

ROYAL EMBLEMS FOR LOYAL SUBJECTS NO. 2947

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*“And He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds;
as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.”*
2 Samuel 23:4.

EASTERN despots fleece their subjects to an enormous extent. Even at the present day, one would hardly wish to be subjected to the demands of an Oriental governments; but, in David’s time, a bad king was a continual pestilence, plague, and famine—a bane to the lives of his subjects, who were under his caprice; and plunder of their fields, which he perpetually swept clean to enrich himself with the produce thereof. Hence, a good king was a *rara avis* in those days, and could never be too highly prized. As soon as he mounted the throne, his subjects began to feel the beneficent influence of his sway. He was to them “as when the sun rises.” The confusion which had existed under weak governors gave place to settled order, while the rapacity which had continually emptied the coffers of the rich, and filched the earnings of the poor, gave place to a regular system of assessment, and men knew how to go about their business with some degree of certainty. It was to them “a morning without clouds.” Forthwith, trade began to flourish; persons who had emigrated to avoid the exactions of the tyrant came back again; fields which had fallen out of tillage, because they would not pay the farmer to cultivate them, began to be sown; and the new ruler was to the land as “clear shining after rain,” which makes the tender grass spring up out of the earth.

I fear we do not value, as we should, the constitutional government which it is our privilege as Britons to enjoy. Let us look where we may—we need not say to the East only, but to the West also—we would not wish to change the government under which we live so happily. Let us gratefully acknowledge to God His tender mercy, and His goodness, in sparing us alike from the refractory elements of a republic, and then prodigious exactions of a despotism, and for giving us to dwell in a quiet and peaceable kingdom, wherein we can sit, “every man under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, none making him afraid.” We may say, I am sure, of Her Majesty who is set over us in the order of providence, that, she has been “as the sun when he rises, as a morning without clouds.” Under her generous sway our country has been verdant. As “the earth by clear shining after rain” brings forth the green herb, so have our institutions fostered our trade and commerce by the goodwill and gracious providence of God.

But it is not my objective, at present, to enlarge upon the secular benefits that have fallen to our lot, though I should not think it unworthy of the Christian ministry to pursue a theme which calls for so much gratitude to God, and might foster so much good feeling among ourselves. We might make one another feel that there are vast mercies we enjoy which would be more esteemed if better known. Just as we speak of Christ’s unknown sufferings, so many of the bounties that we daily enjoy have become so common that we are oblivious of them; and, therefore, I might call them our unknown mercies. It well becomes us to lift up our voices and hearts to heaven, and thank God for the happy land, and for the happy age, in which the lines have fallen to us. Still, I take it that David was not so much speaking of mere political rulers as of Christ Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords, whose sway is always gracious and full of goodwill. May His kingdom come! “Surely, I come quickly,” He cries from heaven. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus,” respond those whose love inspires their worship. His kingdom is “as when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds;” and when it shall have been perfectly established upon the earth, all men shall know that the Son of David, whom they once rejected, is He by whom God would make all generations to be blessed forever and ever. May we, who have waited and watched for His glorious advent, live when He stands in the latter day upon the earth, and may we constitute a part of that glorious harvest, the fruit whereof shall

shake like the cedars of Lebanon! Thus we look for the day wherein the Lord shall come in the clouds of heaven.

I. David says of Christ, HE SHALL BE LIKE THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING, WHEN THE SUN RISES. This He is as King, already, in His Church, and as the rightful Monarch in the individual heart of the believer. Whenever Christ comes into a soul, it is “as the light of the morning, when the sun rises.”

The light of the morning is joyous. Then all the birds begin to sing, and the earth, which is silent at night, save when its stillness is disturbed by stormy winds, or by wild beasts, or by riotous drunken people, becomes vocal with songs from many mouths; so, when Christ comes into the heart, the tuneful notes of the singing birds are heard, and the voice of the turtle dove welcomes the gladsome season. Where darkness had brooded before, the sunlight of Christ brings mirth and blessed rejoicing. Oh, what streamers there are in the town of Mansoul when Prince Emmanuel rides through! Happy day, happy day, when Jesus comes into the heart! Save the day when we shall be with Him where He is, I suppose there is no day that is comparable to the first one, when we behold Christ, and see Him as our Savior and our King.

