

OPEN PRAISE AND PUBLIC CONFESSION

NO. 2604

A SERMON

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 8, 1899.

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1883.

“I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You. I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and for Your truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name. In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.”

Psalm 138:1-3.

IT is a very grievous thing, to one who worships the only living and true God, to see others engaged in idolatrous worship. It stirs one's indignation to see a man worship—not his own hands, but what is even worse than that—the thing which he has made with his own hands and which must, therefore, be inferior to himself. As the righteous soul of Lot in Sodom was vexed with the filthy conversation of the inhabitants of that guilty city, so the righteous soul of David was vexed when he saw the many lords and gods before whom his neighbors were bowing down and in like manner, as long as we are in this world, we shall often be troubled through seeing how others turn aside from the living God, how they forget His truth, set up thoughts of their own in the place of the thoughts of God, and dishonor the Holy Scripture by thinking that their own vain ideas can equal, if not even excel, the revelation of God.

David, in this matter, becomes a guide to us. What he did in the presence of the idols of the heathen is to a great extent what we should do in the presence of the false systems of religion and the errors which are all around us. You, dear friends, cannot love the right if you do not hate the wrong. I would not give a penny for your love to the truth if it is not accompanied with a hearty hatred of error. I have taken this text as an instruction to myself as well as to you. What David did with all his heart, as a man who loved Jehovah, the only true God, that we also should do if, indeed, we love the Lord Jesus Christ and all the glorious truths which cluster around His glorious deity and His atoning sacrifice.

I. How, then, will we act? We will try to act exactly as David did, and if we do so, we shall, first of all, SING WITH WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE. “I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.” This seems a very singular thing to do. Here is a man indignant with these false gods, one would suppose that he would begin to argue on behalf of the true God, that he would raise a controversy on behalf of Jehovah, but he does nothing of the kind. At least, this is not the first thing that he does, but he begins to praise God and to sing that praise aloud. “I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.”

This was a very singular method of procedure, yet a very wise one, for, first, *his song would openly show his contempt for the false gods.* What does it matter to him what these idols really are? Men call them gods, so, for the moment, he calls them gods, too. And he begins to sing, not to them, but to his own God, the only living and true God. He pitches the tune, he lifts up the strain, he sings a psalm, and this is the theme of his music, “Glorious are You, O Jehovah.” And he does this in the very presence of the idol gods and their worshippers, as much as to say, “I take so little notice of them all that I will not even be disturbed about them. I was singing the praises of Jehovah and I shall go on singing them. I was full of holy joy and I intend still to be so. Those gods of the heathen are nothing, but our God made the heavens. Therefore, I will not rob Him of His glory or deprive Him of His full revenue of praise, by turning aside even for a single moment to pay any attention to these mere blocks of wood and stone.” It was a wise way of acting on the part of David and it was also a generous way, because he did not in words pour contempt upon the idols, but he showed his contempt for them by presenting his praise to Jehovah alone.

Let us do the same, beloved. Do not worry yourself about those who turn aside from the truth and run in their own crooked ways. Warn them as best you can, but remember David's advice on another occasion, “Fret not yourself because of evildoers.” You have better work to do than to fret about them.

Begin to praise your God and go on praising Him. Sing as many songs unto Him as ever you did and let your heart be just as glad as ever it can be. “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” And if the Lord laughs, let us not cry. If He treats them with such calm contempt, let us do the same and lift up our voices again and again unto Him whose mercy endures forever, and whose throne is so established that all the leaguered hosts of earth and hell cannot shake it for a single moment. “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns.” “The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever.” Therefore, let no man’s heart fail him, but let all who love the Lord show their contempt for His adversaries by pouring out their joyful adoration unto the Most High.

I like David’s plan of dealing with the idols, by continuing his wholehearted praise to God, because, next, *it would evince his strong faith in the true God*. I cannot tell any better way by which he could have shown his confidence in Jehovah. He had already poured contempt upon the false gods, but now his calm, happy singing proves his reverence for the Most High and makes men see that if they doubt, he does not. If they rail, he knows how vain their railing is. It proves to them that there is at least one man who has true faith in God, for he stands like a solid rock amid the surging sea. He is not moved. No, he is not affected enough to postpone his music, but he keeps on singing and singing the more loudly, the more the sea roars and the fullness thereof. The more shrill the noise of the tumultuous idolaters, the more does he proclaim aloud his holy joy and his unshaken confidence in his God. True faith is one of the best of sermons. He who is—

