

Christ in the Bible Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

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Chapter 1

THE IDEAL MAN -- PSALM 1

It is usual to put a frontispiece in the beginning of a book; and if the book is a biography, the frontispiece is usually a portrait. The first Psalm is the frontispiece of the Psalter and the portrait of the man described in the course of these inspired Psalms. The perfect fulfillment of the ideal is only to be found in that Man of men, the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Himself. So it is not out of place among the Messianic Psalms, among which it was classified by the most spiritual of the Christian fathers.

It has another title to a gospel place. The word "blessed" with which it opens is the keynote of the New Testament and of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. When He opened His mouth on Mount Hattin, to proclaim the righteousness of the new kingdom, His first word was "blessed," and He repeated it again and again until He had laid the foundation of New Testament righteousness in eight beatitudes. When He went away from earth, His hands were extended in blessing; and when He closed the revelation of His love in the Apocalypse of John, its last whisper was a benediction. So this word "blessed" brings the first Psalm down to gospel times and up to gospel heights. Indeed, the book of Psalms is a wonderful anticipation of the spirit of Christianity.

This beautiful Psalm contains the portrait of a righteous man.

I. BY WAY OF CONTRAST

In the distance is the figure of the ungodly man sinking into the darker, deeper shadows of the scorner. The course of the evil man is described in a very dramatic way by three climaxes which express the downward descent of evil.

1. We have the three words -- ungodly, sinner, scorner. These are three very different stages of wickedness, three very different kinds of men.

The ungodly man is remarkable rather for what he is not. He is a man of the world, perhaps a moral and respectable man, but he is ungodly; he has no supreme love for God; he has no interest in divine things; he is not saved; he is not consecrated; he is not living for God.

But the sinner is a very different character. The progression has deepened; the ungodly man has become the sinner; the man without God has become evil; he is now a wrongdoer, a transgressor, a man positively evil, speaking, acting, thinking, living unrighteously and in

contravention to God's holy will and law. He may be a dishonest man, an immoral man, a profane man, a selfish man, a false man; but it matters little, for all sin is of the same kind if not of the same degree.

But there is a deeper gradation, the scorner. This is the reckless, presumptuous, abandoned, profane, and utterly reprobate man who has given up God, conscience, fear, hope, everything holy, sacred, and divine; who has sinned against the Holy Ghost, and has swept out on the awful current of infidelity and defiant wickedness. He is past feeling; he is given over to a reprobate mind; His heart is hardened. He despises the things of God, and he is waiting for his doom.

2. But there is a second climax, marked by the three words, counsel, way, and seat. The counsel of the ungodly is simply their example, their principles, their conversation, their ideas of things. But the way of sinners is their actual conduct, their deeds, their works of evil. The man has now come to perpetrate them, to share them, to do as they do.

But there is still a deeper descent, and that is the seat of the scorner. A way is something from which a man may turn back, but a seat is that in which he has sat down and made himself comfortable. He has committed himself to his evil course and does it without compunction, distress, or any sense of reproof or condemnation. He is a lost, willful man; and if a miracle of grace does not interpose, he is irrevocably lost.

3. There is still another climax: walketh, standeth, sitteth. The first describes an unsettled course of life. He has not yet committed himself to these principles, but is allowing himself to be thrown into contact with them.

But the next expression describes a more settled condition. He standeth. He has become settled in his evil course; he continues in it; he is determined in his spirit; he has taken his stand for evil.

But the third term is still more positive -- sitteth. It describes a man who has become at ease in his evil course, who has made himself comfortable in wrongdoing, who has fixed himself and settled himself forever in unbelief and sin. He has said to God: "Depart from me for I desire not the knowledge of your ways," and God has left him to himself, a poor self-castaway, awaiting the hour of judgment when his eyes will open with amazement and horror, and see the folly and madness of his sin.

These are the progressions of evil. Truly, the sinner cannot stand still. The descending avalanche gathers volume as it rolls. Evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. It is an awful thing to begin to go down. You reach a point where you cannot stop. Like the poor driver in California who had been accustomed to drive the stagecoach up and down the tremendous declivities of the mountains, and knew so well how to stop the wheels by pressing on the brakes; but as he lay one day upon his dying bed, conscious that he had oft neglected the great salvation, and indeed had rejected the Savior, he cried with bitter agony: "I am going down the mountain and cannot get my feet upon the

brakes!" He could find no stopping place.

O brother, if you are on the downward road today, stop! It all begins with neglecting the great salvation. The second step is rejecting, and the third step is despising. Brother, stop now, and the hand of infinite love will grasp you and lift you up to righteousness and salvation.

II. THE RIGHTEOUS MAN'S POSITIVE CHARACTERISTICS

1. "His delight is in the law of the Lord"; his life is in conformity to the will of the Lord; his character is founded upon God's revealed will. The law here does not mean the Ten Commandments, but the whole Mosaic revelation. The Hebrew word 'thorah' means instruction.

The only true foundation of any life is righteousness. Nothing else can bring blessedness. There are mechanical and material laws which cannot be violated; and if you try to build your wall off the plumb-line, it will certainly crumble in ruins about your head and leave you overwhelmed and crushed. Just as vain is it for you to attempt to build your spiritual house on unholy principles. The slightest deviation from spiritual righteousness will bring failure, danger, perhaps destruction. God expects men to be right; requires them to be right; enables them to be right. He has given us a perfect standard, and He is able to bring us up to it. Let us not try to lower it to accommodate God's will to ours, but let us hold it up in its high imperial grandeur and claim the grace to enable us to rise to meet it.

The New Testament is not less righteous than the Old. The very foundation of the redemption of Christ and the cross of Calvary is God's holiness, justice, and eternal righteousness. Nowhere does God's will shine more conspicuously than in the cross of Calvary. The very death of Christ was but a testimony to it. Even to save men God would not violate one tittle of its terms, but required the exaction of its utmost penalty, and the fulfillment of its minutest precept. Christ has come not to excuse us from the righteousness of the law, but to deliver us from the penalty of the law, and then so to deliver us from the power of sin "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

2. The second characteristic of this man is his delight in the law. Some men obey the law because they must; this man, because he wants to. Two little words express the high condition of two dispensations: the one is have to, the other is love to. The blessedness of the Christian life is that we love to do right, to be right. We delight in the law of the Lord. God writes it upon our inward parts. That service which we render without the heart's full consent is not right service. That righteousness which does not spring from the depths of our being is not complete or satisfying to the great heart of God.

He wants to make us so pure that we shall love the right and hate the wrong, and every instinct of our being shall choose the will of God, and cry, "I delight to do your will, O my God: yes, Your law is within my heart." Nothing but the infinite grace of Christ can give us this spirit. Here the Old Testament picture fails, and the New Testament Christ must come to realize the ideal only as His heart is in our heart.

3. This man is a man of practical fruitfulness and usefulness. He is not a man of theories and experiences only, but he lives in the great world of living men and women, and busy events and things, and everywhere and always his life is a benediction. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he does shall prosper."

A tree is not only a beautiful thing with its luxuriant verdure, but it is a most useful thing, especially if it is a fruit-bearing tree, and bears its fruit in its season. This man lives for others and for God, and makes the world his debtor. The age in which he lives, his country, his church, his home, his business, are all better for him. He is not a one-sided man, but he fits into all situations, and is faithful and fruitful under all circumstances. He "brings forth his fruit in his season."

Is he a business man? He carries his religion into his business. Is he an old man? He lights up the winter of age with the torch of faith and love and holy gladness. Is he a young man? He is bright, manly, enterprising, buoyant, a young man among men, but a man of God and a blessing to every one he touches. Is she a mother? She brings forth the fruit of her holy life among her children, and generations call her blessed. Is she a maiden? She adorns her youth and beauty with the loveliness of Christ's spirit and character, fresh, beautiful, springing, youthful, simple-hearted, child-like as a girl, yet sacred, white-robed, separated from the world and dedicated to God, making men and women to feel as she moves among them as if an angel had passed by. Is it a suffering Christian? There is fruit appropriate to the hour of sorrow, the time of temptation, the hard conflict, the hour of misunderstanding, loneliness, disappointment, desertion. All this is recognized but as an occasion to glorify God and show the loveliness of the Christian life. Is it a time of prosperity? There is also appropriate fruit for this, the spirit of cheerfulness, usefulness, unselfishness, and remembrance of the claims of God and the needs of men. There is fruit for childhood days, for the morning of youth, for the meridian of life, for the twilight of age, for the shadows of sorrow and death, for all possible situations, circumstances, and places; and the man whose roots are planted by the rivers of water finds in God support and strength for every possible condition.

4. The next characteristic of this man is permanence. "His leaf also shall not wither." His life is not a spasm of well-meaning effort, dying in weak reaction, but a steady, onward movement of constant and victorious power, his path shining more and more unto the perfect day. Of such a man the Master has said, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

Such are the characteristics of the godly, the righteous, the ideal man. Oh, who can meet the lineaments of the picture? who but He, of whom the world's proud, heartless ruler had to say, "Behold the man," and of whom the Father proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

III. THE BLESSEDNESS OF THIS MAN

The Hebrew introduction to the Psalm is very full and expressive. Literally it may be translated, "Oh, the blessedness!" There are many blessednesses in this life. It is always blessed, blessed in every way.

1. He is blessed in what he escapes, the wretched lot of the ungodly, the sinner, and the scorner. For, surely, the way of the transgressor is hard, and he is happy indeed that shuns it.

2. He is blessed in the spontaneousness of his life. "His delight is in the law of the Lord." Anything is happy in life if we can enjoy it and take pleasure in it. The hardest cross is a joy if it is our delight. The blessedness of the spiritual life consists in this, that it is not an effort, a struggle, a painful constraint, a burden of law; but it is a delightful freedom, a springing impulse, a spontaneous overflow, an artesian well rising ever from exhaustless depths, a great current of water to swim in, bearing us upon its bosom, and making all duty, and even trial, a luxury of joy, a luxury of love.

Oh, do you not long, heavy-laden ones, for the life in which it will not be 'have to' but 'love to'; for a life in which you shall always have your own way because you delight in God, and He gives you the desires of your heart; for a life that will fulfill His own sweet promise, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"; for a life in which you shall run in the way of His commandments when He has enlarged your heart? This is the life of the godly. This is the life of the first Psalm. This is the life of the New Testament saint. This is the life of Christ. This is the life of the Holy Ghost. This is the well of water which Jesus gives, to be within us, springing up into everlasting life. Oh, the blessedness of such a life!

3. The blessedness of such a life springs from the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. This is what is meant by the rivers of water where he is planted. These rivers refer to the blessed influences of the Holy Spirit. It is not one river, but many, the manifold streams that flow with all the fullness of the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of peace, of love, of joy, of holiness, of wisdom, of power, of prayer. This is the source of all blessedness. It is this that makes his life so spontaneous and his lot so easy. A power from above, a power from within fills all his being and divinely enables him to fulfill all the will of God.

He walks in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. He lives in that blessed kingdom which is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. He is a tree in the garden of the Lord whose fruit is love, joy, peace. He is drinking of the fountain which is the source of the blessedness of God and the raptures of heaven. Blessed is the man who is planted by the rivers of water!

4. He is blessed because all that he does shall prosper. His life is not in vain. He accomplishes what he undertakes. His work succeeds. He may not be rich or great or prosperous in the sense in which the world understands and esteems. He may have many troubles and what the world calls failure, but no real evil comes to him. All things work together for good to him. God turns everything that comes to him into real blessing, and surely this is prosperity in the truest

sense.

5. He is blessed because of God's approval. "The Lord knows the way of the righteous." This is enough to make any life happy and successful, for God to set His heart upon it and to take delight in it. The word "knows," according to a familiar Hebraism, means "to approve." The Lord does set His heart upon His people. He takes pleasure in them as a mother in her child. He looks with complacent delight upon their consecrated service and holy purposes to glorify Him. He loves to bless them. He says: "I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul."

In His favor is life, and His loving kindnesses are better than life. Oh, the blessedness of the man who walks in the light of His countenance, who walks in His favor! Oh, the happiness of "the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk in the light of your countenance!" What can harm those whom God loves, chooses, and uses? "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

6. He is blessed because of the future issues of his life in contrast with the ungodly, for there is a day coming when all lives shall be tested, and the transient prosperity of the wicked shall fade away like the chaff before the wind. Oh, then shall we know the blessedness of the righteous life, and truly appreciate what it meant to choose God as our God and to know His great salvation!

"When this passing world is done;
When has sunk yon glorious sun;
When we stand with Christ on high,
Looking o'er life's mystery;
Then, Lord, shall we fully know --
Not till then -- how much we owe."

In conclusion, where shall we look for the realization of this glorious picture? Who can fill up in his own life these perfect lineaments? Listen to the sad cry of God through the ages of the past! "I sought for a man among them . . . but I found none."

But at length the Son of man appeared; and as He stood upon the banks of the Jordan, the Father was satisfied. Humanity had reached its bloom and fruition and there was the Man on earth at last who met all the conditions of ancient prophecy and inspired Scripture. It was Jesus. But what avail is this to us? Can we imitate His holy character any more than we can fulfill the first Psalm? No! Teaching and example are alike unequal to the task of transforming man. We know the right but cannot rise to it. Thank God, there is a better way!

Here is a beautiful rose. How we wish we could copy it. The painter takes his brushes and he tries, and lo, there appears a very wonderful imitation. But you put it to your face, and there is no fragrance. It is a lifeless pigment. Or perhaps some gentle fingers carefully shape from wax or some finer fabric the exquisite petals, and tint them like the beautiful forms of nature. As you hold it in your hand, it looks like a rose; but, still, it is dead, and you throw it aside dissatisfied. It

is not your rose. Ah, there is a better way!

Cut a little graft from that rose and put it in the warm nursery; or take one of its seeds and plant it in the ground. In a little while, opening its fragrant bud and breathing its sweetness into your nostrils, you have the offspring of your rose! It is identical because it was born of it. It is its own very self reproduced. Ah, that is the secret of the first Psalm! To imitate Christ and His example is but a painted or imitation rose; but to take the living Christ and let Him be born in your heart and reproduce Himself there, so that it is not you but Christ that lives in you -- that is the living rose. That is why He lived and died and rose again, that He might come into every open heart and become its life and purity, its love and joy, its righteousness and salvation.

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 2

THE COMING KING -- PSALM 2

The Messianic character of this Psalm is established beyond all others by the frequent references to it in the New Testament, in direct connection with the Lord Jesus Christ. To none but Him could its strong language be applied without the wildest extravagance. It contains three striking pictures.

I. THE EARTH PICTURE

It is a vision of the world in rebellion against God and His Son, Jesus Christ. The first element in the picture is the restlessness of the nations. "Why do the heathen rage?"

To the Psalmist's mind, humanity is like a heaving ocean, like a troubled sea which cannot rest. The stormy deep is frequently employed as a symbol of human passion, and of the troubled, restless masses of humanity. Along with this, the Psalm expresses the idea of vanity, of unrest and strife. "Why do . . . the people imagine a vain thing?" They are like the ocean, ever fretting but never accomplishing anything by its unrest, beating against the shore in futile rage, and rolling back again into its own restless tides, rising and falling, but never any fuller.

"Vanity of vanities" indeed. Oh, how little has come out of all the world's ambition and mighty endeavor! What is Pharaoh today but a withered mummy in a glass case? What is Caesar but a particle of dust that makes up old Rome? What has become of Nebuchadnezzar's grandeur or the very site of his splendid city? Well might the great Frenchman say as he gazed on the splendid pageant of the review of the Grand Army under the Pyramids, "Nothing is lacking here, nothing but permanence." Oh, how the smallest fragment of all that which came from God lives in immortal glory while the mightiest monument of human greatness passes away in oblivion!

Pharaoh is gone, but Moses remains. Nero is forgotten, but Paul is more illustrious today than when he died under Nero's hand. Nebuchadnezzar is but a dream, but Daniel's prophecies are only today reaching their grandest fulfillment. Pontius Pilate and Tiberias Caesar have disappeared, but Jesus Christ, their contemporary, is rising every day, every century, into still more prominence.

On the front of a Mohammedan mosque, centuries ago, was traced in gilt letters the name of Mahomet, but underneath the plaster that bore the inscription, the Christian architect secretly cut in the solid stone the name of God and a verse of His holy Word. This was the verse: "His

kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and his dominion endures to all generations." Ages passed on, the superficial stucco crumbled from the front of the mosque and left the stone work exposed to view, and then the inscription of God's holy Word came out in all its bold relief. Today it stands before the eyes of every passer-by a memorial of the imperishable glory of the things of God, and the transitoriness of all man's boastful pride. How vain, how transient, how futile all the selfishness, the ambition, and the strife against God!

But the figure tells not only of the restlessness and vanity, but also of rebellion. "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." This is the spirit of lawlessness which in every age has resisted the authority of God and is culminating today, as never before, in a thousand forms of license and lawlessness, and which is to reach its full development in the coming of the Lawless One. We see it in its most extreme forms in the anarchy and socialism of our age and the revolt of men against every form of government and religion.

We see it next in the democratic tendencies of our time. We see it in the bold antagonism of many to the authority of the Christian religion, and the popular demand for a freedom that ignores the Sabbath day, the laws of marriage, and even the restraints of morality sometimes. We see it in the insubordination of the young, the precocious freedom of the children of our land, the dissolution of parental authority and control, and the irreverence and self-will of the young.

We see it in the spirit of freedom that is entering the Church of Christ, lowering the standard of Christianity, the spirit of compromise with the world, the laxity of Christian life, the rejection of the authority of the Scriptures, the tendency to reduce even God's Word to the standard of human reason, the refusal of the human heart to submit to God's requirements of personal holiness on the part of His people, the ungodliness and unrighteousness of professing Christians, and the refusal to believe that God requires personal holiness on the part of all who claim to be His people and his followers. We see the two classes even in the Church of God: those who accept God's holy will in all its requirements, and those who do that which is right in their own eyes.

The age is rapidly drifting into license and lawlessness, and we need not wonder at the bolder forms that the daring infidelity and wickedness assume, in defying the very authority of heaven and claiming that man is able to be a God unto himself. We shall yet see greater things than these. The world is hastening to its Armageddon, "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

II. THE HEAVEN PICTURE

How different is all on the heaven side!

1. How calm and tranquil is Jehovah amid the raging of His foes! He "sits in the heavens." He is not agitated, He is not oppressed. He is not even doing anything, but calmly waiting till they

have spent their force in vain, like the fretting billows against the rockbound coast.

2. He despises all their petty and futile hostility. "He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." How foolish must seem to Him all the efforts of His enemies to defy Him! How ridiculous the attacks of infidelity upon the Bible, and how vain the fiercest assaults of human and hellish hatred against the cause of Christ! How God loves to confound His enemies by little things, and to laugh to scorn their vain attempt to resist Him.

Once in England, it is said, a bold and blatant infidel had amused and overawed a crowd by his defiance of God to strike him dead; and after again and again appealing to heaven to prove if there was anything in Christianity, without any apparent effect, he turned to his audience and ridiculed the God who was powerless to harm him. Some were influenced by his audacity, but God was waiting. On his way home, apparently in good health, he suddenly fell from his horse, and in a few moments expired. A medical examination was held, it was found that the cause of his death was a little insect no larger than a sand fly, which he had inhaled. This smallest of insects was sent against him to show how contemptible all his strength and opposition were, and how easily God could confound and destroy him by the feeblest of His creatures.

So, again and again, has God turned into contempt the wrath of His enemies. The very place that was once used as a meeting place for infidels in London became an office of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the very arguments that infidelity has turned against Christianity have been found afterwards to be the strongest evidences of the truth of the Bible.

3. At length God's hour will come, and His mighty voice will speak in anger and His glorious arm be raised in judgment. "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." God's judgments have already fallen upon a sinful world, and the vials of His wrath are now preparing for the days of tribulation. So daring has human wickedness become and so audacious human pride, that

"The purging fires must soon begin,
And judgment end the curse of sin."

4. God's supreme remedy for all the evils of humanity is His own dear Son, Jesus Christ. Not judgment, but Jesus, is the provision of heaven for rebellious men. So we come to

III. THE CHRIST PICTURE

1. We see the divine King. "You are my Son; this day have I begotten you." Earth's true King is no less than God's eternal Son. That which should be recognized as the height of honor has been the one object of the world's fiercest opposition. The Lord's parable has been fulfilled. "Last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But . . . they said . . . This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." But He shall have His inheritance in this little world, the high and eternal honor of having as its King the Creator of all worlds and the highest of all beings.

2. He is the King of Zion, the King of Israel Himself. On the cross the inscription was by the order of an overruling providence: "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS," and this shall yet be verified in the fulfillment of history. Christ is the only living heir to David's throne, and on that throne He shall yet sit in glory and majesty.

3. He is the King of His Church. Men have tried to govern the spiritual kingdom of God, but Christ is the only Head of His Church, and all her work and worship should be subject to His authority and dedicated to His glory.

4. He is the King of Nations. "Ask of me, and I shall give you the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession." All earth's nations are yet to be subject to Him, and all her tribes and tongues are to have a part in the redemption song of which He shall be the theme. But let us not forget how this kingdom is to come to Him. It is to be given to prayer. "Ask of me." Is this to be His prayer alone, or is it to be His prayer in unison with the Church as inspired by the Holy Ghost? Is this not our high calling, to be the voice with which He shall ask? the priesthood through whom His prayer shall be breathed to heaven, and the world evangelized and brought to His feet?

This is the great force, dear friends, through which the Gospel is to be spread among all nations. This is the mightiest force of Christianity today: believing prayer prompted by the Holy Ghost. This is the mightiest missionary lever. And this is something that every Christian may wield if he will, in the power of the Holy Spirit. It will be found by a reference to the history of missions, that all the great triumphs of the Gospel have been in answer to prayer. It will bring money, it will bring men, it will bring openings for the Gospel, it will bring millions to accept it. Let us mention two simple illustrations.

A few years ago, two or three earnest women were led to ask in united prayer that God would lay it upon the hearts of some men of wealth to give largely to foreign missions. In the town where they held their little prayer meetings there was a very rich man who was opposed to foreign missions and had often spoken of the folly of giving so much to the heathen when there was so much need at home. After a time this man died; and when his will was probated, it was found that he had left many thousands of dollars to foreign missions, and that the will was made at the very time these ladies were praying about this matter. God had quickly answered their prayer and touched his heart, without his knowing whence the impulse came.

Again, in a little town in Ohio, an old minister had received the baptism of the Holy Ghost and spent his last days in continued prayer for the world's evangelization. It was customary for him to write his prayers in his diary, and this he did with systematic order, going around the world and covering in turn every mission field. It was found after his death that in the very order of his prayers God had poured out His Spirit upon each one in the form of missionary revivals, leading to the conversion of many souls. Thus God had answered his prayers with such literal exactness as to encourage us in claiming definite results.

Oh, do we realize how much Christ depends upon us to give completeness to His intercession? He is but the Head in heaven, we are the body on earth, and He needs us to fill up the unity of

the prayer and make it the cry of the whole body -- not only the Head in heaven but the Bride on earth, with the Holy Ghost inspiring her cry. Beloved, do you realize that your Master needs your prayers? You have prayed much for yourself; do you ever pray for Jesus? He is asking you today, Will you pray for Me and My kingdom? It is one of the promises of the seventy-second Psalm, "Prayer shall be made for him continually." How much are you praying for Him? How much have you been delivered from selfish prayers? What fruit are you claiming in heathen lands which you may never see?

5. "He is the King of kings." "Be wise now therefore, O you kings: be instructed, O you judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." How marvelously God has put His hand on earth's kings and shown His ascendancy over all human power! How easily He came to the house of Pharaoh, through the infant Moses, and used a child to humble the monarch! How quickly He came to Babylon, through the three Hebrew children, and by their victorious faith compelled Nebuchadnezzar to proclaim the true God through all his dominion! How easily He stepped into the palace of Xerxes, and by the influence of a Hebrew maiden controlled the mighty monarch of the world and saved a whole race from destruction! How manifest His providence in the career of Alexander and his successors, and the minuteness with which He made them fulfill the prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah to the letter! How easily He arrested the career of the great Napoleon and caged him on a lonely isle when He had accomplished His purpose through him! How quickly He humbled the pride of the Papacy in the very hour in which it claimed infallibility with impious audacity! How mightily within the last few decades His hand has moved upon all the nations and shaken all the thrones of earth, and how easily some day He will cause them all to crumble before His touch and give way to Messiah's throne!

O beloved, let us take hold in mighty prayer for earth's kings and governments. There is a promise in the book of Proverbs which we may claim for the evangelization of the world: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turns it whithersoever he will." Our King has sent us forth not merely to the people of this world, but to its nations and sovereigns. "Go you therefore and disciple all nations," is His royal commission. Like ambassadors of a great king, we go forth to take not only individuals but nations for our Lord.

How much depends upon the attitude of the governments of the earth to the Gospel, and we can control this by the ministry of prayer. Let us claim the hearts of earth's rulers for Christ, the King of kings.

6. He is the King of love and grace. So far the picture has been one of majesty and, in some degree, of terror; at least, of power and judgment. But suddenly it all changes, and an appeal of infinite and surpassing tenderness closes the whole wonderful drama.