The rising of the sun is joyous; and, besides that, *it is comforting and consoling* to those who have been suffering from ills which night aggravates. “Would God ’twere morning!” has been the cry of many a languishing one tossing on his couch. “Would God ’twere morning!” may be the cry of many a heart that is troubled exceedingly with the guilt of sin. Ah, let the morning come; let the watchman say, “The morning comes;” let the day dawn, and the day-star appear in our hearts, and there is “the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” Joy to cheer and comfort the disconsolate Christ brings, for He is as the rising of the sun.

And *how glorious is the sun when from his pavilion it looks forth at morn!* Job describes the sunrise as being the stamping of the earth with a seal; as if, when in darkness, the earth were like a lump of clay that is pervious; then, as it is turned to the light, it begins to receive the impress of divine wisdom; mountain and vale all stream with it, till impressed on its surface we begin to perceive the glorious works of God. So, when Christ rises upon the heart, what a glorious transformation is worked! Where there has been no love, no faith, no peace, no joy, none of the blessed fruits of the Spirit, no sooner does Christ come than we perceive all the graces in blossom; yes, they soon become fragrant and blooming, for we are made complete in Him. The advent of Christ brings to the heart celestial beauty; faith in Him decks us with ornaments, and clothes us as with royal apparel. Better garments than Dives had, though he wore scarlet and fine linen, does Christ give to His people when He comes to them; and better fare than Dives had, though he fared sumptuously every day, does Jesus bestow upon His saints when He shines into their hearts. Oh, the glory of the sunrise of the Savior on the darkness of the human soul! If a man might rise every morning of the year to look at the rising sun, and yet never be tired of it, because of the sublimity of the spectacle, I think a man might consider his own conversion every hour in the day, and every day of his life, and yet never be wearied with the thrice-heavenly spectacle of Christ arising over the mountains of his guilt, to banish the dense darkness of his despair.

As the sunrise is thus joyous, and comforting, and glorious, let us remember *how unparalleled it is*—unparalleled because divine. By no method of illumination can we manufacture such a light as the sun exhibits by his simple rising. O you priests, you come, with your incantations and mysteries, to make light in men’s hearts, and sometimes you strike a spark that does but show the darkness; it dies too soon to be called “the light.” And you pile your deeds to heaven—your twigs of good works—you bring your vanload of superstitious observances, and vainly try to make an illumination; but before it begins to blaze, it dies out, and a handful of ashes alone remains to disappoint the expectant ones. But Christ arises, and with what boundless majesty He looks abroad! The joy, the peace, the comfort, the confidence, the full assurance, the blissful hope, which one ray of Christ’s light gives to the heart of man, is not to be equaled; no, scarcely to be compared with anything else. It is a joy that God only gives us, and, thank God, a joy which none can take away.

And, as this sunrise of Christ in our heart is divine, so likewise *it is irresistible*. No curtains can conceal the sun from the world when he wills to rise. No tyrant, by any law, can prevent the sun’s beams from gilding the cottage of the poor. Shine he must, and will. Like a giant he comes out of his chamber, and where is he that shall wrestle with him? Where are you, O man, who can take the bridle of the sun, and bid his coursers stay their race? Until they have climbed to heaven, and then gone down again to bathe their burning fetlocks in the Western Sea, they must, they will pursue their onward course, for none can

stay them, or say to their mighty driver, “What are you doing?” So, when Jesus comes into the heart—away, you fiend! Your time of flight is come! Away despair and doubt, and anything that can prevent the soul from having joy and peace! Thus the eternal mandate runs, “Let that man go free!” Thus says Jehovah to Pharaoh, “Let My people go;” and go they must and shall, for the time of their light and their liberty is come. Like the rising of the sun, when he springs forth “as a giant strong, and as a bridegroom joyful,” even so is Christ Jesus when He rises in the human heart.