**“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,
Confident of victory,”**

has, by that trustful calmness, done more to inspire the timid with confidence than if he were the most eloquent of men who had with great vehemence urged them to trust in God. Thank God, faith, as well as unbelief, is contagious and if—

**“One sickly sheep infects the flock,
And poisons all the rest”—**

there is another side to that truth. One true believer tends to strengthen all the rest and to make them “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” He who can sing as he goes to battle, if he is a leader, is likely to lead a tribe of heroes in his train. He who can sing in the time of shipwreck is likely to put courage into everyone of the crew, so that they do their best for the laboring vessel and if it is possible, bring her safely into the haven. Sing, then, brother. Sing, my sister, for this will prove your childlike confidence in God, your implicit reliance upon Him.

That is a second commendation of David’s mode of action.

The next is that by continuing to praise Jehovah in the presence of the idols, *he declared his all-absorbing zeal for God’s glory*. He did not need to stand up and say, “I love the Lord with all my heart.” Hear him sing, “I will praise You with my whole heart.” See what force he puts into every note. Listen to his jubilant song. You can tell by the very sound of his voice that his praise of Jehovah comes up from his heart and from his whole heart. He is enthusiastic, he is full of confidence. If he had a doubt concerning Jehovah, he would not sing like that, and if he were lukewarm, he would not sing like that. But, as he is singing with his whole heart, those who are opposed to him say to themselves, “It is no use to trouble ourselves about that man. We shall never turn him from the faith.” They will sheer off, one by one, knowing that it is no use to attack such a firm believer. He who praises God with his whole heart is like a man on fire—he is terrible to the adversaries of the Most High. When the great Spanish Armada was ready to swoop down upon the English coast, our brave Admiral Drake took some of his small ships and placed them where the wind would carry them right among the Spanish fleet. He filled the vessels with combustible material and set them afire. Then he had no need to go himself, for the wind just took the fire-ships and drifted them up against the Spanish galleons that floated high out of the water, and exposed a vast surface to the air, and one and another of the big unwieldy monsters were soon in a blaze and a great victory was won without a blow being struck.

So, I like to get a red-hot Christian full of music and praise unto Jehovah and just let him go, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, right into the middle of the adversaries of the truth. They cannot make him out. They do not know how to handle a man on fire. If he would try to argue with them, they might overwhelm him with their logic. If he would fire a shot at them, they could shoot back at him, but he does nothing of the kind. He simply blazes and burns to the glory of God, and that is a most effective mode of warfare with the Lord’s enemies. Suppose, my brethren, that you were to have your hearts all on fire, burning and glowing with the intense conviction that the gospel is true, and that the God of

heaven and earth is the one living and true God, and that the atoning blood of the divine Savior is the one hope of guilty sinners, you might do grand work for God then. Tolerate no doubt in your spirit. Believe right up to the hilt with unstaggering confidence and then sing out your praises of Jehovah with a joyful confidence. Those who hate the truth will not know what to make of you. They will probably get out of your way as quickly as possible, but if they do not, then perhaps you will set them also on fire and it may be, by the grace of God, that you will burn up some of their errors and put them into a terrible state of confusion and anxiety if they still resolve to fight against the Lord of hosts.

It was a wise plan, this of David, of getting in among the heathen gods and singing to the praise of Jehovah. They could not understand him, but they were affected by his singing all the same. If he could have walked through any temple where all the idol gods could have been gathered together, and if he could have sung there the words of our grand Doxology—

***“Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, you heavenly host,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”—***

I should not have wondered if old Dagon had come tumbling down to the ground and if Chemosh, and Milcom, and Baal, and Ashtaroth and all those other abominations of the heathen had fallen prone upon the earth at the sound of this glorious song of praise unto Jehovah. Therefore, if we would overthrow the idols of our own day, let us imitate this wise mode of action on the part of the psalmist.

I believe, also, that David was quite right in singing with all his heart before the idol gods because *it would shield him from all danger wherever he went*. To walk among the wicked is a dangerous exercise. It is as though a man had to go into infected air, or traverse the wards of a leper hospital. He is himself apt to become affected by the poisonous atmosphere and to become infected with the deadly malady. But, oh, if you keep on, with all your heart, praising God all the day, you may go with confidence wherever duty calls you! Ah! you might go between the jaws of death itself and yet suffer no injury, for an atmosphere of praise would be the best deodorizer and disinfectant wherever you might be bidden by the Lord to go. As long as you kept on praising God and magnifying His holy name, no adversary could do you any harm. Remember how the hosts of Jehoshaphat triumphed in the valley of Berachah when they began to sing praises unto God. Then were their adversaries routed. Remember also how Paul and Silas could not be held in bonds when, at midnight, they sang praises unto God. Then the prison rocked, the chains were broken, and the doors flew open, for there must be liberty where men can sing unto Jehovah. Where wholehearted songsters adore the Most High continually, the prisoners' fetters snap and the foundations of dungeons are moved. Therefore, dear friends, mind that you keep up the spirit of praise.