It reminds one of the scene toward the close of our Savior's life when He had just been honored and worshiped as the King of Israel, and, amid the plaudits of the multitude, was marching into Jerusalem. But suddenly, on the side of Olivet as the city burst into view, His whole demeanor changed, and the procession paused at His command. For a moment He gazed at the city at His feet and, bursting into a flood of passionate weeping, cried: "O

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them which are sent unto you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not!"

He could not enjoy the grandeur of the spectacle before Him. He saw not the enthusiasm of the multitudes and the glory of the city and the temple. He could see only the gathering legions of Rome, soon to encompass the beleaguered city, the famine and the terror of the doomed inhabitants, the streets running red with human blood, the pillage and horror that were soon to follow, the captives going forth unto all nations, the ashes of the temple and the desolation of the city for nearly twenty centuries. All this He saw; and as if He would save them even yet from its horrors, He poured out His heart in one last appeal of tender compassion and love.

Such is the picture of this Psalm. Suddenly all the figures of royal majesty are changed, and, bending from His throne, the Savior reaches down His lips of love to rebellious men and, offering the kiss of reconciliation, cries: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way." It is mercy in the midst of majesty. It is love triumphing over judgment.

He sees the coming tribulation. He sees the iron hand that will break rebellious men like a potter's vessel. But He would save us from it. He would gather us to His bosom and shelter us in the coming storm if we would accept His love. He would spread out His wings for the little birdlings and shield them from the cruel hawk and the angry tempest if they only would. His highest prerogative is mercy. His dearest attribute is love. His most kingly glory is to forgive and save.

These are expressed by this beautiful figure: "Kiss the Son."

1. It speaks first of submission. The kiss is the Oriental token of absolute submission; and so our first attitude toward Christ must be surrender. He will lead us into a closer union and lift us to a higher friendship, but we must begin with submission and unconditional surrender; then shall we find that He will welcome us with tenderest love and lift us up into His royal favor.

Bunyan has given us in the allegory of the Holy War, a picture of the surrender of the town of Mansoul to King Immanuel. Long it held out against Him and tried to resist His authority. But at length it was forced to surrender unconditionally and its citizens compelled to march in single file into His presence, with ropes around their necks, acknowledging themselves as worthy of death, and submitting themselves to His sovereign will. But then, to their astonishment, as they lay prostrated at His feet, He caused the herald to proclaim the decree of forgiveness to all the transgressors, through His clemency and mercy. The herald was also to add that King Immanuel had not only forgiven the rebellious town of Mansoul, but had also determined to bestow signal honors and privileges upon the city that had submitted to Him, and make it henceforth His capital and home, and lavish upon it the highest privileges of His kingdom, accepting its citizens as His own personal children, and sharing with them all the riches of His glory. He requires of them that they shall yield unreservedly to Him, and then He rewards them with His richest blessings and fondest love.

2. The figure expresses reconciliation. It tells of friends divided meeting in love and forgiveness. It recalls the picture of Jacob and Esau falling upon each other's bosom in the embrace of mutual love. It tells us of the prodigal and his father meeting in each other's arms with the kiss of reconciliation. It tells of the Savior waiting to forgive and ready to receive the poor sinner to a higher place than Adam lost or angels ever knew. He, at whose feet holy angels fell in adoring awe, bends His lips to kiss the vilest sinner.

Once at the door of a police court a refined lady met a poor abandoned girl in the hands of the police. The poor creature looked so dejected and ashamed, that the lady threw her arms around her and kissed her lips, with some tender words of compassion. The girl was so overwhelmed that she burst into tears and said: "You are the only one who has kissed me since I left my mother. How could you do it?" And that kiss saved her precious soul and brought her to receive her Redeemer's love.

Down in a police court in New York City, a man was on trial. His wife had testified against him, and the judge was about to pronounce a very severe sentence, when the babe in the mother's arms caught sight of its father in the prisoner's dock, and began to cry and to reach out its little hands to go to him. The mother allowed it to climb over the railing. The father took it in his arms. The little one was overjoyed, and in the presence of the court began to caress him in a very tender manner, putting its arms around his neck and kissing him with childlike love and freedom. The court was deeply moved.

The judge even felt the tender appeal, and, after a moment of silence and deep feeling, he said to the man, "You may thank that child for your freedom. I was about to punish you severely for your inexcusable conduct, but the kiss of that little child has saved you from a long term of imprisonment. A man that can be so loved by a pure child cannot after all be utterly hopeless." So, dear friends, there is One who bends from heaven and offers you the kiss of His love. "God's holy Child Jesus" will stand between you and your doom, and the Judge upon the throne will spare even the vilest sinner who accepts that kiss of reconciliation. Oh, do not refuse such love. How easy it is to come back to God in that simple way! How easy it was for you as a little child to go to your father and your mother and by a kiss of reconciliation know that all was forgiven.

Some years ago a minister was called to see his boy die, as was supposed. He was a young man just out of his teens, but did not know the Savior. The father was told as he entered the hospital that the boy could not live many hours, and that if he had anything to say, it must be said quickly. He entered the chamber and took the cold hand of his child with deep emotion. The son looked up and said: "Father, they tell me I am dying, and I know I am not saved. Tell me in the fewest words you can just how to come to Christ, and tell me as if I had only five minutes to live."

What a responsibility for a father's heart! But he sat down and quietly said, "My boy, my dear boy! You remember once when you were a child how you grieved and disobeyed me. I had to treat you with severity and refuse to let you come to me as you used to, and sit on my knee and put your arms about my neck. You saw that it hurt me to be stern and distant as much as it

hurt you, but that I had to do it for your good. But you remember how at last you could not stand it any longer, and you came to me, threw yourself into my arms, and said: 'Papa, forgive me. I am sorry. I will try never to do it again.' You remember how quickly I forgave you without a word, and just took you in my arms and loved you more than ever, and it was all right between us. Just one kiss settled all the trouble. That is all, my dear boy, that you have to do with your Savior. Just as you came to me, go to Him, and He is more willing than I was to take you to His love and make you know it."

"Is that all, Father?" the son answered. "Then pray for me, and I will do it." He covered his face, closed his eyes, and all was still for a few minutes. Then there was a little sob. He threw the covering from his face, opened his eyes, and, with a cry of joy, said: "It is all right, Father. He has received me, and I know that I am saved." That was all, but it was enough. The soul passed from hell to heaven, from sin to salvation forever, and so blessed was the effect of the transition that it lifted him above the power of disease and death. In a few days he was recovering and became one of the most prominent devoted Christian men of this country, not ashamed to tell others the wonderful story of his simple conversion. Oh, who is there that, as he reads these lines, will "kiss the Son" and come into the love of God, of a God who waits to be gracious, with more than a father's love?

3. But the figure means more than reconciliation. It tells of intimate friendship and tender love. So Jesus is calling us into the inner circle of His friendship. Soon He is coming in His glory, and the world will see Him as a mighty King. But He wants us to know Him as a tender, welcome Friend. Clad in his war-like armor, Ulysses met his child. It cowered and fled from his father. The old hero could not stand it. Tearing the helmet from his head and the breastplate from his bosom, he clasped the little one in his arms and said, "Darling, you must not fear me." Then it looked in his face with smiles of joy and said, "Papa, I am not afraid of you now because I know you."

O beloved, shall we meet Him in the armor of His might and the glory of His majesty, and cry to the rocks and mountains to "hide us from the face of him that sits upon the throne"? Or shall we meet Him with the loving confidence of happy children; and as we look up to that majestic throne, shall we catch the glance of a loving welcome that will seem to say, "I know you; you are mine"?

It will be a dreadful day for those to whom He shall say, "I know you not." Job could say in blessed contrast, "Whom I shall see for myself . . . and not another." He is longing to know you now and take you into the inner circle of His friends, so that when that day shall come, you shall look up with transport and say: "This is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Yonder is a steamer reaching the dock. I see two persons on board. But, oh, with what different feelings they view the landing! One is a prisoner in charge of an officer. On that dock are standing the officers of justice who are to carry him to the gloomy prison to bear the punishment of the crimes for which he has been arrested, and brought from far-off lands. Oh,

how he dreads that landing!

But another is standing near. It is a daughter returning home. Her father and mother are waiting on that pier. Her husband also stands there with smiles of welcome, and many loving friends are waving their handkerchiefs and sending their welcome across the narrow space as the ship draws to the shore. Oh, what a different meeting!

So it will be when Christ comes again. Some will meet Him with horror and dismay; some, with rapture and delight. To some it will be a day of judgment and an everlasting prison; to others, it will be the Bridegroom, the wedding, and the homecoming.

"Oh, shall we be found of Him in peace,
Spotless and free from blame?
Shall we meet Him with loving confidence,
Or with tears of grief and shame?"

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 3

THE HEAD OF HUMANITY -- PSALM 8

What a wonderful page is the blue firmament of heaven! Always beautiful, it is most beautiful of all in the glorious East as David gazed upon it often on the plains of Bethlehem, and Persian sages studied it with eager search for truth and God. Oldest pages, grandest of records, graven with the finger of God, punctuated with burning stars of light! All else beneath those old skies has changed, but the skies are still the same. The same constellations are hanging in the blue vault which the Magi studied and which David wrote about in this beautiful Psalm.

But how the page has grown since David's day, in another sense, through the deeper insight which human science has given to the vision and the mind of man. Under the telescopic lens, how much more those skies reveal than David saw, and with what deeper meaning and profounder feeling the intelligent astronomer, or even the well-informed and developed student of natural science, can read these ancient words: "When I consider Your heavens, the works of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him?"

I. THE MAJESTY OF NATURE

We have here a view of the majesty of nature. Majestic and glorious as the heavens are to the natural eye, they are incomparably grander when seen with the eye of science and under the magnifying lenses of the telescope of the astronomer. Man has been able in the progress of the human mind to weigh these mighty orbs, to span that vast immensity, to tell how far those worlds are hung from our little planet, and how long their light has been traveling across the mighty spaces of immensity.

The facts of astronomy are so stupendous that the mind reels under the weight, and the brain almost sinks in the effort to realize their magnitudes and distances. So we first think of their vastness.

We know something of the dimensions of our globe. It is a pretty large sphere, especially when we begin to travel across the continents. But our globe is but a pigmy among the planets of our system.

Yonder crystal star that shines in the evening -- our noble planet Jupiter -- is hundreds of times bigger than this globe; and yonder sun that whirls us around his center once a year is 350,000 times the size of the earth. It would take 350,000 earths to make one sun. But the sun is by no

means the vastest of the worlds of space. While he is the king of light to the planets of our system, yet there are other suns in yonder firmament that look to us like little stars, far vaster than he.

Beautiful Sirius, the brightest of the fixed stars -- that shines like Venus all night long in our heavens -- is 63 times as big as the sun. Yonder Pole Star, that you have to search for in the heavens because of its comparative insignificance, is 86 times the size of the sun. Arcturus, of which Job sang so long ago, would make 500 of our suns; and Alcyone, which twinkles in the Pleiades -- the beautiful seven stars, so-called, which you can see any evening directly above your head -- could be divided into 12,000 pieces, and each piece would be as large as the sun.

The comet of 1680 covered a space four times the distance between us and the moon, and its tail was long enough to reach from here to the sun, and then nearly as far beyond, or about 130,000,000 miles.

Shall we look next at the distance of these vast orbs? Our nearest neighbor is yonder silvery moon that seems to us so much greater than the stars because so near. She is 240,000 miles away, or about thirty times the diameter of our globe. The sun is about 400 times farther distant than this, or 95,000,000 miles. This seems an enormous distance, and yet light which travels about 240,000 miles in a second, could reach us from the moon in a little more than a second. From the sun it takes about ten minutes for the light to come; that is to say, after the sun rises in the morning, it takes about ten minutes for its light to reach us, swiftly as it flies across the intervening spaces.

But yonder Pole Star is 3,000,000 times as far as the moon, and the light which takes only ten minutes to reach us from the sun would be sixty years in reaching us from Polaris. That is, if it had been destroyed sixty years ago, it would only now disappear from the sky. But what is that compared with distant Andromeda, one of the stars of yonder nebula, so far away that it would take 7,000,000 years for its light to reach our globe!

Look up some night in the southern heavens, and you will see a faint light upon the sky. When looked at with a powerful telescope, it is a great bank of suns, each standing out distinct. How wide, do you suppose, is that space of stars? How far from the one extremity to the other of that little circle of nebulous light? It would take a ray of light, traveling 200,000 miles a second, 30,000 years to sail across that little speck.

Do you begin to realize the immensity of the universe? In that one little cloud of light there are suns upon suns, systems upon systems, worlds upon worlds.

But, again, think of their numbers. We can count a few thousand stars upon the sky at night. How many do you suppose astronomers have found in our firmament? Eighteen million, and these are all suns, each of them with its train of worlds around it like ours.

There are about 300 worlds in the solar systems. Suppose there should be as many in each of these 18,000,000 systems, how many worlds, do you suppose, belong to even our firmament?

The mind is lost in trying to count. But they say there are millions of other firmaments besides ours, and each has its new stars which we have never seen. No wonder that we labor in vain to grasp the realization, and cry, "Lord what is man?"

Shall we think of their movements and velocities, the satellites revolving around their planets, the planets around their suns, and each sun with its planet revolving around some great center, and each of the suns revolving around some still greater? And so on, wheel beyond wheel, until we reach the satellite systems, the solar systems, the cluster systems, and the great universe systems, where all the stars of yonder heaven seem whirling around mighty Alcyone in the distant Pleiades, beyond which there may be still vaster wheels circling away through the realms of immensity.

This earth itself is spinning around yonder sun at the rate of 70,000 miles an hour, or twenty miles a second, and yet there is not even the vibration of the mighty express train as it sweeps through space. But the mighty comet of 1680 flew around the sun at the rate of 200 miles a second; and yet with this immense velocity, so vast was its orbit that it would take thirty centuries to complete its year. Surely, this is too high for us to comprehend, too vast for us to measure, and yet we can realize it sufficiently to sink into our littleness and to rise from our nothingness into the conception of our Father's majesty and unsearchable glory.

But not only are these heavenly bodies vast and majestic, but they are beautiful beyond expression. Looked at through our modern instruments, some of yonder suns are brilliant green; some, like the Pole Star, a gorgeous yellow; some, a heavenly blue; some, like the Southern Cross, the color of drops of blood, while other stars are variegated, combining all the colors of the rainbow and looking like great bouquets of light in the heavens. Oh, what will they seem when we shall be endued in the new creation with all the physical powers which science is now anticipating, and faith is foretasting, and we shall know as we are known!

Such are some of the facts of this material universe. Surely "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

II. THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF MAN

"What is man, that You are mindful of him? and the son of man, that You visit him?" Surely at first sight man seems to be a strange contradiction as heir of all this mighty universe. His body, how weak and frail, the prey of disease, the victim of even the animal creation, and at last the food of corruption and the worm; his mind so weak and enfeebled even to understand this mighty world; his spirit so oppressed by sin and sorrow, and led captive by evil influences and unhallowed beings! How touching Job's description of the littleness of man who dwells in a house of clay, whose habitation is in the dust, who is crushed before the moth, whose days are as a handbreadth, and his life like the withering grass of the field!

And yet in the great purpose of God man has an importance that we can scarcely comprehend.

Sometimes a very insignificant being has a singular value. Sometimes a little child is worth more than a whole kingdom. Sometimes it is the question of relationship. If that child is the child of a king, an empire's destiny is wrapped up in his life. Little Moses in the Nile was more important than the pyramids of Egypt. Humble David in his sheepfold was more important than all the sons of Saul. So man, little as he may be, sustains a relation to the Creator of this universe which is unspeakably intimate and glorious. Into our nature has come the very Son of God Himself. The eternal Creator has called Himself our brother. Our human form is worn by Him who sits upon the throne. Our strange race, fallen though it is, has been chosen as the one eternal link between the Creator and the creation; and to latest ages, as angel after angel shall come, and inhabitant after inhabitant shall find his way to the great metropolis of the universe, he shall still find seated upon the throne, supreme above all those glorious worlds that we have just been viewing, a Man.

This it is that makes our race so important, that it is related to God Himself, and has been chosen to be the eternal embodiment of the Deity. This is the mystery of godliness: "God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, . . . received up into glory."

But, again importance is sometimes determined by a question of principle. A single human life has become important because it decided a principle. Six or seven Englishmen imprisoned in Abyssinia were important enough to bring on a war between Great Britain and that land. Nay, a single American subject, unjustly treated by a foreign nation, would involve this whole nation in war, if necessary, for his vindication. The little field of Waterloo was of no importance until a certain day when it became the scene where the destinies of Europe were to be decided and the greatest despot of the nineteenth century was to be broken forever.

And so man is linked with the greatest principle in the universe, the achievement of redemption, the settlement of the question of sin without inflicting punishment, the salvation of a lost race in harmony with the justice of God.

The question of sin, so far as justice was concerned, had been settled before when Satan and his legions had been hurled from heaven because of their disobedience and rebellion.

But now another question has come up. How can sin be met in any other way -- not by judgment, but by mercy -- and yet the holiness and justice of God be vindicated? Nothing less than the infinite wisdom and love of God met the issue. His own Son undertook the amazing mission, and, clothed in human form, bore the penalty of a guilty race, and now is working out for them the wondrous transformation by which the effects of that atonement become applied, and they are brought back not only from all the effects of sin, but to a place infinitely higher than the race ever could have enjoyed before; to be the sons of God, the partakers of the divine nature, the heirs of all the glory of which we have just now been speaking.

This gives to man an importance of which he in himself is altogether unworthy. This little planet has been chosen as the theater for working out the greatest problem of the ages, and it is yet to become the scene of the triumphant march of the King of kings and the Conqueror of Satan, over which all the stars shall wave their torches, and all the spheres shall sing in concert with

cherubim and seraphim: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

III. THE HONOR BESTOWED UPON MAN

"You are mindful of him . . . You visit him. For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and have crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet."

This is high honor. God is mindful of man notwithstanding his insignificance. God has devoted His highest, wisest thoughts to the welfare of man. We are the supreme objects of the attention of Jehovah. How precious are His thoughts! This glorious Bible is the record of some of them, but they are more than can be numbered, and the ages to come shall "show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

But further and higher; He has not only been mindful of us, He has visited us. He has made this world His residence. He has tabernacled among us, and He is coming back again to dwell upon it through the coming age, and for a thousand years this little planet will be the center of the universe and the metropolis of all other worlds. Not distant Alcyone, but little Earth, will be the proud and happy capital of the realms of air, and wondering angels shall hover round it, and often say, perhaps, as they come from yonder blazing worlds, "What is man, that You visit him?"

Not only so, "You crown him with glory and honor." Made a little lower than the angels, he is raised above them, for it is clearly taught here that he is to receive the supreme place in creation; for even this Psalm declares that this is to be taken rigidly and literally, and that "in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him" (see Heb. 2: 8). He is yet to rise to the supremacy of the universe, higher than those 18,000,000 suns, more glorious than all the satellites and stars, more mighty than all the forces of nature, and more honored than the highest archangel that bends before the throne.

IV. MAN'S FAILURE TO REALIZE THIS

This does not come out of the Psalm, but it does in the New Testament commentary of it. Speaking of it in the second chapter of Hebrews, the inspired writer says: "What is man, that You are mindful of him? or the son of man, that You visit him? . . . You have put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him." Oh, how true this is! We do not see this proud empire of man. We see human conquerors trying to gain this crown of universal dominion, but becoming themselves the slaves of sin and passion, enslaving others under them, and sinking at last beneath the dominion of the grave, while their empires fade away like the snowdrifts or the autumn leaves.

Man's place, as a fact, is still that of a poor, sinning, sinking, sorrowing creature. With every pulse beat, another and another is passing to the grave, and up to heaven evermore is rising

from this sad world one ceaseless groan of agony amid the spheres of space in a little black cloud of unbroken gloom. Even we who have begun to receive our kingdom are yet struggling with forces that oft seem too strong for us. Sin, Satan, sorrow, and sickness press us, and all things are not yet put under our feet. A few have sprung into victory, but it is only moral and spiritual. Material things still hold us down, and we are shut in from our great inheritance by the limitations of mortality, and can only claim our crown in foretaste, in hope and aspiration. But, thanks be to God, the problem is solved, the paradox is explained. "We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus."

V. THE HEAD OF HUMANITY CROWNED

We see Jesus, the Head of humanity, crowned already as the pledge that we shall share His crown and inherit all His glory. The race is not yet victorious, but the Head of the race is; and where He is, we shall be; as He is, so shall we be like Him! Glorious hope! We have not the victory yet in all its fullness, but we have the Victor, and "he that sanctifies and they who are sanctified are all of one."

He is not there for Himself, but for us, "Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all." Glorious vision! Glorious forerunner! Glorious guarantee! It is enough! Man is crowned! Man is crowned in the Son of man, and all His spiritual seed are following hard after Him, and soon shall be by His side. Oh, as we see our failings and shortcomings, our limitations and disappointments, let us look up! One has reached yonder heights, and we are following Him. Invisible cords bind us to His heart. We can never be separated from Him. Not as a solitary and selfish Conqueror does He sit yonder, but as our Brother and Helper, and from His heart there come to our hearts the cords of love and power that are drawing us to Him to share His dominion and to partake of His glory.

This was the meaning of the cherubim that God placed at the gate of Eden in the hour of man's shameful fall. The faces of the lion, the ox, the eagle, and the man were typical of the glory of the Son of man, to which we, His redeemed posterity, are yet to rise. When the picture of man's primeval innocence had been blighted and broken, God hung up the picture of man's redeemed and far surpassing glory, that man might see from the beginning his future destiny, and that it might lift him to high and glorious hopes.

Not the cherubim now at the gates of Eden, but the loving Christ at the gospel gates, standing before us as the Pattern of our perfect humanity, the Inspiration of our hopes, and the glorious Head of our redeemed race. Let us claim the realization for ourselves. Let us see Jesus. Let us take Jesus. Let us rest short of nothing that He has given us in Himself, and amid all the discouragements, depressions, and defeats of life, let us look up, let us press on, let us sing:

"High is the rank we now possess,
But higher we shall rise;
Though what we shall hereafter be
Is hid from mortal eyes.

"Our souls, we know, when He appears
Shall bear His image bright;
For all His glory full disclosed
Shall open to our sight.

"A hope so great and so divine
May trials well endure,
And purge the soul from sense and sin
As Christ Himself is pure."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 4

THE ASCENDED CHRIST -- PSALMS 16, 24, 68

These three beautiful Psalms give us the combined picture of the risen and ascended Christ. The twenty-fourth comes in central order after the twenty-second and twenty-third. The twenty-second is the Psalm of crucifixion; the twenty-third, the picture of blessings that follow to us; and the twenty-fourth, the ascension of the Lord and His glorious reign at God's right hand. The logical order begins with Psalm 16: "My flesh also shall rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in hell; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life: in Your presence is fulness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore."

I. DESCENT INTO HADES

This is the inspired picture of what is known in the ancient creeds as the Lord's descent into Hades. That the Psalm refers to our Lord directly is evident from Peter's application of it in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. Peter says it cannot refer to David, whose sepulcher is with them, and whose flesh has seen corruption. Therefore, it must refer to Jesus, who had been raised from the dead by the power of the Father.

But what is meant by His descent into Hades? For the Apostle says in Ephesians: "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" The Apostle Peter has given us the strongest light on this subject of any New Testament writer: "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit [or rather, in the Spirit]: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient . . . in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water."

This forms the battleground of Bible exposition. It is not necessary that we should even state all the views that have been held and advocated. It is enough to give the two which are most approved by evangelical teachers. The old conservative view is that it refers to Noah preaching through the Holy Ghost to the antediluvians, who are now "the spirits in prison," because they were disobedient when he preached to them. In other words, and freely paraphrased, it might be rendered thus: "Jesus is put to death in the flesh, but is quickened, or raised from the dead by the Holy Spirit, which in the days of Noah, and through Noah, preached unto the unbelieving men of that age, who are spirits in prison." In fact, it is a bungling attempt to make the Bible meet a preconceived opinion; and even though it is a good opinion, it is a profanation to wrest Scripture, even with the best intent.

The central meaning of the passage is, that Christ died in His body, but not in His spirit; but, on the contrary, that spirit was quickened into intenser life the moment of His death, and in the disembodied state His spirit went and preached to spirits in prison; that is, to the inhabitants of the world of the dead. The Old Testament represents departed spirits as dwelling in a region called Sheol or Hades.

This seems to have had two sections, one for the lost and one for the saved. The latter is the Paradise of the dying thief, the bosom of Abraham where Lazarus went, the place where Abraham was gathered to his fathers, a sweet and restful place where the redeemed ones waited for the great redemption. It was not heaven, for heaven was not yet opened.

There was another section to this region where the spirits of the wicked passed, represented by the rich man in the parable, far away from the unsaved, and yet in view of them, even across the great gulf. Now, it was to this region of the dead that the spirit of Jesus passed.