The sunrise, moreover, is very much like the coming of Christ, *because of that which it involves*. Those rays of light, which first forced the darkness from the sky with golden prophecy of day, tell of flowers that shall open their cups to drink in the sunlight; they tell of streams that shall sparkle as they flow; they tell of the virgins that shall make merry, and the young men that shall rejoice, because the sun shines on them, and the darkness of night is fled. And so, the coming of Christ into the heart is a prophecy of years of sweet enjoyment—a prophecy of God’s goodness and long-suffering, let night reign, elsewhere, as it may—yes, and it is a prophecy of the fullness of the river of God, forever and ever, before the throne of God in heaven. Do you have Christ, poor soul? Christ is to you the promise of eternal happiness. You cannot be dark again if Christ has once shone on you. No night shall follow this blessed day; it is a day that lasts forever—

*“Does Jesus once upon you shine?
Then Jesus is forever thine.”*

Has Christ appeared to you? Do you trust Him now? Are you reposing only upon His finished work? Then the sun has risen upon you, and it shall go down no more forever. The everlasting Joshua bids the sun stand still, and today, and tomorrow, though the whole world revolve, that Sun of Righteousness abides to still shine on you with healing in His wings.

II. We must proceed to notice that the psalmist uses another figure: “EVEN A MORNING WITHOUT CLOUDS.”

Brethren, there are no clouds in Christ when He arises in a sinner’s heart. The clouds that mostly cover our sky come from Sinai, from the law, and from our own legal propensities, for we are always wishing to do something by which we may inherit eternal life; but there are none of these clouds in Christ.

There is, in Christ, *no cloud of angry rebuke for the past*. When Jesus receives the sinner, He chides not. “Neither do I condemn you,” is all that He has to say. I thought, when I came tremblingly to Him, that He would at least bring all my sins before me, and chide before He sealed my pardon with the kiss of mercy; but it was not so. The Father received the prodigal without a single word of rebuke. He did but say, “Take off his rags;” he did but command them to kill the fatted calf that they might make merry; not a word did He speak of his hungry look, or his filth, or of the far country, or even of the harlots with whom he had spent his substance. Christ receives the soul without rebuke, for He is “like a morning without clouds.”

And, as there is no cloud of anger, so there is *no cloud of exacting demand*. He does not ask the sinner to be anything, or to do anything. That were a cloud, indeed, if He did. A sinner by nature can do nothing, and can be nothing, except as grace shall make him be and do. If Christ did ask anything of you or me, if He did but ask repentance of us, unless He gave us that repentance, His salvation would be of no avail to us. But He asks nothing; all He bids us do is to take Him as everything, and be nothing ourselves. So, to the empty-handed sinner, He is such a full Christ that we may well say, “He is like a morning without clouds.”

And, as He is without cloud of demand, so He is *without cloud of falsehood*. I know that some say Christ may reject those who have put their trust in Him—that, after they are saved, they may yet fall from grace and perish. Surely, that would not be like a morning without clouds. I should see, in the distance, the tempest gathering that might ultimately destroy my spirit; but, no, if you trust Christ, He will surely save you, even to the end. If you put your soul into His hand, there is no fear that He will be false to the sacred charge; He will undertake to be Surety for your soul; He will bring you to His father’s face without hindrance, when the fullness of time is come. Trouble not yourselves, O you anxious ones, concerning the future! Does faith reach only to the present? Do you trust Christ only to save you today? I pray you take a larger sweep of confidence, and trust Him to save you to the end. If you do so, He will be better to you than your fears would suggest, or than your faith can conceive; to the end He will love you, and in the end He will bring you to be like Him and to be with Him where He is. Happy is that man who sees Christ “like

a morning without clouds.” They who see any clouds in Him make the clouds. The clouds are only in their vision; they are not in His person. The spots and defects are in themselves; they are not in His person, nor in His work. If you will only trust Him fully, simply, without any admixture of your own merit or confidence, you shall find Him to be equal to the brightest description—a morning without a single cloud.

III. But now, to the last figure. Upon this we intend to dwell at somewhat greater length. David says of Christ, the King, that His sway is like “CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN,” whereby the tender grass is made to spring out of the earth.