I used to know, years ago, a poor old laboring man. He was a Methodist of the good old-fashioned school. I never met him or spoke with him without finding that, wherever he was, he was always singing. He was up in the morning at half-past five to get out to his farm work and he sang while he was dressing. He sang as he pulled on his corduroys. He sang as he put on his smock. He sang as he walked downstairs, he sang as he tramped off down the street and he sang all day as he was at his work. He did not keep on singing while I was preaching, but he seemed almost as if he wanted to do that. And every now and then, he would burst out with, “Hallelujah.” or “Praise the Lord.” He was so full of thanksgiving to God that he was obliged to give expression to his feelings sometimes even when it would have been more proper if he had kept quiet. He was one of the holiest men I ever knew and I used to account very much for his simple gentleness, integrity, and happiness by the habit he had acquired of constantly singing the praises of God. He worked with some men who were in the habit of swearing, but he kept on singing and after a time, they began to think that it was not the right thing for them to swear. He went among men who drank, but he never left off singing and somehow, even among such men, there was a kind of respect for him. It was so with all who knew him. His employer tried to put him where he would have easier tasks than others as he grew old and everybody loved him.

I always wished that he had been a Baptist—that would have been just the finishing touch to make him perfect—and then we would have lost him, for all perfect people go to heaven at once. But if I mentioned that subject to him—and sometimes I did—it was not long before he began to sing and he asked me to join him, which I gladly did. His was a happy way of living. I wish that I and all of you could rise to it. Perhaps somebody says, “That good man was a very happy, gracious soul, but still he was very childish.” Perhaps so, but I would like to be just as he was. I do not speak of him as having been *childish*, but *child-like*, ever praising God like a happy child who is always singing. You know, dear friends, you can keep on praising the Lord whatever else you may be doing. You can sit down in your house with the needle in your hand, or go abroad into the garden with the hoe, and still be praising God. We do not have half enough of praise, brothers and sisters. I am sure the devil would be more angry with us if

we would begin to praise God more, and we certainly are under no obligations to him to keep from irritating his temper, so let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live and defy the devil to do his worst. As he likes neither music nor song in praise of Jehovah, let him have plenty of them both. Let us continually do as David declared that he would, “I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods (or before the devils, before the kings, or before the beggars, before the drunkards, before the swearers, before anybody and everybody) will I sing praise unto You.”

That, then, was the first part of David’s action—singing unto Jehovah with whole-hearted praise.

II. The second thing that David did was to **WORSHIP BY THE DESPISED RULE**. Even in the presence of those who set up their idol gods and their false systems, he declared to Jehovah, “I will worship toward Your holy temple.”

Some said, “Worship this way.” Others said, “Worship that way.” In the present day, some say that the Old Testament is not inspired, that there is much that is very doubtful in the five books of Moses. Some are going to worship in one way, some in another way of their own inventing, but if we are of David’s mind, we shall say to the Lord, “I will worship toward Your holy temple.” Let every other man have his own way of worshipping if he will, but brethren, as for me, I say to the Lord, with David, “I will worship toward Your holy temple.”

I admire this declaration, first, because *it is a quiet way of ignoring all will-worship*. “Oh!” says one, “I am resolved to worship God with all kinds of show, ceremony, and flowers, and millinery.” Another says, “I intend to worship God out in the fields and never to mingle with His people at all.” Very well, you go your own ways, but I ignore both of your ways, for my way is to worship toward God’s holy temple—that is the way in which the apostles and the early Christians worshipped Christ, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is—the way in which they cheered their own hearts and the hearts of their fellow believers, with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—the way in which they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance—the way in which they gathered around the table of their Lord to remember His great love to them. You may go and set up whatever novelty you like, but I shall keep to that—

“Good old way, by our fathers trod”—

and I trust that every true child of God will make this personal declaration to the Lord, “I will worship toward Your holy temple.”

