

FAITH TRIED AND TRIUMPHING NO. 3265

A SERMON
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*“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”
Job 13:15.*

THERE are some speeches which could not be made by ordinary men. As soon as you hear them, you feel that there is a ring about them which is by no means common. Certain expressions which have been heard and remembered could have been uttered only by great warriors, or by men who have navigated the vast ocean. Certain other still nobler expressions, because spiritual ones, could have been uttered only by those who have had to fight with spiritual foes, or have done business on the great waters of soul trouble. When you hear the expression, “If there are as many devils at Worms as there are tiles on the housetops, I will go there in God’s name,” you are quite certain the speaker is Martin Luther. No other than he could have said it! And just as certainly, I think, I would have felt if I had read tonight’s text for the first time, that it was Job who said it and nobody else.

Job was a master sufferer. No man went deeper into grief than he—his children all dead, his wealth all swept away, his whole body covered with sore boils and blisters and the friends who pretended to comfort him, only accusing him of being a hypocrite, while his own wife bids him, “curse God, and die.” He was brought lower than any and, therefore, being a man of faith, having overcome and triumphed by faith, it was like he to utter such a noble speech as that which our text brings before us. “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him,” is not the utterance of any ordinary commonplace believer! It is a sort of word which, we are quite sure, could only come from a triumphant Job—triumphant by victorious faith! However, I trust there are some here who could use this expression, now that another has fitted it for their lips, and I hope that all of us who have any faith at all, may have that faith so increased that yet, without boasting, we may still be able to say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”

I. In speaking upon this text I would note, first, THAT FAITH IS THE HABITUAL GRACE OF THE CHRISTIAN. To trust in God is his usual mode of life. He does not sometimes trust and sometimes cease to trust, but, “the just shall live by faith.” Faith is not a grace of luxury but a grace of necessity. We must have it and if we have it not, we would not be the people of God at all! The common habit of the Christian, then, is a habit of trusting. The Christian’s walk is faith and his life is faith!

Faith is to the Christian all the spiritual senses, not one, but all. The natural man has his eyes, but by faith we see Him who is invisible! The natural man has his hands and his feelings. We live not by feeling, but our faith is the hand by which we take fast hold upon eternal realities! The natural man has his ears, and they are delighted with sweet sounds, or through them the language of friendship enters his heart. Our faith is the ear through which we hear the voice of God and, sometimes, even catch stray notes from the harps of the angels! The natural man has the nostrils with which he becomes aware of sweet perfumes—and to our faith the name of Jesus is as choicest ointment poured forth! If we receive Christ as our heart’s Lord, all the inlets by which we receive Him and His grace are made of the agate of faith. Gates of carbuncle, windows of agate are true faith. The light of God and the love of God come into our consciousness by our faith.

Faith, too, is with the Christian his first and his last. Faith looking to Christ is the very beginning of spiritual life! We began to live at the foot of the cross when we looked up and saw the flowing of those founts of forgiveness—the five wounds of Christ! And as faith was the first, so it will be the last. We expect to die looking for our Lord’s appearing and still resting upon His finished work. And all between the alpha and the omega—all the other letters—we read them all by faith! There is no period of our life in which it is safe for us to live by feeling, not even when our enjoyments run highest. On the mountain where Christ is transfigured and where, in the midst of the glory we shall fall asleep in amazement, we cannot live by sense! Even there we can only enjoy the glory as faith shall continue to be in exercise. We must all the way through, from the first to the last, look out of ourselves and look above to the things

which are seen, to grasp the things which are not seen, to be touched with the eternal hand and realize that which does not seem real to sense. This is the life of the Christian from the first to the last!