We all understand the metaphor. We have often seen how, after a very heavy shower of rain, and sometimes after a continued rainy season, when the sun shines, there is a delightful clearness and freshness in the air that we seldom perceive at other times. Perhaps the brightest weather is just when the wind has driven away the clouds, and the rain has ceased, and the sun peers forth from its chambers to look down upon the glad earth. Well, now, Christ is to His people just like that—exceedingly clear-shining when the rain is over.

Sorrow and sadness do not last forever. After the rain, there is to come the clear shining. Tried believer, after all your afflictions there remains a rest for the people of God; and if, just now, you are tried and vexed by some extraordinary trial, there is a clear shining coming to your soul when all this rain is over. Look to Christ, and you shall find where that clear shining is. The quiet contemplation you shall have of Him, when this time of rebuke is over, shall then be to you as the earth when the tempest has sobbed itself to sleep, when the clouds have torn themselves to rags, and the sun peers out, shooting forth virtue with its lustrous rays.

And while sorrows, like the floating clouds, last not forever, they do work together with the bliss, that, as the clear sunshine, follows afterwards, to produce good. It is not in the sorrow alone, perhaps, to bring forth good, any more than the rain might, by itself, bring forth the spring blade; but when the sorrow and the joy, when the affliction and the consolation, come together, then the joy of the heart is indeed benign. None bring forth much fruit for God but those who have been deeply plowed with affliction, and deluged with grief; but even they do not bring forth much fruit till they have had the joy of Christ’s presence after the affliction is over. Clear sinning after rain, produces an atmosphere good for the herbs, and the joy of the soul in the presence of the Lord, after a time of sorrow, makes it able to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Thus, *after times of great trouble*, Christ becomes to His people more specially and delightfully sweet than He has ever been before. I notice this in many instances. It is manifest in conversion. What happy, happy days were our first, young days in the faith! I cannot forget mine—I never shall. When talking with those who come to tell me what God has done for their souls, I notice the freshness upon their memory of every separate event on the day of their new birth; they can tell how Christ appeared to them, and how they looked unto Him, and were lightened. “I shall never forget that, sir, till I die,” says one; “I have a very bad memory, and I forget almost everything that is good; but that I shall never forget, for it was such a joyous season.” I know that many of you have had good days, but they have been like pieces of money that you received when children, very bright once; but they have been passed about, and worn in circulation, until they have lost the image and superscription which were once so bright to your eyes. Not so the day of your new birth; it has been like a coin, as fresh as when you laid it aside; and when you take it out again, it is as fresh as the mint delivered it, and you can read it still, and read the image of Christ which it bears. I think there is scarcely such a day on earth to be had in Christian experience as that first day when we came to Christ, and knew Him as our Savior.

The like is true also, in its measure, *after great and heavy affliction*. You have been bereaved. A wife, a husband, a child, has been removed from you; or you have had a great loss in business, you were crossed in some expectation, and you were cast into the lowest depth of trouble. Friends failed you, consolation fled from you; but, after a time, you felt a sweet resignation; you could say, “My soul is even as a weaned child;” your troubles, somehow or other, grew sweet as honey, though before they had been bitter as gall. You saw the finger of a loving Lord in all those engraving lines of affliction, which the chisel had made upon your brow; and you saw the great Refiner sitting at the mouth of the furnace, watching your gold that it might not be destroyed, and rejoicing over your dross, because it melted away in the flame. Do you remember it? Why, I can look back to some of the happiest seasons of my life, and see them stand in juxtaposition with the blackest times of trial. Oh, it has been, sometimes, a glorious thing to be cast down

by rebuke and slander, and then go into one's chamber, and lay Rabshakeh's letter before the Lord, and then to go down, and feel more glad than a king of a hundred kingdoms, because we have been counted worthy to suffer reproach for Christ. At such a season, there is a calm within us more deep and profound than we felt before.