In order truly to die it was necessary not only that His body should hang lifeless on the cross, but that His spirit should go down into the regions of the dead. But how did He go? Not as others had gone before, as victims of death, but as Conqueror and Witness, to preach the consummation of redemption. Even to the unbelieving dead, it was proper that He should announce the accomplishment of those promises which they had rejected. Even to the devil himself and all his angels, it was right that the Son of God should proclaim that he was defeated at length, and that his last desperate blow had been turned against himself in the very death of the Lord.

But to the saints of the past how peculiarly fitting it was that He should preach the great truth that He had come and died for their complete salvation, and that the gates of their prison were about to be opened, and they were to follow Him in a few days as He ascended heavenwards to take His place with them at His Father's side. This is the sense in which He went to preach to the spirits in prison. That He went to proclaim a second probation, another chance of salvation, we do not believe; and there is no semblance of evidence anywhere in the Scriptures to prove, or even imply it. This is the time of men's probation; this is the day of grace; and when it shall be passed, he that is unjust shall be unjust still, and he that is righteous shall be righteous still.

II. HIS RESURRECTION

"You will not leave my soul in hell [Hades]; neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show me the path of life."

Not long did He remain among the dead. On the morning of the third day the fetters of the tomb were burst asunder, the stone rolled away, the spirit returned to the uncorrupted clay, and the body sprang to life in all the fullness and glory of immortality, and Jesus became the firstborn from the dead. Others had been raised from the dead, but He was the first raised to die no more. Even the saints that were raised in connection with His crucifixion did not come out of their graves until after the resurrection of their Lord. This glorious fact of the risen Christ is the

general theme of the apostolic testimony; it gives eternal greatness to the whole Gospel; and in proportion as we realize it, it uplifts and glorifies our whole Christian life.

The difference between the religion of the New Testament and Judaism on the one hand, or Romanism on the other, lies right here in the conception of a living Christ. It is the great evidence of Christianity. It is the mighty inspiration of spiritual life. It is the pattern, both of our spiritual resurrection now and our future glorification in His fullness when He shall come again.

That path of life which He has shown has become the shining way to a mighty multitude, who pass from mortality to immortality, from the race of Adam to the race of our second great Head of humanity. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

But we pass on from this theme, which has been so often unfolded, to the third question.

III. HIS ASCENSION

This is described in Psalm 16, and more fully in the others. "In Your presence is fulness of joy; at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore." This, undoubtedly, is an allusion of Christ to the ascension at His Father's right hand. Psalm 24, however, expressly refers to this glorious event. It is the responsive chorus of the saints and angels who attend the Son of God as He ascends. "Lift up your heads, O you gates; and be you lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in," is the shout of the approaching procession as it mounts the sky and nears the heavenly portals.

"Who is this King of glory?" is the answer of the heavenly chorus that wait at yonder gates. And then the answer is returned from the approaching throng: "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." "Lift up your heads, O you gates," again they shout, "even lift them up, you everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Once again the heavenly hosts answer, "Who is this King of glory?" And once again the chorus around the King sends back the cry as they reach the gates, and both companies unite in the swelling refrain, as it echoes to the confines of the universe, "The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

It is something like the mighty scene which John presents, the whole creation in earth, and in the heaven, and in the sea, away out to the uttermost parts of the universe, waiting with the saints and angels to echo, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

To apply this sublime Psalm to the ascension of the ark to Mount Zion would be unworthy of its lofty character. For there were no everlasting doors; but the gates through which Jesus passed shall never be shaken or removed. The throne to which He ascended can never pass away.

The glory which He has inherited can never decline.

The New Testament has given us the earth view of this glorious event. Out to Bethany He has led them. Perhaps for a moment they have entered that loving home and taken a last farewell of its dear inmates; perhaps they have accompanied the disciples and the Lord from the door to the little eminence on which He stands; and now, with hands out-stretched in blessing, He is speaking to them -- perhaps praying with them -- when, suddenly, they behold Him rising and disappearing.

Often in these forty days had He vanished from them, but now His attitude is different; He does not disappear, but fully in their view He begins to ascend. His hands are still stretched out toward them with tenderness and love as higher and higher He rises into the clear, blue heavens, while they gaze intently as if they would follow if they could. Higher and higher He rises, still blessing, still spreading those hands above their heads, until a cloud intervenes, and they see Him no more. Perhaps it was a cloud of angels; angels, we know were there -- multitudes of angels, and multitudes of saints.

Upward and upward still He arose, beyond the nearest of the stars, beyond the distant constellations, beyond the nebulous clouds which form the great invisible worlds, beyond the vision of the eye, to the one central spot, somewhere in this immensity where stands the metropolis of the universe, the throne of God, and the home of the redeemed. "Far above all principality, and power," the Apostle has said, "and might, and dominion, and every name that is named." Far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Then it was that the glorious chorus of the twenty-fourth Psalm begins, and the King of Glory enters in and takes His seat at the right hand of God.

But the New Testament picture has one little addition, sweeter than all the rest. Just at that moment, when all heaven was prostrate before Him, and when the echoes of those songs were resounding through the universe, His loving heart was turned backward to the earth He had just left; He was thinking of the eleven loving hearts, whose eyes were still straining upward and trying to pierce the little cloud that hung between Him and Bethany. Quickly, therefore, does He send back from the heights of glory two angel messengers, to bear to them His last word of comfort and of love: "You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." How beautiful! How loving! How comforting! It was as if He sent them back a miniature photograph of His own face, and written at the bottom, "The same yesterday, and today, and forever." Blessed be His name forever for those three little words, "This same Jesus."

Oh, how things change! But how sweet to know there is One who is the same forever! I have read somewhere the sweet poem of an old man who addresses the companion of his life after sixty years of sojourning together, and tells her that to him she has still the same face that he knew when she was a little child. Others see the wrinkles and the gray hair, the stooping form and the faded cheeks, but he ever sees only the bright young face of sixty years ago. To him, to his love, her youth is immortal. Her girl-face is stereotyped forever upon his heart, and she

can never grow old. This is, in a sense, true of all loving memories. We see the ideals of things rather than the things themselves, and our imaginations sometimes picture those we love as they have been rather than as they are.

We thank God sometimes for those who are not. To us their faces can never change. That beautiful child is forever young. Others grow old and are scarred with sin and wrinkled with care, but there are some who live in our love and memory in immortal youth and beauty. Thank God that it is forever "this same Jesus." We may change; He changes not. Circumstances may change; He changes not. As He loved you then, He loves you still and will love you forever. O strange, changeless heart of Christ, we praise Your changeless love. We cannot understand it fully, but let it draw us to be worthier of His love.

Why did He ascend?

1. That He might enter upon His reward. "Being made so much better than the angels, he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."
2. That He might assume the kingdom and government of the world which the Father had put into His hands, as mediatorial King; for now power was given Him in heaven and in earth, and He is Head over all things for His Church. His ascension has put all things under His feet, and He sits in calm repose and mighty omnipotence, from henceforth expecting until His enemies are made His footstool.
3. That He might become our Great High Priest, and at God's right hand represent us in heavenly places, meeting for us every question of sin, temptation, and need, presenting our petitions to the Father, and keeping us by His intercessions forevermore.
4. To take possession in our name of our inheritance, and to prepare a place for us when He shall have finished for us our life work and called us home.
5. That we may now ascend with Him and live in heavenly places through the power of His ascension. There is something higher than resurrection life; we may live an ascension life above our trials, anticipating already our heavenly calling, and feeling and acting as we shall when earthly things shall have passed away forever.

IV. THE EFFECTS OF HIS ASCENSION

These are described more fully in the sixty-eighth Psalm. "You have ascended on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts for men; yes, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them."

1. "You have led captivity captive." This undoubtedly refers to the multitudes who ascended with Him from the regions of the dead. The captivity which He led captive is just a Hebrew expression for the captives that He liberated and took with Him to heaven.

Up to the time of Christ's ascension, as we have already seen, the spirits of the sainted dead were not in heaven, but in Paradise or Hades. But when Jesus ascended, He opened the gates of heaven to all believers, and took with Him these ransomed prisoners from the abodes of the dead. And now these gates are ever open, and day by day our friends are passing through, passing in. Stephen looked up from the murderous stones of his persecutors and the blood that was streaming from his face, and saw heaven opened and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, waiting to receive him. And Paul could say, "To depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." And the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us we "are come unto . . . the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

2. "You have received gifts for men." Into His hands the Father gave, on His ascension, all things.

All that had been included in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son was now handed over to Jesus to dispense to His people: pardon for the penitent; power to become the sons of God through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit; grace to keep, to sanctify, to sustain; all the fullness of Jesus, the all-sufficiency of His love and life, especially the greatest of all gifts -- the Holy Ghost. Representative of Christ, the Executive of God, and all the ministries which He endues and directs.

When He ascended on high, "he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Until we all come in the unity of the faith, and to the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Like a king at his coronation, He has received the power and might to give whatever He wishes; and ever since His ascension He has been pouring out the riches of His love and grace, and saying to sinful man, "Ask what you will."

3. The third effect of Christ's ascension was the proclamation of the Gospel of reconciliation to lost and rebellious men.

A great prince rising to the throne usually signalizes his advent by some distinguished act of amnesty. When Alexander of Russia visited Napoleon at Toulon, the French Emperor gave his illustrious visitor the privilege of liberating any one of the prisoners in the galleys. The Emperor went among the men and asked them concerning their lives and their crimes. But none of them was willing to acknowledge his guilt. One said he was unjustly convicted; another, too severely punished; another, persecuted by the officials; but all were virtuous and innocent.

At length, he found one man who was thoroughly penitent and humble and could only blame himself for his sufferings. The Emperor was so pleased that he said, "I have been looking for a sinner all this day, and you are the first I have been able to find. Now, because you are a sinner, you are pardoned and free. Go and use your liberty for his honor to whose clemency you owe it."

So Jesus at God's right hand has received authority to pardon even the rebellious and save the most unworthy and lost, on the simple condition that they will acknowledge their sin and accept His free and sovereign grace.

Oh, the gifts He has to pour out upon the sinful and unworthy: the gift of eternal life, the gift of peace, the gift of grace to stand and overcome, the gift of His Holy Spirit -- all as the gifts of His grace, without money and without condition, to all who will receive them by faith and use them for His glory.

4. The presence of God in the hearts of His people. "That God the Lord might dwell among them." This is the crowning glory of Christ's ascension. It has brought God down to man in a new relationship. God was with men under the Old Testament. He is in them under the New. Christ has been glorified that man might be glorified in Him, and raised up to union with Him. Born as an Adamic race, we may be newborn into a divine nature.

He has gone up to yonder throne that He may send the Holy Ghost to dwell in our hearts and unite us to Himself. Henceforth God's home is to be the human heart. Strange as it may seem, His going up has really brought Him down! So high above us, He has really come so much closer to us than He could have done had He remained on earth in human form.

How finely the Apostle presents this in the lofty Epistle to the Ephesians! He presents Christ in the first chapter as going up, far above all principality and power, and might and dominion. And then in the third chapter he presents Him as coming down to dwell in our hearts by faith, and bringing us to know "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Beloved, do you know this mystery of love and life divine, "Christ in you the hope of glory"? He is waiting now to make your heart His home.

"This is my wonderful story,
Christ to my heart has come;
Jesus, the King of Glory,
Finds in my heart a home."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 5

THE SUFFERING SAVIOR -- PSALM 22

This is the Holy Ghost's picture of the suffering Savior. It is the Ecce Homo of the Psalms. The Gospels have given us the outward picture; this is the inner one, the Holy of Holies of the Redeemer's anguish when He trod the winepress alone.

Well does it precede the twenty-third Psalm. That is the picture of the Shepherd in the fold, but this is the Shepherd in the night, in the desert, in the wilderness, among the wolves, with bleeding feet and broken heart, seeking for the sheep that went astray. May the Holy Spirit engrave the picture upon our hearts!

I. CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

1. The first element in it is the Father's desertion. The opening verse is the wail of Calvary: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

Have you ever felt a sense of God's displeasure or desertion? Do you remember your first conviction of sin and your cry for pardon? Then you know something of the suffering of Christ when He stood in the place of a sinner under the judgment of God and suffered the penalty our sin deserved.

For the first time in His existence He felt the withdrawal of the Father's love. Never had the Father's face been clouded before. But now it is turned away. Nay, it is turned against Him. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him. You have made him sick in smiting him." We can scarcely understand it. But it was strangely, awfully true. For one day God dealt with Jesus as He will deal with sinful, rebellious men. All other agonies could not compare with this. This was the dregs of the cup of woe, the desertion, the wrath of God.

"The Father lifted up His rod.
O Christ, it fell on Thee!
Thou wast sore smitten of Thy God;
Thy bruising healeth me."

2. The second ingredient in the bitter cup was the cruelty of man. How vividly is it all portrayed! The mockery around the cross: "All that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him, seeing that he delighted in him." The cruel crucifixion: "They pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my

bones: they look and stare upon me." The weakness and agony: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like potsherd." The awful thirst: "My tongue cleaves to my jaws." The approaching dissolution: "You have brought me into the dust of death."

It was the most painful and shameful form of public execution. Then, added to the torture of the cross were the insults of the men who mocked Him. How easily could He have silenced them! How easily could He have sprung from that cross and made them fall at His feet in terror! How easily could He have shown the power they doubted! But that would have forfeited our salvation. It was true, "He saved others; himself he could not save."

Thomas Carlyle tells of a Scotchman who once, when ascending a coal shaft of a mine in the bucket, found the strands of the rope giving way. One had already snapped, and the other was breaking. There was another man in the basket, but the rope would not hold both. In a moment his purpose was formed. He was not afraid to die. He turned to his companion and quickly said: "Good-bye! You are not ready, and I am; meet me in heaven!" and he dropped from the basket to the bottom of the shaft. He saved another; himself he could not save. There was room only for one life. So the Master "died to save us all," and bore the jeers and taunts of men that they who mocked Him might not die, but be saved by His very sacrifice.

3. The third element in the Savior's cup of suffering was Satanic hate and demon rage and cruelty. Around Him there gathered in that dark hour, not only the cruelty and hate of men, but all the wrath of hell. "They gaped upon me with their mouths" is the strong language of the inspired picture. "Save me from the lion's mouth." "Deliver . . . from the power of the dog." Like wild beasts they seemed to Him in their ferocity and hideousness. And so indeed they have often seemed to many of God's dear saints in the dark hour of spiritual conflict.

Some of us have passed through the valley of the shadow of death. Amid the host of hell we have spent nights and days that seemed to be infested with dragon forms and fiendish shapes. Our very cheeks could feel the fire, and our ears could almost hear the hissing of the serpent ; and even the smell of the pit was in our nostrils as we passed along, or stood in the evil day in desperate conflict with the powers of darkness. In such an hour Martin Luther actually believed he saw the devil, and threw his ink bottle at him in reality of the conflict. The dying and unsaved soul has often been known to realize the vision of that dark and evil world, even as the departing saint has seen the opening of the gates of glory and the angel forms that wait.

Oh, if we have ever known the anguish of spiritual conflict and the awful pressure of Satan's power upon our spirits, we can have some conception of what our Master suffered on that day on Calvary. There is no pain so keen, except the wrath of God, as that which comes from the fiery touch of Satan. But all the fury of the pit was concentrated upon the Savior in that day, in that hour. Man had determined to take His life, but Satan was determined to have His soul. Oh, if Satan only could have seized the precious spirit of the Son of God, and trampled beneath his feet the deeper life of the Sinless One, hell indeed would have triumphed and heaven have been lost forever.

Like packs of wolves, Satan's hordes crowded around, blotting out the light of heaven with their dragon forms, piercing His spirit with their fiery darts, filling His soul with darkness and agony, and trying in vain to defile Him with their wiles, or betray Him into some word or thought or feeling of impatience, or distrust, or sin. Could they but for one instant have tempted Him successfully; could they have compelled Him to doubt His Father, to complain of His sufferings, or to resent His injuries, a shout would have gone up from their dark abodes that would have shaken the walls of heaven and filled the eyes of angels with tears they never shed before. He knew all this, and the strain of that awful conflict was infinite and indescribable. But not for one moment did He yield. Not one whisper of murmuring escaped His lips. Through all their hosts He passed in triumph, and even Satan had to acknowledge Him conqueror. They could only torment, they could not tempt the sinless Son of God. But, oh, the torment, what tongue can tell, what heart can understand!

There is a strange and beautiful Hindu legend that sheds a sweet vividness on the Savior's sufferings, and especially His sufferings from the hand of Satan.

It is said that a human spirit was once pursued by the demon of vengeance. When about to be overtaken, it cried to the goddess Vishnu, who changed it into a dove so that it was able to rise above the serpent's reach. But now the serpent prayed to his god and was changed into a hawk, and soon swooped down upon the dove. He was about to seize his prey when the dove again cried to the goddess; and now Vishnu opened her bosom and took the frightened fugitive under her protecting wings. But the hawk demanded his prey, and claimed the rights of justice.

Vishnu did not dispute the claim, but said: "You cannot have the dove, but I will bare my bosom to your beak and talons, and you may tear from my flesh as much as will satisfy you for your lost prey." And then, the legend tells us, the demon sprang upon her breast and tore from her bosom as much as would be equivalent for the rescued dove. So heathenism has blindly pictured the mystery of the atonement and the strange substitution whereby we are saved.

Jesus gave Himself up for a season, even to the devil's hate. Oh, can we ever love Him enough for all our life has cost Him?

4. The next element in His cup was death. For Him there was no release. Down to the dark abode of Hades His spirit must descend. There is something in death which tells its own story of dread and agony. Naturally, and apart from the Gospel, it is indeed the King of Terrors. Truly has it been said:

"The worst
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a Paradise
To what we fear in death."

True, to the Christian this has been changed; the sting has been extracted because it has already been borne. But it was not thus that death came to Him. To Him it came under the law and with all the bitterness of the curse. To Him it came as it comes to the sinner -- not only with

all its natural bitterness, but with a sense of penalty, a consciousness of sin and condemnation. He tasted death for every man. (Heb. 2: 9.) The emphasis is on that word "taste." He drank the dregs of the cup, and now for us the bitterness of death is past. But what it was to Him can be understood only by the combination and concentration of all that it has ever meant to sinful, dying men.

5. Helplessness is another element in this cup of woe. There was no escape. In our darkest hour, for us there is hope of release; but for Him there could be none. From the beginning He knew that He must tread the winepress alone until the last; that He must drink the cup to its uttermost dregs; that there could be no reprieve; that it could not pass from Him, and that no one could help Him in it. He was utterly alone and inevitably doomed by His own act. He had chosen that dreadful place of substitution, and He could not now retrace His steps. Not for a moment did He wish to; but that utter loneliness, desolation, and unutterable woe was terrible even to imagine. What must it have been to realize and endure?

II. THE SILVER LINING

These were some of the dark shadows of the cross, but the Psalm does not close without the brighter silver lining on the awful cloud. Four things are especially noticeable, in contrast with Christ's sufferings, as described in this Psalm.

1. There is the consciousness of innocence. Nowhere through the entire Psalm is there a single hint of any iniquity on the part of the Savior. It cannot, therefore, be a mortal man whose distress is here described. The best of men in their afflictions have been conscious of some lesson to be learned and some imperfection to be acknowledged; but this Sufferer has no consciousness of sin. It must have made the burden lighter, while at the same time it made it stronger. He was suffering wholly for others, for He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. His sinlessness was essential to make the substitution adequate. With nothing to answer on His own account, all the merit of His sacrifice is imputed to the sinner, and settles the claims of God against us.

2. We see the spirit of faith. Even when He cries, "Why have You forsaken me?" He can say, "My God! My God!" Again we find Him fighting the good fight of faith, as His children often do, by re-echoing the promises of God and the faithfulness of His love and care. "Our fathers trusted in You," He cries; "they trusted, and You delivered them. They cried unto You, and were delivered: they trusted in You, and were not confounded." "You are he that took me out of the womb: You made me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon You from the womb: . . . be not far from me, O Lord: O my strength, hurry to help me. . . . You have heard me from the horns of the unicorns."

Here we see His spirit trusting in God just as we must trust Him today. It is a glorious example of faith resting on the promises and faithfulness of God in the dark hour. We are apt to forget the perfect humanness of Christ in His life and death. It was as a man that He trusted and triumphed in the strength of God. He was ever dependent upon His Father just as we are dependent upon Him.

It was not through His exalted divine nature wholly that He was able to endure His sufferings, but He was in all points tempted like as we are, and sustained even as we are -- not from Himself but from His Father's supporting strength. And so He is for us the Author and Finisher of our faith. He who fought this battle once, comes still to fight it in our hearts. He who believed for Himself now believes in us, and sustains in us the spirit of trust and victory.

This is our weapon in the hour of suffering -- to believe God and trust His faithfulness and promises. "Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of his servant, that walks in darkness, and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God." Let us go forth unto our trials in the spirit of His faith, and, like Him, we shall triumph, too.

3. We see the spirit of love. His sufferings were not for Himself. Very beautifully is this thought brought out in one of the obscure passages of the Psalm (v. 20): "Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog." What is His darling? The usual interpretation of this is "His own soul," and the Hebrew word does mean my "only one." But is it not sweeter and loftier to apply it to His beloved Church, His dear Bride, His people, for whom He died, and between whom and destruction He was standing in that awful hour? Dearer even than His own soul was your soul. He was covering you from the destroyer and holding you to His bosom while He sank to protect you from the fate He would not flee.

On a Scottish moor the shepherds found one morning, beneath a snowdrift, a slumbering babe on the naked breast of a lifeless mother. The little babe was wrapped in its robes and the mother's outer garments. As the numbness of death crept over her, she had wrapped her mantle around her babe. Death to her was less terrible when she knew her babe was safe. She was saving her darling from the power of the storm. So He sheltered us that dreadful day from the power of the dog. He bore the cruel blow -- no, gave His life itself, and we live because He died. Strange if that child could ever forget its mother's love! Years afterwards, it is said, the remembrance of that story brought that child to God.

Oh, let the memory of our Redeemer's sacrifice bind all our hearts by cords of everlasting gratitude to Him, who loved us and gave Himself for us!

4. Hope was the last bright ray upon this cloud of sorrow. Bright, indeed, it is; so bright that in its glory all the darkness has passed away forever. In a moment the cries of anguish are changed into songs and shouts of praise. As soon as He passes the gates of death, lo, all the regions of the dead resound with the announcement of His victory. "I will declare Your name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I praise You." And then the vision brightens until it covers all the future, until it takes in all the generations of the ransomed, and until it rises to the glory of the millennial world. He sees His ransomed people enjoying the fruits of His sorrow. "The meek shall eat and shall be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord." He sees the gift of eternal life coming to poor lost sinners, and He cries, "Your heart shall live forever."

He sees all the ends of the earth remembering and returning to the Lord. He sees all the

kindreds of the nations worshiping Him. He sees the kingdoms given to the Lord, and the nations bowing beneath His scepter. He sees the proud kings of the earth submitting to His throne. He sees a seed serving Him, and a generation born from His own bosom to love and serve Him. He hears age after age re-echoing the story of His redeeming love. He sees thee, poor sinner, burdened with thy guilt, sinking in thy woe, helpless and despairing, and His heart is glad to know that thou has found in Him a Savior; and thy tears of penitence, thy songs of grateful praise, and thy service of love are recompense enough to repay even Calvary.

He sees the heathen world rescued from its idolatry and wretchedness through His precious blood shed for it. He sees that innumerable company that no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, with white robes, and palms in their hands; and the distant echo of their shout, "Worthy is the Lamb," takes away the sting of death, lights up the darkness of the tomb, and enables Him, for the joy set before Him, to endure the cross, despising the shame.

Oh, shall we not join to give Him His recompense by bringing others to know Him, and sending the good news of His death and redeeming love to all mankind? It was for them He died as much as for us. They are His joy and crown as well as we. His heart bleeds at their sorrow and peril. Oh, let us rouse ourselves to do our best for their redemption, and to haste that day when He shall be crowned with the crown of all the world, and enter into the joy which comforted Him to anticipate in the hour of His agony.

Let us go from the study of this Psalm imbued with the spirit of missions and of service. It was the dying thought of Jesus to save the world. The great work in which we are now uniting all our energies was the work on His heart in the last conscious moment of His life. It was also the thought next to His heart when He was leaving the world and bidding farewell to His disciples on Olivet. Let it be our deepest, highest, latest thought.

When they told Dr. Backus, of Baltimore, that he was dying, He said: "Lift me from the bed and put me on my knees." There for the last two hours of his life he poured out his strength and soul in prayer for the heathen world. It was his last thought, his dying prayer. Like His Master, he entered into the eternal world in the spirit of missions. Oh, let it be our spirit while we live, and in it Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied!

Can we ever bear to let one drop of that precious blood be lost? Can we bear to let one soul perish that it might save? Shall we not say, like the lepers of old, when they found the camp of the enemy full of spoil, and the city they had left was dying of famine, "We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace." Oh, let us not hold our peace with such a Gospel, but give it to the world, the whole world,

"Till every kindred, every tribe
On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe,
And crown Him Lord of all."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 6

THE FOLD AND THE FAMILY -- PSALM 23

This beautiful Psalm deserves to stand as the gateway to the Palace Beautiful of the Messianic Psalms. It has been written on the hearts of many generations and many pilgrims to the heavenly home. It has furnished green pastures and still waters to God's flock through all ages, and has spread a table in the midst of their enemies for millions of God's redeemed.