And I would add, as it is his first and last, so *faith is the Christian's highest and his lowest*. If we ever get upon the mountain summit and bask our foreheads in the sunlight of fellowship with God, we stand there only by faith! It is because our faith is strong and in active exercise that we realize the things not seen as yet, and behold the God whom mortal eyes cannot gaze upon! Our very noblest, happiest and most heavenly times are those which are the results of faith. And so in our lowest. We can only live there by faith. Have you never lain shattered and broken, crushed and destroyed, expecting something yet more terrible? And have you not felt that now in your faintness you could fall back into the Savior's arms? That now in your brokenness you could drop into His hands? That now in your abject nothingness He must be All in All to you, or else there will be an utter end to you? Oh, the faith that is as wings to us when we fly, becomes a lifebuoy to us when we sink! The faith which bears us up to the gates of heaven, also lifts us up from the very gates of hell! 'Tis our first and our last! 'Tis our highest and our lowest! It is all the senses of our spiritual nature. We must have it and always have it. We must trust in the Lord!

The matters about which the true Christian is to trust are very many, but they are chiefly these.

We trust for the pardon of our sins to our God in Christ Jesus. The only hope that any Christian has for the forgiveness of his iniquity lies in the sacrifice presented on Calvary by the Lamb of God whom God has given for the sins of the world. If any shall ask us whether we trust that our sins are forgiven us because of our repentance, or because of a long life of active Christian service, we shall reply that we are thankful if God has given us these things, but our sole reliance is in our dear Lord and Master who was once fastened to the cross, but now sits in power in the highest heavens! Our trust for the pardon of sin in every degree and every respect lies in Christ, the Son of God—and there only! In this matter we can use the language of Job and say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him," for the fact is, the more fully we are slain, the more truly we trust! When we see ourselves to be utterly dead, slain by the two edged sword of the Lord, and all hope of our own self salvation to be a corpse—then it is more easy than ever to come and cast ourselves upon the Christ of God and rest there for all our salvation from the guilt of sin!

But in God *also we trust for the purification of our spirits from all the indwelling power of sin*. Some Christians do not appear to make this a matter of faith and, therefore, they do not succeed therein. You can no more conquer sin in yourself—really conquer it by your own strength—than you can remove the guilt of it by your own merits. The same Christ who is made unto us "justification" and "redemption," is also made unto us "sanctification," and we must never forget that while we wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb as to pardon, we also overcome our sins through the blood of the Lamb! The same Savior who takes away the guilt, takes away the power and the defiling power of sin. Well has Toplady put it—

*"Let the water and the blood
From Your riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure—
Cleanse me from its guilt and power."*

Now, the true Christian can say that he trusts in God for his effectual purification and his final perfection. He does not hope to drive out one of these Canaanites by his own arm. He does not think that he shall slay one of his corruptions in his own strength. But his eyes are unto the hills from where comes his help and he believes that the eternal Spirit will, like refining fire, go through and through his soul till everything in him shall be burnt up except that which is of God—that which will endure the fire and be well pleasing in Jehovah's sight!

The matters upon which we rely upon God, then, are as far as I have yet gone, the finished work of Jesus Christ and the power that there is in Christ and in the blessed Spirit to sanctify us—spirit, soul and body.

But our trust is in God in another sense, namely, first—*we trust Him believing that He always must be just*. It does not occur to us now that God could be unjust. In the days of our flesh we used to think, if we suffered some extreme pain, or if we passed suddenly from wealth to poverty, that God had dealt very harshly with us, but now we feel that His strokes are fewer than our crimes and lighter than our guilt. And it does not occur to us in any way to impeach the justice of God, let Him do what He will. We feel that if He not only should slay us, but if He should cast us into hell forever—remembering what we are in ourselves and standing on our own footing, we could not complain against Him. This is our firm

confidence, that whatever our position is, God has always dealt justly with us, that He will never deal unjustly with us and we shall never have to say of any one transaction that we have with Him, “This is not according to the rule of right.”