And, mark you, if it has been so with us individually, *it has been no less so with the Church*. Remember the clear shining after rain in the apostles' times. "Then had the churches rest, and walking in the fear of God, were multiplied." Those little seasons of hush and calm, between the great persecutions, have always been prolific of converts. I hope, in the midst of successive controversies which darken the sky overhead, that, when the rain is over, and the noise and trouble it costs some tender spirits have ceased, and the powers of darkness have been hushed to sleep once more, we may have some clear shining after rain, and brotherly fellowship once again be renewed. The day comes when the great battle of Armageddon shall be fought, when the powers of darkness shall be roused to frenzy's highest pitch, when hell shall be loosed, and the great dragon shall be permitted to come upon the earth, trailing its chain along in the supremacy of its hour—then, when dreadful war shall come upon the earth, when nations shall reel and stagger to and fro, the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the trumpet of the archangel and the voice of God, and there shall be clear shining after the rain. And then, when the flames shall have consumed this orb, when Judgment shall have been passed, when death and hell shall have been cast into the lake of fire, when all the powers of evil shall have been utterly destroyed before the majesty of His coming who shall overturn them, that His kingdom may be established in heaven, everlasting hallelujahs, "For the Lord God omnipotent reigns," shall bear witness that there is clear shining after the rain: for so must it be in the little as the great, in the experience of the individual as in that of the multitude; there must be a rain, and there must be the clear shining after it, and the two together shall bring forth a matchless harvest, to the praise and glory of His grace, who works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

Do you ask, now, why it is that God gives to His people sweet seasons just after the bitter?

One reason is, *to take the taste of the bitter out of their mouths*. Even as to our little children, when they take their nauseous medicine, we give some sweetmeat; so does the Lord often, when He comes to His little ones, give them such sweet honey of His grace that they might forget their sufferings in the sweet nectar which He guarantees them.

Another reason, no doubt, is *lest they should be utterly destroyed by the terror of His Judgment*. "He tempers the wind to the shorn lamb;" but, better than that, He takes it to His bosom; and when it lies there, little does it know that but for the rain and the tempest it had not lain in His bosom, and been fondled there so tenderly. He put it there lest it should perish.

Then, again, He does it *as a sweet reward of faith*. He sees you in trouble, bravely struggling with the tempest, and says, "I will reward that man." He sees you following Him in the garden, still clinging to Him amidst all the darkness and temptation; and, therefore, He says, "I will give to that soul such joy, by and by, that it shall be well rewarded for its faithfulness to Me in the past."

Is it not also *to prepare you for the future* that, in looking back, you may say, "The last time I had trouble, there was clear shining after the rain, and so I feel it will be next time"? Ah, you timid one, there is a trial coming; it looms over your head. What! And did you behave valiantly for your Master in former times, and will you be a coward now? Ah, my brother, do you think there is a time of ruin threatening you, and do you say, "His mercy is clean gone forever; He will be faithful to me no more"? Oh, why do you say that? Does my Lord deserve it? Has He been with you in six troubles? Then, why should He forsake you in the seventh? He that has helped you up to now will surely help you to the end. Why has He delivered you in the tempest, if He means to let you sink at the last? By the kindness of the past, the love experienced in former days, let your faith put out its great sheet anchor, and outride the storm, for there shall again be "clear shining after rain."

And surely, these changing seasons of ours, and that constant ordinance of His, ought *to make us sick of self, and fond of Him*. He puts gall on the world, and He puts honey on His own lips; so that we may eschew the one and love the other. We are so fond of this world that we must be drawn away from it: and when we are drawn away from it, and enticed to Him, our foolish hearts come to know His value, and we yield ourselves, up to Him.

I cannot tell to whom this sermon is addressed. I am sure it has a mission to fulfill. O brothers and sisters, it may be that these words may be worth a mine of gold to some of you, as clear shining after rain! If they reach your case, thank my Master for it. He may have a harvest from your soul yet. Be sure that you give Him the first fruits of the harvest. When there is clear shining after the rain, honor Him more, serve Him better, give more to His cause, pray more for His people, live more in His fear, commune more with Him, and walk more closely to Him. Let it be true that in your case, as in that of this round world, the rain and the clear shining after it have brought forth their abundant fruit. When you and I shall get to heaven, we will talk on its green and flowery mountains of all the showers through which we passed, and of the clear shining; and, in the sacred high eternal noon, which shall be our portion forever, we shall, with transporting joys, recount the labors of the past, and sing of the clear shining after the rain.