Go to the walls of martyr prisons; look at the records of the sainted dead; recall the echoes of Christian deathbeds; look back upon your own memories and associations, and you will find nothing more sweet, or spiritual, or tender, than this Psalm of psalms.

It has two great themes, two central figures running through it. The first is the Shepherd and His flock; and the second, the Father and His family. In this respect it recalls the fifteenth chapter of Luke and the two most precious of our Savior's parables: The Good Shepherd and The Prodigal Son. It is the same picture that we find in the twenty-third Psalm.

I. THE SHEPHERD AND HIS FLOCK

No one but an Oriental can fully understand the vivid force of this beautiful figure. The shepherd of the East is not only a property owner, but he is a lover of his flock, and a friend and a father to every member of his fold. He knows them all by name, he lives with them, sacrifices everything for them, and loves them with tender affection. In short, he stands between them and everything. Of all creatures the sheep is the most defenseless, helpless, and foolish; it cannot help itself. And so the child of God is absolutely helpless amid the elements surrounding him, and especially the consecrated child of God. They who have wholly yielded themselves to Christ, and not to their own strength and sufficiency, are peculiarly defenseless when they wander from their Lord; they have not the strength of other men to stand alone, and they do not need it if they abide in Him. The safest place is that of utter helplessness and utter dependence.

The trouble with most of us is that we try to be our own shepherds. We forget that the Lord is our Shepherd, and our business is not to trouble ourselves, but to let Him keep us, and to trust and follow Him.

The emphatic words are the two smallest in the sentence: "my" and "is." The first expresses the appropriating faith which claims Him. It is not enough to recognize Him as a Shepherd, but we must put ourselves under His protection and claim Him as our own by personal

appropriation and trust. And we may do this. He allows us thus to claim Him, and He undertakes the everlasting care of all who do. "My sheep," He says, "hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

The other word is the very emphatic "is." David's confidence is without a doubt. So we must trust our Shepherd.

It is not because the sheep is worth so much in dollars and cents, nor the value of its flesh, that it claims the shepherd's care; but because he bought it and owns it; it is His and He belongs to it, to care for it as much for his own sake as for its sake. So the Lord allows us to claim His love and life because we belong to Him, and He has given Himself to us. Has He not justified our confidence? Has He not come to seek us when we were lost? Has He not given us His life to save us? Has He not given us His wonderful promises and His more wonderful love and care? Let us take Him at His word and answer back, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

"I shall not want." This covers every possible need of human life; every proper desire and want, whether it be for soul or for body, for this world, or for the world to come. We can claim the fullness of His supply and say, "My God shall supply all [our] need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." This is the state of utter content, thankfulness, and joy. It is the cry of the heart that has no pining, but can see nothing but blessing and goodness in its lot and in its future. So infinite is its Shepherd's love, so vast His resources, so kind His care, that it can think of nothing that He will not supply.

Beloved, have you this unbounded confidence in God? Are you taking thus from Him of His fullness? Are you honoring Him thus by your testimony and your praise, or are you reflecting upon your Shepherd by miserable discontent and meager, thankless lives?

"He makes me to lie down in green pastures." This is the testimony of His rich provision for our needs. Not one pasture, but many are supplied, and they are all green. He does not feed us on the stale bread of past experiences, but He gives us fresh supplies every day, like the morning dew and the morning light. And so abundant are they that we lie down among them for very satiety. We lie down because we cannot hold any more, even as we have seen the beautiful herds in the English meadows lying down amid the tall, green grass for very fullness. This is the picture of a happy, joyful, victorious Christian life. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

"He leads me beside the still waters." Rather it should read, "the waters of rest." Here again it is not one stream, but many; they are "waters." This is the picture of the Holy Spirit and tells of the Divine Comforter as He brings us into the deepest rest of Jesus; the peace that passeth all understanding, peace like a river, and righteousness like the waves of the sea. But it is only when we follow His leading that we can have this peace. In our own paths we shall not find the waters of rest; but as we follow Him, taking His yoke upon us and learning of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, we shall find rest unto our souls.

"He restores my soul." In the Hebrew this might mean "my life," and thus express His physical redemption and healing love and life. He is the constant Quickener of our life, for the body as well as for the soul. It may also mean His restoring mercy when we go astray or stumble in the way. How often this is realized in our experience! How often we need our Shepherd's tender, restoring mercy, and how tenderly and gently He does rest the erring and bring back the lost one! How different God's dealings with sin from the devil's, and even from men's! How tender and patient His mercy! Look at Him as He meets Elijah on his running away, and tenderly rests him, feeds him, pleads with him, and then restores him! Look at Him as He looks on Simon Peter and melts his heart to penitence, and then gives him back more than he has lost! Listen to His tender words to the erring and the weak, and never, never fly from Him again, whom we have even offended, but

"Go to His bleeding feet, and learn
How freely Jesus can forgive."

And not only forgive, but heal our backslidings, cleanse from all unrighteousness, and turn even our mistakes into means of establishing and settling us.

"He leads me in the paths of righteousness." That is, the right paths. Not only does He rest, but He sanctifies. He cleanses, He keeps, He leads into the land of uprightness. He "is able to keep you from falling [stumbling], and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." For His own name's sake He does all this.

This is the way He becomes our Sanctifier. It is Christ Himself who does it all. We do not deserve it; we cannot accomplish it. We can only receive it as the gift of His mercy, through the blood of Jesus Christ and His exceeding great and precious promises. "For his name's sake." "I do not do this for your sakes, O house of Israel," He says. We cannot claim any credit for our holiness. It is a free gift of His suffering grace, and we can only wonder and adore as we think of the love that does so much for us so undeservedly.

"Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You are with me." This is because of our wandering. This is the way back from the forbidden paths, from the dark wilderness. It does not necessarily mean death itself, but any dark vale overshadowed like the grave. After we have wandered from God, we do often find such dark and lonely passages. It is also true that after we have become fully the Lord's, we are often called to pass through the darkest trials, and are tested in the most painful ways, drinking of a cup more bitter, often, than death itself. Thus it is that the promise becomes so precious.

How much comfort there is in this verse! First, we go through the valley. We do not fall in the midst of it, but ever before us we can see the light at the farther end, the opening vista of the larger place that lies beyond. Again, we are saved from fear. This is often worse than any other evil. If we have no dread, we can have no harm. And He has said, "Whoso hearkens unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." How sweetly the Master's presence can charm away our fears and whisper comfort and rest in the darkest hours!

Next, we have His promise, "You are with me." This is the spirit of nearness and safety. Notice now how beautifully the grammar changes. Up to this time he has been speaking of his Shepherd in the third person, as "He"; but now it all changes and becomes "You." The reason is obvious. The promise has become nearer; the Shepherd is no longer at a distance; he is not talking about Him any more, but talking directly to Him. Going through a deep tunnel one day, my little child drew close to me and held my hand. When we were on the other side and in the bright light, he was not afraid to sit away at a distance and play; but in the dark and narrow place he wanted to feel my touch every moment. So He lets us draw close to Him in the valley, and hold His hand and hear Him say, "I am with you, fear not."

Again, even His rod comforts us. Even the thing that hurts us so is shown to us to be for our good, and we can say: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Your word."

Again, "You have known my soul in adversities." Often has the suffering Christian sung:

"Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to His feet,
Lay me low and keep me there."

A daughter of the East has told this beautiful story of the Oriental shepherd. Sometimes when his sheep would wander and would not answer to his call or come back to the fold, he would take his sling and a little stone and hurl it through the air. Lo! the wandering sheep is stricken, perhaps on one of its foolish feet, and falls wounded to the ground, to pick itself up again, to hobble back with its suffering member, but to escape the perils of the wilderness through its wound. So He wounds to heal and smites to save, and pains us only that He may save us pain.

But, again, not only does His rod comfort us, but His staff comforts us still more. It is not all chastening, but more blessing, and, "As the sufferings of Christ abound, so our consolation also abounds by Christ." God has two hands; the one presses us down, the other presses us up. Thank God, it is the right hand that holds us up, for He says: "The Lord your God will hold your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not."

How beautifully these two hands are described in the First Epistle of Peter: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." This is the hand that presses us down. But he adds very soon, "Casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you." That is the hand that holds us up; that is the staff that comforts us when the rod has smitten us. It is like the mother eagle, who stirs up her nest and hurls her young ones in mid-air, and leaves them to fall, screaming, earthward. But soon her mother-heart flies to the rescue, and swooping under them, she spreads abroad her wings and bears them up again in safety and repose, telling them, doubtless, in strange speech, that she has only done it all in order to teach them to use their little wings and learn to fly themselves. So God lets the pressure of trial come, and then upholds us in it with His everlasting arms, and bears us as on eagle's wings.

This is the trial that comforts us. His precious promises -- oh, how they cheer the sorrowing heart! How sweet they grow in trial, until the heavens glow with stars of hope we never realized before, for

"Sorrow touched by God grows bright
With more than beauty's rays,
As trials show us worlds of light
We never saw by day."

II. THE FATHER'S HOUSE

The figure now changes. There is, perhaps, a spiritual gradation here. Trial and deeper experience, as we have already discovered, may bring us into a closer place with God; and so we have the Father's house next. It is not the fold and the shepherd, but the family circle meeting at the table, the child dwelling in the house forever.

The first feature of the picture is danger; there are enemies. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." We never know the real force of spiritual conflict until we come into a closer place in the life of God. But the victory is so complete that we are not fighting now. He does all the fighting for us, and surrounds us with a wall of fire so wide and secure that we sit in the center, happy, fearless children, eating and drinking at the festal table as though there were no foe in sight. What a perfect picture of security! Eating and drinking in the midst of our enemies! Like the great Apostle, on the tossing ship in the Adriatic storm, bidding his companions eat and drink because they were safe under the promises of God. This is no longer the picture of the wilderness, but it is the prepared table of the feast where all the fullness of His love is freely given to us; and we sit down and partake of the riches of His bounty until our cup runs over in the full measure of our blessing and our joy.

Beloved, is this our place? Are we so victorious that, like our Master, we sit down expecting until all our enemies are made our footstool? Are we so full that our cup runs over and we can hold no more, so that we have ceased to think of ourselves and our blessings in the overflow with which we bless others?

"You anointest my head with oil." This is the figure of the Holy Ghost. This is the spirit of the overflowing joy. This is the symbol of healing, of gladness, of sweet fragrance. In the East, when a traveler comes in from his journey, travel-stained and wet from perspiration, his feet are washed to take away the dust of the road; his head is anointed with oil, and the sweet perfume removes the odor of heat and perspiration; and he sits down all sweetened and restored at the table of his host. So He anoints our head with oil, fills us with His gladness, sweetens us with His fragrance, and brings us into the innermost chambers of His love.

Provision is made the future. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Not only is the present abundantly supplied, but it is all right beyond. Goodness covers every temporal need; mercy, every spiritual need. Goodness includes every gift of His love;

mercy, every provision for our sinfulness. Not only will He love us and care for us as His dear children walking in holy obedience, but His mercy will keep us holy and guard us from even our own unworthiness.

The "house of the Lord" in which we shall dwell in His presence. We are in it now and never shall be withdrawn. But surely it looks forward to His glorious coming, to the house made without hands which is awaiting us when He shall appear.

I cannot withhold a personal testimony. On the first night of a new year, after I had retired and fallen asleep in very close communion with the Lord, I had one of those rare dreams which leave behind them an impression of the voice of God. In my dream I was gazing into the heavens at night, looking at one of the brightest constellations, when suddenly there appeared among them a wonderful star as bright as Venus at its brightest. As I gazed upon it, wondering at its strange beauty in that quarter of the heavens, I became conscious that it was rapidly growing larger every moment. In a few moments I was aware that it must be swiftly approaching; so fast did it enlarge that it seemed to be literally rushing earthwards, and my whole being was stirred with the consciousness that some stupendous event was happening.

Then there passed over my spirit a distinct consciousness that the Lord was coming; that this was the Morning Star and that He was just behind it. The best part of the dream was that it brought only rest and joy. Startling as was the appearance and the certainty of the coming King, there was no fear, but a sweet consciousness that all was right; that I was glad He was coming; that I knew in a few moments He would be here. Although I saw no one around me, I had the quiet assurance that all was right for them, too; it was all right for those I loved as well as for myself. Just at that moment I awakened with the quiet sense that God had spoken to my heart with a personal message respecting what His glorious coming would be to me. Oh, that we all may so live each moment that "when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming"!

There is one thought more in this Psalm. The grammar changes once again to the third person, and the Psalmist is talking not to but about God. It is the voice of testimony to the world. It is the call which we should echo to those who know Him not as their Shepherd and their Father. Is there any such lonely lost one reading this message? Oh, let this little Psalm that has led so many to heaven lead you to God!

Down in a southern hospital a soldier was dying; he was a Scotchman and an infidel. A Christian worker stood by his cot, but he would not listen to the Gospel; he covered his face with the bed cover and turned away in pride and scorn. Noticing that the patient was Scotch, and knowing, himself, the sweetness of the old Psalms to the Scottish ear, the worker sat down a little way off and began to sing the twenty-third Psalm in the old Rousse version:

"The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green; He leadeth me
The quiet waters by."

He sang on quietly, tenderly. Before he was half through the Psalm, the patient was trembling from head to foot and sobbing aloud. He threw the covering down and asked, "Why did you sing that Psalm? My mother taught it to me by her knee, and it was her last message to me when she died." The ice was broken; the heart was open to the truth; tenderly the seed was sown, and the soul was saved.

Two days afterwards the worker returned, but the Scotch-man had passed through the gates. The nurse told him that the night before, as she was passing down the corridor, she heard him singing that verse about the dark valley, and before he got through it, he began to choke with exhaustion. Then he gave a great cry, and said, "Mother! Mother! Mother! I'm coming! The Lord's my Shepherd, too!" The nurse hastened to his side, but he no more needed the care of human hands. He had been saved by the twenty-third Psalm.

I venture to add another incident which illustrates the preciousness of this Psalm for the living as well as for the dying. A well-known Scotchman in New York, a man of great influence and high Christian character, was lying in the stupor of apparent death. A Scotch minister, also widely known, was leaning over him trying to recall his attention from the sleep of approaching death. At last he began to repeat to him the twenty-third Psalm; and when he got to the second verse, Mr. P., roused from his stupor and began to follow him, repeating the words after him until the Psalm was finished. The effect on the sinking man was electrical; he was completely aroused and began to talk with those around him. From that moment he grew better and lived for many years, well and happy, a useful Christian, saved from death by the twenty-third Psalm.

Blessed watchword for both worlds! May the Lord make it gloriously real to us, and may we all be truly able to say with its closing refrain: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 7

A PSALM OF INSTRUCTION -- PSALM 32

The title of this Psalm is Maschil. It is a Hebrew word signifying instruction. It touches very deeply the whole experience of the child of God, from the first to the highest stages of life.

I. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING SIN

Nowhere do we learn so much about sin in a few words as in the four terms here applied.

1. The first is transgression. This means to go beyond. It denotes the actual violation of the law of God by an act in contravention of a divine command. It represents positive disobedience. It includes all the overt acts of sin; all the deeds, words, and thoughts of men which they have committed contrary to God's precepts and commands. This alone is enough to form an awful account against the sinner in the divine impeachment, but this is only the beginning of sin.

2. The word sin is next used, and it describes the converse of this; namely, the coming short of God's will and law. The word here used means to miss the mark, to fail to reach our aim, and it includes that large and often overlooked class of evils, which we might call sins of omission. Little do we realize how much they mean, and how immense will be the account when we stand in the judgment of the Lord: all we might have been, all we might have done, all we might have said, all the sorrow we might have assuaged, all the sin we might have prevented, all the good we might have done, all the souls we might have saved. Oh, what will it be to look at this someday, as God will show us the picture of the possibilities of life, and we shall feel we have lost it forever?

Here are two men passing into judgment. Both have had equal opportunities, equal talents, equal wealth, equal length of life. They have perhaps lived side by side and often passed each other on the path of life. The one goes home with his hands full of sheaves. He has spent his fortune for God and for holy usefulness. He has used his time to do good. He has often denied himself some special pleasure to save a soul, or to comfort a sorrowing one at the gate of heaven. He meets not only the smile of his Judge, but his works do follow him, and glorious trains of happy spirits welcome him. How many there are to greet him as their deliverer, their comforter, and the instrument of their salvation! What a large place in heaven is filled by the fruits of his love! What eternal and infinite horrors have been saved by his self-denial and his loving life service. All this has come out of one consecrated life.

And now the other meets his future. There is nothing to greet him. No happy spirits welcome

him as their dearest friend. No white-robed saints lead him up to the throne as the one who led them to Jesus. But before him rises the vision of just such a heaven as his brother has received; just such a multitude as he, too, might have saved. But where are they? Down in yonder pit of darkness. As he sees what might have been in the light of what actually is for another, he awakes to realize what life meant; what it was not to do, not to sacrifice, not to serve the Lord. Oh, it will be an awful thing for such an one to meet his Judge, and see in the first flash of eternity's light all that he might have saved and kept forever; but it is all forever lost!

O saint of God, if you could blot out the precious fruit of your life, would you for a million worlds? But that is what every sinful man and selfish woman is doing. That is the meaning of sin: the things you have not done, the love you have not given, the faith you have not exercised, the service you have not rendered, the reward you have not won.

3. The word iniquity also has a distinct meaning. Literally, it signifies something twisted, perverted, turned aside from its divine intention, and so it represents the perversion of human nature from its high and holy purpose. Man has perverted everything. That thing which God gave for the noblest uses has been prostituted for selfishness and evil. Man's own body, created as the vehicle of the soul and its instrument of high and holy service, has been turned into the means of gratifying every unholy lust. The human mind, a ray of the divine and created to glorify God, has been used to glorify man, to worship the creature, to dishonor the Creator.

The very gifts of God and His infinite goodness have been abused as an encouragement to sin; and even religion itself has been turned aside from its sacred intent, and been used to serve the devil and promote the wicked selfishness of men. Surely men "have sought out many inventions." "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way."

But the word 'iniquity' has a more general meaning. It is used to express, in a general way, the whole depraved nature of man. It represents the deep fountain of corruption from which all transgressions and sins proceed; for worse than the streams of evil that have filled the history of humanity is the deep fountain of sinful human nature from which all have sprung. Fetid and foul may be the fog that rises from yonder marsh, but far deeper and fouler are the slimy waters of the unclean things that lie beneath the service, from which these fogs are only exhalations. This is iniquity.

It is the vile human heart of which God says: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" And "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." This is the real cause of human ruin. Our acts might be forgiven; our omissions might be overlooked; but our nature is ruined and only capable of continued evil, waxing worse and worse forever. Unless it be radically changed, it is incapable of happiness or holiness, and would turn heaven into hell, even as a leper's body would infect and poison a whole community. There is nothing to be done with this wicked human heart but to destroy it.

4. There is still another term for sin -- guile. This is the subtlest and most hopeless of all the characteristics of sin. It is utterly false, crooked, dishonest. We have often felt, in dealing with sinful man, that there was hope for the most abandoned and depraved, if we could only feel

that the man was true and sincere; that he really was ready to acknowledge his sin without palliation or excuse, and truly longed to be right. There is hope for such a man. But when you feel a man is not honest and true, and that he is only deceiving you, playing with you, and using the cloak of religion for some mean and sordid motive, you feel that you can do nothing with him. He is irretrievably lost.

It is this double heart in man, this lack of uprightness and sincerity which makes his case so desperate. And this is the case with all men naturally, for the old serpent, the father of lies, rules in the children of disobedience, and makes them like himself, deceiving and being deceived.

Oh, what a category of evils: transgression, sin, iniquity, guile! If you have ever seen your heart as God sees it, you may well cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

II. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING SALVATION

God has four provisions to set over against these four names of sin.

1. The first is forgiveness. This has to do with our acts of evil. They render us liable to punishment; and when God forgives us, He acquits us of all charges, conceals the judgment against us, delivers us from guilt and punishment, and treats us as if we had not sinned. This is the purchase of Christ's blood; this is the offer of the Gospel to all who will sincerely repent and accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, to all of you who read these lines "through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

2. Covered. "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered." This is fuller, deeper, and more definite. It tells us of the great facts and principles that lie back of the forgiveness. Something had to be done to purchase this forgiveness, to provide for this settlement, to make right the relations between the sinner and the law of God. There had to be a covering.

Go back with me to Eden. See that guilty pair cowering with shame. It is not that their forms are naked. They, poor souls, are conscious of being exposed to the holy eye of God. Their sin is uncovered, and they cannot bear the exposure. So they take the fig leaves and sew them together, and put them on their persons. The searching eye of God has found them out, but His compassion provides a better covering. He bids them take those spotless lambs that stand before them, and doubtless, confessing their sins with their hands upon their heads, He slays the victims as sacrifices for their guilt. Then He takes the skins from their bleeding bodies, all dripping with crimson drops, and He puts them on their persons as a covering of blood, reminding them of the great Sacrifice that was yet to come, and by His blood make expiation for their guilt, and then by His righteousness cover their souls with spotless robes.

This was the meaning of the lid of the ark in the ancient tabernacle. It was the covering all sprinkled with blood which hid the broken law from the eye of Him who looked down from

between the cherubim. The word propitiation means covering, and this word is applied to Christ. "And he is the propitiation for our sins"; that is, the covering for our sins. When the poor publican smote upon his breast and cried to heaven for mercy, his prayer was "God be the propitiation for me a sinner." He saw that there must be a covering.

This was the meaning of the blood upon the doorposts of Israel's tents when the destroying angel passed by. Jesus, the Great Sacrifice, in this beautiful type, was covering them from the wrath of the avenger. Beloved, are your sins not only forgiven, but covered, canceled, and forever put away through the blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses from all sin?

3. Not imputed. This word literally means not to think. It not only describes the judicial act of God in acquitting the sinner and dismissing the charge against him, but it means still more: it means that He forgets as well as forgives, and thinks of us no longer in the light of our sin, but treats us and loves us as if we had never sinned. He puts it quite out of His heart, and never again upbraids us with its faintest suggestion.

This is the wonderful part of God's forgiveness; it is so generous, so affectionate, so ennobling, that He takes away from the poor, guilty, shamefaced criminal cringing at His feet, every sense of shame, and lifts him up into His confidence, and gives him the self-respect and dignity of a prince and a child. There is something wonderful about this in God, and yet some of us understand it in our human relations. We want to trust those we love, and we must trust them perfectly. We know what it is to be unwilling to lose confidence in a friend, and to cling to that confidence even when we might suppose that it was not deserved. How the parent continues to trust his child, and refuses to doubt him even though he knows him to be wrong, until at length his noble confidence has ennobled its object! God is unwilling to lose confidence in us; and when He justifies us, He determines to trust us, and begins to treat us as if we were worthy of perfect trust; and indeed He makes us worthy by His confidence and by His grace.

How beautifully this comes out in some of His words respecting His people! "He has not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither has he seen perverseness in Israel." Plenty there was to see, but He would not see it. He said: "Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Savior." Lie they often did, but He would not believe it, but resolved to love them into goodness. He has been loving us and ennobling us by His love, and holding fast to us in His strong purpose of full salvation, and every moment He looks upon us in the light of that loving purpose as we shall be when we shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom" of our Father.

Oh, how wonderful this confidence of God! But how good and kind He is to exercise it toward us. How we love Him for it! He has sworn that He "would not be wroth" with us, "nor rebuke" us. This draws us to His bosom and makes us love Him and love to please Him. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord does not impute iniquity," and against whom He will not even think one thought or shadow of his former self.

4. The expulsion of guile. "In whose spirit there is no guile." God not only refuses to think a thought of evil against us, but He actually takes the evil away by putting in us the true heart, the honest will, the new spirit, and the single eye to choose and please Him. He drives out the evil

to bring in the good. So we have the fourfold salvation over against the fourfold sin: forgiveness, atonement, love, and cleansing. All this is for us in the finished and perfect work of Christ. For "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Oh, the blessedness of the man who receives this full salvation! All our sorrows come from sin, and in full salvation we find our perfect joy. Do you know all this in its fullness? Is the blessedness of this great salvation even now filling all your being with the glad amen of praise to God?

III. INSTRUCTION CONCERNING TROUBLE AND SORROW

We have two kinds of sorrow in the next verses. One is the trouble of the impenitent sinner trying to override his conscience and be happy in his sins. But the Psalmist could find no peace this way. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." Oh, the misery of a guilty conscience and a hidden sin! But, oh, the relief that comes to the penitent heart! "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin."

We have also the picture of the sorrows of the saint, but they do not touch him. "Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him." And then he sends up his shout of triumph: "You are my hiding place; You will preserve me from trouble; You will encompass me with songs of deliverance."

How free! Our spirit springs above all care and sorrow when we enjoy the love and peace of God. How light the burdens of temporal distress when the heart can spring and sing in the triumph of the Lord's great love! Only let us see His gracious face and know that He is pleased, and we can sing above the darkness and the storm,

"Let cares like a wild deluge come,
And storms of sorrow fall;
May I but safely reach my home,
My God, my heaven, my all."