But we go a great deal further. Having believed in Christ Jesus, and having become His children, *we trust, believing that God will never do anything to us but that which is full of love.* We are assured that His eternal love does not only come forth, now and then, that it does not only permeate and infuse itself into a few of His actions—but that all His conduct towards His children are actuated by the motive power of love. He is always love towards those who put their trust in Him. We are sure that He never gives us a pain more than is necessary and that He never lets us suffer a loss more than is necessary. “Though for a season, if necessary, we are in heaviness through manifold temptations,” we know and are convinced that there *is* a necessity for it. We trust His justice and we trust His goodness.

And, more, *we trust His wisdom mingled with all this.* He has said that “all things work together for good to them that love God,” and we believe it. We have had some bitters in our cup, but we still believe it. We may yet have a great many more, but we are assured that through the help of God’s Spirit we shall still believe this—that come what may, expected or unexpected, in the ways of grief and sorrow, still that ultimate good shall come out of the whole! God’s purpose of love shall not be thwarted, but rather shall be answered by every circumstance of our history. Therefore do we trust in God that He is just and cannot do us an unrighteous action! That He is loving and cannot do a cruel thing to us! That He is wise and loving and just—and will make all things work together for good!

In summary, *we trust Him as a child trusts its parent,* that is, for everything. There are many things about Him that we cannot understand—as there were about our parents in our childhood—but we trust Him and know that there is none like He. “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun.” We trust Him in all that He does. We cannot understand Him, for His way is in the sea and His footsteps are not known. But we are sure that they are footsteps of holiness and they are ways of righteousness. We trust Him for all the past and all the present, yes, and for all the future, too—that future which sometimes looms before us in the mist—and half alarms us till we are ready to shrink back from it. We gather up the skirts of our robe, again, and though we fear as we enter into the cloud, yet are we comforted with the full conviction that He who has done so well in the past, will be with us even to life’s close.

Thus have I tried to show you that the whole tenor of the Christian’s life is trust—that, as in the text, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.”

II. Now the second point shall be that those of us who have learned to trust in God expect that OUR FAITH SHALL BE TRIED. The text holds the plain supposition that it shall be *extremely* tried. He does not say, “Though I *die*”—that would be a great trial. Death is not a pleasant thing. It is no child’s play even to the strongest believer. Job does not say, “Though I die,” but, “Though He slays me.” That is more. He does not say, “Though He permit me to be slain,” but, “Though *He slays me*—though He should seem to be so much my enemy as to turn round and kill me! Though I may not believe His action, I will believe Him—I will believe His infallible word. “Even though He slays me.” It is not, “Though He makes me hunger.” Or, “Though He puts me in prison, though He allows me to be mocked, though He allows me to be banned from all my friends and to live a solitary and wretched life.” No, it is more than that—“Though He *slays me*.” And mark, it is not, “Though He slays my children. Though He takes away my wife. Though He removes all my dear kindred.” It is more than that. “Though He slays me. Though it comes right home to myself.”

Ah, Job knew what He meant, for all other things had been done except the slaying of him! His children were dead and the house in which they had met was a ruin. All he had was gone—his health had gone and he could not rest by reason of the disease which was all over him—most painful and most acute. He had nothing left on earth that was worth having. He was even friendless and he was worse than wifeless, for his wife had turned against him. Yet he says there is but one thing more that can be done—and God has kept Satan back from that. He said, “Only you shall not take his life.” But if the Lord chose to let loose the dog without even the link of a chain upon him—though He allows me now to lose my life itself—

*“Though He slay me, I will trust,
Praise Him even from the dust—
Prove, and sing it as I prove,
His eternal gracious love.”*

Now, the text evidently implies that faith will be tried and tried severely. Let us think a moment about this. Has it not been always the case that if any man has had a faith beyond his fellow men, it has met with trial? If you go a step beyond the ordinary rank and file, you will be shot at for that very reason! Columbus believes that there is another part of the world undiscovered—what ridicule is heaped upon him! Galileo says the world moves—he must be put into the Inquisition—the poor old man must be forced to deny what he was quite sure was the truth. It was dangerous in those days to know too much and to believe a little more than other people. And in spiritual things it is just the same. The world is against the true faith. The faith of God's elect is not a flower that men delight to admire and praise—it is a thing which, wherever they see it, they count as a speckled bird and they are sure to be against it! If you have faith in God, remember that this is not the world of faith, but the world of unbelief—and the darkness that is in the world will try to quench your light!

