

“HIS GREAT LOVE” NO. 2968

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*“His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”
Ephesians 2:4-5*

You notice, in this chapter, the remarkable change of subject which commences at the fourth verse. Paul had been giving a very sad description of what even the saints are by nature, and of their conduct before conversion, and then, as if he was quite weary of writing upon that painful topic, he says, “But God”—and goes on to tell what God has done. What a relief it is to turn from ourselves, and from our fellow-men, to God! And I do not know when God, in His rich mercy, ever seems so lovely in our eyes as when we have just gazed upon our own abundant sins.

The diamond shines all the more brilliantly when it has a suitable foil to set off its brightness, and man seems to act as a foil for the goodness and the mercy of God. Perhaps you remember that the psalmist, when he had said in his haste, “All men are liars,” turned abruptly from that theme, and said, “What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?” It is as if he had said, “I will not have anything more to do with man. I find him to be only like a broken cistern that can hold no water, but as for my God, He has never failed me, and He never will, so ‘I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.’”

I want, at this time, just to intertwist these two subjects—ourselves in our fall, and God in His grace—ourselves in our sin, and God in His love, “His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.” I shall not need so much to preach as just to refresh your memories—to revive your recollections of the great things which the Lord, in His grace, hath done for you. I want you, who know the Lord, to remember what you were, and what God has done for you. Those two themes will bring out the greatness of His love, so they shall be our two objects for meditation, first, *what we were*, and secondly, *what God did for us*.

I. First, then, WHAT WE WERE. The text says that “we were dead in sins.”

O believer, whatever life, of a spiritual kind, you have in you today, was given to you by God, it was not yours by nature. Before God looked upon you in love and pity, and said unto you “Live!” you were dead. That is to say, as far as spiritual things are concerned, *you were insensible*—insensible alike to the terrors of divine wrath and to the melodies of divine love.

You could even lie at the foot of Sinai, and not shake with affright, although Moses did exceedingly fear and quake, and you could lie at the foot of the cross, and yet not be melted by the death-cries of Immanuel, although the earth did quake, and the rocks were rent, and the graves were opened at that doleful sound. Do you not remember, beloved, when you passed through such a time as that? I do—when utter callousness and coldness of heart reigned supreme within us, when the world—painted harlot, as she is—could attract us, but we were insensible to the inexpressible beauties of Him who is altogether lovely, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

And as we were insensible to spiritual things, being dead, *so we were, at that time, without power to do anything*. We were preached to, called, and bidden to come, but as far as all goodness was concerned, we were like a corpse, unable to hear the sweetest music, or the crack of doom resounding overhead. Do you not remember, dear friends, when it was so with you? You thought then that you could do

something good in your own strength, but it was a dreadful failure when you attempted it. Your resolutions, when you got as far as resolving, all fell to the ground, for you were, in the emphatic words of Paul, “without strength,” Yes, you were insensible and powerless.

And, what is worse still, we were then *without will or desire to come to God*. We had no disposition to move towards the Lord, no aspirations after holiness, no longing after communion with our Creator. We loved the world and were content to fill our treasury with its paltry pelf, this seemed to be the only portion for which we cared. If we could have become rich, and increased with goods, we should have said, “Soul, take thine ease; there is nothing more for thee to desire.”

That was our state by nature, we were dead. And did the Lord love us then, when there was nothing whatever in us to commend us to Him—nothing by which we could possibly rise into a condition that would be estimable in His sight? Did He love us then? Yes, He did, and there must have been surprising grace in that “great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

While we were dead as to spiritual things, *there was, alas! a life in us of another kind*. If you read the chapter from which our text is taken, you will find that the dead people are described as walking. They were walking corpses—a strange commingling of metaphors, and yet most certainly true with regard to all ungodly men. They are dead to goodness, but as for the evil within them, how full of life it is! The devil within them and the flesh within them were active enough. And as the corpse gives forth corruption, and fills the tomb with putridity, so did our sin continually give forth evil emanations which must have been most nauseous to God, yet notwithstanding all this, “he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

Let me just mention some of the unlovely and unlovable things which God saw in us while we were in that dead state. One of the last was this, *we were ungrateful*. It is very difficult to continue to love ungrateful persons. If you seek to do them good, and yet you receive no thanks from them—if you persevere in doing them good, and yet still, for all that, they are unkind to you—it is not in flesh and blood to continue still to love them.