IV. INSTRUCTION ABOUT GUIDANCE

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go: I will guide you with my eye."

1. We have God's instruction. The forgiven and saved soul needs to be taught, and how graciously He teaches and opens up His Word!

But more than instruction is needed. Direction also in practical duty is required. "I will . . . teach you in the way you shall go." This is more than knowledge; this is wisdom. And this He gives by His Holy Spirit to the sanctified judgment, and makes us know what we ought to do.

2. "I will guide you with my eye." This is more than being taught in our mind. This is something finer, more delicate, more divine. I have seen a drill master stand before a class of hundreds of

young children, and by a glance that I could scarcely detect, direct every movement of their hands, and feet, and faces, with the utmost precision. But how closely they watched him! He was guiding them with his eye. Is this the meaning of the verse? Does it teach us that we are to keep our eyes so constantly fixed upon God that we will catch His every movement, and always know His will by the smile of His approving countenance? Yes, it is true, and it may be the meaning of the verse. But it seems to us there is still a closer meaning.

It seems to us that He offers in this verse to put His own eye in us, and enable us to see with His eyes, and not with our own. There is a great difference in these two things. Looking at people with your eyes, you get narrow, selfish views. Looking at people with Christ's eyes, they seem so different. You can love and bless them. He is willing to put His mind in us, to let us think His thoughts, to see all things even as He sees and knows. But in order to do this, we must renounce our wisdom; we must subject our judgment to His; we must crucify our opinions and thoughts, and be willing to be fools that we may be wise.

In order to have the divine guidance in this blessed way, we must be yielding and obedient. "Be you not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto you." The horse and the mule cannot be guided by intelligent sympathy with the driver. And so many Christians have to be held by the Lord with a strong hand, because they will not let God draw them near enough to guide them with His eye.

Oh, let us not be servants but friends, of whom the Master can say: "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

Finally, this Psalm contains instruction about joy. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous : and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart." Yes, they who know the blessedness of this full salvation, and let the Lord bring them into the sweet place of trust and guidance, may well rejoice and shout for joy.

Blessed is the man that is forgiven, but more than blessed is the man who lets God guide him with His eye.

Let us not be behind the spirit of these ancient Psalms. Three thousand years nearer the throne than they, oh, surely, we should have a louder, sweeter song. Let us rejoice in the Lord evermore.

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 8

THE ROYAL BRIDEGROOM -- PSALM 45

A little bit of broken glass is sufficient to reflect the full glory of the sun; so human love, a poor fragment at best, helps us to rise to that love divine of which it is the feeble type, the earthly foretaste of the Marriage of the Lamb.

The Bible is a love story, and the great objective point to which it moves forward is the rapture of the Bride and the Marriage Supper before the throne. In the beautiful story of Adam and Eve, the wooing and wedding of Rebekah, the sacred idyll of Ruth and Boaz, the exquisite poem of the Canticles, the parable of the Virgins, the Marriage of the King's Son, and the beautiful vision of the Apocalypse, we find it running like a golden thread. The earthly figure is only the shadow. The reality is the union of the whole Church with her glorious Lord and Head.

This is the theme of the forty-fifth Psalm. It is the story of the Heavenly Bridegroom and His Bride, the Church. There are three points in the prophetic picture on which we shall dwell: the Bridegroom, the Bride, and the offspring.

I. THE BRIDEGROOM

This is a picture combining the elements of strength and sweetness, so seldom found together in any human character. Some people are strong without being gentle; others are sweet without being stable. This picture combines both elements in perfect harmony, like the solid mountains with their ribs of adamant and their covering of moss, verdure and bloom.

1. The stronger qualities.

The first of these is righteousness. "You love righteousness, and hate wickedness." There can be no permanent love for one unless it is founded on esteem, and that esteem based on the sterling qualities of uprightness and moral worth. We cannot permanently love an unrighteous person. This glorious Bridegroom comes to us in all the attractions of perfect purity, uprightness, and infinite holiness. We can rest with implicit confidence upon His infallible integrity, and know that He is always right.

Truth is also essential to the confidence of love. We must be able to rest on the word of the one we love; not only upon his word, but upon his absolute sincerity, honesty, frankness, and faithfulness. We must know that he is thoroughly consistent and unchangeable in his love. Our Bridegroom is the embodiment of faithfulness. Written upon His vesture and upon His thigh are

the words True and Faithful. His lightest word shall be fulfilled. His very thought is absolute fidelity. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Even "if we believe not, yet he abides faithful: he cannot deny himself." Has He given us a promise? We can rest upon it forever. Has He given us a right to trust Him anywhere? He will never change. Has He encouraged us to lean upon Him? We may lay our whole weight upon His faithful breast and know that He will never fail us. Others may change, but He is changeless, our truehearted and everlasting Friend.

Victorious power is another quality. He rides forth as a Conqueror amid His enemies and ours. There is none that can stay His hand from working. There is none that can resist His will. Other friends may want to help us, but they are not able. There is nothing that He cannot do for His Bride. He could speak worlds into existence for her if necessary, and His lightest command would banish in a moment all her adversaries. He is her Vindicator and Defender, and none can dispute His will. His friendship means eternal safety, eternal victory. All power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. Those that are the objects of His love can never have cause to fear. Who would not have such a Friend? And, oh, who would refuse to be His Bride?

He has kingly and sovereign power. He has supreme authority. He has the right to exercise His power without resistance. The eternal Father has invested Him with all authority and dominion. His will is supreme above all this vast creation, and all shall yet crown Him "King of kings and Lord of all." This is the Bridegroom that offers you His love.

2. His gentler qualities.

The first of these is His beauty. "You are fairer than the children of men." There are fair faces and noble forms among the sons and daughters of men, but He is fairer than them all, in the loveliness of His spirit, and even in the beauty of His person.

If His very name can thrill the heart with such delight, what must His person be? All the beauty of human loveliness came originally from His hand and must, somehow, be in His person. All that is beautiful in the sunshine and the stars, the loveliness of nature and the beauty of art, is but the reproduction of something which was originally in Him. A photograph can combine in one face the beauty of twenty, so that the single picture expresses the charm of each different face combined in one. Ancient art sometimes gathered up in one single form the loveliness of man or woman in its Venus or Apollo; but, oh, what must that beautiful face be that can combine all the beautiful faces of earth lighted up by the glory of Deity!

Sometimes we catch a glimpse of the radiance that streams from it, but that face itself we have not seen except through the revelation of the Spirit as He brings the full conception of its loveliness to the heart. Then, language is too poor to describe the view of Jesus which the heart sometimes catches even here. A poor dying idiot caught a glimpse of its glory, and for weeks he could only cry amid his wandering thoughts as his face every few minutes would light up, "Yon lovely Man; I want to go to yon lovely Man." The great and good Dr. Anderson, of Boston, Secretary of the American Board of Foreign Missions, often said for weeks before he died, "I have such a longing to see the face of Jesus." Some day we shall see it, and it will be

ages before we shall want to look away to any other.

His gracious words. "Grace is poured into your lips." What a singular beauty there is in the words of Jesus, even if there were no deeper reality behind them! When did poetry frame such sentences as some of the promises that fell from the Master's lips? "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Let not your heart be troubled." There is music in their very sound, and their sweetness can never die. But how much sweeter when they are spoken to the heart by the Holy Spirit! Oh, how the memory lingers on some of these gracious promises whispered to us in some hour of sorrow, turning all our darkness into day and lifting us up into praise and victory!

"In your majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness." This is more than beauty. This is grandeur, sublimity, loftiness, glory. But, notwithstanding, there is nothing in it that overawes or repels, for it is all so blended with meekness and gentleness that it attracts and rests us. How often we see these elements combined in the character of God: "Our Father," the gentleness; "who is in heaven," the majesty; "The Lamb," the meekness; "in the midst of the throne," the almightiness. He is a glorious King. He is a mighty Conqueror. He is the majestic God. But He is our Beloved, our Husband, and our Friend.

Sometimes we look at some distinguished man, or meet with some lofty personage, and yet we wonder at the freedom and simplicity with which we can think of him, because we know him as a friend is known. A little child can lie in the bosom of a queen and forget the monarch in the mother. And so the Bride can rest upon the heart of the King, and know that to her He is only her beloved. And so Christ will let us come as near, and even amid His transcendent majesty, see only the Savior who died for us and the Friend who loves us.

Gladness. "God, Your God has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows." There are some natures that are so joyous and radiant that we love to be with them. Their very presence sheds gladness all around them. Jesus, our royal Bridegroom, is full of gladness, and to be in His presence is to have fullness of joy. They who dwell in His presence are ever happy and triumphant.

In our darkest hours, could we but see His face, it would be lighted up with victory and rest, and we would wonder at our own fears and cares. There is nothing more beautiful in the picture of His life than the radiant gladness that ever shone upon His face, and lighted up His spirit even in the most trying hours. When all around seemed dark and threatening, He could rejoice in spirit, and, forgetting all His sorrows, could say, "Let not your heart be troubled." Even on the cross His joy triumphed over pain and death, and for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame."

Sweetness. "All Your garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." Fragrance is the most exquisite and delicate of material things. It is the very soul of the flower. It expresses, better than any other earthly things, the idea of sweetness; that blending of joy and love which no other word could so well express; that quality which draws us to persons because of their loveliness, and sheds upon us such delight and comfort from their spirit. It is like the

atmosphere of spices that filled the Holy of Holies; burning spices and clouds of incense.

It is that which makes the hour of prayer so sacred and sweet, and surrounds us in our closet with such a deep, delightful sense of the divine presence as nothing else on earth affords -- more delightful and more sacred than the closest intimacy of human friendship, and the most perfect fellowship of kindred hearts. This is the spirit of Jesus; and if we are clothed in His garments, it will be our spirit, too, and, like His, all our robes will smell of myrrh and aloes.

These spices are significant. The myrrh was used for the dead, and the aloe is a bitter plant. The myrrh tells of the sweetness that comes from self-crucifixion, and the aloes, of the bittersweet that comes out of sanctified sorrow, while the cassia speaks of the other qualities of loveliness which fill the Savior's heart and hold us to His bosom. Such is the royal Bridegroom, "the chiefest among ten thousand," "yes, the one altogether lovely." Well might the tongue flow as the pen of a ready writer; well might the heart glow with love and joy as he drew the picture of his glorious King and sweetest Friend. Many another heart has felt the same indwelling of the Savior's love, and often has sung or felt:

"Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest."

II. THE BRIDE

We have her call. "Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline your ear; forget also your own people, and your father's house."

1. She is to hearken. Why is this call so expressed? It is because the voice is so soft and low that if she does not hearken diligently she will not hear it. Jesus calls with a still, small voice; and if we are immersed in worldly thoughts and cares, we shall miss His call. The voice which calls the Bride is not a loud voice. The lover whispers his suit, and she must listen with open ear or she will lose the whispered words of love. How often have we missed the Master's sweetest voice because we have not hearkened!

2. She must not only hearken but consider. This word literally means "to sit down together." She must sit down with Him and let Him talk to her. She must let His message sink deep into her heart. She must think. Ah, how little we meditate and let the Lord's message sink deep into our spirit! True consecration and deep spiritual life must begin in contemplation and deep communion in the secret place of the heart. "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still," is the Psalmist's appropriate word.

But she must also incline her ear. This means a willingness to hear; this means a direction of the heart to the call. Sometimes we refuse the call; we would rather not hear. We are afraid we shall be called away from the world and sin, or from some choice of our own self-will; but if we will incline our ear, if we will be willing to listen and catch the voice of God, we shall receive His

messages and be led into the closer place of His love and fellowship.

3. There must be a separation. "Forget also your own people, and your father's house." There is something that must be given up before she can know His love and come into the fullness of His blessing. Every high spring rises from a corresponding depth. God loves the place of sacrifice. The place the temple rose was the spot where Abraham had given up his child and his all to God; therefore God immortalized it forever. The place where redemption was founded was the cross of Calvary. So in each of our lives, the everlasting memorial which God is preparing for us will spring out of some experience of separation and sacrifice.

We cannot have both the earthly and the heavenly. How much are we to give up? All, and then God will give back in Him whatever He chooses to give, no longer as it was before, but from henceforth as linked with Him. Abraham received back Isaac, but not to be the same; he was no longer his Isaac, but God's.

It is not merely giving up, but a glad giving up, a turning of the heart and affections from every other direction because, of the greater attraction which draws us to Him, even as the bride no longer desires even the joys of home and the companionship of father and mother in comparison with the transcendent delight of her husband's society.

4. We have her consecration. "He is your Lord, and worship you him." She gives herself entirely to Him; she recognizes Him as divine; she worships Him. It is the dedication of all her being to One who is not only her Lover but her Lord.

5. Her garments. Much is said about her wardrobe.

First, her robes are all glorious within. It is her inner adorning that is emphasized. Outwardly and in the sight of men, she may seem common and unattractive, but her inner adorning is all glorious. Her heart is pure, her love is heavenly and divine, her spirit is as beautiful as His own.

"Her clothing is of wrought gold." Gold is the symbol of the divine. This tells of the holiness and the loveliness that are not mere human virtue, but the very nature of God Himself, and the work of the blessed Holy Ghost; the imperishable qualities that come not from human effort, but from the indwelling life of Christ Himself within the heart.

Not only is her clothing of gold, but it is of "wrought gold." Every garment is made for her especially. It is not ready-made clothing, but it is made expressly for her. It tells us of the grace which provides for each of us a heavenly robe exactly adapted to our own life. We are not all dressed alike, but God has given each of us a special provision of grace which He has for none besides. He adapts Himself to us with special care, and meets our every need with infinite provisions of His grace. He is ever working for us. His own loving hands provide for each emergency, and meet each new situation. As the actors upon the stage have different robes for each new act, which they have simply to put on and wear, so the grace of Jesus Christ has provided for each of us all things that pertain to life and godliness for every occurrence that meets us.

Again, we read of the raiment of needlework. This suggests to us the thousand little stitches which enter into our daily life, and the provisions of God's grace are as minute as the threads in your garments. There is nothing too small for God's mercy to provide, not by hours even, but by moments. We may live on Him and take Him for each new moment as it comes.

6. We have her intimacy with Him and His delight in her. "She shall be brought unto the King." "So shall the king greatly desire your beauty." This is the best of it. What are her garments, her companions, her other joys, compared with the joy of His presence, fellowship, and love? We read of the virgins, her companions. We may be virgins, or we may be the Bride. She has companions.

"The daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift." This tells of the business of the world. Tyre was the type of earthly commerce. It means prophetically that a day is coming when the wealth of the world shall be at the feet of the Bride of the Lamb, and we who have given up all for Christ shall control and possess what others now prize so highly and risk their all to gain.

Next, we have the entering into the palace of the King. "With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace." Oh, how the vision rises before us: The bridal procession, the joyful songs, the glorious Bride, the welcome of the Savior, the happy meeting to part no more, the joyful greetings on that eternal shore, the entering never to go out again. Oh, will you, shall I be there?

There is another question: How are we answering the call now? "Hearken, O daughter, and consider." "Will you go with this man?" God help us to answer as did Rebekah of old, "I will go."

III. THE OFFSPRING

There is a glorious offspring from this marriage. "Instead of your fathers shall be your children, whom you may make princes in all the earth." We do not enter upon the meaning of this glorious prophecy, the generations in the ages to come that shall be born of the Bride of the Lamb; but it is enough for the present to know that all we can be as Christians, and all that we can do to bring others to Christ, is the fruit of our own union with the Lord Jesus. "That you should be married . . . to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Every soul that we bring to Christ ought to be begotten of our love, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and be the real offspring of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Not until we know Him in His deepest intimacy, as the Bridegroom of our heart, can we know all the fullness of His power, and can we be to others all that He would have us be.

Beloved, what place are you taking? The place of the virgins or the place of the Bride? The virgin may be pure, but the Bride is something more. She has the marriage love, the bridal robes, and the nearness which no others can know. This is the high calling which we may accept and which we may miss. May the Lord Himself enable us to understand the kingdom to which we are called, and not to come short of the highest place to which mortals have ever been raised, and to which angels dare not aspire! "Hearken, O daughter, and consider," a still,

small voice is whispering to you. "Forget also your own people, and your father's house; So shall the king greatly desire your beauty: for he is your Lord; and worship you him."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 9

THE MISSIONARY PSALM -- PSALM 67

This beautiful Psalm covers all the ages and dispensations.

I. THE MOSAIC DISPENSATION

It begins with the Mosaic dispensation: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us."

This is almost a repetition of the blessing of the high priest under the old dispensation. These were almost the very words that Aaron was to utter when he blessed the Hebrew congregation in the name of the Lord, and said: "The LORD bless you, and keep you: The LORD make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you: The LORD lift up his countenance upon you, and give the peace." This is the spirit of the Old Testament.

It is blessed and heavenly, but it does not reach beyond ourselves. It is our blessing rather than the blessing of others, and yet it is very precious and real; and, so far as it goes, it is our blessing still even under the new dispensation.

1. It begins with the divine mercy, the source of all our blessings, and especially of our salvation, the greatest of our mercies.
2. It speaks of our temporal blessings which form so large a part of the Old Testament promises: God's goodness to us in our natural life and our earthly needs.
3. It reaches its fullness in the third petition, "Cause his face to shine upon us. This leads up to the Lord's own personal presence with us, and the manifestation of Himself to us as He manifested Himself under the Old Testament in the Shekinah glory that shone in the Holy of Holies; and as He does in the New, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our hearts and the gracious manifestation of the presence of Christ in the consecrated spirit. This is all the most blessed and the most real, and all this is necessary before we can be prepared to go into the deeper and broader experiences of the Psalm. But this is all personal and does not reach beyond ourselves.

II. THE CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION

The second prayer of this beautiful Psalm covers the Christian dispensation and the wider publication of the Gospel to the Gentiles and to all the world: "That Your way may be known

upon the earth, Your saving health among all nations."

This is just as distinct a picture of the New Testament dispensation as the first verse is of the Old. This is the wider view of the Gospel for the whole human race. God's way just means His glorious way of salvation and His high and holy will respecting man. Properly speaking, Christ is Himself God's way. "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; and so it is a prayer for the knowledge of Jesus to be spread among all the nations.

The beautiful expression, "Your saving health," includes the idea not only of salvation, but of healing, too, or, more correctly, of that fullness of blessing which the old word 'health' so perfectly expressed. The Saxon 'hale' gives us the perfect meaning, and it just describes the wholeness and soundness and wholesomeness which the Gospel brings into all our life, making everything right and happy and enabling us to say, 'All is well.' This is the Gospel that men need, a Gospel that brings glad tidings for every human need, and saves us utterly and perfectly in every part of our being.

The Psalmist's prayer is that this may be known. We are not to save men, but we are to make God's salvation known. All that Christ's coming is waiting for is simply the proclamation of the Gospel among all nations. The world does not know this great salvation. Men will not accept it, but all should know it. This has been the business of the Church in the Christian ages. For this the Holy Ghost was given. This is our calling today. This is the meaning of Christian missions -- to make God's way known upon the earth, and His saving health among all nations. It is to this we are consecrating ourselves, and to this we dedicate ourselves anew this day.

After eighteen centuries there are still but a few million out of earth's heathen nations who know the Gospel. Perhaps one-half of the population of this globe has never heard the name of Jesus, and God is sending us forth simply to tell them. A human government could reach all the tribes of earth in a very short space of time, with any message of importance. But the King of kings has not found an army that could carry His commission beyond the borders of earth's unevangelized lands.

Oh, how we need to pray, "That Your way may be known upon the earth, 'Your saving health among all nations.'"

III. THE JEWISH PEOPLE

God's purpose for the Jewish people is here made known. "Let the people praise You, O God; let all the people praise You." The "people" here mean God's chosen people Israel, as the "nations" mean the Gentiles.

This is to be the closing incident of the New Testament dispensation, the restoration and salvation of Israel. This prayer is now being fulfilled. The spirit of grace and supplication is now being poured out upon the house of David, and they that pierced Him are beginning to look upon Him, and to return to their rejected Messiah. Many of the ancient people of God are returning to their old land, and, better still, many of them are turning to their Messiah. God

speed the day when all the people shall praise the Lord, and God, even their own God, shall bless them!

IV. THE SECOND ADVENT

The personal coming of Christ and the blessing of the millennial earth and its redeemed nations are next referred to, in the words: "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. . . . Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

This is the picture of Christ's personal reign. It is He who shall judge the people righteously. It is He who shall govern the nations upon earth. It is this that is to make the nations rejoice and sing for joy. It is this that is to bring back more than Eden blessedness to the sin-cursed earth, until it shall yield its increase; and all the nations of the earth shall fear Him. God haste this glorious day for which creation is groaning and travailing in pain!

Oh, how different the picture now! Even those ancient Psalms forecast the awful vision as they cry, "Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."

V. SOME PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. God has revealed to us His plan for the world and the ages. This beautiful Psalm contains a very clear outline of the dispensations and purposes of God. He has not called us servants, but He has called us friends; for all things that He has heard of the Father He has made known unto us. He has taken us into His confidence, and we can intelligently cooperate with Him in carrying out His great purposes for the world which He has redeemed. This is a high honor and privilege.

Many persons are working in the dark. They do not understand God's idea for this age. They are expecting the world to be converted in the present dispensation, and they are disappointed because their hopes are not realized. This is not God's intent, but rather to gather out of all nations a people for His name, then restore His ancient people Israel, and come Himself to reign over the millennial earth, restoring it to righteousness and peace. Let us accept our great trust and be worthy of the high honor He has given us as coworkers with Himself.

2. God has given us a great trust for the world. This Gospel is not our own, but given us for dying men. We dare not use it for ourselves without peril. Suppose some wealthy man were to bequeath a great estate to the suffering poor of New York City, and leave us as trustees of the fund; and we, instead of using it according to His benevolent wishes, were to sit down and enjoy it ourselves, and squander it upon our families and our pleasures. Would we not be regarded as false to our trust, and cruel, selfish, unjust, and criminal? Christ has left us the purchase of His blood, not for enjoyment merely, but for the world's salvation. Terrible indeed will be the account which they shall have to render who have used this trust for their own

salvation and enjoyment, and left the world, for whom it was intended, to perish in ignorance and sin. We are trustees of the Gospel. Let us never forget this.

3. We live in a very solemn time. We are on the threshold of the age to come, and at the close of the Christian dispensation. Never were times so momentous or opportunities so extraordinary. We belong to that generation for which all the ages have been waiting, and all beings might well envy; the generation whose high calling it may be to welcome their returning King and herald around the world the tiding of His coming. We have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. God help us to redeem the time and be true to His high calling!

4. God Himself has gone out before us and is working mightily in His providence and grace for the evangelization of the world. His providence has shaken every heathen nation, and opened almost all the world to the Gospel. His Spirit has been marvelously poured out upon the heathen, and His hand is manifest in the remarkable history of modern missions as in nothing else since apostolic times. With such encouragements, surely, we may well go forth and expect His mighty blessing on our efforts to evangelize the world.

5. We are living in an age when God is using not the mighty and the learned, but the humblest instrumentalities to do His work. He is choosing a people out of a people. He is taking the things that are weak and foolish; the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are. No one need, therefore, say, "I am unfit. There is nothing I can do." All we need is the baptism of His Spirit, the power of His presence, and He can use us mightily in our weakness and nothingness as witnesses to the name of Jesus. The victory of today is to be won by Gideon's little band, the three hundred, and not by the thirty thousand.

6. Finally, the pole star of our missionary effort is the Lord's personal coming. He is near at hand. It is this that stirs our hearts. It is this that makes every sacrifice and toil seem little. He is so near, and His recompense will make amends for all. Oh, let us go forth with this all-animating hope, and bring to pass the 67th Psalm in all the fullness of the Christian dispensation and the millennial glory!

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; That Your way may be known upon earth, Your saving health among all nations. Let the people praise You, O God; let all the people praise You. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You shall judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Let the people praise You, O God; let all the people praise You. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 10

THE MILLENNIAL KING -- PSALM 72

This Psalm has primary reference to Solomon, and is called a Psalm or Song for Solomon. But it is greater than even Solomon in all his glory, and reaches its true fulfillment in the "King of kings and Prince of Peace," of whom Solomon was but a type. David was the type of Christ our King, with special reference to His conflicts and conquests. Solomon typifies His peaceful throne and His millennial kingdom.

This is the picture of Christ's millennial throne.

I. THE KING

1. We behold here the picture of a wise king. "Give the king Your judgments, O God." This word means the power to rule and judge with wisdom, such as God gave to Solomon in so preeminent a measure. This was his special request of God, and it was marvelously given.

We all remember the wonderful wisdom with which he detected the true mother of the child that was brought to him for judgment, and how his wisdom brought from the uttermost parts of the earth the wondering pilgrims, who came to sit at his feet and propound their hard questions until nothing was left unsolved of all their hearts' desire. But a greater than Solomon is here, the "Wonderful Counselor," the Man of whom it was said by His enemies, "Never a man spoke like this man"; the One who answered the craft and subtlety of His foes until they were glad to escape from His presence in silence and confusion -- Christ, the Wisdom of God.