But remember that true *faith scorns trial and outlives it*. It is not worth having if it does not. If I believe in the friendship of my friend and yet it cannot bear a little trial, it is not real friendship. Perhaps in your youth, as with most of us, there was someone exceedingly dear to you. In your boyish or girlish days you would walk with some companion and you swore inseparable friendship. Ah, how many of those friendships did you make—and they were broken? Since then, perhaps, we have thought that someone with whom we took sweet counsel could never, by any possibility, betray us—but there came a test of our friendship. We were not worth as much as we once were, or we were not as much esteemed as we used to be, or there happened to be a misunderstanding—and in a little tiff, the friendship was marred. But that faith which a man has in his fellow men that is worth having will not yield so easily. No, says the man, “If you say anything to me against my friend, I do not believe you! I think there is some other way of reading it. If you speak the truth, you do not know all about it—there is something else that would change the complexion of it. And even if you were to convict him of a fault, I would still love him, for there are many virtues in him and if he did this thing, he must have made a mistake. I will defend him.”

Now, transfer this from common life to faith in God. If a man says, “I trust in God,” and it is all smooth sailing, and his children are about him and he has plenty upon the table, his body in full health and he has all that heart could wish—well, we will see what sort of faith that is! It is not yet proven—will the man believe his God when God begins to take away all he loves? Will he believe Him when the wife pines away with a long and painful sickness? Will he believe Him when child after child is taken to the tomb? Will he believe Him when he sees his property taken away before his eyes? Will he believe his God when he, himself, can scarcely move hand or foot upon the bed off sickness? Will he still be able to bless the name of the Lord when he is stripped of everything? If he can, then this is faith worth having! But if he cannot, then it is not the faith that is worthy of God and it is well it does give way, for *then* it may drive the man to seek the true faith which would bear these tests!

You see, then brothers and sisters, if we have faith, we must expect to have it tried by reason of faith being an unusual thing in the world and because if it would not bear trial it would not be worth having! History tells us that the best servants of God have had their trials—and why should we expect to escape? We turn over the historical pages of this book which are so full of instruction to us and we find that all the Lord's children have had to do battle for the preservation of their faith. There is no smooth road to heaven! Steam rollers can be used for the earth, for our common roads, but you shall find flint stones on the road to glory! They have never been rolled smooth and they never will be—

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*

Faith must and shall be tried as surely as it is the faith of God's people! And if the best of saints have been obliged to say that through much tribulation they have inherited the kingdom, we must not expect that God will change His rule in His treatment of us. I would not, however, encourage one thing which I have sometimes noticed, namely, the fear which comes into some Christians that they are not God's people because they have not been much tried. All the saints meet with trial. I know a dear friend who is suffering just now, who says that he was occasionally afflicted with a fear that he could not be a child of God because he was so long without a sickness or without a trial. Ah, you will have that case met quite soon enough! Do not run after trouble—remember troubles of our own seeking would not be genuine strokes of the rod. You may leave that in God's hands. Do not fret yourself there. Only when the trials do come to you, let this console you, that—

*“Bastards may escape the rod,
Plunged in sensual vain delight!*

*But the true born child of God
Must not—would not, if he might!”*

In our peace of soul, if God has given it to us by lot and by inheritance, some thorns and thistles must and will spring up in this present world.

Moreover, dear brothers and sisters, *the trial is greatly for our good and greatly for God’s glory*. Our faith could never grow, neither could we be sure of it, if it had not been tested. They do not send steam vessels out to sea at once. Often you see on the Clyde, vessels being tried—tried on the Gairloch—before they go out to sea. And God tries us here, before we take the great ocean of judgment—before we come to the time of death. We have our trials here and we grow by our trials. Among the best mercies we have ever received are those mercies that have come to us dressed in the somber garb of mourning which have carried treasures in both their hands. God be thanked for the fire! God be thanked for the refiner’s furnace and the crucible! They have been among the best things we have inherited from His mercy!