Yet, my brethren and sisters in Christ, what ingratitude to God was in our hearts once! What favors the Lord bestowed upon us—not merely daily bread and temporal blessings, but there were real spiritual gifts of His grace presented to us, yet we turned our backs upon them all, and worse still, we turned our backs upon Him who gave them to us. How sad it is that many people live, year after year, without ever recognizing the God who gives them so many mercies and blessings! Perhaps, now and then, there is a “thank God!” just uttered in idleness or as a compliment, but there is no heart in it.

The ingratitude of some of us was greater even than that of others, for we were born of godly parents, we were nurtured in the home of piety, we heard scarcely a sound in our infancy that was not mingled with the name of Jesus, and yet, as we grew up, these very things we regarded as restraints, and sometimes we wished that we could do as other people’s children did, and half regretted that we had godly friends who watched so carefully over our conduct. The Lord might have said to us, “I have done so much for you, yet you exhibit no gratitude, I will therefore leave you, and give these favors to others,” but in His great mercy, He did not act like that although we were so ungrateful.

What is even worse, *we were complaining and murmuring*. Do you not remember, in your unconverted state, my friend, how scarcely anything seemed to please you? This thing happened quite contrary to your wishes, and that was not at all to your mind, and the other was not according to your notion of what should be. The prophet Jeremiah asked, “Wherefore doth a living man complain?” But we seemed to ask, “Why should we leave off complaining?” We murmured against the Lord notwithstanding the great mercies that He gave to us, we rebelled against Him, and waxed worse and worse.

It is a difficult thing for us to love a murmurer. When you try to do a man good, and he only grumbles at what you do for him, you are very apt to say, “Very well, I will take my favors where they will be better appreciated.” But God did not act like that towards us, “His great love wherewith he loved us” was not to be turned away from us even by our murmurings and complainings.

And all that while, dear friends, *we were trifling with spiritual things*. Like those people mentioned in the parable who, when they were invited to the marriage feast, "made light of it," so did we. We were warned to escape from hell, but it seemed to us like an idle tale. We were bidden to seek after heaven, but we loved the things of this world too well to barter them for joys unseen and eternal. We were told that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and it seemed to be a story that we had heard so often that we called it "a platitude."

We were adjured to lay hold on Christ, and to find eternal life in Him, but we said, "Perhaps we will tomorrow," proving that we did not care about it, but would make God wait at our beck and call when it should be convenient for us. You know that, if a man is in an ill state of health and you, as a doctor, go to help him, but he merely laughs at his illness, and says that he does not care about it, you are very apt to say, "Then, why should I care? You are sick, and I am anxious to heal you, but you say that you do not care to be healed. Very well then, I will go to some other patient who will entreat me to use my best skill on his behalf, and who will be grateful to me when I have used it."

But the Lord did not act like that with us. Notwithstanding our trifling, He was in earnest, He meant to heal our soul-sickness, and He did heal it. Determined to save us, He would not heed the rebuff of our carelessness and callousness, but still persevered in manifesting toward us that "great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

To make the deformity of our character still worse—*we were all the while proud*—as proud as Lucifer. We had not any righteousness of our own, yet we thought we had. We were far off from God by wicked works, yet we stood before Him, like the Pharisee in the temple, and thanked Him that we were not as other men! We were quite content, though we had nothing to be content with. We were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," yet we said that we were "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing." As for shedding penitential tears, we left that work to those who had sinned more deeply than we had, for we imagined that we had kept all the commandments from our youth up. Thus, we despised the Savior because we exalted ourselves.