Earth owes much to wise sovereigns, but her true King has yet to come. What a glorious day that will be when upon the throne of earth shall sit that Mighty One, whose infinite wisdom shall govern the happy nations and bring to earth its highest possibilities of blessing!

2. He is a righteous King. "He shall judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with judgment." How much the world has suffered from injustice, oppression, and wrong! All the sorrows of men spring from their sins. But the King that is coming shall be not only the Righteous One, but His people shall be all righteous. "In his days shall the righteous flourish," and sin and wrong shall disappear from the earth. This is the secret of failure in all our social and political attempts at reform. The material itself is wrong, and until that is rectified, all the best of human plans must end in failure.

A building lay in ruins, and many were discussing the cause of the wreck. The architect said

that the plans were perfect; the contractors declared that the specifications had been all complied with: every brick was in its place, and every arch was rightly set. Why had it tumbled in ruins? A plain workman took up a brick and crushed it beneath his fingers. "There," he said, "is the cause; the brick is rotten, and one is not able to support the weight of another. The material is worthless, and all your best designs are useless with a lot of rotten brick." Alas! Republicanism, social reform, philanthropy, humanitarianism, legislation, example, philosophy, poetry, patriotism can do nothing to elevate and save humanity so long as the human heart is corrupt and the materials are worthless.

But the day is coming when sin shall disappear, when righteousness shall prevail, and when it shall be said of earth, in the language of the ancient prophet: "The Lord bless you, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness." What a glorious day it will be when truth and virtue, honesty and uprightness, unselfishness and love shall bind man to man in a chain of holy benignity, and the prayer of ages shall be fulfilled: "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

3. It is a kingdom of peace. "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness. . . . In his days shall the righteous flourish; and the abundance of peace so long as the moon endures." Other kings have ruled by the sword. But He shall be called the Prince of Peace. Oh, the unspeakable horrors of war! Who can measure its frightful expense in treasure and blood, in tears and agony? Oh, the horrors of bloody strife and the mutilated forms of dying men! Oh, the wild and devilish strife of the sanguinary battlefield! Oh, the myriads of graves that have marked the track of earthly conquerors! In the last few decades there is not an important nation under the sun that has not been deluged in blood. But all this is coming to an end.

"Through the dim future, through long generations,
The echoing sounds grow fainter and then cease;
And, like a bell, with solemn, sweet vibrations,
I hear the voice of Christ again say 'Peace.'

"Peace, and no longer from its brazen portals
The voice of war's loud thunder shakes the skies,
But beautiful as songs of the immortals
The holy melodies of love arise."

But that is only one side of peace. There are a thousand strifes that never end in blood. There are a thousand swords that only shed the richer blood of the spirit. Oh, the sorrows and sins that come from lack of harmony, from the discords of human hearts, from the ill adjustments of human lives, from the clash and friction of human spirits! Men are at war with themselves, at war with each other, at war with God. Oh, for the coming of the Prince of Peace! That will bring rest to every restless heart, harmony to every divided home, unity and love to all human lives, and peace with God, so perfect, that like the planets around their sun, all earth's inhabitants shall move in harmony with the will of God, and earth once more become the counterpart of heaven, and its troubled sea of unrest like the sea of glass before the throne.

4. It will be a kingdom of grace and love. "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. . . . He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth. . . . He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight."

He will be the King of grace, of gentleness, of meekness. He will be the Protector of the poor, the Comforter of the sorrowing, the Friend of the friendless. Earth has had its Prince Arthurs and its Peters the Great, whose glory it was to live among their peasantry and to befriend the lowly and the poor. But the coming King is the ideal of gentleness and grace.

Oh, the happiness His reign will bring! "God shall wipe away all tears" and redress all wrongs, destroy all enemies, heal all the wounds of the ages. What a world that will be where there will be no sin, no sickness, no sorrow, no selfishness, no Satan! What a Millennium that will be where we shall have our perfect bodies, our perfect spirits, our parted friends, and our blessed Savior forever!

"O long-expected day, begin,
Dawn on this world of pain and sin."

5. It will be a kingdom of glory, riches, and splendor. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. To Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised." While all the elements of spiritual blessings will be there, there will not be lacking one thing which can constitute material happiness and glory.

The earth will be transformed. Its physical features will be materially changed, its climate adjusted, its thorns and thistles, rocks and desert waste places exchanged for beauty and fertility, "and the wilderness and the solitary place shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." The very animal creation will be so changed that they will perfectly minister to man as in the first creation, and violence, cruelty, and suffering will pass away from earth. The riches and the glory of earth will be laid at the feet of Jesus and shared with His redeemed. Has He not said: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"?

It is then that the reward will come, and they who have followed Him in the sacrifice of all earthly ambitions will sit with Him on thrones and receive with Him a hundredfold of houses and lands and earthly distinctions and glories. This is not to be the chief element of their happiness. These things are nothing without Him. But having taught them to find their portion first in Him, He will give them all besides, and Himself with it and in it, and make real the old testimony of one of His saints: "First, I have everything in God, and then I have God in everything."

6. It will be a universal kingdom. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river

unto the ends of the earth. Yes, all kings shall fall before him: all nations shall serve him."

There will never be another universal kingdom until Jesus comes. Our boasted democracy is not going to include the world. Its next hope is a king, and earth is waiting for His advent with groans of pain. The Church is not going to become universal, but Christ Himself, by His personal coming, shall gather all nations and tribes and tongues beneath His peaceful scepter.

7. It will be an everlasting kingdom. "They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed."

Not only for a thousand years will His kingdom last, but "forever and ever." The Scriptural conception of the future is very glorious. It is not a monotonous forever, but it is a succession of aeons, or ages, of surpassing glory. The Millennium is but one of these ages. The new heavens and the new earth will be the next, and beyond that is age after age forever. Could we be told the glory of some of these distant ages, we could not even comprehend it. But as these mighty aeons roll on, we shall be prepared for yet greater progressions, and this mighty universe will expand until that great promise be fulfilled: "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

Such is a feeble outline of this inspired picture of the millennial kingdom of the Lord Jesus. The other Scriptures are full of the picture of this golden age of Christian hope and promise. But what can we do to hasten it?

II. HIS SUBJECTS

1. We can long for it. There is a great promise to those who simply and truly love His appearing. If we desire it, it will influence and transform our lives. It is the goal of our highest hopes and affections and the time when our real life shall begin. Is our treasure there? Are our hopes there? Is every fiber of our being crying: "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly"? Is it home forever to our homeless hearts? This is what the Master sees and loves. This is what friendship appreciates in a friend -- the sense of his absence, the longing for his return.

2. We can pray for it. Do you ever pray for the things that are coming to you after Jesus comes? Have you stored up anything on the other side of the resurrection, for which you are waiting and asking? Oh, you little know the power there is in that kind of prayer! It will elevate all your being by cords that are anchored to the very throne, and attractions that will lift you above the skies.

3. We can live for it. We can be ready for His coming every moment. He can keep your garments unspotted. Let Him adorn you with the wedding robe; and when all the members of His Church are thus adorned, and the Bride is ready for her husband, He will not be long in coming.

4. We can labor for His coming. The best way to hasten it is to send the Gospel to all nations

and take the invitations to the wedding to all earth's inhabitants. When this shall have been done, we know the end will come. Blessed hope! Lord, hasten it! Oh, let the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come," and every heart respond, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

In Scotland's darkest day, the nation at last felt that its only hope lay in the return of John Knox. So he was sent for, and eagerly they awaited the first signal of the great reformer's advent. At length a messenger hastened up from Leith, entered the chamber where the delegates were secretly assembled, and, carefully shutting the door, a whisper was breathed, "John Knox has come." It went from lip to lip, and men stood up with strange excitement, buckled on their armor and helmets, went from village to village, and from home to home, until, before many hours had passed, the tidings had been whispered to every waiting heart, "John Knox has come!" Brave men gathered quickly to the secret meeting place where a mighty host stood around their glorious leader, and the enemies of Scotland trembled on their throne before the power of one mighty man. Scotland was saved, and the religious liberties of the world were settled.

Oh, this is the only hope of the world! Let us send it up to heaven as the cry of prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Soon the whisper will sweep down from yonder skies, "The Lord has come!" Around Him will silently gather His faithful waiting ones; scepters will fall and thrones will crumble, and the King of kings will take the kingdom, and the saints of the Most High will reign with Him forever and ever.

O day of days! O hope of hopes! O King of kings and Lord of lords! We wait, we watch, we long, we hope, we pray, we work for You. Amen.

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 11

JESUS OUR ABIDING HOME -- PSALM 91

Like the twenty-second, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth Psalms, more effective in their grouping than even in their individuality, the ninetieth and ninety-first Psalms are fitted into each other with singular effect.

The first was undoubtedly written by Moses, and the second, most probably, by the same author. We know it has been attributed to a much later time by many, but the internal evidences and the imagery employed point strongly to the wilderness.

The ninetieth Psalm was the cry of his lonely heart, as for forty years Israel wandered in the trackless wilderness without a habitation or a home, until from that scene of desolation and death his heart turns to find rest in God, as he cries: "Lord, You have been our dwelling place [home] in all generations."

But even this bright and blessed comfort seems almost lost in the dirge-like strains of the closing verses of the Psalm, as all his thoughts become absorbed in the scenes of depression and mortality that gather around him, so that the song becomes one long, sad wail. "You turn man to destruction." "All our days are passed away in Your wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told."

But in the ninety-first Psalm, his lonely heart has found its home "in the secret place of the most High . . . under the shadow of the Almighty," and beneath the covert of His shadowing wings. There is no doubt that all through this Psalm there is a reference to the Tabernacle in the wilderness. Its holy shrine within the veil and beneath the outspread wings of the cherubim is the secret place of the most High and the shadow of the Almighty where His Spirit dwells in holy fellowship and eternal security and rest.

Whoever was the author of this Psalm, we know who is its great end. We know where the secret place of the Most High and the shadow of the Almighty for us are found, even in the bosom of Jesus our abiding home. And we know also for whom it is intended, even for all who are in Him and longing to abide in Him. There are few of us who cannot claim it as our own Psalm, and record it as our testimony. May the Holy Spirit enlarge it to our thought once more, and make it as never before our living experience!

Let us look first at the names of God here given; secondly, His promises; and thirdly, their conditions.

I. THE NAMES OF GOD

There are four glorious names given to Him in this Psalm.

1. The Most High. This tells of His supremacy as sovereign Lord, above all authority and dominion and every name that is named. High as may be our difficulties, He is higher. Our enemies may be lofty, but He is above them. The place to which He bids us rise may be beyond our reach, but He is able to raise us to the loftiest heights of faith and hope. What can be too hard or too high for the Most High?

2. The Almighty. This is the glorious name He gave to Abraham and repeated to Moses, the Hebrew Shaddai. It tells of the God of infinite power and resources for which nothing is too hard. It is He who formed the worlds out of nothing. It is He who holds those mighty suns in their places, and whirls those countless systems on their orbits, and keeps in motion this mighty universe without disturbance. It is He who has shown His mighty power in the miracles of the Bible, in the destruction of Pharaoh's host and Sennacherib's army, in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and in the conversion of the myriads who have passed from sin, white-robed and glorified, into the presence of His glory. It is He who is our Protector and our God.

3. Jehovah. This is the dearest of all names because it links them all with us. It means the covenant God. It means the God who is related to us, the God who is revealed in Jesus as the God of grace and mercy.

4. God. This, His absolute name, denotes His eternal Deity and infinite perfection. But the best of it is, He is my God. He is not an abstract God, far away, but He gives Himself to me, and permits me to call Him my very own, to possess Him, to use Him, to say He is mine. Oh, have we known His mighty name? He condescends to give to us these glorious names. He might have hidden Himself away in inscrutable, inaccessible majesty, but He has deigned to come down to meet us, to tell us about Himself, to reveal Himself by names that we can understand. Let us meet Him; let us respond to His love; let us "say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."

II. HIS PROMISES

1. Protection from the wiles of temptation. "Surely he shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler." We need first to be guarded from spiritual evil, and this is promised here even in its most subtle forms. The fowler is our great enemy, the devil, seeking to catch us like unwary little birds by his deceptive snares. But from these, the man who meets the conditions of this Psalm shall be guarded.

God will not allow us to be deceived. He is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us faultless. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able." Blessed promise! How much we need it! How insidious are the deceptions of the foe! How

weak and foolish all our wisdom! But how secure are those whose life is hid with Christ!

2. Protection from physical ills. "From the noisome pestilence." This undoubtedly denotes disease of every kind, for here the severest of all forms is mentioned -- "the noisome pestilence." And if we are promised exemption from this, it must include all lesser forms. This must, of course, be preceded by the other promise. We must be saved first from spiritual evil. But if we are, we shall be kept from physical evil. Both these promises are preceded by the most emphatic word in the Psalm, "surely." It is God's great Amen. It must have a very marked meaning. God foresaw all the professors, editors, and theologians who were going to write against the literal meaning of this blessed promise, and so He put this down and underscored it for all the ages, that no trembling soul need ever doubt or fear to take the Lord as a Sanctifier and Healer, and to expect to be kept in perfect peace and safety while humbly trusting in Him. Let us put our amen to God's yes, and trust Him with all our heart for all our need.

3. His overshadowing presence. "He shall cover you with his feathers, and under his wings shall you trust." Undoubtedly this refers in some sense to the mother bird as she broods over her little ones, covering them with her strong pinions and nestling them under her soft feathers. What a beautiful figure it is of God's tenderness! Not only the strong wings, but the soft, downy feathers. Oh, that we may claim all that the figure means; and while He stretches out His mighty wings, let us nestle close to His bosom. There is a double sense here: "He shall cover," but you shall trust. We are to meet His love as it comes to us. There is something in human hearts that needs caressing and comforting, and God is full of it. We need to nestle on His bosom, to be cherished and fondled. God loves to do it. "He will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over you with singing."

But there is another meaning in the figure, It refers undoubtedly to the cherubim in the holy of holies, those beautiful wings of gold that were spread out above the ark, between which shone the Shekinah glory representing the face of God, the smile of heaven. This is "the secret place of the most High." These are the wings that cover us. The figure is even more complete when we include all that it contained, for still lower down beneath those wings was the covering lid of the ark, the mercy seat sprinkled with the blood which covered the sins of the people, and hid them from the eye that looked down from above. So that we are covered first by the blood, and then by the wings of God, while His countenance, full of light and love, beams down upon us from between the cherub wings.

4. He promises us victorious faith. "His truth shall be your shield and buckler." The shield is the uniform type of faith in the Scriptures. The shield was made very large in ancient times and covered all the person, warding off the darts that came in front. So it represents that perfect trust that covers all our person from every attack of the enemy. This is God's glorious gift. Christ is our shield, Christ is our faith.

But what about the buckler? Why, this shield might be lost; the hand that held it might let go; the blow of the enemy might strike it down; or the hand of the foe might wrest it from the bravest soldier and leave him unprotected. But the buckler could not be torn away. It was fastened on the arm, buckled to the wrist; it was part of the soldier. The buckler tells us of a

faith we cannot lose. It is the faith of God, the Spirit of Christ within us, the Author and Finisher of our faith, establishing us immovably and making us "more than conquerors through him that loved us." This is the promise. This is our privilege. Let us claim it.

5. Deliverance from fear. "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flies by day; nor for the pestilence that walks in darkness; nor for the destruction that wastes at noon day." Fear is the worst of our calamities, and it brings many a calamity. But God can save us from fear and keep us from all alarm. "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." "Whoso hearkens unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil." In God's hands our future is safe, and He will let no evil harm us. Knowing that, we can be calm and free from care.

Fear also includes care, worry, and anxiety of every kind. To be saved from this is indeed a haven of rest. No one is truly saved from these cares until he enters into and abides in "the secret place of the most High." This is the difference between the consecrated and the ordinary Christian; the latter is oppressed with a thousand cares and fears; the former can "be careful for nothing," and have the peace of God which passes understanding to garrison his heart and mind in Christ Jesus.

The things mentioned here are very serious and terrible evils. The calamities in whose face the saint can look in the light of the Psalm without an alarm are no imaginary things: the terror, the pestilence, the arrow, the destruction. It is a time of awful pestilence and widespread desolation, but he is calm and trustful and can sing: "Therefore will not we fear though the earth be removed, though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Beloved, are you there? Is your future horizon without a cloud because it is covered by the light of His promise and His presence?

6. Safety amid all danger. "A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you behold and see the reward of the wicked." Not only are we free from fear, but we are saved from harm. The man or woman who is in the Master's will cannot perish until his work is accomplished. How often God has carried His chosen ones through battles and oceans, tempests and wild beasts!

Look at the story of Jeremiah amid the last day of Jerusalem; of Arnot and Livingstone among the savages of Africa; of Paton among the murderous heathen of the New Hebrides ; of the Covenanters in their conventicles in Scotland; and of many another whom God has guarded amid a thousand deaths. Let us believe in our almighty God and fear not to step wherever He bids us, for we are far safer in the midst of dangers in His will than surrounded by every human precaution, but disobedient to Him.

7. Security from all real evil. "There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling." Literally in the Hebrew this means "any stroke." It denotes the judgment of God's displeasure; or a calamity such as often overtakes the wicked. The meaning is, that nothing shall overtake the trusting and abiding child of God which has real evil in it, or any element of the divine displeasure, or of actual harm. Troubles undoubtedly will come to him,

but the evil will be taken out of them. The devil's sting will not reach him. "That wicked one touches him not," and God's displeasure will never visit him, for He has sworn "I would not be wroth with you, nor rebuke you."

Sorrow, indeed, is hard to bear when it comes with God's anger and with Satan's hate unguarded by heavenly love. But when we are conscious that the Master comes between us and everything that touches us, and that every trial that meets us is brought to us by our blessed Redeemer, and shorn of its evil by His love, then nothing can injure us or even discourage us; but up through every cloud we can look into His face and say: "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," and "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," and "Who is he that will harm you, if you be followers of that which is good?"

8. Angelic guardianship. "He shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. They shall bear you up in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone."

The ministry of angels is too plainly revealed in the Old and New Testaments to need any demonstration, but it has not ceased. The vision of Jacob represents the angels as ascending and descending upon the son of man, and all through the Christian age they are busy still for God's redeemed. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Were we to visit heaven today, we should find it, perhaps, emptied of angels, and all their myriads busy on this earth with God's redeemed ones.

The annals of Christian biography have some very wonderful instances of angelic appearances, and we can scarcely doubt that they sometimes have become visible even since the apostolic age.

Not a single angel, but a camp of angels is represented as round about those who fear the Lord. Could we see the spiritual realm, we should behold armies of mighty beings all around us, and in the loneliest and most perilous places we should never fear. Sometimes we can almost hear the flutter of their wings and feel the touch of their interposing hands. They are never absent from us.

The devil forgot to quote this rightly when he repeated it to Christ in the wilderness. He left out this clause, "In all your ways." His idea was that the angels would appear on some great occasion when Christ fell from the pinnacle of the temple, but the truth was the angels were just as near in the wilderness as they could have been in Jerusalem, and their presence even at that moment was between Christ and the arch-fiend.

"Always are they with us, and upon their hands shall they bear you up." This is much more beautiful than the ordinary translation. Not "in their hands" as if they were carrying us; but "upon their hands" as if we were walking upon a pavement of angelic wings, or, rather, soaring in the heavenly places, up-borne by their mighty pinions. Oh, let us realize our heavenly escort, and go forth without fear to do our Master's work and will.

9. Victory over Satan. "You shall tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shall you trample under feet." These are figures of Satanic powers in their strength and malignity; but to the one who abides in Christ, they are all conquered foes, and it is our privilege to tread them beneath our feet and treat them as vanquished enemies.

Our Savior has given us the same promise in the New Testament. "Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you." We shall not be exempt from temptation, but we may keep temptation beneath our feet and not allow it to come even within touch of our heart. "He that is begotten of God keeps himself, and that wicked one touches him not." This is our privilege in Christ, Let us fully claim it.

There is a suggestive thought in connection with "the young lion." The right time to tread upon the lion is while he is young; meet the evil before it grows to importance; claim victory over the first assaults of temptation. Do not let the devil get headway even for a moment, and then shall we have no old lions to contend with. This is the secret of victory in the great conflicts, to be always on guard in the little skirmishes, and immediately triumph over the breath of temptation.

Beloved, shall we take our victory over the enemy? It is our privilege. Our Lord has triumphed, and in Him we are already raised up "far above all principality and power." Let us keep them beneath our feet. Let us stand in Him triumphant, waving evermore the banner of victory as we cry, "Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory [always causes us to triumph in] through our Lord Jesus Christ."

10. "I will set him on high." This may mean earthly honor; certainly it means spiritual exaltation. It is the same promise which Isaiah so eloquently expresses: "He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks." It is to dwell in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; it is to have the lofty and heavenly life. And by and by it shall reach the still higher sense of everlasting glory.

11. Answered prayer. "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." This is the privilege of those who dwell in the secret place. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you." God wants us to have our prayers answered. It is as much for His glory as it is for our blessing. He tells us that He has chosen and ordained us for this, that whatsoever we ask in the name of Jesus, we may receive. We may abide so near Him that we shall only ask what He wants to give, and therefore we shall never ask in vain if we catch His thought before we offer our petition.

12. His presence in trouble. "I will be with him in trouble. The tense changes, and the Lord is with us before we have time to recognize the trouble. He comes with the trouble. There is not an instant's interval until He is there. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Never is His presence so consciously realized as when circumstances are trying, and all around is dark and sad. Then, like the stars that come out under the pall of night, His face shines with a luster that we never know in more prosperous times; and if He is with us, we are so conscious of His presence that the trouble is scarcely realized. It is possible to be so

enwrapped with God that we shall not see when heat comes. We shall scarcely be conscious of the dark cloud around until it is left behind us. There is nothing that more gloriously characterizes the consecrated child of God than His Spirit in times of trouble. Any one can be cheerful and happy amid prosperity, but to rejoice in the midst of suffering; to be strengthened unto all longsuffering with joyfulness; to meet poverty, disappointment, desertion, difficulty, with patience, fortitude, and cheerfulness -- this is possible only to a soul that is filled with the grace and presence of Jesus.

13. Deliverance from trouble. God wants us first to know His presence in trouble, so sustaining us that we are enabled to triumph even before the trouble is removed. But then when He has taught us this lesson, He loves to remove the trouble and to show us His providence as well as His grace. And so, when we have learned to bear our trials with patience and victory, we usually find that they are taken away and that our path is made smooth again. The discipline has done its work, and it is not necessary that it should continue.

14. "I will . . . honor him." God does love to honor a soul that lives wholly for Him. He honors such men with great usefulness, with wide influence among their fellow-men, by His signal blessing upon their work; by the seal of His Holy Spirit; and, by and by, by the crowns and kingdoms which He shall have to bestow, not only upon those who have served Him much, but those who have loved Him truly.

15. Length of days. "With long life will I satisfy him." This does not necessarily mean that we shall live for a century, but it means that we shall be satisfied. The Lord will fulfill our heart's desires if we abide in Him, and enable us to say before our journey is ended, "Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you." But its highest sense is to be fulfilled in the days of eternity. Oh, we are yet but babes in the great cycles of existence! But as a drop to the ocean is this life compared with the ages to come, through which we are to live in His glory and grow into higher, nobler conditions of blessing and power. For He has saved us and raised us up "that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

16. To see the salvation of God. "And show him my salvation." Now this, of course, means the great salvation of the Gospel, the unfolding of God's plan in all its beauty and glory, to know in its breadth and length and depth and height, the love of Christ which passes knowledge. But it is not merely to know salvation as an abstract thing, but it is to know the Savior. Standing in his trembling age in yonder temple, old Simeon holds in his arms a little Babe; and as he drops his tears on the smiling face of Jesus, he cries, "My eyes have seen your salvation." Ah, he must have learned the ninety-first Psalm by heart. And by and by we shall see Christ in all His beauty and glory, and reach the climax of the ninety-first Psalm, and of all other Psalms and songs and experiences.

"Christ to trust and Christ to know
 Constitute our bliss below;
 Christ to see and Christ to love
 Constitute our bliss above."

III. THE CONDITIONS

1. That he dwell "in the secret place of the most High" and "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." The meaning of this is all explained in the fifteenth chapter of John, which is the New Testament counterpart of the ninety-first Psalm. It is to know Jesus in His indwelling, and to live in unbroken fellowship with Him. The Hebrew is very beautiful. The two clauses are parallel. It is not "he that dwells," etc., "shall abide." It is "He that dwells and he that abides." They are coordinate clauses, both describing the same person. There is a little difference in the verb in each case: the one signifies to dwell by day; the other, to lodge by night. Together they express a continual abiding in Jesus, both day and night, that union and communion with Him that are unbroken and perpetual. This is the habit of the consecrated life. This is the secret of holiness, peace, power, victory, and every physical blessing. Let us hear Him say today, "Abide in me, and I in you . . . for without me you can do nothing."