Thus I have brought out two ideas of the text. The Christian lives by faith and he expects that faith to be tried.

III. But now the next point is the main point of the text—that A TRUE FAITH, PUT ON TRIAL, WILL CERTAINLY BEAR IT. “Though He slays me.” It is an extreme expression. “Though He does His worst. Though He gives the last and uttermost stroke that can be taken, yet will I believe Him. Though He slays me.”

Faith will be justified to the uttermost. It is very easy to believe the creature too much. It is a common fault. It is impossible to trust the Creator too much! To trust Him too little is one of the most usual of sins. Faith in the creature is hardly ever warranted. Faith in the Creator can be warranted, push it as far as ever you like. You know that there is a point where faith in the creature must stop. Our dearest friends can go with us only to the Jordan’s brink and then they can help us no longer. But though we go through the valley of the shadow of death, God is with us and we need fear no evil. Though it actually comes to the slaying and to the death, still we may trust in Him—for He cannot—He will not fail us!

Why is it that the believer is warranted in trusting in God to the very last extremity? The answer is because He is always the same God. If He is worth trusting one day, He is worth trusting another. He cannot change. His character is such that if it is infinitely worthy of my confidence today, it will be just the same in the rough weather that may come tomorrow! Could He change, then my faith in Him ought to change—but if He is always the same true, faithful, loving and tender God, ruling all things by His power—there can be no reason why my faith should make a change. I ought to trust Him, who at all times is the same!

I ought to trust Him, also, to the last, because *outward providences prove nothing to us about God*. We cannot read outward events correctly—they are written in hieroglyphics. The book of God is readable—it is written in human language! But the works of God are often unreadable—

*“Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain.
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.”*

We begin spelling God’s works and making mischief out of them because we do not know the letters or understand the alphabet, and cannot readily know what He means. If the Lord says He loves us, do we believe it though He smites us? Do we believe that—

*“Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face?”*

Be wise, then, and believe in the God you cannot see—not in the outward providence which you can see—for if you could see that outward providence aright as God sees it, you would see it to be as full of love as assuredly God’s heart is to you if you are a believer in Him! Therefore, since the outward is no sign to us, let us, when it gathers all the black it can, still believe in Him. When it shall seem most severe and deep calls unto deep at the noise of God’s waterspouts, let us still hope in Him, for He is the health of our countenance and our God!

Moreover, brothers and sisters, there is another cause why we should always trust in Him. To whom else can we go? We are shut up to this. When it comes to slaying, to cutting, to striking and to killing work, what can the soul do but fall into the Creator’s arms? When it comes to dying, what words shall fit

these lips so well as these—"Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit." The course of the Christian's life is such that he feels it more necessary to trust every day he lives. He does not get off the line of faith—he gets more into the middle of it as he feels his weakness more. And at the last, when his weakness will be more apparent, he will need faith more than ever—and he will have it! He shall be able to say, "My flesh and my heart fails, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Ah, I ask again—to whom should we go in our trouble but unto God? All other sources are then dried up! The world mocks us, it seems to be a howling wilderness. 'Tis only from heaven the manna can come—only from the rock, Christ Jesus, the living water can gush forth!