We thought little of Christ because we thought much of ourselves. And so, in our pride, we dared to strut before the eternal throne as if we were some great ones, though we were but worms of the dust. I think that it is one of the most difficult things in the world to love a proud man. You can love a man, even though he has a thousand faults, if he is not proud and boastful, but when he is very proud, human nature seems to start back from him, yet God, in His "great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins," loved us although we were proud, and loved us out of that sinful state.

If worse could be, there was something even worse than pride in us, for *we were deceptive* as well as proud. "No," says one, "surely you cannot truthfully lay that to our charge." Well, I have to confess that it was so with myself. I remember that, when I was ill, I said that, if God would only spare my life, I would live so differently in future, but my promise was not kept, though God did spare my life. Often, after a stirring sermon, I have sought a place where I could weep in secret, and I have said, "Now will I be decided for the Lord," but it was not so.

Oh, how many times have we broken the promises and vows we made unto the Lord! Child of God, before your conversion, how many vows and covenants you made, yet your goodness was like the morning cloud or the early dew, which soon passes away. Who can love one who is not to be trusted? Yet God, in "his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins," loved us while we so many times deceived him.

These things which I have mentioned, have appertained to all the children of God, but there are some of them whose sins have been even greater than these. I ask every converted man here just to look through his own biography. Some of you were, perhaps, converted while you were young, and so were kept from the grosser sins into which others fall, but there were some who were suffered to go into drunkenness, or into uncleanness and all manner of iniquity. God has forgiven you, my brother, and has washed all that evil away in the precious blood of Jesus, but you feel that you can never forgive yourself. I know that I am bringing some very unhappy memories before you, of which you say, "Would

God that night had never been, or that day had never passed over my head!" The Lord grant that, as you look back upon those sins of yours, you may feel deeply humbled, and at the same time, may be devoutly grateful to God for "his great love" wherewith He hath loved you!

There have been some, who seem as if they had gone to the utmost extremity of sin—as if they dared and defied the Most High, and yet, notwithstanding their atrocious sins, free grace has won the day. There has seemed, in some cases, to be a stern struggle between sin and grace, as if sin said, "I will provoke God till grace shall leave him," but grace has said, "Provoked as the Lord is, yet still will He stand to His purpose of mercy, He will not turn away from the decree of His love,"

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I ask you to think this subject over in your own private meditations. There are some things that it would not be right to mention in any ear but the ear of God, for it certainly was a horrible pit out of which He took us, and miry clay indeed out of which He drew us, so we may well praise "his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins."

II. The second subject for our meditation is, WHAT GOD DID FOR US "even when we were dead in sins."

Well, first of all, *He remained faithful to His choice of us*. He had chosen His people or ever the earth was, and He did not choose them in the dark. He knew right well what their nature would be, and also the practice which would grow out of their nature, so that nothing that has happened has ever surprised the Lord concerning any one of His people. He was well aware beforehand of all their corruption and filthiness, so, when He saw them acting as I have described, He did not turn from His purpose to save them. Blessed be His name for this. It is one of the wonders of His grace and proves the greatness of His love.

Then, next, as He did not repent of His choice, so *neither did He repent of His redemption of His people*. You will find it recorded in Scripture that "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart," but you never read that He repented of redemption. Nowhere in Scripture is there such a passage as this, "It grieved the Lord at His heart that He had given His Son to die for such unworthy ones." No, my friends, He had bought us with a price beyond all calculation, even the hearts blood of His only-begotten Son, so that, although we went from sin to sin, and for a time resisted all the calls of the Gospel, He did not turn from His purpose of love and mercy, nor make His atonement for us null and void.

Then, further, in His great love for us, *God would not let us die till He had brought us to Christ*. Possibly, we passed through many perils, and had many escapes. John Bunyan, you will remember, was to have stood as sentinel one night, but another soldier took his place, and was shot. John Bunyan did not know at the time, why the exchange was made, but God had ordained that he should not die till he had been brought to Christ. So fool-hardy was he that, on one occasion, he plucked the sting out of a viper with his bare hand, yet he was unhurt, for God would not let him die while he was such a desperado.