What did David mean by that expression, “Your holy temple”? Well, the temple, like the tabernacle in the wilderness, was *typical of the adorable person of our Lord Jesus Christ*. It was not that the tent in the wilderness or the temple on Mount Zion was anything of itself, but these were the places where God was especially pleased to reveal Himself. Now, today the temple of Jehovah is the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ which He Himself expressly called “the temple.” Let others worship saints and angels, if they will, but we will worship the incarnate Christ and Him alone. Let others worship the man and think him nothing more than man, but we shall worship Christ as God. I was delighted to sing with you, a little while ago—

*“Jesus, my God! I know His name,
His name is all my trust.
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.”*

Jesus is not only my Savior, but He is also my God. And my prayers are to be presented to the Father through Him and to come up unto the Most High through the person of the God-man, the Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. I will worship toward that shrine, the person of the Son of God and God the Son.

But the temple was also *the place of sacrifice* and we shall only praise God aright as we trust to the one great sacrifice. Oh, how many, nowadays, deny the great truth of vicarious suffering, the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, saying that He is our Exemplar, but not the Maker of propitiation and reconciliation by His blood. Well, do not trouble your head about these people and begin to discuss with them, but say, “As for me, ‘I will worship toward Your holy temple.’ I have not any hope of my prayers speeding except through the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. I can have no assurance of being accepted by God unless I am ‘accepted in the Beloved.’ So I will offer no prayer but that which goes to God by the crimson road of the substitutionary death of Christ. ‘I will worship toward Your holy temple.’” Keep to that declaration with unshaken firmness of resolve and it will be the best answer that you can give to the idols, or to the devils, or to everyone else who may oppose the Most High.

III. Now notice, thirdly, what David did. He went on from singing and worshipping to **PRAISE THE QUESTIONED ATTRIBUTES**—the very attributes which are being questioned in this present age. “I will praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and for Your truth.”

The true believer should praise God, first, for His lovingkindness and for that lovingkindness in its universality. Some say that the God whom we preach cannot be a God of love because He banishes unbelievers into endless misery. If they refuse His Son, He gives them no hope that there can be any hereafter for them except that of eternal banishment from His presence and from the glory of His power. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." And there are some preachers who cover up and try to hide this solemn truth, or speak as if they had velvet in their mouths when they come to deal with it. I shall not do so. By God's grace, I never shall do so. There is enough love in God to satisfy me and I shall not want to make another god in order that I may believe in his lovingkindness. My heart delights to praise the very Jehovah of whom the psalmist sings, "To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever."

I am quite certain that He never executes judgment with a severity which will be questioned by right minds. And in the Last Great Day, when the whole of this dispensation is wound up, it will be seen that "God is love." We may not be able to see it now. He may seem to be, as David says in another Psalm, "terrible out of His holy places." Jehovah Himself declares that He is a jealous God who will by no means clear the guilty and there are many who quibble at that, but the Day shall declare it. When the veil is rolled up, to the astonishment of all God's creatures, it will be seen that He did the best, the wisest and the kindest thing which, all things considered, could have been done and therefore though I cannot yet understand all His dealings with the sons of men, yet I believe that they are right and I will praise His name for His lovingkindness.

There is a special note here which bids us think of *God's lovingkindness in its specialty*. Many quibble at this great truth of God which seems to me to be self-evident, that Christ should choose His own spouse. They want to have entrusted to them the selection of a bride for Him. They want God to be lacking to the free will of man and that none of His purposes should be carried out unless man permits it. Their notion is that the great Creator must sit and wait till He gets His creature's permission to be gracious. But as for us, beloved, we adore the glorious truth of His electing love. We admire the sovereignty of His grace and we delight to know that He does as He wills among the inhabitants of this lower world, and deals out His mercy, as Paul puts it, "according to the good pleasure of His will." Instead of disputing with idols or devils, we begin to sing with all our heart concerning the special love of God to His chosen and the favor which He bears towards them that put their trust in Him. We cannot employ our time to better purpose—to argue and debate might be a waste of effort and might depress our own spirit, but to bless the name of the Lord will do us good and will also be to His honor and glory.

I find that the original bears another meaning, "I will praise Your name *for Your grace*, and for Your truth." Is it not a blessed thing to have that word, "grace," always in the mouth? "Grace." Is it not one of the sweetest words that God ever permitted human lips to utter? And we often say, "*Free grace*," even if some tell us that is tautology. If one tap of the hammer will not suffice, we will give two. If men do not understand what "grace," means, we will call it, "free grace" and we will bless and praise the name of the Lord that we have two such words in the language as, "free grace."