And there is one other word I will say before I leave this point—we may depend upon it, *God will always justify our faith if we do trust Him*. There was never one who in the long run had to say, "I was a fool to trust in God." Many have said to us, in time of trouble, "He trusted in God that He would deliver him, let Him deliver him," and they have hissed between their teeth that hideous taunt, "Where is their God now?" But God has not left the righteous to be ashamed and to be offended forever! They have had, perhaps, a blush on the cheek for a moment, for the flesh is weak, but they have not been confounded for long. Faith has come to the rescue and God has fulfilled their faith! Many a man has trusted in himself and been deceived. Many have trusted in their wealth and been disappointed. Thousands have relied on friends and have been betrayed. But blessed is the man, O Lord of hosts, who stays Himself on You! You can go beyond your friend's line and measure—you may readily expect too much of him. You can try the temper of the dearest one you have on earth and at last feel that you have tried it too much. But you can never go beyond the line of God! Your sin will rather be in limiting the Holy One of Israel! You will never open your mouth too wide for Him! You will never ask too much at His hands! You will never expect too much! You will never believe too much! Has He not, Himself, said, "I am the Lord your God which brought you out of the land of Egypt, open your mouth wide and I will fill it"? The wider you open it, the better! The larger your expectations, the better, for according to your faith so shall it be done unto you!

Now, in closing I would observe that if we say the text, it *will take a good deal of saying* and, if it is true, it will need the power of God, Himself, to make it true. You can stand up tonight and say, "Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him." But how would it be if He took you at your word? Did you ever question yourself thus, Christian brothers and sisters? You have said, "Well, I hope I have a faith that will bear me safely into the presence of God." Did you ever put yourself in the posture of a dying man and think whether you could look death in the face? You have said, "I hope when I am weighed in the balances I shall not be found wanting." Did you ever get in the scales and try? Have you made a self-examination, an earnest praying, testing, and trying of yourself? They do not send out a gun from the foundry without putting it into the proof house to see whether it will bear the discharge of the powder. Have you ever put yourself into the proof house?

But beware, above all things, of religious boasting! Remember that God does not care for our words—it is the heart, it is the reality and truth of what we say—not the verbiage—that commends us to Him. Many a man says very boldly, "Though God should slays me, I will trust Him," and yet when God denies him a week's work, he does not trust Him! If he had a sick child, his faith would begin to waver. A little puff of wind will alter some people's faith, for heaviest the heart is in the heavy air! O for a faith that can stand the test! Seek such faith, look to the strong for strength in this matter and cry loudly unto Him who is the author and the finisher of faith, that He would strengthen it in you. Say, "Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief and bring me to this—that I can look anything in the face." And then say, "Let all the floods of earth, and all the outflowing from hell, and even the drenching trials that come from heaven, itself, come upon me, yet will I stay myself on the Lord, for He will not fail me, neither will He leave me! His mercy cannot depart from His chosen. He will keep to the end those who have rested in Him.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 26.*

No doubt this Psalm was written by David when his cruel persecutor, Saul, the more effectually to stab at him, spread false reports concerning his character. When the wicked can use no other weapons, they always have their quivers full of slanderous reports. Let us learn, here, that the best of men must expect to be misrepresented and to have the worst of crimes laid to their charge. Let us learn, also, from the example of David, to carry our case to the highest court at once, not to meddle with the lower courts

of earth, but to go at once to the court of the King's bench in heaven and there plead our cause before the eternal throne.

Verse 1. *Judge me, O LORD*—As if he turned away from all other judges, bribed and false as they had proved themselves to be in his case, and put himself on trial before God. “Judge me, O Lord—

1. *For I have walked in my integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.* He pleads two things. First the outward life and second the inward faith, which as it is the mainspring and source of the outer life of integrity, is also the more important of the two. Mark that as the case is between himself and his accusers, he pleads his life, for though we are justified before God by faith and not by works, yet before men we must be justified by our works, rather than by our faith. It is in vain for me to plead my faith when I am slandered. The only answer that can effectually shut the mouth of the adversary is to point to a blameless life. Hence in this case he not only brings his faith before his God, but he also brings the fruit of his faith. Note the inference which he draws from God's mercy to him in enabling him to walk uprightly and to trust Him—“therefore I shall not slide.” He rests for the future upon his God! His position was slippery, his enemies were always busy trying to trip up his heels, but he says—“I shall not slide.”