2. We must confess Him as our Keeper. "I will say of the Lord." It is not enough to think it, to feel it, to resolve it; we must say it. "Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for them that fear You; which You have wrought for them that trust in you before the sons of men!" We must not be ashamed to confess our deliverance and commit ourselves to His promises, and risk our whole future upon His faithfulness. We must confess Him in order to be saved; so we must receive and keep our sanctification, our healing, and the answers to our prayers by acknowledging God, even before we see His working.

3. We must trust Him. "In him will I trust." We must claim His promise and lean upon it, and steadily rest without doubt or fear, meeting every temptation and questioning with the victorious answer, I will trust.

4. We must give ourselves utterly to Him, and be His, and His alone. "Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him." God seems to be so deeply stirred by the devotion of the heart to Him, that there is nothing that He will not do. He seems to rise up in holy gladness and say, "Because he has set his love upon me, therefore will I bless him above all blessing."

God loves a single and devoted heart. O beloved, He is calling you to choose Him. To every one of you the test will come; but as it comes, it will show in the depths of your being whether you love Him with all your heart, or know whether you have so set your love upon Him that all else shall go, before you let go His love or disobey His will. Christ's heart is longing for devotion, and to the man or woman who will give it, there is nothing which He will withhold.

5. We must take our victory by putting our foot upon the lion and the adder and trampling our foes in victorious faith. God has the victory for us, but we must take it by putting our feet upon the necks of our foes, and claim His power to make good our bold aggressive stand. He is not going to annihilate the devil and stop our temptations, but He is going to give us victory if we will take it.

Oh, may He enable us thus to abide in Him, thus to trust Him, thus to confess Him, thus to set our heart upon Him, and thus to triumph in Him over all our foes; and so to know in all its meaning this glorious Psalm, which the Master Himself so grandly fulfilled, and then left as the heritage of His children until the wilderness of trial shall be past and the closing echoes shall be fulfilled in the song we shall sing before the throne, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 12

THE PIVOT PSALM -- PSALM 103

This is a strange term to give this Psalm, but it is an appropriate and impressive one. The first verse of this Psalm is said to be the very center of the Old Testament. In their jealousy for the integrity of the sacred Scriptures, the Jews counted the chapters and verses so that they could tell how many chapters and verses there were in the whole Bible, and know at once if there had been any addition to, or subtraction from, the original Scriptures.

In the very center of these chapters and verses we find this sublime note of praise. Surely, this is not an accident. Surely, it fittingly expresses the great truth that praise is the true center of Christianity and the Christian life, the true pivot on which to hang our faith and hope and happiness and holiness. Surely, we shall have looked at this Psalm in vain if we learn from it nothing more than this, the high and fixed purpose that from this moment we shall make praise the very heart and center of our whole life.

What is faith but just such confidence in God that we can praise Him for what we desire? What is prayer but an ineffectual cry, until it reaches the spirit of praise and claims the answer which God cannot refuse to thanksgiving? It was when Paul and Silas ceased their praying and sang praises to God that the answer came from the rending earth and the responding heavens. This will turn every sorrow into joy, every cloud into sunshine, every hour into gladness, to say, no matter what meets us in the circumstances of life, "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth." This is the praise Psalm of the Bible. Let it be the pivot of our life and the keynote of our songs. Many reasons are given here why we should praise the Lord.

I. THE LORD HIMSELF

The first reason is found in the Lord Himself. Before any of His benefits are mentioned, or any causes for our thanksgiving are found in the circumstances of our life, he cries, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

It is the Lord and His holy name that constitute our first, and last, and highest cause for praise. I sometimes have tried to realize the thought: What if there had been no God, no universe, no creature, no man, no time, no eternity, no being to call anything into being, forever and forever, forever and forever -- nothing, nothing, and no possibility of anything. It is too terrible, and the brain sinks crushed beneath its awful weight. We are so glad to arouse ourselves from the hideous dream and realize that God is, as we cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

But, again, how different God might have been! He might have been a God of stern justice, of awful majesty, without mercy, grace, or love. Suppose He had been such a being as some of earth's cruel conquerors -- a Nebuchadnezzar or a Nero -- the embodiment of selfishness and power. We could not have resisted His will. But He could only have been to us a terror and an adversary. How we thank Him for what He is; that His nature and His name are love; that He delights in mercy; that He is slow to anger; that He is all that is lovely as well as all that is mighty, and again we cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

Again, He might have been all this and yet we never might have known Him. The millions of China know Him not. The savages of Africa know Him not. The devotees of Mohammedanism know Him not. Millions among us in Christian lands have never known Him. Why is it that we know Him? Only by His infinite grace that He has given us the light.

Oh, how much cause we have to praise Him! That He has revealed Himself to us; that He has given us the Bible; that He has given to us His Son; that He has given to us His Spirit; that He has cast our lot in Christian lands; that He has called us by His grace; that He has opened our eyes; that He is our God; that we know He loves us, cares for us; again we lift our hearts in the joyful song, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name."

II. HIS BENEFITS

The next cause for praise is His benefits; His kind acts toward us; His gracious dealings with us even before our spiritual mercies are mentioned, and our salvation is referred to. The goodness of God, even apart from salvation, is wonderful. How much God has done for us in our natural life and in His works of creation and providence! How kind the hand that formed us! How differently He might have made us!

Oh, the manifold wisdom and love displayed even in the human body and mind, and the constitution of our social and domestic life! How easy it would have been for God to have made us without these exquisite senses, tastes, and capacities! Suppose He had made the heavens yellow and the earth red. Our eyes would have been strained with agony and bewildered with the harsh, strong colors. Instead, He has made the curtain above us a delicate blue, and the carpet beneath us a soft green, resting our organs of vision, and affording the most exquisite delight by their beauty.

Suppose He had made us without the sense of taste. We might have been nourished by our food, but we would not have enjoyed it. But He has given us these sensitive palates that recognize the delicious flavor of things, and then He has provided the objects that gratify them. He might have made all the food alike, but He has spread our table with a hundred bounties, each contributing some new pleasure to our physical senses, and He has made the sense of smell, with all the delicious odors of the garden and the air. And so He has adjusted us to the world around us and adjusted the world to us.

More exquisite still are the affections that He has placed within our breasts, and the objects of love, the ties of nature, the home bonds that meet them with such blessed objects of regard and link us one to another by the cords of love! Oh, as we think of all the thousand ways in which He has studied the happiness of His creatures, our hearts respond with the glad song, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

III. SALVATION

The third ground for praising God is salvation. "Who forgives all your iniquities." This is the greatest blessing of all. Deeply as we realize it now, we never shall fully know what it means until that hour when we stand with Him amid the dissolving universe; and as we see the past from which we have been rescued, we shall send forth one shout of praise that shall reecho around the universe, "Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

"Who forgives all your iniquities." It is in the present tense, and the most universal sense. It is not some of our iniquities, but all. It is not merely once that He forgave, but He still forgives, and He will forever. He is forgiving now, and He is waiting today to be gracious. His blood keeps cleansing us from all sin. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come [keep coming] unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them." We never get beyond that blood. Even as of old they carried the blood of the sacrifice into the holiest of all and touched every article in the Tabernacle with it, so, still, the blood of Jesus Christ goes with us all the way, and in our deepest and highest experiences it is more and more precious to our souls. We never get beyond the cross.

It is not necessary that we should sin willfully, but the holiest saint has ten thousand shortcomings of which he is ever conscious, and needs and loves to bathe afresh in the precious blood, and wash his feet in the basin which the blessed Master still holds for the feet of all His travel-stained disciples. Never need we remain a moment under the power or dominion of sin. Ever may we freely come to the precious fountain and sing the glad refrain,

"They're all taken away, away,
My sins are all taken away."

Later in the Psalm, a very beautiful figure is added to express the completeness of our salvation. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." This is a more beautiful figure than even David understood.

We know in the light of modern science that the East is infinitely distant from the West. We may go north a while, but we shall soon come to the end of North; or if we begin to go south, we soon reach the end of the southern limit and begin to go north. But go eastward, and there is no transition line that you can cross and begin to move westward. It is east forever, and though you encircle the world a thousand times, you still are going east. And so it is with your journey westward, so that there is no place where East and West can meet. "So far has he removed our transgressions from us." They are traveling eternally apart from us, and the longer we live, the farther apart will they go. So perfect, so eternal is His forgiveness.

IV. PHYSICAL BLESSING AND HEALING

The next ground of his thanksgiving is God's physical blessing and healing of our diseases through His mercy and love. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, . . . who heals all your diseases." This is expressed in the very same terms as salvation. It is as absolute. It is as present. It is as universal and complete. It is as divine. He heals. They who try to contradict it are foolishly taking the bread of life from their own lips, and making of none effect the grace and mercy of God which they might enjoy.

In the next clause the source of this healing is represented. It is through Christ's redemption. "Who redeems your life from destruction." It is through the blood of Calvary and the redeeming purchase of Christ's atoning blood that this also comes to us. On the cross He bore our physical liabilities, and those who trust in Him are thus set free from the physical penalties of disease on account of sin.

There is still a higher phase of this precious truth brought out in this passage: "Your youth is renewed like the eagle's." This is the quickening life of Christ in our mortal flesh, giving vitality and spring to the body; taking away the effects of age and infirmity; keeping us in youthful vigor when nature has become exhausted; and imparting to our frame the life and energy of our risen Lord as the source of our health and strength.

This is more than being healed of disease and redeemed from death. It is being quickened in the higher life and filled with the vigor and energy of our Lord. Oh, how we should bless the Lord for it! Those of us who have experienced it can never tell how much it means. Oh, the weariness and pains it has taken away; the dreadful nights and wearing days that it has changed to times of sweet repose and hours of joyful service! Oh, the spring and gladness that it has put into our existence! Oh, the power it has given us for service! Oh, how much it has added to the years of time, multiplying each hour and making it manifoldly more by the enriching of His strength and love! How precious it has made Him! How real He has become, so that every nerve cord understands Him, every organ enjoys Him, and every fibre of our flesh seems to sing: "Bless the Lord, O my soul; . . . who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies; . . . so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's."

V. DEEPER SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

The next ground of gratitude to God is our deeper spiritual blessings and joys. "Who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's." This latter clause is unhappily translated. It is not "your mouth" but "your being." It means the inmost being. It is not "good things" but, literally, "the good." "Who satisfies your being with the good." It is not possible to satisfy our deeper being with earthly things, with any thing.

It was a fool who said in his heart to his soul, "Soul, you have much goods laid up for many

years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry." He tried to feed his soul on corn and wine, and barns, farms, and gain. But he was a fool. God told him so. The only thing that can meet the hunger of the heart is God Himself. It is He who is the good and who meets the need of the inmost being, satisfies it to the core. They that touch Him are conscious that they touch the center of our life; that He fills the inmost core of their being.

There is something in Christ that does meet our spirit's utmost need. Put that flower away in the cellar, and it will get white and withered; bring it into the sun, and its whole organism will open up and absorb the light and life of that which is its god. So our being is made for Him, and He alone can fill it. There is not an instinct in your spirits, there is not a feeling in your heart, there is not a capacity in your mind, there is nothing in the little child, the maiden, the youth, the man, the woman, the sage, the poet, the artist, the loftiest or the lowliest intellect, but Christ can utterly satisfy. There is not a moment of our existence but may be spent in perfect rest and utter delight in His communion and blessing, and every fiber of our nature throb with the song of gladness: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, . . . who satisfies your being with the good" and who "crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

VI. COVENANT RELATIONS TO ISRAEL

Next the Psalmist praises God for His covenant relations to Israel and His people. Amid all their changes, frailties, and failures, He has been their faithful God, and, like a father, has carried them, remembering their frailty, forgiving their sin, and keeping covenant with them that serve Him.

VII. HIS COMING

He finally praises God because of His kingdom and His coming. "The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom rules over all." Oh, how much cause we have to praise God for this! How glad I am that I am not king, but that God is on the throne, and that He is coming soon to reign over this revolted, disordered world. Things may look very strange and confused at times; someone else may seem to hold the reins, but bless the Lord, "The Lord sits king forever." "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice."

And soon He will come again. Not forever shall wrong be triumphant and right be trampled upon. Not forever shall we weep and wait. He is coming soon with His kingdom and righteousness and peace, and with our robes and crowns. Let us rejoice because "The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom [dominion] rules over all," and "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Then the Psalm closes with the majestic peroration in which he calls upon the heavenly hosts, the universe, creation, and all the works of God to praise and magnify His glorious name.

What does this mean? Why, beloved, that you and I, His ransomed ones, are to lead the chorus of earth and heaven, and to sing a louder, sweeter song than angels in glory can ever

know, or warbling bird or sweet songster of earth can ever sing. Could you and I enter heaven today, we would be astonished at its music. But, O beloved, there is something higher and nobler for you and me than even the songs of angels. God calls upon us here, not to listen to them, but to lead them, to rise above them, and to awake their harps to melodies they never knew before. The day is coming when, higher and nearer the throne than they, we shall give the keynote to the choruses of heaven, and they shall be glad to follow in the loud refrain.

Think, we can have a song they never can sing, of that redemption they have not needed and they have never shared.

And then it means still further, that as we go out among the works of God, which are full of praise and gladness, we shall be gladder than they. As we look in the sunshine, we are to shine with a radiance that the sun can never know. As we gaze upon the beauty and bloom of nature, we are to glorify God with a loveliness and with a radiance that earth can never wear. As we hear the hum of ten thousand insects, and the songs that warble from the branches of the summer woods, from the bursting throats of the little birds, and the thrilling melodies of nature, we are to praise Him whom they can never know as we know Him. He is our Father and our Friend.

Oh, is it ever so? Is it not often sadly, shamefully different? Have you gone out in this bright, glad world many a time with a shadowed face and a mournful spirit, with a dirge in every tone, and a groan in every breath? Why, the little birds upon the trees and the insects at your feet were reproving you to your face, and seeming to say, Praise the Lord. God forbid that they should have to awaken our songs! Rather does this glorious Psalm mean that we are to lead them in a chorus of praise; and, taking our place in the center of this universe, to strike the keynote of every strain, until, through heaven and earth, His redemption song shall ring, and roll away to the boundaries of immensity, a Hallelujah Chorus to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb.

This is the glorious picture that inspiration has given us in the Apocalypse of John. In the closing verses of the fifth chapter of Revelation, we find the redeemed in the very center of the throne. Around them, farther and farther out, are the circles of creation. First, the angels, and then the whole creation of God, to the utmost confines of the universe; and, as they strike the song that angels cannot sing: "You were slain, and have redeemed us to God, . . . and have made us unto our God kings and priests," angels take up the chorus, the only chorus they can sing, and repeat the fourfold doxology: "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

And then, further, our song is caught up by the whole creation, out and out, and on and on, from world to world, and then away

"Where worlds beyond the farthest star
That ever met the human eye
Catch the loud anthem from afar,
That rolls along immensity."

until at last the outermost boundary of creation is reached, and then the tide rolls back to the throne. The waves of melody, like the reflux billows of the ocean, return; and as they reach the center once again, lo! the elders fall upon their faces before the throne, and the song is lost in silence; and the deepest, highest of all praise, and all worship, and all speech, and all thought, and all feeling, completes the great doxology -- the silence that falls upon its face, and in the wordless praise of the Spirit's deepest joy, worships God.

Beloved, this is to be our eternal employ, to lead the songs of heaven. Oh, let us learn it now.

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 13

THE PRIEST KING -- PSALM 110

This has been called by Luther the most beautiful of the Psalms. It is the picture of Christ upon His mediatorial throne. We have seen Him as the suffering Savior in the twenty-second Psalm; as the Shepherd in the twenty-third; as the risen and ascended Lord in the twenty-fourth and sixty-eighth Psalms. Now we see Him seated upon His throne in the one hundred and tenth Psalm, reigning over His mediatorial kingdom and exercising His holy priesthood as our Advocate with God.

I. THE PRIEST-KING

1. He is a divine King. "The Lord said unto my Lord." He Himself is called Lord, not only by David, but by the eternal Father. We see two divine personalities here: "the Lord" and "my Lord." This is not uncommon in the Old Testament, and a very dull eye can find in many places the evidence of the divine Trinity, even in the Hebrew Scriptures. How glad we are to know that our King is the Lord of heaven and earth, and nothing can be too hard for Him!

2. Back of Him there is another person as mighty and divine -- the Father. There is a power behind the throne, even all the Godhead.

We read in Daniel of these two personalities: "The Ancient of Days" who came in the clouds of heaven, and "The Son of man" who came with Him, and to whom He gave the kingdom and a dominion which should never pass away. He can say, "All things that the Father has are mine" ; "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"; and above all the rage of the heathen and the wrath of His enemies, "He that sits in the heavens" said, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish from the way."

3. He is ruling over a rebellious empire. He is not acknowledged. He is not as yet a millennial king as we see Him in other Psalms, seated upon a peaceful throne, but He is in the midst of a conflict, and waging the holy war of gospel dispensation against sin and Satan. But amid all opposition and conflict, he is calmly seated upon His throne, not dismayed or distracted by the violence of His foes, but "expecting until his enemies be made his footstool." He is confident of victory. He sees ever before Him the issue; and while amid the smoke of the battle we may be often perplexed and discouraged, yet He is smiling calmly at our fears and waiting for the consummation of all His plans and all our hopes.

4. He is the King of Righteousness. The name of His glorious type, Melchizedek, suggests this.

The two roots of the word signify "king" and "righteousness." This does not merely mean that He is the righteous King, but it means especially that He is a King who dispenses righteousness to His followers and subjects. Other kings require righteousness from them, but His business is to give them righteousness, to make them holy, and just, and good. He takes them as a race of sinners, justifies them freely through His grace, and then imparts to them His own spirit and nature, and makes them partakers of His righteousness. It is His royal gift to us. Let us take it freely. He came "that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life."

5. He is the King of Peace. For Melchizedek was the King of Salem, which means peace. This is His next royal gift -- peace. It is His great legacy. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

It is His royal benison to all His subjects. He is the Prince of Peace. They that follow Him find rest unto their souls and know the peace of God that passes all understanding. Has He given us His righteousness and His peace? Do we dwell with Him in the land of rest where "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever"?

6. He is our Great High Priest. Not only does He rule over us, and for us, but stands between us and all our sins and their present and eternal consequences. He settles for us every question that can rise between us and God. He represents us in heaven in all our interests. He keeps our relations with God ever right. He secures for us the grace we need from moment to moment and day to day. He presents our petitions to the Father, taking out of them their faults and imperfections, correcting and directing them, and adding to them His own intercessions, mingling with them the incense of His perfect offering, and claiming acceptance for them through the merits of His own all-prevailing name.

Like the priests of old, He bears our names upon His shoulders in the place of strength, carrying all our burdens and bearing all our sorrows. Like Aaron, He bears our names upon His breast as well as on His shoulders, carrying us in the place of sympathy and love. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest" who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"; "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way"; "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Such is the picture of our great Priest-King.

His ancient type of Melchizedek stands in the record of the past like the great sphinx of the desert, a strange enigma.

The Apostle speaks of him almost as if he had no origin and no descent, but this may simply mean that we have no record of these, and that he is the same as though he came out of the darkness and went into the dimness of obscurity. Some have supposed that he was a divine person, the Son of God anticipating His incarnation, but we see no reason for this or proof of it. He was, doubtless, simply a human type of the divine Son of God.

He was the only one in the Old Testament who held both the office of a priest and a king. The Judges in some measure anticipated this: Eli ministering at the altar and also judging Israel; and Samuel, for a time, exercising both functions. But none of them could be called a king. Jesus holds both offices. He who rules us with His mighty scepter and holds our destinies in His hand, is the same who died for our sins, who intercedes for us at the Father's side, and who ever lives to save us to the uttermost. Blessed King, faithful Priest, precious Savior -- blessed be His glorious name forever!

II. HIS FOLLOWERS

"Your people shall be willing [a free-will offering] in the day of Your power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: You have the dew of Your youth." This is the beautiful picture of the subjects of the glorious King.

1. They are freewill offerings. They are a consecrated people; they are not bound to Him by fetters of iron or forces of compulsion, but by a free, glad surrender of their hearts and sacrifice of their lives. They love Him, they delight to do His will, they have been conquered by His love. Their watchword is "Whose I am and whom I serve." They are not their own, but are bought with a price. They have presented their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, their reasonable service. This is the condition of all full blessing in the kingdom of Christ. God gives all, and we give all.

Only as we freely give do we freely receive. A heart half consecrated can never be fully saved, or perfectly victorious and happy; but he who yields himself fully to God finds God as fully yielded to him. This is the true condition of all effective service. God does not ask our work first, but ourselves first, and then our service follows. He does not use hired servants or borrowed vessels. He owns His servants and puts His coat-of-arms on all the vessels of His house, and will use nothing fully until it becomes His and His alone.

I know a wealthy friend who desired at one time to adopt a child. The mother was unwilling to part with it permanently, but very glad to have it taken to the rich man's home and educated and befriended. When it came to the point of surrendering it utterly, her heart naturally shrank and almost refused; but she was told that in no other way would he accept the child. The reason was that he wished to make it his heir and bestow upon it his great wealth. Then she saw the advantage of complete surrender, and in the highest love to the little one, she gave up her personal claims that it might receive a greater blessing than she in her poverty could ever give it. So God asks us to give ourselves utterly to Him, only because He wants to give us His all in return and make us the heirs of all His riches and joint-heirs with His own dear Son.

2. They are clothed in the beauty of holiness. They are not only a consecrated people but a holy people. Here we see the true spiritual order of our higher experiences and blessings. Consecration must come first and then sanctification. We can consecrate ourselves as freewill offerings. Then God sanctifies us and clothes us with the beauties of His holiness. The consecration is ours; the sanctification is His. It is with Christ's robes that He covers us; with Christ's virtues that He adorns us. Our holiness is as much His gift as our pardon. "To her was

granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The bride receives her robe as the free gift of her Lord. She does not weave it and stitch it with her own weak hands, but she receives the seamless robe of her Lord in all its completeness, and puts on the Lord Jesus Himself as her sanctification and glory.

But here we read not only of holiness, but of the beauties of holiness. It is not merely a right character and life, but a lovely bearing, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior, and shedding luster upon our Christian profession and the name of our Lord.

We read not only of the garments that were clean, but of the garments that were bright or lustrous. Every housewife knows the difference between her clothes as she takes them from her clothesline and as she takes them from the laundry. They are clean when they leave the clothesline, but they are bright when they leave the laundry.

There is a stern and blameless righteousness which a man may live before the world and before the Lord, in which no fault can be found, and yet it may be as cold as the granite cliffs of some lone mountain peak. There is a sweet, soft, mellow, and beautiful holiness which is as different from the other as the lovely mountainside all covered with moss and flowers and fountains is different from the mountain peak. The life of Jesus was not stern virtue but sweet love. It was full of the beauty of holiness. How gentle, how tender, how thoughtful, how courteous, how unselfish, how refined, how delicate in its sensitiveness, how lofty, majestic, devoted, how transparent and sincere, how sweet and affectionate, how it attracted the little child, how it drew the poor sinner, how it fascinated the loftiest minds, how it satisfied the warmest hearts! Who can ever paint the beauties of Christ's character, the little touches of loveliness that filled up His life, the thousand trifles that others neglect, and that constitute the fullness of His perfection?

Look at Him as a little child. What a perfect child, and yet how far beyond other children. Look at Him as He bows His head to receive the baptism of John that He may fulfill all righteousness. Look at Him as He takes the little child in His arms. Look at Him as He refuses to meet the gaze of the poor woman whom they brought to Him in her sin, lest He should hurt her sensitive feelings by looking into her eyes in the presence of those pitiless men. Look at Him as He anticipates Peter's perplexity about the taxes at Capernaum, and sends him to find the gold in the mouth of the fish, even before he has time to speak of it. Look at Him as, with the towel around His waist, He bows at the disciples' feet, the lowliest, yet the loftiest of them all.

Listen to Him as, with heart already anticipating the burden of the cross, He forgets His sorrow and tenderly says: "Let not your heart be troubled." Listen as He speaks of His peace and joy even in that dark hour. See how perfectly human He is in His tears at Lazarus' tomb, and in His sorrow in Gethsemane, and yet how perfectly yielded to the will of God. Look at Him in the bright morning of the resurrection with His glad "All hail!" and His shining joy. Look at that exquisite scene in the garden as He calls Mary by name. Look at Him as He gently suggests her sin to the woman of Samaria without telling it; and again, by one look breaks Peter's heart without an upbraiding word, and then by that wonderful three-fold question by the Sea of

Tiberias restores him again and suggests many things which He did not utter, but which the disciple could perfectly understand.

See the affectionateness that took Mary to His heart and John to His bosom, and on the cross of Calvary remembered the mother who bore Him, and consigned her to the care of the one whom He loved best. O incomparable Christ! How the faintest touches of the picture put our coarseness and incompleteness to shame, and make us long to hide beneath the folds of His vesture, and be covered with His perfect righteousness! And so He would have us like Himself, clothed with all the beauties of a holy life and character.