And what wonderful escapes from shipwreck, from murder, from fever, from accidents in a thousand forms some men have had, simply because God will not let them perish, for He means that they shall yet be brought as sheep into His fold. I told you some time ago, that I once talked with a gentleman who was in the famous charge at Balaclava, and I felt moved to say to him, "Surely God had some designs of love toward you, or He would not have spared you when so many were being taken away." Well, in whatever way our lives have been spared, we ascribe it to the great love wherewith God loved us even when we were dead in sins.

We see that great love also manifested *in the way in which God restrained us from many sins*. There have been times in our history when, if it had not been for a mysterious check that was put upon us, we should have sinned much worse even than we did. Something of that kind happened in the case of the well-known Colonel Gardiner. He had made an appointment for the commission of a very gross sin, but the Lord had chosen him unto eternal life, so that night, which he intended to spend in sin, became the time of his conversion to God, and you know what a devout and earnest Christian he became. The Lord

knows the right time to say to anyone, “Thus far shalt thou go, but no farther.” He makes men’s minds and hearts, like the sea, to know His will, and to move or be still at His divine command. Cannot some of you, my brethren, recollect the way in which God thus restrained you from going to an excess of riot?

And then, His great love was seen *by the way in which He kept on calling us by His grace*. Some of us can scarcely tell when we were first bidden to come to the Savior. A mother’s tears and a father’s prayers are, however, among the fondly-cherished memories of that early call. Do not some of you remember that loving Sabbath school teacher, and the earnestness with which she pleaded with you, and that godly minister, and how he seemed to throw his whole soul into the work of entreating you to yield yourself to the Savior?

Others of you cannot forget how, with good books, letters, entreaties, and persuasions from Christian friends, you have been followed, as if the Lord had hunted you out of your sins by all the agencies that could possibly be used, yet you dodged, and twisted, and doubled, this way and that way, trying to escape from your gracious Pursuer. You were like a bird that the fowler cannot take for a long while, or like a wandering sheep that the shepherd cannot find for many a day. But the good Shepherd never gave up the search, He meant to find you, and He did. He had determined to save you, and from that determination He would not be burned aside, do whatever you might.

And at last, there came the blessed day when He subdued you unto himself. The weapons of your rebellion fell from your hands, for Christ had conquered you, and how did He do it? By “his great love”—His omnipotent grace. You were dead in sins when His Spirit came to work them upon you, but the Spirit came, in the name of the risen Savior, with such almighty force of irresistible love that you were carried captive—a willing captive—at the chariot wheels of your Divine Conqueror. Shall we ever forget that blessed time? We sing “Happy day! Happy day!” and well we may, for that conquest is the chief and foremost token of “his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.”

I will not say more about this precious truth, but I will use the few minutes still at my disposal in making a practical application of my subject.

If, dear friends, the Lord loved us with such great love even when we were dead in sins, *do you think that He will ever leave us to perish?* Have you indulged the notion that, under your present trial, whatever it may be, you will be deserted by your God? My dear widowed sister, do you fear that the Lord will forsake you now that your husband is dead? My friend over there—you who have had heavy losses in business—do you not believe that the Lord will help you through? Did He love you when you were dead in sins, and is He going to desert you now? Do you think you will ever have to ask, with the psalmist, “Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?”

If you do talk like that, then ask yourself why the Lord ever began His work of love upon you if He did not mean to finish it, or if He meant, after all, to cast you off? Do you think, if that was His intention, He would ever have begun with you? He knew all that would happen to you, and all that you would do, so that nothing comes unexpectedly to Him. Known unto the Lord, from the beginning, were all your trials and all your sins, so that, as He still loved you, in the foresight of all that was to happen to you, do you think that He will now, or ever, cast you away from him? You know that He will not.