2. *Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.* This is a wonderful verse. One would hardly dare to pray it. Here are three kinds of trial. According to the etymology of the Hebrew, the first is the trial by touch—“Examine me.” The next is the trial by smell—“Prove me.” And the next is the trial by fire—“Try my reins and my heart.” You see how anxious he is to really have the matter decided by God. “Lord, search me through and through. You know I am not a hypocrite.” Now who dares to say this but that true man of God whose soul is wholly fixed upon the Lord? The reins and the heart are mentioned because those were believed to be the seat of the affections—and when the affections are right the whole man is right. The heart is the fountain from which issue streams of life and if the fountain is pure, the streams cannot be impure—hence he asks chiefly that the examination may be directed to his reins and to his heart.

3. *For your lovingkindness is before my eyes*—Right straight before his eyes he had God's loving kindness. Some people appear to have their miseries, their sorrows, their sins before their eyes, but happy is that believer who always has God's lovingkindness before him!

Come, my brothers and sisters, forget for a little while the burden of your business cares—now for a little season let the sickness that is in your house be left in the hands of your God and let His loving kindness be before your eyes. Loving-kindness—pull the word to pieces. Remember the ancientness of it, the constancy of it, the variety of ways in which it shows itself and the lavish bounties which it bestows upon you! Do not turn your back to God's goodness, but now, right straight before you sets the loving kindness of your God!

3. *And I have walked in Your truth.* By which he may mean two things. First that he endeavored to hold fast to the truths of God both in doctrine and in practice. Or, secondly, that by God's truthfulness in giving him the promised grace, he had been enabled to walk uprightly.

4. *I have not sat with vain persons*—I never took counsel with them. They never were my choice companions.

4. *Neither will I go in with dissemblers.* He makes a vow for the future that all crafty, lying, and foolish men shall never have his companionship.

5. *I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.* By which he does not mean that he does not associate with them in any way, for we must go out of the world if we will not have communion with sinners—but he means that he did not *seek* their company, found no pleasure in it and never went in it to abet them in their evil deeds.

6. *I will wash my hands in innocence.* Pilate did this, but alas, the water was very dirty in which he washed his hands! This was an old Jewish rite when a man was found murdered—if the people in the valley in which he was found would be free from the crime of murder, they took a heifer, slew it, and then washed their hands in water over the head of the victim. They were then clear. So here he says—“I will wash my hands in innocence.”

6. *So will I compass Your altar, O LORD.* He is innocent as far as men are concerned, but he still confesses that he is a sinner, for he goes to God's altar. Perfect men need no altars. It is the sinner that needs a sacrifice. So let the saint always know that though he can plead innocence against the charges of men—yet before God his hope lies in the blood sprinkled altar of which Jesus Christ is the great High Priest!

7, 8. *That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Your wondrous works. LORD, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your honor dwells.* I am sure many of us can say this, that when the Sabbath comes round, it is the best day of all the week! And that hour in the weeknight when we can get to the house of God—what an inexpressible relief is that! It is to us like a green oasis in the midst of the sandy desert. There are no beauties in nature and no changes to be perceived in traveling that I think can ever compensate for the loss of the constant means of grace—after all, God’s house is the fairest spot on earth! Zion, I will prefer you above my chief joy! If I forget you, let my right hand forget her cunning. “I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your honor dwells.”

9, 10. *Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men: in whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.* See, he so loves God’s house that he cannot bear the thought of being shut in with sinners! And this is our comfort—that if we have loved God’s house on earth, we shall dwell in His house forever!

11. *But as for me, I will walk in my integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.* See again, my beloved, how in the Christian’s practice, good works and faith are seen happily blended. He declares that he will walk in his integrity, but still, still note, he prays as one that is conscious of a thousand imperfections—“Redeem me and be merciful unto me.” We rest on Christ, alone, but still we desire to walk in holiness with as much exactness as though our salvation depended upon our good works!

12. *My foot stands in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.*

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