The other attribute for which David said that he would praise the name of the Lord is, *God's truth*. Our heart may well be sad as we see how men are pecking at God's truth. One part of the Bible is given up by one and another part is rejected by another. One of our wise men says, "I have given up all the Old Testament and a large part of the New." Well, sir, you might just as well give it all up, because you evidently have no part nor lot in it, or else you would not talk like that. Those gentlemen who want to mend the Bible really need mending themselves. That is where the mischief lies in most cases. If they were savingly converted by the grace of God, they would love every letter of the Book, from Genesis to Revelation, and find it food to their souls. But they do not know the inner meaning of it and therefore they despise the Scripture as being but husks to them, and I greatly fear that is all that it is to many of them. But as for us, we shall glory in God's truth—in the historic accuracy of every word of this blessed old Bible. In the absolute truth of everything that is recorded here. In the certainty of the fulfillment of every promise and every threat that is in this Book, and what is more, in the absolute correctness of every unfulfilled prophecy as being just as certain as certainty itself. There is where we mean to stand.

We believe in plenary verbal inspiration, with all its difficulties, for there are not half as many difficulties in that doctrine as there are in any other kind of inspiration that men may imagine. If this Book is not the real solid foundation of our religion, what have we to build upon? If God has spoken a lie, where are we, brethren? And if this Book, for which the martyrs bled and which sustained our sires in prison

and on their deathbeds—if this precious Book, which is today hugged to the heart of many a dying saint, is to be rent away from us, it shall not go without a struggle in which we will, if necessary, sacrifice even our lives. We will never give up the Bible. We will love it in life and in death, and we will still believe that it is the glorious and perfect revelation, as far as our imperfect minds can discern it, of the lovingkindness and truth of God, and for it we will praise and bless His holy name. This is what David said he would do, and I recommend all tried saints to do the same.

IV. Now, fourthly, there was another thing which David meant to do and that was to REVERENCE GOD'S WORD TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE. He puts it thus. "You have magnified Your Word above all Your name." My text is such a great one that I need half-a-dozen nights to discuss it, so I can only give you hints of what I would say if I had the time.

God's name, dear friends, is revealed in a measure in nature. In providence that name may be spelt out, but David tells us here that the Lord has magnified His Word above all His name. That is to say that revelation is made by God to be infinitely superior to creation and to providence as a revealing of Himself, for, first, *it is clearer*. If a man paints grand pictures, even if I never saw the man, I know a little about him when I see his paintings. Yes, but if he writes me a letter and in that letter tells me what is in his very heart, I know more about him by his words than I do by his works. And there is more of God in some passages of the Bible than in the whole universe besides. If science could be all known, it would not contain as much real light as there is in a single verse of Scripture, for the best light is in the Word. There is other light, too, but it is only moonlight as compared with the sunlight. God has magnified His Word, for its clearness, above every other method of revealing His name or character.

It is not only clearer, but it is also *surer*. If we look into God's works, one man sees one thing and another man sees another, but if you look into God's Word and you have a childlike spirit, you will see what another childlike-spirited man sees. If you are God's child, you will see what others of God's children see there, and in the great fundamental truths discoverable in His Word, the saints are almost entirely agreed. The whole universe is not big enough to mirror God in all His glory. If He looks into the great and wide sea that He has made, the glass is too small to reflect more than a part of His glory. Suppose that God should reveal Himself fully in nature? It would soon be seen that the axles of the wheel would be all too weak to sustain the weight of Deity. It is only revelation that can manifest Him truly to us.

Think again—God's Word is *more lasting* than His other works. The revelation of God in nature is not unique. If He has made one world, He can make another. If He has made one universe, He can make fifty universes, but after having given us one complete revelation of His will, He will never give another—that one stands alone. What God has made known in the book of nature will all pass away. There will come a day when the elements themselves shall be dissolved with fervent heat and like a worn-out vesture, all this material creation shall be put away. But, "the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you," so that God magnifies His Word by making it everlasting. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

Does not God magnify His Word in your hearts, dear friends? You have sometimes been in the fields on the Sabbath and a sweet sense of rest has stolen over you. In the time of harvest, or on a bright morning when the sun has risen, you have been overwhelmed with a sense of the glory of God. But still, that sweet feeling never comes to the heart so as to affect its secret springs like a passage out of Scripture. A promise from God will cast more light into your soul than all the beauties of sea and land. I do not for a moment depreciate the wondrous glory of God in all His works, but still, I do say God is seen better in His Word than in all His works besides, and He has magnified His Word above all His name. They say that we ought to alter Scripture because scientists have found out something or other. Yes, I know all about that kind of talk. Scientists found out many things years ago and within ten years somebody else rose up and found out that they were all wrong. The history of so-called philosophy is the history of fools. And the philosophers of this day are no more right than those of fifty years ago. The men are coming to the front who will confute the positive assertions of the present and when they have made their own assertions, and made their bow, another set of wise men will be coming after them to confound them. They are all as the grass that withers, but "the Word of the Lord endures forever." It has been tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times and here it remains, the pure refined metal still, and in this will we glory and not be ashamed.