Again, if He so loved you even when you were dead in sins, *will He deny you anything that is for His own glory, and for your own and other’s good?* You have been praying, but you have feared that the mercy you asked would never come. Think for a moment—He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for you centuries before you were born, will He not freely give to you all that you ought to ask of Him now that you are alive unto Him?

George Herbert speaks of the dew that falls upon the grass, although the grass cannot call for the dew, but you do call upon God to give you His grace, so shall not His grace come copiously to you as the dew falling when God sends it? Doth He water the earth when its dumb mouth opens? Doth He provide food for the “dumb driven cattle?” Then, will He not attend to your cries and prayers when you call upon Him in the name of His well-beloved Son? If He loved you when you were a mass of

corruption, will He not answer your supplications now that He has in you to be an heir of heaven, and formed you in the likeness of His Son? O, beloved, be of good comfort, and let no thought of despondency, or of unbelief, ever cross your mind!

Further, if the Lord loved you thus even when you were dead in sins, *ought you not now to love Him very much?* Oh, the love of God! The apostle does not say that God pitied us, though that is true. He does not say that the Lord had compassion upon us, though that also is true, but Paul speaks of “his great love.” I can perfectly understand God’s pitying me, I can perfectly understand God’s having compassion on me, but I cannot comprehend God’s loving me, nor can you. Think what it means—He *loves* you. Sweet above all other things is love—a mother’s love, a father’s love, a husband’s love, a wife’s love—but all these are only faint images of the love of God.

You know how greatly you are cheered by the earthly love of one who is dear to you, but Paul says that *God* loves you. He that made the heavens and the earth, before whom you are as an emmet, has set His heart’s affection upon you. He loves you so much that He has made great sacrifices for you, He is daily blessing you, and He will not be in heaven without you. So dear, so strong is His love to you, and it was so even when you were dead in sins. Oh, then, will you not love Him much in return for His “great love” to you? Is anything too hard for you to bear for His dear sake, or anything too difficult for you to do for Him who loved you so? Dear Lord, we give ourselves to thee, ’tis all that we can do.

Another reflection for you, my Christian friend, is this. If God so loved you even when you were dead in sins, *ought not you to love those who treat you badly?* There are many people, in this world, who seem as if they could not do anything but ugly things. They have not a generous spot in their nature, they are cross-grained, ever quarrelling, and he who would fain live peaceably with them sometimes finds it very hard work. I know some gentle spirits that are deeply wounded by the hard and cruel things that are said or done to them by their relatives or companions.

Well, dear friends, if any of us are treated thus, let us love these cruel people, let us cover their unkindness over with our love, for if God loved us even when we were dead in sins—when He could not see anything in us to love, we also ought to love others for His sake. Even when we see a thousand faults in them, we must say, “As God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven us, so do we forgive you,” It is a grand thing to be able to bury in eternal forgetfulness every unkind word or act that has ever caused us pain. If any of you have any thought of anger in your heart against anyone—if you have any feeling of resentment—if you have any recollection of injuries—if there is aught that vexes and grieves you, come and bury it all in the grave of Jesus, for if He loved you when you were dead in sins, it cannot be half so wonderful for you to love your poor fellow-sinner whatever ill-treatment you may have received at his hands.

My last word is to the unconverted, and it is a very sweet and precious word. Do you see, unconverted man, that you need never say, “I dare not come to God through Jesus Christ, because there is nothing good in me”? You need never say that, for Paul speaks of “his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins.” Now, if all His people were loved by Him when they were dead in sins, how can you think that God requires anything good in man as the cause or reason for His love? Of all the saints in heaven it may be said that God loved them because He would do it, for by nature there was nothing more in them for God to love than there was in the very devils in hell.

And as to His saints on earth, if God loves them—and He does—it is simply because He will do it, for there was no goodness whatever in them by nature, God loves them in the infinite sovereignty of His great loving nature. Well, then, poor soul, why should not God love *you*? And since He bids you come to Him, however empty you may be of everything that is good, come to Him, and welcome.