How sad the thought that there is no “clear shining after rain” for some of you! There is a rain of troubles in reserve for you—that you know; there will be more troubles yet in this life; there is heavy shower coming yet in death, and then it shall rain forever, and there shall be a horrible tempest—that is your portion. If you believe not that Jesus is the Christ, and trust not your souls to Him, all the woe you have ever known is as nothing; it is but the first spattering of the drops on the pavement; it is nothing compared with the storm which shall beat upon your unsheltered head forever and ever. But the refuge is before you, man! The sky is dark, the tempest lowers; but the refuge is before you. Run! In God’s name, run! The storm comes hastening on, as if God were gathering up all His black artillery that He might discharge His dreadful thunders upon you. Run! “But can I enter?” Yes, the door is open; run! “But may I enter?” Yes, He invites you: “Come unto Me, yes, come unto Me—come this night—trust Me,” He says, “and I will save your soul.” “But I am unworthy.” Well, see the tempest! Run! Let your unworthiness put feathers to your feet, and not stop you in your haste. Jesus calls you from His throne in heaven; He invites you: “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” “The Spirit and the bride say, Come; And let Him that hears say, Come.” Heaven and earth say, “Come.” Sinner, will you avoid the tempest? Will you flee, and find shelter in Christ? God help you to trust Christ now, and unto Him shall be the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 27.*

Verse 1. *The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*

A sort of trembling seems to have been creeping over him, so he argues thus with his own heart, “Why should I be dismayed? Am I afraid of coming darkness? ‘The Lord is my light.’ Do dangers surround me? ‘The Lord is my salvation.’ Do I expect stern labor or severe suffering? ‘The Lord is the strength of my life.’ Are there many enemies watching for my halting? Yet, ‘of whom shall I be afraid’ since He is on my side?” Then he falls back upon his past experience:—

2. *When the wicked, even my enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.*

“They were very fierce. Like cannibals, they meant to eat me right up. They would not have spared me. They ‘came upon me’ in such a fashion that I was taken at a disadvantage. I seemed to be altogether in their power, but ‘they stumbled and fell.’ I had not to lift a hand against them, but the mysterious power of God entirely overthrew them. They stumbled and fell then, so shall I be afraid of them now?”

3. *Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.*

“God has not changed. My enemies are not more powerful than they were; and if they should become so, omnipotence will still overmatch them. I will therefore be confident, and calm, come what may.”

4. *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life.*

“That, wherever I am, I may be at home with God—that I may feel in every place, that I am still in His house—never away from home—whether in the wilderness or in the city, still dwelling like a child at home with its parents.”

4, 5. *To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple. For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion:*

“Will not a father take care of his own children? Does not even the feeble hen cover her chickens with her wings, and will not God cover me with His feathers, and cause me to rest in safety under His wings? Yes, that He will. ‘In the time of trouble He shall hide me’ away from it, so that it shall not hurt me. I shall be hidden right away in His pavilion, in His royal tent, which is pitched in the very center of His army. Around me shall lie all the forces of divine providence to protect me, since I am the honored guest of the Commander-in-Chief Himself. In the pavilion of His sovereignty shall He hide me.”

5. *In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me:*

That is, in the holy of holies, into which no man might come. “There shall God hide me—in the tabernacle of sacrifice—behind the atonement of Christ.” Thus David had the two blessed protections of sovereignty and sacrifice.

5. *He shall set me up upon a rock.*

“His lofty power shall lift me above the turmoil, and His immutable fidelity, like a rock that never moves, shall make me to stand fast.”

6. *And now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies round about me:*

“They may surround me, and threaten me, but they cannot hurt me, for I am living with my God, abiding like a child in my Father’s house.”

6, 7. *Therefore will I offer in His tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the LORD. Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice:*

He has not done praising before He begins to pray. We are scarcely out of one trouble before we enter into another. This is what keeps Christian people alive, because, escaping from one trial, they begin to praise, and falling into another, they begin to pray; and prayer and praise make up a Christian’s breath. May we abound in both!