V. Lastly, David was going to PROVE ALL BY HIS OWN EXPERIENCE. A bit of experience is the best thing with which to close up my discourse. "In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul."

Ah, brethren, men say that facts are stubborn things, and so they are, and when a man once gets a fact with regard to the religion of Jesus Christ, he becomes a stubborn man. The man who is in the habit

of praying to God and who is in the habit of having answers to his prayers, the man who lives a life of prayer and consequently who is enriched by innumerable mercies, says to those who deny the efficacy of prayer, “You may say what you like, but you cannot trouble us about this matter, because I am daily testing and daily proving in my own experience what prayer can accomplish.” “Well,” they say, “you did not get out of the trouble. You prayed, but you did not escape from it.” That is quite true, I did not, but God strengthened me with strength in my soul and it is a grand thing when the mind becomes calm, when the soul grows strong, when courage increases, when confidence comes, when deep peace, and quiet restfulness flow into the soul. All that is a blessed answer to prayer, and as long as God gives us that, we cannot desert His standard, or deny His faithfulness and His truth. Let those who will, go and leave the snows of Lebanon, and the pure flowing river of God for the broken cisterns that can hold no water, or for the muddy waters of Egypt—but we cannot, we dare not, we will not. God helping us, we will stand fast in our belief in the power of prayer. We have tried it, we have proved it, and we are not to be shaken from our confidence in its efficacy. The Lord give to everyone of you who do not, at present know it, to prove it yourselves, to try it to your heart’s joy and satisfaction, and you also shall stand fast in your confidence in Him even to the end! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:
PSALM 138.**

Verse 1. *I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.*

“Gods or no gods, whatever they may be, ‘I will praise You with my whole heart.’ I will not be ashamed to declare my confidence in Jehovah, whoever may listen to me.”

2. *I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name for Your lovingkindness and for Your truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.*

Now was his time to speak. The gods of the heathen had their worshippers. Then should Jehovah be deserted by His loyal subjects? “No,” says David, “I will worship You, and I will praise You, whoever may oppose me.”

3. *In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.*

What worshipper of idols could ever say that of his god? “Ears have they,” but they hear not the cries of their worshippers. “Hands have they,” but they cannot deliver those who cry to them. “Feet have they,” but they cannot come to the help of their votaries. But David declares that God had heard him in the day of his trouble and strengthened him with strength in his soul.

4. *All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the words of Your mouth.*

He felt that he had had such good things to say concerning God, such blessed words of God to make known, that even the kings of the earth, when they began to listen to him, would become attentive and would even become converts and begin to praise Jehovah with him.

5. *Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.*

Think of that—kings singing in the ways of the Lord. Crowned princes becoming choristers in God’s service. Someone has said that there are few in heaven who wore crowns on earth. And I am afraid it is true that of all who are crowned on earth, few ever get to that land where all are kings and priests unto God. To have a crown on earth and a crown above is a rare thing. But David says that these kings “shall sing in the ways of Jehovah: for great is the glory of Jehovah,” and they shall be overpowered by that glory—melted, subdued, wooed, won, converted by its power.

6, 7. *Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.*

He was a king, yet he expected trouble. And do you complain when it comes to your cottage, after it had been to David’s palace? “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.”

7. *You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me.*

He expected, first, to be revived, and afterwards to be protected. He believed that God would stretch out His hand, as men do when they make a supreme effort, and put forth all their force, “You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies.” David also expected ultimate preservation, “‘Your right hand shall save me.’ You will do it dexterously, readily, gladly, will You do it. ‘Your right hand shall save me.’”

8. *The LORD will perfect that which concerns me.*

“All that has to do with me—my business, my family, my work, my temporal, and my eternal interests—‘that which concerns me,’ and that which troubles me, moves my heart with the deepest concern, Jehovah will perfect.”

8. *Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.*

And He will not do it. He will carry on unto completion the work which He has begun, blessed be His holy name!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—138, 670, 324.

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