Let the text knock on the head, once for all, all ideas of doing anything to win the love of God, and if you feel yourself to be the very worst, and lowest, and meanest of the human race, I rejoice that you feel that, for the Lord loves to look upon those who are self-emptied, and who have nothing good of their own to plead before him. These are the people who will value His love, and upon such people as these it is that He bestows His love. “The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick.” The

hospital is for the man who is diseased, not for the one who is in health, and the Lord Jesus Christ has opened a Hospital for Incurables—for those who cannot be cured by all the medicines of human morality and outward religion. Christ bids them come to Him that He may make them whole.

I wish I had the power to speak of the love of God to the sinner in such a way that He would come to the Lord Jesus Christ, but I will try to put the brush very plainly and simply, and then I will close my discourse.

My hearer, whatever you may have been up to this moment—if you have been a despiser of God, an infidel, a blasphemer—if you have added sin to sin, if you have made yourself black as hell with enormous transgressions—yet all this is no reason why God should not have chosen you, and loved you, and all this is no reason why He should not now forgive you, and accept you? Nay, He puts it thus in His Word, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Come, then, ye blackest of sinners—ye who feel yourselves unfit to be found in a house of prayer—ye who, like the publican in the temple, scarcely dare to lift up your eyes to heaven—you condemned ones, who fear that there is no hope for you—let me assure you that in you there is space for God’s mercy to be displayed, elbow-room for His grace to work. Come to Jesus just as you are, accept the atonement made by His own blood, and be saved here and now, for He waits to be gracious, and He has said, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.”

I recollect the time, many years ago, when I would have given both my eyes to hear such truth as I have preached tonight. It would not have mattered to me who had told it to me. If it had been a man of stammering tongue and faulty grammar, if He had but said to me, “Salvation is of God’s grace, not of your merit, it is of God’s goodness, not of your holiness, you have nothing to do but to rest on what Christ has done, for God loves even thee who are dead in sins,”—if I had known that, I think I should have found peace with God long before I did.

Does anyone say, “But I want to feel, and I want to do, and I want to find out this, and that, and the other”? You want nothing of the kind, sinner. Christ has done it all. To take any merit of your own to Christ, would be worse than carrying coals to Newcastle. Come just as you are, empty-handed sinner, bankrupt sinner, starving sinner, thou who art at the very gates of hell, for—

*“There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
There is life at this moment for thee;
Then look, sinner—look unto Him, and be saved,—
Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.”*

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 30

May the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writer of this Psalm, now lead us into its inner meaning! It is entitled “A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David, “or rather, “A Psalm; a song of dedication for the House. By David.” It was a song of faith, since David did not live to witness the dedication of the temple, for which he had planned in his heart, and for which he had laid by in store. Though he knew that he would not be permitted by God to build it, he took delight in writing a Psalm which might be sung at the opening of the temple. Thus it begins—

Verse 1. *I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foe to rejoice over me.*

“I will exalt thee, for thou hast exalted me. I will lift up thy praise, because thou hast lifted up my spirits. I will bless thee, for thou hast blessed me,” Our song of praise should be the echo of God’s voice of love.

“Thou hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.” You remember that this was one of the three things put to David as a chastisement for his great sin in numbering the people, “Wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee?” He here praises the Lord that such calamity as that did not come upon him. “Thou hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.” Sorrows averted should be the occasion of grateful songs of thanksgiving.

2. *O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.*

The king and the people had been sorely smitten with sickness on account of his sin, but the Lord, in mercy, bade the destroying angel sheathe his sword when he “was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite,”—the very place which afterwards became the site on which the temple was built. It was well, therefore, at its opening, to praise the God who heals his people. We ought to praise the Lord more than we do for our recovery from sickness. Employ the physician if you will, but when healing comes to you, magnify the Lord for it, and ascribe the glory of it to His holy name.

3. *O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.*

Here is a double mercy to sing of—not dead, and not damned. Life spared is something for which to praise the Lord, but to have the soul saved from going down to the pit is a cause of still greater thanksgiving. Oh, praise the name of the Lord, ye who love Him, and trust in Him, for He has delivered you from going down into the pit!