7, 8. *Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, LORD, will I seek.*

“So I answered You when You did speak. Now answer me, O Lord, when I speak to You.” It sometimes happens that God speaks to us, and we make no reply to Him, and for that reason He refuses to hear us when we speak to Him. You must have an opened ear to God if you expect Him to have an opened ear to you. Notice how David pleads: “Hear, O Lord, when I cry . . . When You said, Seek you My face; my heart said unto You, Your face, Lord, will I seek.”

9. *Hide not Your face far from me; put not Your servant away in anger:*

David has a jealous fear lest he should have provoked the Lord to hide Himself from him, so he prays as one who is dependent upon his Heavenly Father’s smile, and cannot live without it. “Put not Your servant away in anger.”

9. *You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.*

That is sweet pleading; cannot you, who are cast down, use it as David did? “You have been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.” And then, as if to show that he does not pray this out of unbelief, but out of earnest and true faith he says:—

10. *When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.*

“The Lord will never forsake me. Though I pray, ‘Leave me not,’ I know that He will not. Father and mother retain love for their child when that child has lost every earthly friend; but, Lord, if nature should change, and mothers should turn to monsters, still, ‘when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.’”

11. *Teach me Your way, O LORD,*

This is a sweetly practical prayer. Our heart often says, “Lord, let me have my own way;” but when grace has done its work, it talks in another fashion, “‘Teach me Your way, O Lord.’ Only let me know what You would have me be, and do, and feel, and I submit myself to You, joyfully. But, Lord, I am so weak that, even if I am taught Your way, I fear I shall not go in it unless You shall do more than teach me.”

11. *And lead me—*

“Put Your finger out, as mothers do to tender infants: ‘Lead me’”—

11. *In a plain path, because of my enemies.*

“Do not let it be a difficult way, in which I shall hardly know which is the right road, but let it be a very plain path. And, Lord, help me so to walk in my daily life that there may be no mistake about my being upright and honest before men: ‘Lead me in a plain path.’” Oh, there are some, even among professing Christians, who have many tricks, and shifts, and schemes, and dodges, just like worldlings or foxes; but the sheep of Christ must take care to follow the Shepherd’s plain footprints. There was no craft in Christ. In Him was no guile; and if we are Israelites indeed, the same thing will be said of us. Oh, that we would each one cultivate a transparent character, and not have to live so that our life is one perpetual apology for an attempt to hide something! Wear your heart upon your sleeve, and let your soul show itself distinctly in your actions, not being afraid if all the world should see you.

12. *Deliver me not over unto the will of my enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.*

It is their delight to be cruel, to say unkind, unjust, untruthful things which lacerate the heart; and the more some people can tear good men’s reputations to pieces, the more pleased they are. I must say that it is hardly less than a miracle, that any true servant of God should for any length of time escape even from the vilest slander, so base are the tongues of men.

13. *I had fainted, unless I had believed—*

That is the smelling bottle for a fainting soul: “I had fainted unless I had believed.” You must do the one or the other; you must either believe or else faint, but if your faith is strong you cannot faint. O you who are of feeble faith, it is little marvel that you faint! Would God that your faith were stronger! Notice what David says, “Unless I had believed”—

13. *To see—*

Some say, “Seeing is believing,” but it is not; it is the very opposite of believing. Some people must see in order to believe, but the true followers of our Lord believe to see. If you will believe it, you shall see it; but if you will not believe it till you have seen it, then you shall never believe at all. “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see”—

13, 14. *The goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.*

Why did David put that little sentence in and say, “Wait, I say”? It is a repetition, but not a vain one, for it is his own personal testimony, as much as if he had said, “I have waited on the Lord, and I have found that He helps me, so, wait, I say, on the Lord.” Oh, my brethren and sisters, we wait so much upon men, we wait so much upon ourselves; if we could get into that holy quietness in which God’s voice could be heard within our souls—if the voice of man could be hushed, and we were content that the Lord should speak to us, how much more blessed would our lives become! Now have you any burden at this moment? Have you any care? Have you a knot which you cannot untie? Have you come into a labyrinth of which you cannot find the clue? “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord.”

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