not that a grand word? Well might Jehovah say, "Not for Your sakes do I this, O house of Israel." He saved them for His own sake,—

8. *That He might make His mighty power to be known.*

Free Grace finds in itself, not in us, its own motive, and discovers its own reason for acting on our behalf. God's reason for mercy is found in His mercy.

9-13. *He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And He saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. Then believed they His words; they sang His praise. They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel.*

Ah, me! Even the divided sea is soon forgotten! Enemies walled up by water speedily pass from remembrance. "They soon forgot His works; they waited not for His counsel:"—

14, 15. *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.*

I do not know of anything more dreadful than that—to be fattened without, and to be starved within—to have everything that heart could wish for, and yet not to have the best thing that the heart ought to wish for. May God save us from that appearance of prosperity which is only a veiled desolation!

16. *They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.*

These two men had done everything for the children of Israel; they had been the instruments in the hand of God of innumerable blessings to them; yet they envied Moses and Aaron.

17, 18. *The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.*

Jehovah's mercy did not melt the people's hard hearts, so perhaps the fear of His judgment would. God tried both methods with them, as He has done with us, for sometimes He has been very gracious to us, and at other times He has chastened us very sorely. He has tried the kiss and He has tried the blow. Yet what happened in the case of Israel?

19-22. *They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass. They forgot God their Savior, which had done great things in Egypt; wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red Sea.*

What was to become of such a people, provoking Him again and again?

23. *Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach to turn away His wrath, lest He should destroy them.*

How often has our blessed Mediator, who is far greater than Moses, stood before the Lord in the breach! How often has the great Husbandman said, concerning the fruitless tree, "Cut it down; why cumberest it the ground?" And then that Divine Dresser of the vineyard has pleaded, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it." And here we are, still spared and still blessed, through the intercession of God's chosen Mediator.

24. *Yes, they despised the pleasant land,—*

They said that the Canaan towards which they were traveling was not worth the trouble of getting to it: "They despised the pleasant land,"—

24-28. *They believed not His word: but murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD. Therefore He lifted up His hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness: to over-*

throw their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. They joined themselves also unto Baal-Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

They began to study necromancy and spiritualism, and to join in the abominations of the worship of Baal.

29. *Thus they provoked Him to anger with their inventions: and the plague broke in upon them.*

Now notice how something always happened to spare them from the destruction which they deserved.

30, 31. *Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations forevermore.*

Yet they still went on sinning against the Most High.

32, 33. *They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that he spoke unadvisedly with his lips.*

Does it not seem remarkable that Moses, the true servant of God, was not spared from punishment when it was but a word that He spoke unadvisedly, yet still the mercy of God was continued to that provoking generation? Ah! That is always the way with our jealous God; those whom He loves best will be sure to feel His chastising rod, whatever happens to others.

At last the Israelites reached Canaan, they entered into the land that flowed with milk and honey; did that change their character? No; not in the least.

34-38. *They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.*

Just think how low they had sunk; God's own people had come down to this, that, they actually offered their own children in sacrifice to Moloch.

39-43. *Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against His people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance. And He gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand. Many times did He deliver them;—*

You would not have expected to find such a sentence as that here; yet there it stands. Notwithstanding all that these people did, “many times did He deliver them;”—

43-45. *But they provoked Him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless He regarded their affliction, when He heard their cry: and He remembered His covenant, and repented according to the multitude of His mercies.*

Was there ever so strange a story as this—a story of provocation continued almost beyond belief, and yet of mercy which would not be overcome—of persevering love that would not turn aside?

46-48. *He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Your holy name, and to triumph in Your praise. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise you the LORD.*

So the Psalm ends upon its keynote—“Hallelujah”—“Praise You Jehovah.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—734, 125, 821.

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