4. *Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

David seems to say to the saints, “Do not let me sing alone, but all of you join in the chorus.” He does not invite reprobates to praise the Lord, but he says, “Sing unto JEHOVAH, O ye saints of his.” I think it is very wrong to have the praises of God sung in public by ungodly men and women, as there sometimes are, the singing should not be left to a godless choir. Oh, no, “sing unto the LORD, all ye saints of his,” for you only can sing sincerely unto him.

“Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,”—at the very memory of Him, at the remembrance of the whole of Him, for that is His holiness, His wholeness, the entire, perfect character of God. O saints below, sing as they do in heaven, for their song is “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.”

5. *For his anger endureth but a moment;*

Notice that the words “endureth but” are inserted by the translators, and very properly so, but see how the passages reads if you leave them out, “For his anger a moment,” That is long enough for Him to display it, for it is His strange work, and long enough for us to endure it, for it might crush us if it lasted longer.

5. *In his favor is life:*

Life came to Jerusalem, in David’s day, as soon as God smiled upon it, and life comes to us as soon as we taste of His favor, even though we have been ready to die of despair.

5. *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*

As the dews are appropriate to the night, so is weeping seemly for us when Jesus hides his face from us. The children of the bride-chamber may well mourn when the heavenly Bridegroom is taken from them, but it is only for a night. Morning will end our mourning. Our night-sorrow is for the night, but our joys are for a day that will know no evening.

6. *And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.*

It is a pity to say too much, very few people fall into the opposite fault of saying too little. It is always a pity to be counting with certainty upon the future, and presuming, because of the hopefulness of the present, that this state of things will last forever David was not wise when he said, in his prosperity, “I shall never be moved.”

7. *LORD, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*

When God is at cross purposes with his people, they are troubled at once. There is no need for blows, no need for angry words, “Thou didst hide thy face; and I was troubled.” That is enough for a child of God; let him but miss the light of God’s countenance, and it breaks him down at once.

8. *I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.*

What should the child of God do, when he is in trouble, but cry? And to whom should he cry but to his Father?

9. *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?*

So his prayer was an argument, and that is the very bone and sinew of prayer—to reason and argue with God. He seems to put it thus—“Lord, if I lose my soul, thou wilt be a loser, too, for thou wilt lose a singer out of thy choir, one who would be glad enough to praise thee, and whose very life it is to magnify thee. Oh, do not cut me down! When I am dead, when I am lost, there can be no praise to thee from me, so spare me, my gracious God?”

10. *Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.*

What a handy prayer this is, a prayer to carry about with you wherever you go! “LORD, be thou my Helper.” That is a minister’s prayer when he was going to preach. That is a Sunday school teacher’s prayer when going to the class. Is not that a prayer for the sufferer when the pain upon him is very severe? “LORD, be thou my Helper.” Art thou working for Him? Art thou cast down in soul? This prayer will suit thee: “LORD, be thou my Helper.”

11. *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*

What a transformation scene in answer to prayer! Notice that David does not say, “I hope that thou hast,” but he puts it thus, “Thou hast—Thou hast,” He is quite sure about it, and being sure of this great mercy, he gives God all the glory of it. What a wonderful change it is! Not merely from mourning into peace, but into delight—delight expressed by dancing, not merely from sackcloth into ordinary dress, but from the sackcloth of sorrow in the satin of gladness. God does nothing by halves, he not only chases away the night, and gives us twilight, but he goes on to gladden us with the full glory of noontide, and sell this he does with a definite end and purpose—

12. *To the end that my glory—*

Or “my tongue”—

12. *May sing praise to thee, and not be silent.*

God ought to have praise from us. It is the quit-rent which we pay as tenants to the great Lord of all, let us not rob him of his revenue.

12. *O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—716, 711, 30 AND FROM “SACRED SONGS AND SOLOS—39

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.