How minute are the little directions of the Holy Ghost about our spirit and conduct! How many little things are described in the Christian's investiture! Not only the things that are honest and just and pure, but the things that are lovely and of good report. Here are some of them: courtesy, considerateness of others, sensitiveness to the feelings of one another, thinking no evil, rejoicing with them that rejoice, weeping with them that weep, condescending to men of low estate, in honor preferring one another, believing all things, hoping all things of the worst of men, rejoicing evermore, submitting one to another, and many more which the Holy Ghost has interwoven with almost every fiber of the Holy Scriptures, in little threads which make up the warp of holy living.

A great sculptor was once asked by his friend how he could linger so long over the marble statute which months before seemed complete to him, as he looked upon it. "Why," said the sculptor, "I have touched every part of this figure in these months and changed the whole expression by a thousand little touches. Here an eye has received a deeper fullness, a lip a more sensitive expression, a nostril is more dilated, an eye-brow is more expressive. These may be trifles, but trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle."

Oh, that the old story might be translated into the holier art of Christian living, and that we might go forth robed in the beauties of holiness, not only wearing the linen of the saint but the wedding garment of the bride.

3. They are bright with the light of the morning, born "from the womb of the morning." The truly consecrated and sanctified Christian is bright, joyous, radiant, and hopeful. Our light should shine before men. Our countenance should be radiant with the glory of God, and our whole bearing tell that we are the children of the light. The morning is the type of gladness, brightness, hopefulness. How different we feel after a night of rest and with the opening dawn! We lay down weary, jaded, perhaps exhausted, but we awake with such new strength and hopefulness that the tasks which yesterday depressed us today seem lighter than a feather, and we go out into life with zest and spring.

The Christian's life may be an everlasting morning. We may ever have the privilege of beginning afresh and, "forgetting those things which are behind," step out each moment into a new and eternal future of sunshine and blessing. Let our lives be more joyous, our spirits more like the morning. "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon you." "Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the LORD

shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended."

4. They are fresh with the dew of His youth. The consecrated Christian knows what this means. It is a spirit of perpetual youth. It is a continual zest. It is a delightful freshness that keeps us watered and spontaneous in our spirit every moment. How soon the world ages, but the heart that is filled with Jesus is ever young. Holiness is the best preservative of youthfulness, freshness, sweetness, and joy.

It is possible to go through everything we touch with this spirit of springing freshness. It is not only for the hour of prayer and praise, and the mountain tops of holy ecstasy, but we can carry it through the drudgery of life, through the hum-drum, monotonous steps of toil, through the commonplace occupations of long days and hours, in the kitchen, the nursery, the crowded street, the noisy factory, at the office desk. We can keep the sweet fragrance of this heavenly blossom, not only amid the smoke and grime of earthly toil, but even amid the fumes of the pit itself. When the dragon breathes upon us with his fiery breath, and ten thousand shafts of temptation whirl around us, this sweet atmosphere will purify the air and fortify us against even the touch of the foe, and the very smell of the pit will be dispelled by the heavenly fragrance that we carry in our breast.

Not only will this exhilarate our hearts and freshen our spirits, but even our bodies will be kept in health and buoyancy and our physical strength renewed at the fountain of His immortal youth.

We must not forget the source of this. It is not in ourselves but in Him. It is not our youth, but His youth that refreshes and bedews us. It is only as we have the heart of Christ within us that we have the fountain of perpetual freshness. Christ is ever young. How beautiful the thought that Jesus ever remains the young man of thirty-three! He never grew old, and He never will. That glorious face that beamed upon Mary and Peter and John on the morning of the resurrection with His glad "All Hail!" remains forever the same, and He is willing to touch us with His freshness, and fill us with His immortal youth.

One of Wellington's generals, it is said, came back to him for a moment just before setting out on a very difficult commission, to which his commander had appointed him. Reaching out his hand, he said: "General, let me grasp your hand before I go." He took the hand of the chief. His face brightened; and as he dashed away, he said: "Now I feel able for my work since I have touched that conquering hand." So each moment we can touch that conquering Hand that never lost a battle, that never relinquished a trust, that never grows weak or weary; and, strong in the strength of Christ, we can do all things hand in hand with Him.

Fresh from the dew of His youth. The figure of the dew is very suggestive. It comes at night. So out of our nights of darkness, sorrow, and waiting, come our mornings of refreshing and our days of victory. Again, it comes on quiet nights, never on stormy nights. And so, as we get before the Lord and hush our fretting and tumults, our thoughts and cares, and fears and plans, He fills us with His fullness and waters us with His refreshing. Again, the dew is always in the air; and we may always absorb it if we have the right temperature and spiritual condition to create it. The dew does not fall from heaven, but it gathers from the air around us. The old

familiar illustration will stand repeating. The ice pitcher, on the warmest and sultriest day, in a moment is covered with crystal dew-drops. And so our Lord is ever around us in the very air we breathe. His freshness is ever within our reach if we will adjust ourselves to that presence. If we will grow cool and quiet and open our being to receive His life, He is ever ready to bedew us with His blessing, to fill us with His joy and peace and love, to send us forth the children of the morning, fresh with the dew of His youth.

The palm tree is the most glorious of all trees, with its waving branches and the precious clusters of fruit hanging from its laden boughs. But where does the palm tree grow? In the burning desert where the ground beneath is like consuming fire, and the air above as a heated oven. Whence does it draw its life? Just because of its situation the palm tree is provided with immense leaves, through all of whose pores the vapor of the air is absorbed, while its sensitive roots reach down to the hidden fountains and absorb from beneath the sand every particle of moisture that it can find. And so from the depths and heights it draws the life that sustains its glorious verdure and rich fruitfulness and makes it the queen of the vegetable creation. It is like unto him of whom the Oriental prophet has said with such truth and beauty: "He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit."

Such is the blessed heritage of the children of the heavenly King. Such is the glorious recompense of entire consecration. Such is the reversion that comes to those who are willing to be a free-will offerings in the day of His power. Oh, let that day begin with some of us! Oh, let us make the full surrender now, and begin to follow Him in the glorious procession of the children of the morning, who, robed in the beauties of holiness and the bridal garments of the advent glory, already throbbing with the pulse-beats of immortal youth, are waiting for that glad day that shall bring us in fullness to that of which we are now permitted to enjoy the blessed foretaste and anticipation.

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 14

THE HALLEL -- PSALM 118

This was Luther's favorite Psalm. He says respecting it: "This is my Psalm which I love. Although the whole of the Psalms and the Scripture, which is my only consolation in life, are also dear to me, I have chosen this Psalm particularly to be called and to be mine; for it has often deserved my love, and helped me out of many deep distresses, when neither emperors, nor kings, nor the wise and prudent, nor the saints could have helped me." Indeed, no better panorama of the great Reformer's conflicts and victories can be found than these graphic verses. They "compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about like bees; . . . for in the name of the Lord I will destroy them." "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes."

But the Psalm has higher claims than those that associate it with the great Reformer.

It was the last Psalm of the Hebrew Hallel, the closing refrain of that great sacred oratorio which the Hebrews chanted at their great festivals, and it is most probable that it was the very hymn which Jesus sang as He went from the upper chamber to the Mount of Olives. It contains a summary of the whole work of redemption and the conflict and victory of Christ. Its Messianic character is established by the frequent references to it in the New Testament by Christ Himself and His apostles, and it is indeed a picture of His own inner life in the sufferings and conflicts of Calvary. Let us briefly glance at some of these expressions.

I. A PRELUDE OF PRAISE

The whole house of Israel is summoned to praise the Lord; then the house of Aaron; then the whole company of them that fear the Lord. They are called to praise Him because He is good, and because He is merciful, and His mercy endures forever. His goodness is the outflow of His love, and His mercy is the special direction of that love to the unworthy and sinful. But for His mercy His goodness never could reach us, an unworthy and fallen race. But His mercy endures forever, and even sinful men may rejoice in its fullness and claim its richest blessings.

II. A CONFESSION OF FAITH

It is the utterance of a trust that looks from man to God, from the highest princes and the mightiest human names to the Almighty Himself. God usually calls His people to the spirit of praise and of faith first, and then He lets the pressure of conflict fall upon us to prove the

sincerity of our confession and the reality of our trust. And so, after these bold claims of faith and notes of praise, we have

III. THE PICTURE OF CONFLICT

It is a desperate conflict. It is the conflict of a soul with innumerable spiritual forces and malignant foes that seem like clouds of bees filling the air, and fiery thorns scorching him with their consuming breath. It is the conflict of Christ in the dark hour of His sorrow and suffering. It is the conflict of the great suffering hearts of brave, true men in all ages, during which the soldiers of faith have followed the great Captain of their salvation, and, like Him, been made perfect through suffering.

IV. THE SHOUT OF VICTORY

It is also the shout of victory. "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. . . . I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD." It is the triumph of Jesus over death and the grave. It is the victorious shout of His Church militant as she follows in His triumph.

V. THE OPEN GATES

Next, we have the open gates of righteousness and salvation. "Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD into which the righteous shall enter." This is a picture of an opened salvation through the Savior's cross. This is the shout of accomplished redemption and full salvation. This is the cry of Stephen amid the pains of martyrdom: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This is the far-off echo of the sacred litany: "When You by the sharpness of death had borne our sins, You opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

VI. THE RESURRECTION DAY

The glorious resurrection day, and the day of grace. "This is the day which the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." This may well describe any day of glorious victory, but it especially refers to the resurrection day; to the day when Jesus burst the fetters of the tomb, and made for us the Lord's Day forever the day of days, because it commemorates the greatest of all the facts of Christianity, the resurrection of the Lord. This is the cornerstone of our precious hopes. This is the foundation of the Church. This is the greatest principle of Christianity. The Lord is risen, and we are risen with Him.

VII. THE PENITENT'S PRAYER

"Save now, I beseech You, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech You, send now prosperity." Literally this means Hosanna! This was the cry which became so familiar in the streets of Jerusalem, that the very children took it up and rang it out on the air as their little prayer to Jesus, in defiance of the hate of scribes and Pharisees.

In its place in the Psalm it describes the salvation of the Gospel as it follows in its natural order the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Oh, how often has this cry gone up during the Christian ages, and how often has it been answered by the love and mercy of God until Hosanna has been changed to Hallelujah!

VIII. THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

"The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner." This is a proverbial expression, but Christ Himself has applied it to His own rejection by man and His election by God as the cornerstone of the Church.

It is just as true of Christ's people. "God has chosen the weak things of the world . . . and things which are despised." The most beautiful window in Europe was made by a little apprentice boy with the thrown-away fragments of his master's workshop. One day that master saw the wonderful mosaic of light and color which the little hands had wrought together; and when he learned who had made it, he took him in his arms and said, "You have surpassed your master and made for yourself an imperishable monument of genius out of worthless fragments." So God is taking the world's rejected ones, and, by and by, the universe will gaze upon the New Jerusalem with rapturous wonder as it shall shine above the glory of the sapphire and the ruby, the tints of the rainbow, and the light of a thousand suns.

IX. THE COMING OF THE LORD

The climax of all will be the coming of the Lord. "Blessed be he that comes in the name of the LORD." Our Savior has given us the true application of this verse in His own solemn parting words to Jerusalem, after His sorrowful appeal to them for whom He so often had longed and labored. He said as He left the temple: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, You shall not see me henceforth, until you shall say, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

We know when that day shall be, the day of His personal coming, and the return of His ancient people to their true Messiah. And so the verse is a promise of His advent. This is our blessed hope. This is the pole star of redemption. This is the future of Christian hope and aspiration. And this is the imminent, overshadowing reality for which hushed hearts are waiting today in all the Church of God.

X. THE ABIDING PLACE AND CONSECRATED SERVICE

The Psalm does not close without a picture of the deeper inner life of the saint. "We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which has shown us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Surely, this is the picture of consecration and union with God. This is the life into which redemption leads us. The language here is borrowed from the tabernacle. The house of the Lord is the inner abiding place. The light which God has shown us is the Shekinah glory that shines above the mercy seat. The

sacrifice is that living consecration which we make as we enter in, and which, as we enter more closely in, we make more perfectly. Have we come into this sacred place? Do we know this abiding life? Are we dwelling under the shining of the Shekinah? Are we bound to the horns of the altar by the cords of love and self-surrender? Can we sing

"I have come with my guilt to the altar of God;
In the laver of cleansing I'm washed from my sin,
And now, to the innermost presence of God,
To the holy of holies I am entering in.

"In my blood-sprinkled robes I can stand without dread
Where the lamps of the Lord o'er the cherubim shine.
I am feasting my soul on the heavenly bread;
I am breathing the odors of incense divine.

"I have passed through the veil to that sacred abode
Where His glory the Savior reveals to His own,
And now, in the innermost presence of God,
I am dwelling forever with Jesus alone."

Oh, it is not until we enter in that we know the fullness and blessedness of salvation. Looking at yonder tabernacle from the outside, it appeared a very common thing -- an old tent covered with badger skins. But looking at it from within, it was resplendent with the dazzling glory of light and gold and gems of rarest beauty.

You cannot know Christ until you come into the bosom of His love. You cannot truly serve Him or bless others until you reach the center and can say, "We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD." Then no sacrifice seems hard. Then you can say, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Then the life becomes a chorus of joy and praise, a glad, eternal Hallel, echoing evermore: "You are my God, and I will praise You: You are my God, I will exalt You. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endures forever."

Christ In The Bible

Psalms

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 15

THE PEARL PSALM -- PSALM 133

We have called this the Pearl Psalm because it is the picture of the Church of Christ in unity, and this picture Christ has given to us in the New Testament in one of His most beautiful parables, under the image of the Pearl of Great Price. (Mat. 13: 45, 46.)

At first sight this may not seem to be a Messianic Psalm, for it tells of the Church rather than Christ. But what is the Church but the Body of Christ? He is only a Head without her; she constitutes His completeness; nor can we ever think of her unity apart from her living Head.

I. THE EXCELLENCY OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

"How good . . . it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" It is good. It is God's great plan, not only for His Church, but for the universe. It is the end for which He has been working from the beginning. Far back in the past eternity He dwelt alone, the inaccessible and infinite Jehovah. Then from His hand there came this wondrous universe, these worlds of space that roll afar and cover yonder vast immensity.

But there was a void impassable between the Creator and the creature. The highest angel could not look across that mighty abyss. The distance was infinite.

But there was One who from the beginning was designed to be the Reconciler. It was the Son of God, and into this created universe He descended to gather together into one all things in Himself.

The Creator became the creature; the Invisible became incarnate. He took upon Himself the form of man, and then He came still nearer to dwell in the very hearts of men Himself. And now there is one Being who is the link that binds this mighty universe to its Creator, and upon yonder throne shall forever sit a Man who in His own person combines the infinite and transcendent glory of God with the form and face and spirit of one of Adam's race. He and His glorious Church are the uniting links of the whole universe, and in Him all things are already being made one.

He has designed His glorious Church, therefore, to be the special expression of all the diversity in this universe combined in perfect unity. She is the microcosm of the universe and the reflection of God Himself. It is, therefore, His purpose for her that she might be made perfect in oneness, both with Him her glorious Head, and in all her parts and members.

This was His last command respecting her as He went away, that her members should love one another as He had loved them. This was the burden of His parting prayer as He stood at the entrance of the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His agony, and prayed: "That they all may be one; as You, Father, are in me, and I in You, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that You have sent me."

II. THE PLEASANTNESS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

It is not only "good," but it is "pleasant." Nothing is sweeter than the joy of love; nothing is more bitter than the sting of hate; nothing is more keen than the anguish of separation. God's own nature is love, and therefore it is blessedness; and if we would know His joy, we must rise to His love and live out of ourselves and for others. How happy the heart where love reigns supreme! How delightful the church where all the members love one another! How blessed the people that dwell in peace! How miserable the hearts that are ever indulging their bitterness, strife, jealousy, envy, and malignity! You may hurt others by the stings of passion, but you hurt yourselves much more. "How pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"

III. THE BLESSING THAT FOLLOWS

The blessing that follows Christian unity is described in the words, "For there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life forevermore."

God's special blessing attends His people when they dwell in love and walk in unity. He has promised to be with them as they walk in love.

1. He promises a blessing upon the soul that walks in love. You will be blessed yourself if you walk in unity, but
2. It will promote the blessing of others. It will create an atmosphere that will create spiritual growth. It is when the members are fitly framed together that they grow into an holy temple in the Lord. It is like the warm sunshine of May which brings out the fruits and flowers of the earth. The church which is bathed in the atmosphere of love will always be fragrant with the blossoms of Christian loveliness and usefulness.
3. It brings answers to our prayers. The prayer of unity has a peculiar promise. "If two of you shall agree [symphonize] on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."
4. It will impress the unbelieving world. It is given by an infidel historian as the chief ground for the rapid progress of Christianity in the early centuries, that the Christians loved one another so tenderly and faithfully.
5. It will bring down the special gifts of the Holy Ghost. The heavenly Dove will only dwell in an atmosphere of love and peace. If the Church would only return to her primitive unity, she would soon be restored to her ancient power, and all the gifts of the Holy Ghost would crown the

grace of love and bring the world to the feet of Jesus.

6. It will bring the blessing of salvation to sinners. The world is drawn to such an atmosphere, and lost men find it an attractive and congenial home. We must love them to Christ by the love we bear to one another and which overflows to them. Show me a church full of love, and I will show you a church which enjoys a perpetual revival.

IV. THE SOURCE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

"It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion."

These two beautiful figures represent very distinctly:

1. The person of Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, under the image of Aaron, and,
2. The Holy Ghost under the double image of the ointment and the dew. The oil falls on Aaron's head and descends to the skirts of his garments. And so, the spirit of unity and love comes to us from Jesus Christ. He is the Head and the High Priest, and we, lying at His feet, receive the anointing and the Spirit that fell on Him. It is only as we are united to Christ and drink in His very own spirit that we can be filled with love. Our love is a poor, worthless thing. We must have His, and He is willing to give us the same anointing that fell on Him, and which reaches and rests on us.

We may have the very love that He had and the very Holy Ghost that baptized and filled Him.

It is our relation to Christ that fixes our relation to each other. It is when we are in Him that we can be one with others. It is a vain attempt to try to get into unity with men by touching them directly, and trying to arrange our creeds, plans, and human mechanisms. The true spirit is to be right with Him and near to Him, and then we shall touch all that are in Him as they touch Him.

But the figure also tells us of the Holy Ghost Himself. The sacred anointing that fell on Aaron's head reached to the fringes of his robe. He is the Spirit of unity and love. The same Spirit that dwelt in Christ makes us all one in Him. Oh, if we were all baptized with the Holy Ghost, we should all be one. It is easy to get on with men and women who are filled with the Spirit. People half-filled with the Holy Ghost are very difficult to get on with. They have just enough to make them spiritually conceited, willful, sensitive, and critical, but the heart filled with the Holy Ghost is always simple, adjustable, free from self-will and angularities of every kind. You cannot hurt such a man because he is not there to hurt. The cloud has come in, and Moses has moved out. We may have this blessed Holy Ghost in all His fullness, as fully as He fell on the head of Jesus. All that is necessary is that we get down to the skirts of His garment; keep low enough, empty enough, open enough, and we shall be filled.

The figure of the dew is still more beautiful. The same dew that fell on lofty Hermon descended also on the little mountains of Zion. It tells us that the lowliest child of God can have the same grace that was given to the loftiest; that the humblest Christian may have the same spirit that made John the beloved and enabled Mary to pour the fragrant anointing on the Master's head. This love is not our virtue, or the result of our struggles and endeavors, but it is the grace of Jesus and the very spirit of our Lord Himself shed abroad in us and enabling us to live in this world even as He.

V. SOME CONSIDERATIONS TO ENABLE US TO WALK IN UNITY

1. Let us determine and endeavor to walk in unity. Every victory must be won and every grace attained and established through a fixed purpose and a definite committal of ourselves to this. You can have from Christ whatever you will determine to have. The very strongest terms are used in the New Testament to express the importance of this purpose. We are to "follow after charity." We are to endeavor "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." As much as lies in us we are to "live peaceably with all men." These terms express the most intense determination and the most eager pursuit of an object. The same eagerness with which the hunter pursues his prey, and the worldling his fortune, we are to show in the pursuit of love.

Some earnest Christians have found it most helpful to pledge that they will stand in the spirit of love, and let nothing offend them or break their unity. It would be a good thing if all who read these lines would, on their knees before God and in His strength, solemnly determine and pledge their word that they will never again willingly allow themselves to sin against love, or to break their unity of spirit toward any of God's children.

2. It will help us to remember that we are always responsible for any breach of unity. Do not think of your brother's fault, or say what he has done, but think of your place, and remember that if you keep right, it is impossible for others to strive with you. There are some men with whom you cannot quarrel. They are so gentle and loving they will not take offense. The next time some one tries you or wrongs you, do not begin to think what he has done, but rather what you are going to do. Keep your eyes off their fault, and think only of your duty and responsibility to keep in sweetness and victory.

3. Remember that God permits every test to come into your life, and that He is watching to see what you will do. He is glorified and pleased if you triumph with all longsuffering, gentleness and love; grieved and shamed if you lose your victory and give way to passion and temptation. Your Heavenly Father is using all these situations in life which come to you, to educate you for something higher; and the way in which you meet them is determining your own future position in His glorious kingdom. He wants a race of men and women who can walk in perfect love and triumph under all circumstances.

After all, the test of everything is love. The characters that will stand prominent in the ages to come are those who have overcome in this arena. Those who are offended with every trifling trouble now are not going to stand in the places of high honor and service in the ages of glory.

O beloved, remember, the next time some little trial meets you, that your heavenly Father is waiting to see what you will do, and whether you will be worthy of the crown and the place of glorious trust when He comes to reign with His saints. The Scotch housekeepers in the old times used to leave a broomstick across the hall when a new girl came to apply for a place in the family. They wished to see if she would pick it up or stumble over it, and her fate was decided by the way she met it. Beloved, do not be so foolish as to fall over a broomstick and miss a kingdom.

4. Remember also that the devil is waiting to see you slip and fall. These spaces above us are not empty. Myriads of eyes are gazing down; myriads are thronging yonder galleries, and many of them laugh with a fiendish joy when you are provoked to some thought or act of unkindness or bitterness. And if you could see the faces of yonder heavenly beings, you might behold a blush of shame as they hang their heads; and the Master turns away that He may not see the dishonor of His child. Yes, we are made a gazing stock to angels and principalities. Let us not please our foes by yielding to their wiles, but let us keep our victory and triumph in our love.

5. Think of others, not in the light of their faults and failures, but in the light of God's promises for them, and as they will be some day when the grace of Christ has completed their sanctification, and they shine in all the glory of the ransomed. Anticipate their future as you do your own. Think of them with a love that "believes all things," that "hopes all things," and that clothes them with the qualities which they shall some day possess even if they do not now. To God this is everything. Time is nothing in His eye, which sweeps eternity, and sees you each moment as you will be when you shine like the sun in the kingdom of your Father. See your brother in the same light, and you will be able to walk in love.

6. Look at people as Christ looks at them; see them in the light of His love. They are dear to Him. He does not condemn them for every failure and reject them even for their most glaring faults; and if you have His heart toward them, you will be patient and gentle. Think how He looked on Peter; forgave the woman taken in her sin; spoke to Judas even in tenderness and love; and for His enemies prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Think how long He overlooked your faults before you were even saved; always loving you for what you should be. Treat your brother with the heart of Christ and look upon him with the eyes of Jesus.

7. Ask God to sanctify your natural affections. Most of them are full of selfishness and constant provocations of envy, jealousy, and strife. You have inordinate and passionate loves that are purely earthly even if not immoral; and if you walk in heavenly love, you must have them crucified and purified, and exchanged for holy affections which are raised above all bitterness and strife, and characterized by peace, unselfishness, gentleness, forbearance, and all the fruits of the Spirit.

8. Above all else, if you would walk in unity, ask Christ to crucify you. The greatest enemy to love is self. Learn to look not on your own things, but on the things of others, and consider every moment not how this is going to affect you, but how it is going to affect your brother, and

you will be kept in love and sweetness.

9. Keep the joy and sweetness of the Lord. A happy heart, full of Christ's gladness, wants to make everybody else happy. It is when you are morose and gloomy that you feel like scowling at others and getting offended at everybody you meet. Ask God to give you His joy and to keep it full, and you will find it easy to love.

10. Take Christ's love. He will put His own heart in you; He will enable you to love even as He loves. He who commanded it will make the command possible and enable you to realize it.

The torch of Christian love must be lighted at the flame of Christ's own love. They tell us that on Easter morning, in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, it is very beautiful, in the deep gloom, to see, suddenly, one flash of light appear in the tomb of Jesus. Instantly the song rings through the aisles and galleries, "The Lord is risen indeed!" And then that flash of light touches the torches in the hands of the priests, and, suddenly, all along the line of hundreds of white-robed men, the light shines in a great circle of glory, while the song echoes again and again, "The Lord is risen indeed!"

That single light from the open grave of Jesus lights all the torches. So from His heart must come the flame that will kindle our hearts to love Him. And so the oil that fell on His blessed head shall flow down to us as we lie at His feet covered by the skirts of His garments.

"Spirit of Love, upon us shed
The oil that fell on Aaron's head
And bathed his holy feet.
Oh, let our hearts like censers glow!
Oh, let our love like incense flow
In fragrant odors sweet!"